



THE DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 24, 2020

Contact: Dan Martinez, Senior Communications Specialist
dmartinez81@yisd.net

Desertaire ES named 2020 National Blue Ribbon School

Desertaire Elementary School earned one of the most coveted awards in education Thursday when it was among 367 schools to be named a 2020 National Blue Ribbon School, an honor that affirms the hard work of students, teachers, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content.

U.S education officials announced that 367 private and public schools won this year's National Blue Ribbon Schools award after demonstrating overall academic excellence or notable improvement in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups.

Desertaire ES is the 12th school in the Ysleta Independent School District to become a National Blue Ribbon School, following Valle Verde Early College High School's designation in 2017.

Specifically, Desertaire ES won this year's Blue Ribbon School award for being an Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School, making it among the highest-performing schools in Texas as measured through test scores.

"I'm beyond proud of our teachers and scholars," said Desertaire Elementary School Principal Beth Harbison. "We are a family of learning, and we appreciate the support from our Superintendent Dr. Xavier De La Torre and the community."

In 2016-17, Desertaire ES was designated as a "Focus School" for its wide achievement gaps in reading and math when compared to schools nationwide. By implementing practices that included data talks and analysis, progress monitoring, instructional rounds, tiered intervention, and teachers teaching teachers, the campus went on to earn a B-rating in 2018-19 and an A-rating in 2019-20, as well as TEA Distinction Designations for outstanding performance in English-language arts, Academic Growth, Closing the Gaps, and Postsecondary Readiness.

This turnaround in student performance was not only impressive, but indicative of the rigor, vitality, and distinction of a faculty and administration driven toward higher levels of excellence, YISD officials said. The positive and inclusive climate at the campus also promotes a powerful sense of belonging for students, parents, and staff.

Desertaire was among only 26 schools in Texas – and three in El Paso – to be nominated for the National Blue Ribbon Schools program last January. The school then completed a rigorous application process through the U.S. Department of Education, which featured a detailed description of the school's demographics; educational philosophy; school climate and culture; engagement of families and community; strategies for success; and other areas.

Desertaire ES will now receive a National Blue Ribbon Schools flag, a widely recognized symbol of exemplary teaching and learning. The U.S. Department of Education will also formally recognize Desertaire and other 2020 Blue Ribbon Schools during a virtual awards ceremony Nov. 12 and 13.

Founded in 1982, the National Blue Ribbon Schools award has been given to more than 9,000 schools. For more information, visit www.ed.gov/nationalblueribbonschools.