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Wednesday, Dec. 18, 2019

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Idaho schools honored as national Distinguished Schools, Blue Ribbon nominees

(BOISE) – Four Idaho schools producing stellar results in helping at-risk students succeed have been identified for national recognition by the State Department of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra announced.

Nezperce School in the Nezperce Joint School District and Birch Elementary School in the Vallivue School District were selected as this year's Distinguished Schools for Idaho. Fairview Elementary School in the Bonneville Joint School District and Beutler Middle School in the West Side Joint School District are Idaho's two nominees for the National Blue Ribbon Award.

"These four schools provide outstanding service to their communities, districts and, most of all, their students," Superintendent Ybarra said. "They are outstanding examples of Idaho educators' dedication and achievement, helping their students succeed regardless of background, economic status or prior performance levels. These educators' skill, hard work and individualized attention inspire their students to accomplish amazing things."

All four honored schools met their targets in ISAT for all student subgroups, with at least 95 percent participation in the annual assessment.

The Distinguished Schools will be honored during the National ESEA Conference Feb. 4-7 in Atlanta, Ga. Blue Ribbon honorees are expected to be named in September 2020 and honored in Washington, D.C., in November 2020.

The annual Distinguished Schools awards recognize outstanding achievements by two Title I schools from each state that serve a high proportion of at-risk students.

Nezperce School was honored in the category of Exceptional Student Performance and Academic Growth. The K-12 school outperformed more than 80 percent of other Idaho schools in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding proficiency in the content standards for both English

language arts and mathematics over the past three years. About 40 percent of Nezperce students come from an economically disadvantaged background.

Birch Elementary School's selection came in the category of Closing the Achievement Gap. The school improved mathematics performance of economically disadvantaged students by 12 percentage points during the past year. About 40 percent of its students come from an economically disadvantaged background.

In order for a school to qualify for the Distinguished School Award, it must: have a poverty rate of at least 35 percent for the selected school year, demonstrate high academic achievement for two or more consecutive years, and meet or exceed state-determined criteria based on two or more consecutive years of achievement data.

Like this year's Distinguished Schools, Idaho's two Blue Ribbon nominees are Title I-A schools. The federal program provides funding to districts and schools, helping students who are most at risk meet state academic standards and reach proficiency on state assessments.

Fairview Elementary in Idaho Falls is nominated as an Exemplary High Performing School. Of Fairview students, 71.9 percent were proficient in English language arts and 72.3 percent were proficient in mathematics. More than 40 percent of Fairview students come from an economically disadvantaged background.

Beutler Middle School in Dayton was nominated as an Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School. At Beutler, 74.4 percent were proficient in English language arts and 67.4 percent were proficient in mathematics. More than 40 percent of Beutler's students come from an economically disadvantaged background.

In order to be nominated for a National Blue Ribbon award, a school must be in the top 15 percent of all schools in the state, ranked on the performance of all students who participated in the most recently administered state assessments in English language arts and mathematics. Idaho nominees must have at least 40 percent of their students identified as economically disadvantaged.

Idaho's Distinguished Schools and Blue Ribbon nominees will receive a monetary award to support their participation in national award ceremonies.

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