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# NEWS RELEASE

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## U.S. Department of Education Awards Three NM Schools with National Recognition

*Schools Recognized for Excellence with 2016 U.S. Blue Ribbon Awards*

**SANTA FE, NM** – Today, Governor Susana Martinez announced that the U.S. Department of Education has awarded three schools in New Mexico with national recognition for closing achievement gaps. The Blue Ribbon School award is one of nation's highest honors for excellent academic achievement or academic improvement in schools. The three schools are: New Mexico School for the Arts in Santa Fe; Mesa Elementary School in Clovis; and Cloudcroft Middle School.

"I am so proud of our students, teachers, and school staff. Their hard work paid off; they deserve this national recognition," Governor Martinez said. "These three schools are some of the best in the entire country, and this just goes to show that our students and schools can compete with the very best. I have no doubt that our students will continue to rise to the occasion and make our state proud."

The three New Mexico schools are among 329 schools – and just 279 public schools – across the country to be named 2016 Blue Ribbon Schools. Leaders from each of the three schools will be invited to attend recognition ceremony in Washington D.C. on November 7 and 8 later this year.

New Mexico School for the Arts was recognized for Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing. NMSA is a state charter school, and the school serves more than 200 students with a blended curriculum of arts and rigorous academics. The school has earned an "A" grade every year since New Mexico started the school grading system and was highest-performing school in New Mexico. The school is located in Santa Fe.

Mesa Elementary School was recognized for Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing. The school serves more than 500 students in Clovis, with 77 percent of students being Hispanic. Mesa Elementary has earned an "A" in for two consecutive years, and had previously been recognized with the Blue Ribbon Award in 2001. The school is located in the Clovis Municipal School District.

Cloudcroft Middle School was recognized for Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing. The school serves 87 students in southern New Mexico's Otero County and has earned an "A" school grade for two consecutive years, having risen from a "C" previously. Cloudcroft Middle School is the sole middle school in the Cloudcroft Municipal School District.

"These Blue Ribbon schools are leading the way for New Mexico, and are showing the heights that our students and schools can reach," said New Mexico Public Education Department Secretary Hanna

Skandera. “These are just some of the top schools in New Mexico, but they represent what our state can achieve when we put students first and challenge our kids to aim higher.”

Schools are recognized in two categories: Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools and Exemplary High Performing Schools. All of the New Mexico schools winning 2016 Blue Ribbon Awards were recognized for Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing, demonstrating high-performance and significant progress in closing achievement gaps between all students and subgroups in each school.

To qualify for the award, schools had to demonstrate dramatic progress in student achievement growth or show overall academic excellence. Nominated schools must have earned an “A” letter grade based on New Mexico’s A-F School Grading System. After being nominated, each school submits an application to the United States Department of Education for consideration and review. Schools nominated for student achievement growth must demonstrate significant progress in closing the achievement gap between student the highest performing students and the lowest performing students, while schools recognized for overall academic excellence must rank among the state’s highest performing schools.

Since 1982, the United States Department of Education has invited annual National Blue Ribbon School nominations from state education agencies and top education officials. A total of 420 schools nationwide may be nominated, with awards determined by the number of K-12 students and schools in each state or jurisdiction.

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