

U.S. Department Of Education Names Webster Elementary A 2015 National Blue Ribbon School

Urbandale Community School District congratulates Webster Elementary for achieving the distinction of being named a 2015 National Blue Ribbon School—one of only five Iowa schools to receive this honor

URBANDALE, Iowa – September 29, 2015 – In addition to the [Urbandale Community School District \(UCSD\)](#) recently accepting the Bronze Leadership Award at the Iowa Governor’s Celebration of Excellence Conference, implementing the Teacher Leadership and Compensation program after receiving the seventh highest score out of 200 plans submitted by school districts throughout the state and attaining the District’s highest achievement levels in 17 years, the UCSD is celebrating an extraordinary achievement by one of its elementary schools. [Webster Elementary](#) has been designated a [2015 National Blue Ribbon School](#) by the U.S. Department of Education. The national award uses standards of excellence evidenced by student achievement measures and research-based indicators of school quality to honor schools based on their overall academic excellence or their progress in closing the achievement gap. Webster Elementary is being recognized for exemplary high student performance over the past five years and is one of only five Iowa schools to receive this highly coveted distinction. The U.S. Department of Education will honor 285 public and 50 private schools nationwide at a recognition ceremony on November 9–10, 2015, in Washington, D.C.

“It is an honor to receive this recognition for our school,” said Dr. Greg Careenza, Webster Elementary Principal. “This truly is the result of a commitment on the part of our staff, students, and our families to create a school environment where everyone can succeed at the highest of levels.”



Urbandale Community School District’s Webster Elementary named a 2015 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education—one of only five Iowa schools to receive this highly coveted distinction.

Although student enrollment has more than tripled since Webster Elementary first opened its doors in 2006, a continuous and steadfast focus remains at the forefront for providing students a learning environment that empowers them to discover, reach and achieve their greatest potential. Teachers and staff share an exceptional commitment to building highly collaborative, supportive relationships between students, staff, families and the Urbandale community. Developing effective partnerships with all stakeholders and giving students greater ownership and voice in their learning are key components to

maintaining high levels of student achievement. Webster’s mission statement—to foster in our students a passion for lifelong learning that helps them to achieve their own personal best—serves as a guide and beacon for the continual improvement of all learners in the system.

“This honor recognizes your students’ accomplishments and the hard work and dedication that went into their success,” U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said in a video message to the awardees. “Your journey has taught you collaboration, intentional instruction and strong relationships in school and with your community. You represent excellence—in vision, in implementation and in results—and we want to learn as much as we can from you.” (Note: Video URL will be made available the afternoon of 9/29/15.)

Since 2010, the UCSD has been embedding [Quality & Continual Improvement \(Q/CI\)](#) theories and practices throughout the District in order to create a systems approach for improvement that increases engagement, improves achievement, encourages collaboration and ignites a renewed passion for learning. This constancy of purpose is woven throughout every facet of the district—from the classroom level, to the building level, to the District level, to the Board level—which results in not only a common language for how the District will improve but clarity as to what’s needed for improvement and most importantly, a profound understanding for why this improvement is critical for student achievement and success.

“Year after year, as my three children have progressed through Webster Elementary School, I continue to be impressed with the focus on positive change and improvement within each grade level. The teachers meet regularly to challenge themselves and assess their progress toward one common goal—to get the most out of each and every student,” said Tasha Mulligan, Webster Elementary Parent.

Continual improvement and personal growth are fundamental tenets at Webster Elementary. Teachers work together as grade level teams in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to design and deliver instruction that benefits all students. Through careful lesson planning, teachers are encouraged to create lessons that are based on the characteristics of effective instruction. Teachers spend a significant amount of time using current assessment data to differentiate instruction to meet all student needs. Through this collaboration, a strong sense of commitment has developed to ensure that all students are successful in attaining key learning targets. Instructionally, the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) process is utilized to make learning targets clear and assess student progress toward those goals. Each teacher has successfully used the PDSA cycle to involve students in the understanding of key learning targets being covered in class and the monitoring of their progress toward those key goals.

Aligning with the District’s vision—to bring learning to life for everyone—Webster students are given numerous opportunities to carry forth their exceptional academic achievements inside the classroom by becoming involved in a variety of leadership activities throughout the school. Students may participate in student council, drama club, or the Artist Guild in order to learn and demonstrate their leadership abilities. Students work with other grade level children to build connections through buddies or when working in their small group character lessons (called J-Hawk Huddles). Both of these groups focus on how to recognize the talents and skills of each other and build character. This hard work is showcased during whole school assemblies that are planned with and led by students. At these assemblies, celebrations of hard work and student success are announced.

The UCSD prides itself on the outstanding teachers and staff who create school environments that are welcoming, nurturing and highly dedicated to helping students achieve success both inside and outside the

classroom. The District congratulates Webster Elementary for being selected by the U.S. Department of Education as a 2015 National Blue Ribbon School. It is an extraordinary honor and one that reflects the hard work, dedication and perseverance of all Webster students, staff and families. To learn more about how Urbandale is transforming education, visit: Showcase.UrbandaleSchools.com

About Urbandale Community School District

The Urbandale Community School District includes portions of Des Moines and Urbandale, Iowa. The district serves over 3,900 students in six elementary schools, one middle school and one comprehensive high school. The Urbandale district supports an increasingly diverse student population where 51 languages are spoken. Building on the existing foundation of excellence in education, Urbandale is transforming education throughout the district. By implementing innovative [Quality/Continual Improvement](#) strategies that create learning environments that more fully engage, challenge and motivate students, Urbandale is taking transformation from theory into practice. Urbandale prepares students for becoming lifelong learners and is a school district that brings learning to life for everyone. To learn more, visit: UrbandaleSchools.com

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