

NEWS RELEASE

Maine Department of Education, Susan A. Gendron, Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Monday, December 3, 2007

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Maine School of Science and Mathematics Ranked in Top 100 High Schools Nationwide
Twelve other Maine high schools in U.S. News and World Report's first annual ranking

AUGUSTA – U.S. News and World Report ranked Maine School of Science and Mathematics in Limestone the 35th best in the nation, placing it in the top 100 high schools to earn a gold medal in its first annual ranking. Four Maine high schools earned silver medals, placing them in the top 505, and eight earned bronze medals, meaning they are in the top 1,591 high schools out of more than 18,000 in the country. The magazine reported the results in its Nov. 30 edition, which hit news stands nationwide today.

MSSM is the only school from Maine to make the gold medal list, which focused primarily on college readiness and is based in large part on the number of students taking Advanced Placement courses and tests, and how they perform on them. Six other schools in New England made the top 100 – one from Vermont and five from Massachusetts.

“This is a significant accomplishment for Maine’s only public magnet school,” says Maine Education Commissioner Susan A. Gendron. “It is good recognition for Maine School of Science and Mathematics and demonstrates the success of this unique learning opportunity for students from all over Maine. We recognized in the 1990s how critical math and science were to the economic future of the state and for our students. The Maine Math and Science School is a foundational component of our STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) agenda.”

Gendron said Maine’s only publicly-funded magnet school opens opportunities for all Maine students: “It’s kids who are inquisitive about taking their math and science skills further to the highest level possible who thrive in this exciting environment.”

Opened in 1995, MSSM has over 100 students from 81 towns and cities. In 2007, 39 students graduated. The school challenges students to achieve their aspirations by fostering intellectual growth through a rigorous curriculum in advanced mathematics, science, and humanities. The residential experience encourages personal accountability and the development of skills in relationships, healthful living and social diversity. This mission is advanced through outreach programs including distance education, summer programs and workshops for students and teachers throughout the state.

“Our graduates tell us that their education at MSSM sets them apart from graduates of other schools,” said Walt Warner, executive director of the school. “They feel more than adequately prepared for their 1st and often 2nd years of college because of the quality of teachers and their ability to create a really stimulating learning environment.

“At MSSM they are in an environment where free and creative thinking is encouraged. Students feel they are able to effectively communicate with teachers what they understand. They develop skills that require creative, analytical, and critical thinking.”

Gendron praised the 12 other Maine high schools to earn a place in the rankings. Silver medals went to: Bangor, Falmouth, Greely (Cumberland), and Yarmouth high schools. Schools making it into the bronze category are: Carrabec High School (Anson), Easton Junior-Senior High School, Greenville Middle/High School, Isleboro Central School, Katahdin Middle/High School (Stacyville), Lubec Consolidated School, Stearns High School (Millinocket), and Washburn District High School.

[Marker][Marker]“Over the past seven years we have worked hard in [Marker]Maine to open access to AP courses,” Gendron said. “Fifteen percent more students took AP exams in 2007 compared to 2006, and the percentage scoring a 3 or above did not decrease. In other words, there is still a large contingent of students who can benefit from the AP offerings. It is important that every student be prepared and have access to AP courses. These are college level courses that are taught by high school teachers who know their students best and can meet their learning needs. We are more interested in students taking the courses as opposed to the test score but this is clear evidence that providing students that opportunity is working.”

The ranking focuses primarily on college-readiness, though it also used measures to determine how well the schools serve all its students well, not just those who are bound for college. The ranking methodologies use Advanced Placement data as the major benchmark for success. AP is a College Board program that offers college-level courses at high schools across the country. This measured which schools produced the best college-level achievement for the highest percentages of their students. The rankings also looked for schools in which economically-disadvantaged students performed better than would statistically be expected, and where minorities and low-income students performed better than the average for their group in the same state.

The full list of schools, methodology, and news reporting on the rankings can be found at:

[<http://www.usnews.com/highschools>]www.usnews.com/highschools

For more information about Maine School of Science and Mathematics, visit:

[<http://www.mssm.org/>]www.mssm.org

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