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Fourth Grand Haven Elementary Receives National Honors

GRAND HAVEN, MI: Trips to Washington, D.C. are becoming routine for Grand Haven Area Public Schools, as is national recognition for its commitment to student achievement. On November 14 and 15, 2019, Peach Plains Elementary was honored with a National Blue Ribbon Schools Award, joining three other GHAPS elementaries as an Exemplary High Performing School.

"There are many reasons that Peach Plains achieved this national recognition," says Andrew Ingall, GHAPS superintendent. "But everything begins with the intentional efforts of our teachers and their focus on success for all."

The school's partnership with the Reading Now Network is one example of this intentionality and focus. Reading proficiency is one the key indicators for student success, and robust literacy efforts have a positive affect across subject areas. In 2016, the Reading Now Network brought literacy experts directly into Peach Plains, and helped teachers focus on identifying and incorporating literacy practices into every single lesson. Teachers also improved their use of data to better inform intervention lessons and plans. As of February 2019, overall test scores for Peach Plains students increased by 15%.

"It was an incredible experience for our staff and school community to be honored in Washington, D.C.," says Kathryn Drake, Peach Plains principal. "Taking pause to celebrate our accomplishments created a sense of inspiration for all of us. But we're not done yet – we're still striving to give our students the best education, and being a National Blue Ribbon School affirms the work we do every day."

Along with Drake, several district representatives traveled to Washington, D.C. to accept the award. Additional attendees included Superintendent Ingall; Mary Jane Evink, Executive Director of Instructional Services; Jennifer Kenny, Literacy Coach; and Annemarie Ratke, 4th grade teacher.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private elementary, middle and high schools based on their overall academic excellence or their progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. This year, only 13 Michigan schools were named Exemplary High Performing Schools, including Peach Plains Elementary. These schools have Michigan's highest achieving students (the top 15%) in English and mathematics, as measured by state assessments.

Grand Haven Area Public Schools is a district of distinction for students preschool through 12th grade. With a goal of providing exceptional educational experiences, GHAPS is committed to success for all students and strives to provide exemplary programs and opportunities to meet the diverse needs of students.

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For more information about this story, contact King Media at 517.333.2048.