For Immediate Release
September 27, 2019

District 7’s Columbus Elementary School Awarded National Honors

Columbus Elementary School has been recently awarded one of the highest education recognitions in the nation. The elementary school, located in the Edwardsville Community Unit School District, has been named a 2019 Exemplary High Performing Schools National Blue Ribbon School by United States Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. Columbus Elementary is one of only 362 schools in the nation to be recognized.

“We are extremely honored to be recognized as one of the top schools in the nation,” said Columbus Elementary School Principal Julie Matarelli, “Columbus Elementary students, parents and staff, past and present, have made this school a model of excellence, and this distinction is a great way to honor those who have made Columbus the school that it is today.”

The U.S. Department of Education’s National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes outstanding urban, suburban and rural, large and small, traditional and innovative schools. All schools recognized, however, share some core elements of effective schools. Their leaders not only articulate a vision of excellence and hold everyone to high standards; they stay close to the real action of teaching and learning. Mutual respect and trust run deep in their cultures. Faculty are supported by mentoring and professional development, and student data from many sources drive all instructional adaptations.

To be recognized, the school must meet criteria as an “Exemplary High Performing” school and have the state’s highest achieving students (the top 15%) in English and mathematics as measured by state assessments.

“To be acknowledged for equipping our students with the skills they will need to be successful after graduation, only affirms the dedication of our teachers, families, staff members and communities,” said Cathie Wright, District 7 Director for Curriculum & Instruction. “Blue Ribbon Schools are seen as leaders in academic achievement, and our Columbus Elementary School family is well-prepared to assume that role.”

"We recognize and honor your important work in preparing students for successful careers and meaningful lives," said U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos in a video message to the honorees. "As a National Blue Ribbon School, your school demonstrates what is possible when committed educators hold all students and staff to high standards and create vibrant, innovative cultures of teaching and learning."

All 362 National Blue Ribbon Schools will be honored at an annual awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. in November, where each receives a plaque and flag to signify its exemplary status. These schools serve as examples for other schools throughout the nation and details of their achievements are shared on the U.S. Department of Education’s website.