



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Sept. 29, 2016**

### **Three Alaska Schools Receive National Recognition as Blue Ribbon Schools**

JUNEAU -- The U.S. Department of Education has recognized three Alaska schools with its prestigious Blue Ribbon School Award.

The schools, which were nominated by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, are: Orion Elementary School, a preK-6 school in the Anchorage School District; Bayshore Elementary School, a K-6 school in the Anchorage School District; and Academy Charter School, a K-8 school in Palmer, in the Mat-Su Borough School District.

“I am very proud of the educators, students, and families at Academy Charter, Bayshore Elementary, and Orion Elementary, who work so hard to make their schools successful,” said Dr. Michael Johnson, Alaska Commissioner of Education and Early Development. “Each of Alaska’s Blue Ribbon Schools is unique, but they share the conviction that successful schools meet the needs of each student in a supportive environment. I look forward to sharing their example with communities throughout Alaska.”

The Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors schools that are high-performing or have a high percentage of disadvantaged students who show significant improvement on statewide assessments. School performance is demonstrated by student scores on state assessments in English language arts and math. All three Alaska schools were exemplary high-performing schools, based on the most recent completed state assessments, from spring 2015.

Nominated schools prepare an extensive application, including a narrative of their vision, community and strengths; descriptions of curriculum, instruction, professional development, and leadership; and student assessment data.

Bayshore Elementary, in its application, cited a diverse student body; highly structured programs such as Response to Intervention, Walk to Learn, and its sixth-grade middle school model; data-based decision making; focused professional development; and schoolwide music and art programs. “Bayshore teachers have high expectations for our students,” its application said. “We work from the knowledge that our students can do what they put their minds to and that our job is to help them get there.”

Orion Elementary, on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, cited in its application collaboratively planned instruction that encourages and challenges students to achieve at high levels; multi-sensory instruction in grades 1-3 to meet diverse needs; weekly professional development; and a student support team. "Parents appreciate the Orion staff's consideration of unique family and student needs," the application said. "They note teachers' caring responses to military lifestyle demands, which can be full of abrupt changes, parent absences, transitions, and sudden goodbyes."

Academy Charter School opened in August 1997, adding one grade level a year; staff, parents, and the community gradually built its campus. The school retains small classes so it can respond to each student's needs and hold students accountable, and it uses innovative curricula such as Core Knowledge and Spalding. "Academy seeks to create thinkers and problem solvers, and to develop knowledgeable, empowered, well-rounded, caring citizens," the application said. "The school continues to be successful because it encourages students to thrive, grow and learn in a setting that celebrates their success and outcomes."

For more information about Blue Ribbon Schools, see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html>.

School contacts:

Orion Elementary School, Principal Brenda Cheathon, 907-742-0250

Bayshore Elementary School, Principal Heidi Packer, 907-742-5360

Academy Charter School, Principal Barbara Gerard, 907-746-2358

###