



Statement of Senator Heidi Heitkamp

RECOGNIZING WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 2015 NATIONAL BLUE  
RIBBON SCHOOL AWARD WINNER

Ms. HEITKAMP – Mr. President, I want to congratulate the students, faculty and parents of Washington Elementary School, located in Valley City, North Dakota, on being awarded the 2015 National Blue Ribbon School Award.

Founded in 1982, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private elementary, middle, and high schools where students perform at very high levels or where significant improvements are being made in students' academic achievement. A National Blue Ribbon Schools flag overhead has become a mark of excellence in education recognized by everyone from parents to policy-makers in thousands of communities. Since the program's founding, the U.S. Department of Education has bestowed this coveted award to just over 7,500 of America's best schools.

Washington Elementary School serves nearly 265 students in grades four through six and was the only school in North Dakota to receive the honor of Exemplary High Performing School in 2015. Receiving recognition as a National Blue Ribbon School signifies the hard work and dedication of the educators, students and parents involved, and I have no doubt its students are on a path to success. At Washington Elementary, every staff member understands that every student, regardless of background, is important and deserving of the best. To support its students, the school provides access to a reading program that has been vital in ensuring targeted assistance for those students who require additional support. Through this program and others, the school continues to excel and surpass necessary benchmarks.

As school leadership states, "The success of Washington Elementary cannot be attributed to one person, program, or initiative. Rather it is the collective effort of all the outstanding people involved – the students, staff, parents, and community members who continue to strive for excellence each and every day." It is through this dedication, that the school provides access to a reading pilot program that enhances reading and language skills, a math and science curriculum supplemented by STEM activities, and history courses that emphasize creativity and flexibility in teaching.

The Valley City Public Schools mission statement reads, "Together we are building a legacy of excellence, one student at a time." This mission embodies all that Washington Elementary is working to accomplish by looking at the needs of each individual student as well as providing a safe and respectful learning environment that breeds success. I wish the very best to the community of Valley City and congratulations to all engaged at Washington Elementary for achieving this high honor. Thank you for your commitment to our children and leaders of tomorrow.