

# VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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## **U.S. Department of Education Names Vernon's Northeast School a National Blue Ribbon School**

### ***Recognizes Exemplary Achievement in Closing Achievement Gap***

(**VERNON, Connecticut**) – The U.S. Department of Education has named Vernon's Northeast School a 2020 National Blue Ribbon School, recognizing the hard work of students, families, teachers, staff and administrators and their success in essentially eliminating the achievement gap.

The annual awards program recognizes schools for their overall academic excellence or their progress in closing the achievement gap. Northeast is being recognized for closing the achievement gap, but has actually achieved both, ranking among the top 15 percent of all schools in the state the past two years and helping all students achieve at a high level.

"Today we're celebrating Northeast School's national recognition, an honor that validates the hard work of dedicated teachers and staff during the past three years," said Vernon Schools Superintendent Dr. Joseph P. Macary. "We're especially proud of how parents and the community have worked with us to support students' learning. This type of continuous and diligent collaboration helps our students thrive."

Northeast School was among 367 schools nationwide to be honored.

"Congratulations to this year's National Blue Ribbon School awardees," said U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. "It's a privilege to recognize the extraordinary work you do to meet students' needs and prepare them for successful careers and meaningful lives."

*The Vernon Public Schools, in partnership with family and community, is committed to provide a quality education, with high expectations, in a safe environment where all students become independent learners and productive contributors to society.*

Each year since the 2015-16 school year, the number of students at Northeast School meeting or exceeding grade level proficiency in English Language Arts and Math has increased.

For the 2015-16 school year, 56.9 percent of Northeast Students met or exceeded the standard in English Language Arts and 44.5 percent met or exceeded the standard in math.



Northeast School staff members Laura Corsino, left, and Christine Sullivan, lead a fourth grade class.

By the 2019-19 school year, the number of students meeting or exceeding the standard increased 22.8 percent in English Language Arts to 69.9 percent, and in math the number increased 44 percent to 64.1 percent of students meeting or exceeding the standard.

The same level of progress has been demonstrated in the Connecticut’s Next Generation Accountability results, which are essentially a report card for a school’s whole approach to teaching students.

In four of the last five years, Northeast School’s score has beat the state average. And for the past two years, Northeast School was rated among the top 15 percent of schools in the state.

“The key to Northeast School’s success is we look at the kids individually,” said Dr. Brenda Greene, who has been principal at Northeast School for nine years. “We ask, ‘what does this child need?’ We drill down and do whatever we can for the individual student. That child will be the best he or she can be.”

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Keeping in close touch with families is also key to closing the achievement gap, Greene said. “Our families want in their children what we want – engaged young people with active minds who love to learn and excel,” Greene said.

Dr. Macary said that if such results can be achieved at Northeast School, they can be achieved at any school.

“If you have a quality teaching staff and focused interventions in both English Language Arts and Mathematics for students who are not on grade level, you are helping push the tide forward,” Dr. Macary said. “That along with a relevant curriculum is a formula for success. It’s a team effort – students, parents, teachers, administration, staff, everybody.”

There is a simple but powerful mantra at Northeast School, “Work hard and Be Nice.” And it is part of what has propelled Northeast School forward. As students and teachers focus on learning, the environment surrounding them is quiet and calm. “We have built a school culture that brings out the best in each of us,” Greene said.

Fifth grader Caleb Asiedu, 10, is attending Northeast School in-person only two days a week, but says he can’t wait to be back in school full time.

“Every day, I really just can’t wait to go to school because of all the great people here,” Caleb said, adding that his teachers expect hard work and push students. “This school goes beyond your level, but doesn’t make it hard for you. The teachers make it understandable.”

Northeast School received Blue Ribbon recognition in 1991 and teacher Amy Violette was a fifth grade student at the time. She is now a Math Interventionist at Northeast School, helping students who are struggling with math or who need enrichment.

“I think it’s a fantastic honor for our students and staff,” she said. “We’ve been working extremely hard under Dr. Greene’s leadership. We all work collaboratively together to help meet the needs of the students in our building.”

Greene said she too is proud of the National Blue Ribbon School recognition because it indicates Northeast School is on the right path. “It validates that we are doing things right,” Greene said.

Still, Greene said there is more progress to be made.

“We are proud and feel fortunate about what we have accomplished thus far, but there is much more to be done,” Greene said. “We owe our best effort to these students and to their families every day.”

Greene said her focus remains getting all children to meet the benchmarks set by the state.

“To me, if Northeast School does really well then the district does really well,” she said. “I want Northeast School to be the best. If we strive for all students to meet grade expectations, we will naturally reach our goals.”

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