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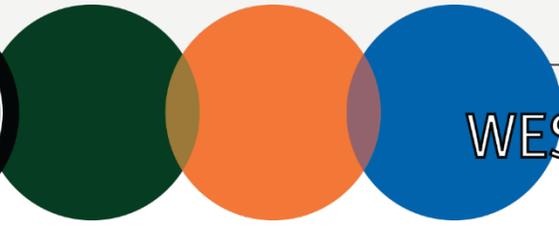
### Freedom Elementary School Named “National Blue Ribbon School”

WEST FARGO, ND – (October 1, 2018) – North Dakota’s Superintendent of Public Instruction, Kirsten Baesler, announced today that West Fargo’s Freedom Elementary School has been named a National Blue Ribbon School for 2018.

Each year, the U.S. Department of Education recognizes a group of schools across the country as Blue Ribbon Schools. Just this morning, U.S. Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, announced the 349 schools selected for the award, of which, three are from North Dakota: Freedom Elementary School, Central Valley Elementary School, and Richland Elementary School. It is the second consecutive year that three North Dakota elementary schools have been honored; in 2017, Kindred Elementary School, Fargo’s Longfellow Elementary School, and West Fargo’s Legacy Elementary School were named as Blue Ribbon schools.

The Blue Ribbon program, which has been running for 36 years, honors schools where students either achieve very high learning standards or make substantial improvements in their learning. The Education Department designated all three North Dakota Schools as “exemplary high performing” schools.

Dr. Jeff Johnson, Freedom Elementary School Principal, made a surprise announcement about the recognition to his students and staff at 1:30PM today. Dr. Johnson said the award “takes a lot of teamwork and collaboration, and just staff and students and parents working



together. A lot of setting goals, and looking at what we want to be as a school community, and making sure we're all on the same page for how to help our kids learn and grow."

The Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Schools application asks about each school's leadership philosophy, instructional methods, curriculum, and testing; how it engages and motivates students, their families, and the community; how it provides a positive learning environment; and other data, including its location, enrollment, demographics, and how many students have disabilities or are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

Dr. Johnson called the application process "a good opportunity for us to really rethink the importance of what we do on a daily basis to work together, and the importance of curriculum and of teamwork, and just following through on education in general."

The United States Education Department will be holding a ceremony on November 7 - 8 in Washington, D.C. to honor the Blue Ribbon schools. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction will hold a celebration at each of the three schools at a later date.

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