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NEWS RELEASE

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School Classifications: 79 percent of Schools Met All Annual Targets 20 Schools Honored as 2010 Regents' Commended Schools

Nearly four of every five schools (230 out of 292 schools, or 79%) met all of the 2009-10 targets in the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), according to the annual school-performance classifications that Gov. Donald L. Carcieri and Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist released today (June 29, 2010).

Among those schools that met all of their annual targets, 20 schools were honored as 2010 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 list of Regents' Commended Schools is attached.

The classifications, based on results of the 2009-10 state assessments in mathematics, reading, and writing as well as the 2008-09 attendance and four-year graduation rates, showed that 85 percent of the elementary schools (153 out of 179 schools), 88 percent of the middle schools (49 out of 56 schools), and 49 percent of the high schools (28 out of 57 schools) met all of their targets. (The results do not include the six early-grade elementary schools that use a different state assessment; the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will release their classifications during the summer.)

Last year, 81 percent of schools (242 out of 298 schools, not including the early-grade schools) met all of their targets.

“While our performance has remained fairly steady, we expected to see some significant advances in reading, writing, and math proficiency given this is the third and final year before the state’s performance targets are increased again as they have in the past. It is particularly disturbing to see the lack of improvement in persistently low math scores,” said Governor Carcieri. “The school-performance classifications for 2010 underscore the need to provide teachers with more timely information and tools to effectively address the learning gaps of students statewide. I am confident that rigorous common standards for student learning that are being considered by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education at their July meeting, together with a new common assessment tool Rhode Island is helping to develop through a multi-state partnership, will enable teachers to better pinpoint and correct student learning gaps throughout the school year.”

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“Though I am pleased that nearly 80 percent of our schools met all of their annual targets, about the same percentage as last year, I am concerned that a large number of schools, including nearly half of our high schools, have missed their targets,” said Robert G. Flanders, Jr., Esq., Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. “We will continue to work to ensure that all of our high-school graduates can demonstrate proficiency in core subject areas. Our graduates must be ready for success in college and careers.”

“The school-performance classifications we released today show that we have a lot of work before us as we strive to make Rhode Island schools the best in the country,” said Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “We see troubling achievement gaps across the state, as schools fail to meet their targets for students with disabilities, English-language learners, and students of color. As we put into action our strategic plan, ‘Transforming Education in Rhode Island,’ we will work closely with the schools and districts that have missed their targets and we will intervene as necessary in the persistently lowest-achieving schools. We must be sure to provide excellent learning opportunities for *every* student in Rhode Island.”

Among the 62 schools (21%) that missed one or more of their annual targets, 19 schools (6.5%) missed targets for the first time and are classified as “Caution” schools. In all, 77 schools are identified for improvement, either because they missed their targets for one or more years or because they met all their targets this year but missed targets in 2008-09. (Schools must meet all targets for two years in a row before they are no longer identified for improvement.) Schools identified for improvement face varying levels of sanctions, ranging up to corrective action and restructuring.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) also released the 2010 classifications of school districts, which showed that 7 districts missed their annual targets and are in “intervention status.” RIDE will work directly with the districts in intervention status to implement improvements or corrective-action plans. Three districts that were in intervention status last year met all their annual targets this year. If these districts meet all of their targets next year, they will be clear of federal and state sanctions and interventions.

Seven schools that were previously identified for improvement have met all of their targets for two consecutive years and are therefore removed from intervention status. They are:

- Frank E. Thompson Middle School, Newport;
- North Providence High School, North Providence;
- Joseph Jenks Junior High School, Pawtucket;
- Robert L Bailey IV Elementary School, Providence;
- Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program;
- Warwick Veterans Memorial High School, Warwick; and
- Woonsocket Middle School, Woonsocket

Similarly, the North Providence school district, which had been identified for improvement, has now met all of its targets for two consecutive 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 assessments, 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 required to meet the targets for student groups only if they have 45 students in that group across all tested grades.

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

- 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 2010" under <http://www.ride.ri.gov/ride/reportCards.aspx>); and
- 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).

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