

## **Ozaukee Middle School earns a Blue Ribbon**

Written by MARK JAEGER

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### **U.S. Department of Education School of Excellence award recognizes focus on needs of all students**

Ozaukee Middle School has been named a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Education.

The Fredonia middle school is one of 25 in the country — and the only one in Wisconsin — to receive the honor this year, according to the Department of Education announcement made last week.

Much of the foundation for the award was put into place while Jeff Sauer served as middle school principal. Joe Hastreiter took over as principal at the start of the school year.

Supt. Blake Peuse said the honor is the culmination of a five-year, districtwide process that focused on the learning needs of all students — including those with special needs, those who come from lower-income families and those who speak English as a second language.

Peuse said staff members have adjusted their teaching styles to accommodate the needs of individual learners.

“The belief system is one of ‘doing what is best for the student,’ rather than what is easiest or more convenient for the teacher, school or district,” he said.

“This shift has helped all students gain a strong foothold in creating success factors based upon clear and concise expectations, reporting of success and distinction of what skills are required to be college and career ready.”

Peuse said the move to a standards-based grading and reporting system has given students a clearer understanding of expectations.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes schools where high learning standards are maintained or notable improvements have been made in closing achievement gaps.

Ozaukee Middle School’s award notes its successful efforts in raising student performance.

District officials said that the school’s staff has embraced a variety of teaching advances, including full implementation of standards-based grading, alignment of assessments and the use of professional learning communities.

In the award announcement, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan wrote of the significance of the honor.

“National Blue Ribbon Schools are models of consistent excellence and a resource for other schools and districts. We celebrate them for their tireless effort and boundless creativity in

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reaching and teaching every student,” Duncan said.

Formal presentation of the award will be made in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 10 and 11.