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**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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**Press Release**

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**September 7, 2012**

## **Three Alaska Schools Named Blue Ribbon Schools**

JUNEAU – West Homer Elementary School in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District and Point Higgins School and the Tongass School of Arts and Sciences Charter School in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District have been named Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education. They are among just 269 public schools nationwide to receive the honor.

“Their work reflects the conviction that every child has promise and that education is the surest pathway to a strong, secure future,” said U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

“The academic success of West Homer, Point Higgins and Tongass is a credit to their students, parents and educators, and to their communities,” said Alaska Education Commissioner Mike Hanley. “Their achievements are an inspiration.”

The National Blue Ribbon Schools award honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools in two categories: 1) exemplary high-performing schools that are among their state’s highest-performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally-normed tests; and 2) exemplary improving schools, which have at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds and demonstrate the most progress in improving student achievement levels as measured by state assessments or nationally-normed tests.

The U.S. Department of Education requests nominations from the top education official in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and the Bureau of Indian Education. The Council for American Private Education nominates private schools.

West Homer and Point Higgins were honored as high-performing schools, and Tongass as an improving school.

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At West Homer, an approximately 225-student grade 3 to 6 school, 94 percent of all students were proficient in reading and math in 2011. Ninety-two percent of economically disadvantaged students were proficient in reading and 91 percent in math. Of Alaska Native students, 94 percent were proficient in reading and 83 percent in math.

At Point Higgins, an approximately 250-student pre-kindergarten to grade 6 school, 94 percent of all students were proficient in reading and 92 percent in math in 2011. Eighty-eight percent of economically disadvantaged students were proficient in reading and 92 percent in math. Of Alaska Native students, 95 percent were proficient in reading and 100 percent in math.

At Tongass, an approximately 160-student pre-kindergarten to grade 6 charter school, 87 percent of all students were proficient in reading and 77 percent math in 2011 -- representing an increase of 15 percentage points in each subject since 2007. Eighty-one percent of economically disadvantaged students were proficient in reading and 69 percent in math in 2011. Of Alaska Native students, 70 percent were proficient in reading and 61 percent in math. The Native math scores have increased 11 percentage points since 2007.

The schools will be honored at an awards ceremony Nov. 12-13 in Washington, D.C. For more information about Blue Ribbon Schools, see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html>.

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