



PRESS RELEASE

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Three HISD Schools Win the 2011 U.S. Department of Education National Blue Ribbon Award

*Lyons Elementary, Challenge Early College High School, Eastwood Academy High School
Recognized by U.S. Department of Education*

September 16, 2011—Three HISD schools were named as 2011 National Blue Ribbon Schools by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. The winning schools are E.A. “Squatty” Lyons Elementary School, Challenge Early College High School and Eastwood Academy High School. Only 304 schools in the country and 26 in Texas that have attained the National Blue Ribbon honor this year.

HISD Superintendent Terry Grier said, “You don’t receive the highest honor the U.S. Department of Education can bestow, without teachers, parents and administrators working together for the good of those students. These schools represent the best in education. We want to learn from them in order to improve all our schools.”

Board President Paula Harris added, “High expectations and no excuses are common themes that make these Blue Ribbon schools so strong. We are working everyday to replicate their successes.”

The Blue Ribbon Schools award honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools whose students achieve at very high levels or have made significant progress and helped close gaps in achievement, especially among disadvantaged and minority students. The program recognizes 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 (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 national norms-based tests.

Challenge Early College High School is being recognized for the high achievement of a student body in which more than 60 percent qualify as economically disadvantaged. Challenge attained the state’s highest accountability rating of *Exemplary*. Eastwood Academy High School has been recognized as *Exemplary* by the TEA for four years running. Eastwood was recognized for achievements in state, national and college advance placement exams for a student population in which more than 87% of students qualify for free or reduced priced lunch. Lyons Elementary also earned the title of *Exemplary School* by the Texas Education Agency last year

In November, the 304 National Blue Ribbon Schools will be honored at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. Each school will receive a plaque and a flag to signify their Blue Ribbon School status. The **Houston Independent School District** is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States with 298 schools and more than 200,000 students. The 301-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area with nearly 30,000 employees.

For more information, visit the HISD Web site at www.houstonisd.org.