

of ambitious changes, particularly aimed at high achieving students. Increased rigor and high academic expectations are key to the success of YWLA. One can expect similar standards to evolve across the district as superintendent Pedro Martinez moves toward his district goals.

“As we work to redefine excellence throughout our district, their success is a great example of what we hope to achieve,” Martinez stated in a news release.

As an in-district charter school YWLA draws students from across Bexar County. However its presence within the SAISD boundaries provides a touchstone for the progress district leadership is seeking.

While they were recognized simply for their top tier academic performance, measured by state and national assessments, YWLA is also working toward bolstering specific academic fields. The academy focuses of math, science and technology – fields in which women are underrepresented.

“YWLA’s focus on science, math, and technology equips students with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the evolving global economy,” stated U.S. Rep. Joaquín Castro (D-20th District). “Graduates from YWLA are not only college-ready, they are poised to be leaders in whichever career they choose to pursue. I applaud the entire YWLA community and the example they set for schools across the United States.”

In a seeming paradox of empowerment, the confidence the girls gain in an all-female environment will prepare them to succeed in fields where they will be the only woman in the room. They are encouraged not only to develop their academic skills, but the kind of gracious determination that will prevail against doors that were once tightly shut.

“We know that our school requires exceptional self-motivation, grit and perseverance, and our students demonstrate these characteristics consistently

as they exceed expectations daily,” stated Principal Delia McLerran.

Girls at YWLA have long expressed the freedom they feel in the competitive, all girls environment. Without pressure from less-ambitious peers or distraction from boys, the girls thrive on the support of their “sisters” and the expectations of their teachers. Success is not a zero sum game at YWLA. The girls inspire and challenge each other with each personal accomplishment.

A Blue Ribbon designation is proof that this attitude has permeated the school, resulting in a community of motivated, promising young women.

Those who know the work ethic and motivation of the girls on the YWLA campus would agree that the 2015 Blue Ribbon is probably one of many accolades to come. These girls are unstoppable.

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## A blue ribbon for Young Women’s Leadership Academy



Principal Delia McLerran is congratulated by San Antonio Independent School District Superintendent Pedro Martinez after she told the student body their school is a 2015 National Blue Ribbon School.

### Young Women’s Leadership Academy cited

By Greta Kaul  
STAFF WRITER

The U.S. Education Department has named the Young Women’s Leadership Academy a 2015 National Blue Ribbon School for its academic excellence.

The Blue Ribbon honor, established in 1982, is awarded to elementary, middle and high schools – both public and private – for excellent academics or for closing achievement gaps among students. The Young Women’s Leadership Academy, in the San Antonio Independent School District, was one of 335 U.S. schools, and the only Bexar County school, selected this year.

“To receive this honor is just huge for us, but I think more than

anything, it validates everything our teachers are doing with our students,” Delia McLerran, who has been the academy’s principal for six years, said Tuesday after the announcement.

The academy opened in 2008 as an in-district charter school for SAISD girls. It has grades 6 through 12 and is the only public all-girls school in San Antonio, and its curriculum emphasizes science, technology and math.

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**San Antonio Young Women’s Leadership Academy**  
2123 W. Huisache Ave. • San Antonio, Texas 78201  
210-438-6525 • [www.saisd.net/schools/ywla](http://www.saisd.net/schools/ywla)





Students Anyssa Herrera and Grecia Garza share their excitement at the announcement of the school's National Blue Ribbon School status.

In 2014, the school graduated its first batch of seniors.

When asked what sets her academy apart from other schools, McLerran said teachers and staff have high expectations for every student.

"If they're going to be leaders in San Antonio or anywhere in this country they want to live, (they've got to) be women of action," she said.

Of the 335 schools named, 303, including Young Women's Leadership Academy, are recognized for high performance, while 32 received the honor for closing achievement gaps.

McLerran will travel to Washington, D.C., later this year for a ceremony recognizing the achievements of her school and others.

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Young Women's Leadership Academy students Azel Garca, Meg Garcia, Mallory Sanchez and Karease Williams celebrate the school's recognition as a National Blue Ribbon School with Principal Delia McLerran, center.

## Kudos to SAISD women's academy

Kudos to the Young Women's Leadership Academy of the San Antonio Independent School District for winning an impressive bit of recognition from the Department of Education.

The SAISD academy was a recipient of the department's 2015 National Blue Ribbon for academic excellence, the Express-

News reported this week. The women's academy was the only school in Bexar County to snare the honor. The only all-girls public school in San Antonio, the academy was launched in 2008 and emphasizes science, technology and math. The first class graduated last year.

In an era when public schools are routinely roasted by critics and under fire from many directions, it is particularly encouraging to see award-winning academic performance in our city.

Principal Delia McLerran told the Express-News that high expectations are placed on every student at the SAISD school. And the honor from the Department of Education is strong evidence that those expectations are paying off.

Congratulations to McLerran and her team for setting high standards and meeting them. The school is a good example, for us all.

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## RIVARD REPORT

Urban. Independent. All About San Antonio.

### Young Women's Leadership Academy Earns Federal Blue Ribbon

By Bekah McNeel

29 SEPTEMBER, 2015 AT 12:58

Young Women's Leadership Academy's (YWLA) star is growing even brighter within the education constellation of Bexar County. The public all-girls academy was one of 335 public and private schools in the country

to win the U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon designation for 2015.

The department awards the Blue Ribbon designation to elementary and secondary schools for one of two accomplishments. YWLA was among the 303 recognized for exemplary high performance. An additional 35

schools were recognized for their work to close achievement gaps among student subgroups.

Only 28 Texas schools received the designation, and YWLA is the only school in Bexar County to receive the Blue Ribbon in 2015.

The designation comes at a time when SAISD is on the brink

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