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Press Release

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Tops in the Nation Once Again: Four East Baton Rouge Parish Magnet Schools Gain Prestigious Honors

Baton Rouge, La. – The foremost national authority on magnet schools and their educational programs, **Magnet Schools of America**, has once again **single out four East Baton Rouge Parish School System magnet schools for awards** recognizing their cutting-edge programs and curriculum as a standard of excellence for others in the United States.

Baton Rouge Foreign Language Academic Immersion Magnet School (BR FLAIM, formerly South Boulevard Elementary School), Sherwood Middle Magnet School and Westdale Heights Academic Magnet (WHAM) School each were selected for a **Magnet Schools of America (MSA) Magnet School of Excellence Award**. This is MSA's top Merit Award. In addition, **Baton Rouge Center for Visual & Performing Arts (BRCVPA)** will receive the coveted **Magnet School of Distinction Award**. BRCVPA was recognized for maintaining a high quality visual and performing arts magnet program that does not admit students based on academic criteria.

The presentation of the Magnet Schools of Excellence awards will be held May 17 at a luncheon during the 29th National Conference on Magnet Schools, which will be hosted by Indianapolis Public Schools May 15-18. During the presentation, schools will receive a cash award and a plaque. MSA awards are based on criteria such as desegregation, innovative instructional strategies, student achievement and parent and community involvement. **At the national conference, the school district will be represented in another way:** Sherwood Middle, Scotlandville Pre-Engineering Middle and McKinley Middle Academic Magnet schools will have representatives presenting about their programs.

This is the second consecutive year schools in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System have won top magnet awards. In 2010, Westdale Heights Elementary and Sherwood Middle schools each won the Magnet School of Distinction Award, while BR FLAIM and Baton Rouge Magnet High School each won the Magnet School of Excellence Award.

In addition, **Baton Rouge Magnet High School Principal Nanette McCann received MSA's Magnet Principal of the Year Award** last spring at the national conference, when **Carlos Sam, the school district's director of Magnet Programs, also was named a director-at-large for the national Magnet Schools of America Board.**

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This week, Sam was excited about the number of schools winning these prestigious awards. “This national recognition,” said Sam, “proves that the district magnet programs are innovative, and that we have some of the best and diverse magnet schools in the nation.”

The Baton Rouge Center for Visual & Performing Arts is celebrating its 16th year as a magnet school for the visual and performing arts. “Along with a wonderful academic program, all students at BRCVPA receive instruction in art, dance, music, drama and creative writing and are taught by specialists in each of those disciplines. As students advance, they may specialize by choosing to participate in one or more performing groups,” said **Principal Mark Richterman**.

He said the continued success of the BRCVPA arts-integrated program is grounded in the proven research that instruction in the arts beginning at an early age enhances brain development and produces strong academic students. The school’s test scores, which are some of the highest in the state, support that research. Children at BRCVPA have opportunities for success in numerous areas which leads to confidence and motivation. This success breeds more success across the curriculum.

BR FLAIM Principal Cheryl Miller was pleased to see the hard work and success of her staff and students recognized in this way. “We are different in the use of foreign languages to teach educational content. The foreign language is not taught as a separate subject. Students learn the new language use Spanish or French to acquire Math, Science and Social Studies information.”

Students complete the fifth grade as bilingual learners, fluent in their native language and either Spanish or French. Students may enter the program in kindergarten or first grade. After first grade, they may enter if transferring from an approved immersion program. BR FLAIM is the only public elementary school in the East Baton Rouge Parish targeting French and Spanish with an advanced academic curriculum. The school has been a foreign language academic immersion magnet school for six years.

“What a great honor for our school,” said **Sherwood Middle Principal Phyllis Crawford**. “Our students, faculty and staff are always striving for excellence in all academic areas to challenge our students to be their best – every day. All our hard work has made the school the highest performing public middle school in the district for the past five years.” **Sherwood Middle is a U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon School.**

In 2008, WHAM also was named a Magnet School of Excellence and a national Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. “We are not only creating well-educated students at our school but also our community’s future leaders,” said **Principal Norma Church**. An emphasis is placed daily on inquiry and project-based learning, especially in Science and Mathematics, using the latest technology in every classroom. In the spring, WHAM also was recognized for its outstanding science education initiatives by receiving the **national 2010 Intel Schools of Distinction Award.**

For more information about MSA or the awards, visit www.magnet.edu.

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