“Coopersville High School Receives Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School Award”

At its meeting on February 12, the Michigan Board of Education announced that Coopersville High School was a winner of the highly coveted 2003-04 Blue Ribbon Exemplary Schools Award. Coopersville High School is one of six high schools and one of 11 secondary schools to receive the honor. Dr. Arthur Vrettas, Michigan Department of Education spokesperson, stated that “Blue Ribbon Schools are models of both excellence and equity. To be recognized, a school must demonstrate a strong commitment to educational excellence for all students.”

Coopersville High School Principal, Ron Veldman, was ecstatic upon hearing the news, and praised the efforts of staff, students, and the community. “Being selected as a Blue Ribbon Exemplary School is a direct reflection on our entire community, our entire staff, and all of our students.” Board of Education President, Tim Postma, remarked that Coopersville Area Public Schools are the “best kept secret in Western Michigan,” and that “Our high academic standards and achievements, well known in our own backyard, are now being recognized by the State Board of Education’s highest honor, the Blue Ribbon status. It’s great to know that we are second to none!” The Coopersville School Board has declared March to be “Blue Ribbon Month,” and encourages everyone in the district to participate in the many activities and celebrations in honor of the Exemplary Blue Ribbon School designation.

The Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School Program began in 1982. The program selects the top schools in the state of Michigan, choosing from among all public, charter, and parochial schools. Schools are evaluated on numerous criteria, some of which include: 5 years of data from test scores, attendance rates, dropout rates, graduation rates, and school discipline. Schools must demonstrate high academic standards and achievement, varieties of course offerings, and unique programs which benefit students. Co curricular programs, community partnerships, family involvement, technology use, and the quality of staff and students are all considered. A Blue Ribbon School must demonstrate a healthy and safe school environment. Michigan State Board of Education President, Kathleen N. Strauss said “This program identifies and recognizes outstanding schools across the state which provide students a world-class education.”

Kevin O’Neill, superintendent, announced the award to the Coopersville community during his annual State of the Schools address at the board meeting on Monday, February 16, 2004. Although he gave the state a failing grade for funding school districts, he held out the high school as a reflection of the entire district. “Our staff, school board, students, parents and entire community are to be commended for their collective commitment as they prepare our students to be the tomorrow’s leaders.”