



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Elliot Krieger, Communications - (401) 222-8471

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Governor Releases School Classifications; Two-Thirds of Schools Met All Targets

PROVIDENCE – More than half of the public schools in the state (57 percent) are classified as high performing and two-thirds of the schools (68 percent) met all of their annual targets set by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Governor Donald L. Carcieri released the results today (December 14, 2006) at the Hope High School complex, where the Hope Leadership School was honored for meeting all of its targets. The state ordered a complete reorganization of the Hope schools last year after years of low test scores.

“I am pleased that so many of our schools – including more than half of our high schools – have made all of their annual targets,” said Governor Carcieri. “Though a third of our high schools are high performing, too many are making insufficient progress, largely because they have missed targets in mathematics. I believe that by continuing to focus on mathematics and science education, we can improve student performance at all grade levels.

“We must improve the way we teach mathematics statewide so that our children have the skills they need to succeed in the 21st-century economy,” Carcieri continued. “Fortunately, we are already laying the groundwork by implementing the recommendations of my Blue Ribbon Panel on Math and Science Education. As a result, we will soon unveil a statewide math curriculum, and we have begun work on a statewide science curriculum. We also are creating a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Center to provide on-going support for our teachers. These reforms will help ensure that all Rhode Island children become proficient in math and science.”

“This is a great day for Hope Leadership,” said James A. DiPrete, Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. “The Regents have strongly supported many of the ideas that have been put into practice at Hope: small learning communities, strong advisory systems, and graduation based on student proficiency. The success here at Hope Leadership, after years of struggle, shows that with concentrated effort and good will our schools can improve.”

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The classifications released today are based on tests administered during the 2005-06 school year. Classifications for elementary and middle schools, which were tested in the fall of 2005, were released in September. Classifications for high schools, which were tested in the spring of 2006, were released today, completing the statewide picture.

Among high schools, one-third (19 schools) were high performing and one-fourth (15 schools) received Regents' Commendations for exceptionally high scores or significant progress.

About 40 percent (23 schools) of the high schools, however, were classified as making "insufficient progress," meaning that they missed multiple targets or missed targets for consecutive years. Statewide, about 20 percent of the schools (61 schools) were classified as making insufficient progress.

Statewide, the high-school test results were largely unchanged from last year: 42.8 percent were proficient in mathematics (down 2.3 points) and 54 percent were proficient in English (up 1.8 points).

"The results released today once again show that there are two Rhode Islands – an urban core where many of our schools are struggling and a suburban ring where most schools are performing well," said Peter McWalters, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. "Almost all of the schools that have missed multiple targets are from our cities, and proficiency rates in the cities are about 20 points below the state average. To improve our statewide performance, we must continue to focus on our urban schools."

With statewide test results for 2005-06 complete, the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) has also classified the school districts: 22 met the federal requirements for Adequate Yearly Progress and 14 missed their annual targets. Of those that missed targets, 8 had met their targets in the previous testing year: Chariho, Cranston, Foster-Glocester, Glocester, Middletown, Newport, North Providence, and Westerly.

Six districts have missed targets for multiple years and are subject to state intervention, which consists of various degrees of state support for and oversight of school and district operations. The six districts in "intervention status" are: Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, South Kingstown, West Warwick, and Woonsocket.

East Providence had been in intervention status, but the district has met its targets and is removed from the intervention list.

Under the terms of NCLB, RIDE sets annual targets for all schools and districts. These targets rise in a series of steps over a 12-year span. The targets were raised during the 2004-05 school year.

All schools (and districts) must meet up to 37 targets, based on tests in English language arts (reading and writing) and mathematics, as well as targets for participation rates on the tests, attendance rates, and graduation rates. Schools (and districts) must meet targets for all students as well as for up to eight groups of students: Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, White, students with disabilities, students living in poverty, and English-language learners. Schools are evaluated against these targets only when there are 45 or more enrolled students in the student group.

All students in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11 are tested annually.

For further information about the Rhode Island Accountability System and School-Performance Classifications, or to see report cards for each school and district, see the RIDE Web site, www.ride.ri.gov, under School Report Cards.