

# New Bedford's Congdon Elementary named a National Blue Ribbon School

*U.S. Department of Education hails Congdon "an inspiring example" of student success.*

The U.S. Department of Education has recognized John B. Congdon Elementary School as a 2020 National Blue Ribbon School. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos in Washington D.C. made the announcement today. "Congratulations on your recognition as a 2020 Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing National Blue Ribbon School! The U.S. Department of Education acknowledges your students' success as an inspiring example of how teachers, parents, and community leaders can work together to help students prepare for what comes next," Secretary DeVos wrote in a letter dated today to Congdon Principal Darcie Aungst.

"The recognition is based on a school's overall academic performance or progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. The coveted National Blue Ribbon Schools award affirms the hard work of educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content," according to the DOE website.

Nominated by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Congdon is one of only six Massachusetts schools receiving the coveted honor and the only one that is not in an affluent district, Principal Darcie Aungst noted. "Five years ago Congdon was ranked in the bottom 20% of schools in the state. Today we were named one of the top schools in the country! This climb to success happened because the staff, students, and community worked together with the

strong belief that ALL of our students can achieve at high levels. We vowed to never give up and to improve every day because the work we do every day at this school is too important," she said.

Superintendent Thomas Anderson stated, "We are extremely proud of our outstanding team. Their commitment of putting students first is representative of this hard earned and well-deserved honor. This honor is evidence that effective strategic planning combined with a lot of TLC makes continued improvement along multiple benchmarks not only possible, but the norm that all of us can achieve."

In congratulating the students, staff and families, Mayor Jon Mitchell stated, "Over the last several years, the Congdon School has established itself as one of the best elementary schools in Massachusetts – if not the best. What is striking about today's announcement is that the majority of the other schools recognized by the Department of Education are located in affluent suburbs of major cities. Congdon's sustained excellence is a direct result of the school's first-rate professionals, under the leadership of Principal Darcie Aungst, who have been fervently committed to the proposition that all children, regardless of background, are capable of learning. That one of New Bedford's elementary schools is in the discussion of 'America's best' is also a reflection of how far the school district has come in recent years."

Using standards of excellence evidenced by student achievement measures the U.S. Department of Education honors high-performing schools and schools that are making great strides in closing any achievement gaps among student groups.

Aba S. Kumi, Director of the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program noted of Congdon, "Your school is one of 367 schools in the nation and one of six schools from Massachusetts to be recognized in 2020."

The National Blue Ribbon School Program is supported through ongoing collaboration with the National Association of Elementary School Principals, Association for Middle Level Education, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

A list of the 2020 National Blue Ribbon Schools is available on both the U. S. Department of Education's website at <https://www.ed.gov/nationalblueribbonschools> and National Blue Ribbon Schools website at <https://nationalblueribbonschools.ed.gov>. Selected profiles of schools are featured on the NBRS website, along with exemplary practices and winning applications and school summaries.



*Students celebrate in 2019 Congdon's designation as a Massachusetts School of Recognition for the second consecutive year. The 2020 Blue Ribbon Award places Congdon among the nation's best schools. (NBPS photo)*