

# **A record five Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport are named "Blue Ribbon Schools" by the U.S. Department of Education; only Catholic Schools in Connecticut; six diocesan schools are now recognized with the highest national honor a school can receive!**

**BRIDGEPORT, Tuesday, September 15, 2009, 12:00 noon** — The U.S. Department of Education announced today that five Catholic Elementary Schools of the Diocese of Bridgeport – an all-time record – have been named "2009 Blue Ribbon Schools," placing them in the top 10 percent of schools in the United States.

Only **314** elementary schools – public and private – in the United States have received this honor, including only **8** in the State of Connecticut. This is the highest national honor that a school can receive.

With five 2009 Blue Ribbon Schools, the Diocese of Bridgeport has captured **10 percent** of the 50 private school awards nationwide.



## **Only Catholic Schools in State**

In Connecticut, the five diocesan Catholic schools are the only Catholic schools to be honored in the state this year.

The five 2009 Blue Ribbon Schools of the Diocese of Bridgeport are:

- **Greenwich Catholic School, Greenwich**
- **Our Lady of Fatima School, Wilton**
- **Saint Cecilia School, Stamford**
- **Saint Mark School, Stratford**
- **Saint Rose of Lima School, Newtown**

Fact sheets on each school, with quotes from each Principal, are included [below](#).

## **Second Year in a Row; 6 Blue Ribbon Schools in Total**

This is the second year in a row that diocesan Catholic schools have been honored. Last year, [Saint Mary School](#) in Bethel was one of only three schools in Connecticut to receive the recognition, and the only elementary school in the state.

For the 2009 competition, a record 13 Catholic schools in the Diocese were nominated to receive the Blue Ribbon Award.

"Our cup runneth over!" says **Dr. Margaret Dames**, superintendent of the Diocese's 39 Catholic schools, which educate more than 11,000 students. "We're positively thrilled by this wonderful news. This is about excellence. Blue Ribbon recognition gives us credit for the hard work by our Teachers, Administrators, Parents, School Advisory Board members, Pastors, and, of course, our students that has been going on for years at our Catholic schools.

"If it were up to me, every single one of our Catholic schools would be honored," Dr. Dames continues. "They all continue to advance in academic excellence. In fact, students in all of our Catholic elementary schools read at or above grade level."

### **Top Ten Percent of All Schools in the United States**

The Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private schools based on one of two criteria: 1) Schools whose students, regardless of background, achieve in the top 10 percent of their state on state tests or, in the case of private schools in the top 10 percent of the nation on nationally-normed tests; and 2) Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that demonstrate dramatic improvement of student performance to high levels on state tests or nationally-normed tests.

In addition, public schools must meet Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP, in reading (language arts) and mathematics. Each state — not the federal government — sets its own academic standards and benchmark goals.

Winning schools have withstood the scrutiny of a review panel of experienced educators at the national level.

"These Blue Ribbon Schools have shown that all children can learn with appropriate supports," **Arne Duncan**, Secretary of Education, said in making today's announcement. "They are producing outstanding results for their students. Some have shown dramatic improvements in places where students are overcoming the challenges of poverty, and others serve as examples of consistent excellence that can be a resource for other schools. They are places where improved teaching and learning benefits every student, and where students are challenged to meet high expectations with the active support of teachers, parents and the community."

To read today's press release from the U.S. Department of Education, [click here](#).

### **Building Future Leaders in Our Community**

**Bishop William E. Lori** greeted today's news as further evidence of the vibrancy and value of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Bridgeport.

"Our renaissance of Catholic education in Fairfield County continues," says Bishop Lori. "Catholic education is not just about test scores, important as they are. It's about communicating the Good News of Jesus Christ and helping our young people become the persons God meant them to be from all eternity. We're building new generations of leadership in the Church and in society, women and men who will know their faith and understand how it transforms the human condition while helping to shape a more humane society.

"I offer my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Dames and her team, and to our Blue Ribbon Principals, Teachers, Students, Advisory Boards, and Parents," Bishop Lori adds. "With today's outstanding news, I hope that many more parents will consider investing in a Catholic education for their child's future."