

**NEW RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPT 30, 2014**

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**LIBERTYVILLE ELEMENTARY DISTRICT 70's
ROCKLAND SCHOOL
AWARDED NATIONAL 2014 BLUE RIBBON**

Rockland School in Libertyville is being honored as a 2014 National Blue Ribbon School Award of Excellence - the second time the school has been honored with the award.

“Each year since 1982, the U.S. Department of Education has sought out schools where students attain and maintain high academic goals,” District 70 Supt. Dr. Guy Schumacher said. “It is most evident that the impressive children, past and present, distinguished and caring staff, as well as exemplary leadership of Rockland School have dedicated themselves to achieving a commitment to academic excellence.”

Recognized as one of the most prestigious honors in education, the Blue Ribbon School award serves as a benchmark for excellence. “These great schools are fulfilling the promise of American education—that all students, no matter their name or zip code, can flourish when schools provide safe, creative, and challenging learning environments,” U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said today of the Blue Ribbon Award winners. “National Blue Ribbon Schools are models of consistent excellence and a resource for other schools and districts. We celebrate them for their tireless effort and boundless creativity in reaching and teaching every student.”

Rockland School, a school known for its old-fashioned and bright red exterior doors, was selected as a "high performing" school in the award categories, being measured on state assessments over the last five years. Rockland was one of 11 public elementary schools in Illinois to be recommended to apply for the 2014 award by the Illinois State Board of Education and, then, to be honored.

Rockland first won the prestigious national academic honor of being named a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence in 1989. A majority of District 70 schools now have been honored with the Blue Ribbon award twice, with the last one going to Highland Middle School in 2010, having first being honored in 1990. Adler Park School was awarded the Blue Ribbon in the

2000-01 school year, having first won the award in 1991. Butterfield School received the honor in 1993.

Rockland Principal Jeff Knapp guided the school through the lengthy and detailed Blue Ribbon process. It began in February, when Rockland staff members on the school's Improvement, Planning and Leadership Team met to split the application process into 12 different components listed by the U.S. Department of Education. Each component was then handed to a committee representing Rockland staff. Members working on the application included Kara Graeb, Dale List, Kathy Matheson, Tejal Mehta, Katie Nyland, Jennifer Parkhurst, Danya Sundh, Jaime Wittenberg and Knapp.

"This award is a celebration of the collaborative efforts of our entire staff," Knapp said. "The reflective nature of the application will continue to serve us well going forward into the future."

To be considered for the prestigious award, state schools first must be nominated by Illinois State Board of Election. Rockland then completed a 38-page application and tried to capture what a visit to the mid-size District 70 school would be like and what makes Rockland so special and unique.

Knapp credited hard working students, dedicated parents and an outstanding teaching staff for working together as a team to win the award.

"By analyzing all aspects of our school, we are incredibly proud to see the recognition for what goes on in this building every day. When you have students, parents and staff working together in a community, great things will continue to happen here at Rockland School and District 70. We are very lucky to work in a school system with tremendous support from the Board of Education, the district administrators, and the collaboration with other school staff and professionals here in District 70."

"The work our staff has done and the relationships they have built with our students, parents, and community members is truly special. Learning at Rockland is engaging and fun for our students because of our teachers.

"The red doors open our students' minds to a world of possibilities and it all comes back to a school where the stakeholders are invested in doing what's best for the children. The Rockland community should be very proud as we hold on to the traditions of our school while at the same time pushing ourselves towards continuous improvement."

The schools – 287 public and 50 private – will be honored at an awards ceremony Nov. 10-11 in Washington, D.C. Knapp will attend, along with speech and language pathologist Kara Graeb and second grade teacher Tejal Mehta, and Supt. Schumacher.

The award honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools whose students achieving at very high levels or those who have made significant progress and helped close gaps in achievement especially among disadvantaged and minority students.

The Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private schools based on one of two criteria:

- 1) Schools whose students, regardless of backgrounds, are high performing. These are schools ranked among the state's highest performing schools as measured by their performance on state assessments or in the case of private schools, that score at the highest performance level on tests referenced by national norms in at least the most recent year tested; and
- 2) Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that improve student performance to high levels as measured by the school's performance on state assessments or nationally-normed tests.

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