



NEWS

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DR. DIANNA R. WENTZELL, COMMISSIONER

For Immediate Release:

September 28, 2017

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Four Connecticut Public Schools Awarded Prestigious National Blue Ribbon Distinction

Schools in Danbury, East Lyme, Montville, and Norwich are Recognized

The U.S. Department of Education today named the following Connecticut public schools as 2017 National Blue Ribbon Schools:

- East Lyme High School in East Lyme
- Oakdale School in Montville
- Thomas W. Mahan School in Norwich
- Morris Street School in Danbury

All selected schools demonstrated outstanding overall achievement and were identified as Schools of Distinction as measured by Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability System. The National Blue Ribbon Program distinguishes schools in two categories — Exemplary High Performing and Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing. East Lyme High School and Oakdale School were identified in the High Performing category and Thomas W. Mahan and Morris Street School were recognized for their work toward closing Connecticut's achievement gap.

“Every student deserves the kind of education that allows them to thrive and meet their full potential,” said Governor Dannel P. Malloy. “With exemplary schools like East Lyme High School, Oakdale School, Thomas W. Mahan School, and Morris Street School inspiring a love of learning in our students, it's no wonder that we have record high graduation rates and students who are among the best readers in the nation. We congratulate these four schools and their educators, students, and families for their collective efforts to nurture school communities where all students are making great strides toward success in college, careers, and life.”

“I am pleased to congratulate all four schools for the tremendous amount of work they have done to earn this high honor,” said State Education Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell. “Education truly is the great equalizer. I am especially proud of the schools in our Alliance Districts that are accelerating academic growth for some of our highest need students.”

East Lyme High School with its enrollment of more than 1,000 students performed among the top 10 percent of all high schools statewide on the accountability index. The school demonstrates consistently

high performance across content areas and provides broad access to courses designed to prepare students for college and careers. More than 85 percent of East Lyme High School students participate in school-sponsored activities, teams, and clubs designed to foster important school community connections. Fewer than 5 percent of students are chronically absent and the most recent reports show a four-year graduation rate of 98 percent.

Oakdale School in Montville is a pre-K–5 school that demonstrated top performance in multiple categories based on accountability reports. With an overall Accountability Index of 91.7, this school placed itself among the top 10 percent of all elementary and middle schools statewide. Contributing to the Accountability Index is an English language arts (ELA) performance index of 83 and a mathematics performance index of 76.8. These scores exceed the state expectation of 75, indicating high overall performance among all students. Principal Jill Mazzalupo credited her staff. “Oakdale School staff prides themselves in taking on new initiatives with enthusiasm and hard work,” she said. “Our staff constantly seek opportunities for new learning to deliver instruction that is relevant and rigorous and keeps students engaged and excited about learning.”

Both schools identified as Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing are located within Alliance Districts. Thomas W. Mahan School serves Norwich students in prekindergarten through grade 5. The veteran educators at Mahan use their knowledge and relevant data about every student to identify where students are and ensure that all students are provided the supports and challenges necessary to advance. Each grade has academic enrichment blocks that contain a variety of targeted interventions, including support in small groups, focused 1-to-1 instruction, and enrichment for students who are at or above grade level. The success of their tiered instructional approach is evidenced in their 2015-16 academic growth results. This school demonstrated strong growth overall and was placed among the top 10 percent of all schools for the growth of their High Needs students in ELA and mathematics.

Morris Street School in Danbury was identified as a School of Distinction last year when accountability reports were released. Morris earned distinction in two categories: Highest Growth for All Students and Highest Growth for High Needs Students. This neighborhood school enrolls approximately 370 students in grades K-5. Half the students are English learners and more than 80 percent are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals. The professionals in this school are committed to encouraging parent involvement, maintaining a positive school culture, and raising student achievement. Morris Street School houses a family resource center, and together they work to strengthen the ties between the school and the families by providing programs, family support, and access to a variety of resources. Additionally, Morris Street School started a volunteer program with the support of local faith-based organizations that has been hugely successful, leading to expansion of the program in four other Danbury schools.

For the Montville, Norwich, and Danbury school districts, this is the first time they have had a National Blue Ribbon School identified in their districts.

For more information about the program, please visit the [USED's National Blue Ribbon Schools Program webpage](#).

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