



NEWS RELEASE

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Seventy-First Classical Middle School 'Rises' and is Named a 2022 National Blue Ribbon School

Seventy-First Classical Middle is one of five schools recognized statewide

Fayetteville, N.C. –The [U.S. Department of Education](#) recently named Seventy-First Classical Middle School (SFCMS) a 2022 National Blue Ribbon School. The coveted National Blue Ribbon School award affirms the hard work of educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content. Seventy-First Classical Middle School has been recognized for being an Exemplary High Performing School and is among the state's highest performing schools as measured by state assessments.



"I applaud all the honorees for the 2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Award for creating vibrant, welcoming, and affirming school communities where students can learn, grow, reach their potential, and achieve their dreams," U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona said in a news release.

"As our country continues to recover from the pandemic, we know that our future will only be as strong as the education we provide to all of our children," he said. "Blue Ribbon Schools have gone above and beyond to keep students healthy and safe while meeting their academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. These schools show what is possible to make an enduring, positive difference in students' lives."

This year, SFCMS is one of 297 schools recognized across the country with this prestigious honor and [one of five schools recognized in North Carolina](#).

"This national honor acknowledges the outstanding work that is being done at Seventy-First Classical Middle School to provide a rigorous learning environment and help students reach their maximum potential," said Dr. Marvin Connelly, Jr., superintendent of the Cumberland County Schools. "Despite the challenges presented by the global pandemic, our schools continue to rise because of the hard work of our students, premier professionals, families and community partners."

According to the [Blue Ribbon Award application](#) submitted by the school, "During the COVID-19 pandemic, SFCMS worked hard to maintain connections to students and ensure students continued to achieve at a high level academically. The daily attendance for each class continued to be in the 95% range, even when school was online. This was accomplished through daily phone calls by teachers, administration and school counselors, and through virtual student activities designed to increase engagement."

Upon learning about the good news, Dr. Quesha Tillman, principal of Seventy-First Classical Middle School, stated, "Seventy-First has an established set of high academic standards and expectations for all scholars. Despite the pandemic, our staff and families have found ways to challenge and motivate every learner. We are tremendously proud of the amazing work Knight Nation has and continues to do. We are truly appreciative of the hard work and diligence of Mr. Todd Yardis and his former administrative team for laying the groundwork for this coveted accolade! Each day we continue to bring that passion for teaching and learning, positive community interactions, and the time put in behind-the-scenes training and game planning to improve our craft. Thanks to the consistent dedication and efficacy of our KNIGHT FAMILY, I have confidence that we will continue to achieve excellence."

Now in its 39th year, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has bestowed recognition on more than 9,000 schools. To access photographs and brief descriptions of the 2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools, visit <https://www.nationalblueribbonschools.ed.gov/>. Read the news release from the U.S. Department of Education [here](#).

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