RICHLAND COUNTY COMMUNITY UNIT NO. 1
1100 EAST LAUREL STREET - OLNEY, ILLINOIS 62450 - P/618-395-2324 - F/618-392-4147

Jason Fox, Superintendent of Schools
Rylan Rusk, Assistant Superintendent of Business
Kacie Rodgers, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum

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For Immediate Release

Richland County Elementary School Named 2026 Governor's Blue Ribbon School

State designation celebrates the school's success in closing achievement gaps.

Olney – Richland County Elementary School has been named a 2026 Governor's Blue Ribbon School, earning one of the state's highest recognitions for educational excellence. The school is one of just 24 schools statewide to receive the distinction this year.

"I want to congratulate our 2026 Governor's Blue Ribbon Schools, who demonstrate what is possible when students, educators, families, and communities come together to support our children in reaching their full potential," **said Governor JB Pritzker**. "All across the state, Illinois schools are reaching new heights in school performance, graduation rates, and learning proficiency – a testament to the passion and dedication of our teachers and the power of sustained public investment in education."

The Illinois Governor's Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and nonpublic [AM1] schools that demonstrate exceptional student outcomes through outstanding academic performance or success in closing achievement gaps. Richland County Elementary School was recognized as an Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School.

"Being named a Governor's Blue Ribbon School is an incredible honor for Richland County Elementary School and a reflection of the hard work, dedication, and commitment of our teachers, support staff, students, parents, and administrators. This recognition represents our collective efforts to continually improve, provide meaningful learning opportunities, and ensure every student receives the support needed to reach their full potential. We are proud of the progress our students are making and grateful to have a school community that believes in the success of every child," **said Jason Fox, Superintendent of Richland County CUSD #1.**

The recognition highlights Richland County Elementary School's extraordinary progress in closing performance gaps between student groups.

“Being named a 2026 Governor’s Blue Ribbon School is an incredible honor, especially because our recognition celebrates the progress we are making in closing achievement gaps and ensuring every student has the opportunity to succeed. This accomplishment reflects the commitment of our teachers and staff to continually learn, grow, and do whatever it takes to meet the needs of our students. We believe every child can learn and achieve at high levels, and our work is centered on making that belief a reality for every student who walks through our doors. This recognition belongs to our entire school community—our students, staff, families, and everyone who supports the success of Richland County Elementary School. We are proud of how far we have come and remain committed to the work still ahead of us.” **said Jennifer Fox, Principal of Richland County Elementary School.**

"Being named a Governor's Blue Ribbon School is a remarkable achievement and a testament to the hard work of students, educators, staff, and families," **said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tony Sanders.** "These schools have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to student success, whether through exceptional academic performance or meaningful progress in closing achievement gaps. Their accomplishments reflect the strength of Illinois education and provide examples of excellence for schools across our state."

Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) announced [VV2] [AM3] recipients on Oct. 20. All 2026 Governor's Blue Ribbon School recipients will be invited to a special recognition event at the Governor's Mansion in Springfield this spring.

The Governor's Blue Ribbon Schools Program was established in 2025, after the federal administration abruptly ended the prestigious U.S. Department of Education program. The Governor’s Blue Ribbon Schools Program continues the longstanding tradition of recognizing educational excellence in Illinois schools. Schools receiving the designation serve as models for effective teaching, learning, and student support across the state.

Link to Press Conference: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9A_9oXpy8o

Governor’s Press Release:
https://gov-pritzker-newsroom.prezly.com/gov-pritzker-announces-2026-governors-blue-ribbon-schools