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At Palo Pinto ISD, we will provide the best of instruction for today and for the future so our students are well prepared to meet their fullest potential.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Palo Pinto Elementary Recognized as a 2025 Lone Star Ribbon School

(Formerly Known as a U.S. Department of Education National Blue Ribbon School)

Palo Pinto, Texas — September 29, 2025 — Palo Pinto Elementary is proud to announce its designation as a **2025 Lone Star Ribbon School**, the new state-level recognition program that officially **replaced the U.S. Department of Education National Blue Ribbon Schools Program for Texas in August 2025**. This prestigious honor underscores the school's unwavering commitment to academic excellence and its dedication to fostering a high-achieving learning environment for all students.

Palo Pinto Elementary was **originally selected to receive the U.S. Department of Education National Blue Ribbon School award for the 2025–2026 school year** prior to the program's discontinuation nationally at the end of last month. The Texas Lone Star Ribbon Schools Program now carries forward this legacy, recognizing the same level of excellence at the state level.

In 2025, Palo Pinto Elementary is **one of only 28 schools out of approximately 9,100 public schools in Texas** to receive this elite designation. Further, Palo Pinto Elementary is **one of approximately 356 schools out of about 100,000 schools nationwide** that had been slated to receive this honor under the former National Blue Ribbon Schools Program. To put this in perspective, **approximately one-third of one percent—or about 0.36%—of all schools in the U.S. earn this recognition each year.**

Founded in 1982, the **National Blue Ribbon Schools Program** celebrated public and private elementary, middle, and high schools across the nation where students excel at very high levels or where significant improvements had been made in academic achievement. The **Texas Lone Star Ribbon School flag**, which will soon fly proudly at Palo Pinto Elementary, continues this tradition. It serves as a symbol of educational excellence recognized by parents, educators, and policymakers across Texas and formerly, across the nation.

Since its inception over 40 years ago, the U.S. Department of Education has awarded this coveted recognition to **more than 9,000 schools** in communities **nationwide**. Being named a National Blue Ribbon School—or now, a Lone Star Ribbon School—places Palo Pinto Elementary among an **elite group of schools setting the standard for academic success and innovation.**

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program had been administered by the U.S. Department of Education under the authority of Public Law 107-110 (January 8, 2002), Part D—Fund for the Improvement of Education, Subpart 1, Sec. 5411(b)(5). In Texas, the journey to recognition began with a **nomination by the Texas Commissioner of Education**, followed by an in-depth analysis of student assessment data and demographic information in alignment with the **Texas State Plan approved by the USDE**.

“We are thrilled and deeply honored to receive this recognition,” said **Wendell Barker, Superintendent of Palo Pinto ISD**. “This achievement reflects the dedication, hard work, talent, and commitment of our students, teachers, administrators, staff, school board, parents, and the entire community. It is a testament to the power of collaboration and a shared commitment to excellence in education. We are thankful that TEA and Governor Abbott recognized us and the other designated schools after the USDE surprisingly discontinued their recognition program at the end of August. We were unsure how this distinction would be honored this year and greatly appreciate the state of Texas for carrying forward the legacy to recognize high achieving schools.”

The Lone Star Ribbon Schools designation—formerly the National Blue Ribbon Schools designation—**affirms the exemplary teaching, engaged learning, and strong sense of community that define Palo Pinto Elementary**. The school’s commitment to providing students with a top-tier education prepares them for lifelong success and strengthens the foundation of the Palo Pinto community.

For more information about **Texas’ Lone Star Ribbon Schools Program** and its origins in the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, please visit the **Texas Education Agency** website. For Governor Abbott’s press release on September 29, 2025, please visit: <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-announces-inaugural-lone-star-ribbon-schools>.