

**BIRMINGHAM, Ala., Monday, May 22**— Mountain Brook Junior High has been selected as a 2000 Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. The Blue Ribbon, the most prestigious education award in the country, distinguishes Mountain Brook Junior High for its excellence in leadership, teaching, curriculum, student achievement, parent involvement and community support.

U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-AL), who notified Principal Garry Rickard about the award, said, "With the dedicated effort of parents, teachers, students and the community, Mountain Brook Junior High has shown itself to be a national leader in pursuit of educational excellence. This prestigious honor is presented only to those schools that have strong leadership, high quality teaching, solid evidence of family involvement and a commitment to share their best practices with other schools. As schools throughout Alabama and the nation seek to improve the quality of education our children receive, they can learn by example from Blue Ribbon schools like Mountain Brook Junior High."

Principal Garry Rickard said the award represents a great honor for the students, teachers, staff members and parents. "It's a powerful validation of the hard work and commitment that have led to our focus on quality and continuing improvement," he said, adding that "this is just the beginning of our journey. We've reached these high standards and the Blue Ribbon award inspires us to even greater achievements."

Schools selected for recognition prepared an extensive written nomination package representing a thorough self-evaluation. The process (in itself a challenging experience) involved assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the school and developing improvement plans for the future. When evaluating nominations, the Department of Education looks for overall school quality, including challenging standards and curriculum, excellent teaching, ongoing professional development by teachers and staff members, a safe and supportive school environment, family and community partnerships that contribute to school quality, and high or improving student performance.

Established in 1982, the Blue Ribbon Schools Program celebrates elementary and secondary schools in alternate years and has evolved to place a strong emphasis on school improvement.

Representatives from the school will attend a national ceremony this fall in Washington, D.C. where they will be congratulated by education and government officials.