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NEWS RELEASE

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School Classifications: Nearly 3 of 4 Schools Met All Annual Targets

Nearly three of four schools (223 schools, 73%) met all of the 2007-08 targets set by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), according to the annual school-performance classifications released today (Aug. 19, 2008) by Gov. Donald L. Carcieri.

The classifications, based on results of the 2007-08 state tests in mathematics, reading, and writing as well as the 2006-07 attendance and graduation rates, showed that 82 percent of the elementary schools (158 schools) and 72 percent of the middle schools (39 schools) met all of their targets, but only 46 percent of the high schools (26 schools) did so.

This year, the annual targets that each school must meet were raised by several points, as is required by the federal NCLB. As a result, slightly fewer schools met all of their targets - down from 80 percent (244 schools) last year - even though test scores improved in most grade levels.

"I am very pleased that the majority of schools met all the new test targets," Governor Carcieri said. "While there are schools still working to accomplish that goal, the testing shows our education system is on the right track to prepare our students for the world of the future and not the past."

"Though it's good news that nearly 75 percent of our public schools met all of their annual targets, we need to ensure that our schools continue to make progress," said Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq., Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. "I am particularly concerned that less than half of our high schools met all of their targets, and I expect that the new Diploma System will help ensure that all our graduates reach proficiency."

Significant gaps separated the urban schools from others in the state, with only 41 percent of the schools (32 schools) in urban districts (Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, Woonsocket) meeting all targets; 85 percent of the schools (191 schools) in the rest of the state did so.

"The school classifications that the Governor released today once again show that there are two Rhode Islands," said Peter McWalters, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. "Our suburban schools are performing very well, but less than half of our urban schools met all of their annual targets. We must continue to focus our school-reform efforts and investments on improvements in our urban districts."

Among the 81 schools (27%) that missed one or more of their annual targets, 23 schools (8%) missed targets for the first time and are classified as "Caution" schools. Those that have missed targets for multiple years (58 schools; 19%) are classified as making "insufficient progress," and they may face sanctions, including implementing of a corrective action plan or restructuring by the state.

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Among those schools that met all of their annual targets, 21 schools from 10 districts were honored as Regents' Commended Schools. These schools have achieved exceptionally high performance in English and mathematics for two years, made significant progress for two years, or significantly closed achievement gaps that separate the various student groups.

The Governor also released the 2008 classifications of school districts, which showed that 12 districts did not meet their annual targets and that 10 districts are in "intervention status," which means that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education works directly with those districts to implement improvement or corrective-action plans.

Eight schools that had previously been identified for school improvement have now made all of their targets for two years and are removed from intervention status. They are: Ponaganset High School (Foster-Glocester), Middletown High School, the Flora S. Curtis Memorial School (Pawtucket), and in Providence the Alfred Lima Sr. Elementary School, Charles N. Fortes Academy, Laurel Hill Avenue School, Nathanael Greene Middle School, and Windmill Street Elementary School.

Similarly, one district – South Kingstown – that had been identified for improvement has now made all of its targets for two years and has been removed from intervention status.

Under provisions of NCLB, the state sets annual targets for each school level (elementary, middle, high school) in English (reading and writing) and mathematics, attendance (elementary and middle schools), and graduation rate. The target scores for the state tests, which are based on how many students achieve proficiency or improve at other scoring levels, rise in equal increments until they reach 100 (100-percent proficiency) in 2014.

Schools must meet the targets for their level on a schoolwide basis as well as for each of eight student groups: Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, White, students in poverty, students with disabilities, and English-language learners. Schools are not required to meet the targets for student groups, however, unless they have 45 students in that group in all tested grades or (for high schools) over three years of testing.

Supplementary materials posted on the RIDE Web site, www.ride.ri.gov, includes:

- The complete lists of school and district classifications and of Regents' Commended Schools (<http://www.ride.ri.gov/assessment/accountability.aspx>)
- Individual report cards for each school and district and a brochure explaining the school-performance classifications (see "Ride Report Cards 2008" under <http://www.ride.ri.gov/ride/reportCards.aspx>)
- The RIDE Accountability System Technical Bulletin Workbook, which provides technical information about the classification system (http://www.ride.ri.gov/assessment/DOCS/Accountability/7.2008_AccountabilitySystem_TechBulletin.pdf)