



National Blue Ribbon Schools Program:

2021 New Jersey Public School Nomination Guide

Overview

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program (NBRS) annually honors America's most successful public and non-public elementary, middle and high schools. NBRS recognizes both schools whose students achieve at very high levels and schools making significant progress in closing academic achievement gaps among different groups of students.

Each year, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) reviews the data for all public schools in the state and nominates schools that meet the [eligibility requirements](#) provided by the U.S. Department of Education (USED). Non-public schools are nominated by the Council of American Private Education (CAPE). **There is no application process to be considered for nomination**, as all public schools in the state are considered each year.

New Jersey is able to nominate up to nine public schools each year across two categories: "Exemplary High Performing Schools" and "Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools". At least one-third of the schools nominated must be schools where at least 40% of students are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Due to these restrictions, there may be schools that meet the eligibility requirements that cannot be nominated.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, virtually no states administered a statewide assessment for the 2019–2020 school year. As a result, states are allowed to use results from the 2018–2019 school year to nominate schools for 2021.

Timeline

Month	Process
September–October 2020	USED releases updated guidance
October–January 2020	NJDOE determines nomination plan, compiles data, and identifies eligible schools
January–February 2021	Final nominees are identified and contacted by NJDOE to determine interest in applying
February 2021	NJDOE submits final nominees to USED and USED invites nominees to apply
February–April 2021	Nominated schools submit applications by April deadline
April–June 2021	USED reviews applications
August 2021	NJDOE certifies that nominated school have met all eligibility criteria
September 2021	USED announces the National Blue Ribbon Schools



Eligibility

USED provides requirements that all nominated schools must meet and specific requirements for each of the two categories: “Exemplary High Performing Schools” and “Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools.” NJDOE may choose each year to nominate schools in both categories or in only one category.

Requirements for All Nominated Schools

- Serves one or more of grades K–12
- Open for five full years and assessed grades have been part of the school for at least three years prior to September 2019
- Has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years (2016–2020)
- Has at least 100 students enrolled and assessment data for at least 10 students per grade
- Met most recent annual targets for statewide assessment performance and graduation rate
- School assessment participation rates are at least 95%
- No history of testing irregularities
- Not identified as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years
- Not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary and not issued an OCR violation
- No pending suit alleging violation of one or more of the civil rights statutes of the Constitution’s equal protection clause
- No findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

“Exemplary High Performing Schools” Requirements

- School is in the top 15% of the state based on a composite score that combines performance on the 2018–2019 statewide assessment with other measures
- Each student group is in the top 40% of the state based on a composite score that combines performance on the 2018–2019 statewide assessment with other measures.
- High schools are in the top 15% of the state based on 2019 graduation rate and a measure of College and Career readiness (as part of a composite score).

“Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools” Requirements

- One or more student group is in the top 15% of the state based on increase in performance on the 2018–2019 statewide assessment compared to two to four years before
- Each student group is in the top 40% of the state based on a composite score that combines performance on the 2019–2020 statewide assessment with other measures.
- Each student group is in the top 40% of the state based on 2019 graduation rate and a measure of College and Career Readiness (as part of a composite score).
- Schoolwide improvement on the statewide assessment must equal or exceed statewide improvement.

Contact BlueRibbon@doe.nj.gov for more information about the process.

