

---

# National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

---

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION SINCE 1982

---

ANNETTE JONES, NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
Interview Transcript

The National Blue Ribbon award really represents excellence in all facets of the school. We're talking about academics, spiritual formations, any programs, excellent highly qualified personnel, parent/ community support. In essence, the award is given, really, to the entire school community.

When I started as a principal, that was one of my goals. In parochial schools, you apply to CAPE. In 2004, I applied for the award and I did not advance to the next level. So, in 2005 our school applied again, Immaculate Heart of Mary School, and we were recognized as a National Blue Ribbon school.

CAPE stands for the Council of American Private Education and that involves all types of non-public schools in the United States: Catholic schools, Lutheran schools, private schools, independent schools. The non-public schools certainly self-nominate, but of course they need to meet the criteria, the academic criteria through assessments.

The National Blue Ribbon award is a springboard to so many other opportunities. I know one of my schools, after we were named, we ended up becoming really on a different level, and looking at things from a national perspective, as we had made connections with other national educators throughout the country. And then we ended up making connections internationally, and having some exchanges, principal exchanges. So really, the award can be anything that a school wants it to be. It can be marketing; it can be increasing enrollment; it can be more participation at the national or international levels in education.

My role now is to assist and encourage and be the cheerleader for principals and superintendents who may want to start the process. I have worked with people individually, or in small groups or in phone conferences; I have done a webinar – kind of a tutorial so principals or their teams can watch the webinar, listen to the webinar and make sure they understand the process before we talk and answer questions. The other part of that is making sure that I am supportive and encouraging and saying, "Yes you can do this. I know you can do that." And being there also in case things don't work out the first time for them. Having experienced that part myself, I can completely empathize and I want to make sure that I am there to say, "Okay, now let's get the next year's ready and let's talk about how it will work differently for you next year."



*Annette Jones, Assistant Director of Leadership Development, National Catholic Educational Association*

It's really transformational. It's about moving a school from where a school is, even if they're an excellent school, moving them just a little bit further to the next level, and then watching that transformation happen, and being a part of it. As we embraced the change and we adopted the best practices in all aspects of our school, that's when I really saw that the reward was what we were accomplishing and then the National Blue Ribbon was even just icing on the cake.