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Governor, Education Commissioner Release 2004 School-Performance Classifications
Reports Show More High-Performing Schools, More Schools Making Progress

PROVIDENCE – More than half of the public schools in Rhode Island are classified as "high performing," according to the official list of 2004 School Performance Classifications compiled by the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Among public schools in the state, 52 percent (166 schools) are high performing (up from 29 percent last year), 21 percent (66 schools) are moderately performing, and 27 percent (84 schools) are in need of improvement (down from 38 percent last year).

Last year, 99 schools (32 percent) missed at least one of their annual targets and were classified as making "insufficient progress"; this year, only 55 schools (17 percent) were in that classification.

The improvements in classifications are a result of the significant gains students achieved on the 2004 state tests in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Governor Donald L. Carcieri released the list of classifications in a news conference this morning at the Robert L. Bailey IV School, which made significant improvements.

"Today I am pleased to announce we have seen improvements across the board and throughout the state on the 2004 School-Performance Classifications," said Governor Donald L. Carcieri. "Two years ago, the federal No Child Left Behind Act challenged each and every state on the issue of accountability. Rhode Island is effectively meeting the challenge. In my 2005 budget, I included an additional $1.4 million to create math specialists to provide support to schools and districts in this critical subject. Additionally, I have provideded funding for turnaround specialists to be assigned to secondary schools to provide needed guidance in the areas of instruction, finance, and data analysis."

Carcieri continued: "We can attribute our success to establishing clear standards and expectations, building solid connections between these standards and assessments, and providing a mechanism through the No Child Left Behind Act for real accountability. Our young people are the future of Rhode Island, and we must ensure that their future is bright. Working together we are achieving this goal."

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"I want to congratulate the students and the staff at the Bailey School – and students and educators around the state – for the great improvements we are seeing today," said James A. DiPrete, Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. "The results released today confirm what every teacher and parent knows: All children can learn."

"The school-performance classifications released today are, in part, the result of years of work at the school level, backed by strong support from the state," said Patrick A. Guida, Chairman of the of Regents' Subcommittee on Progressive Support and Intervention. "The Regents and the state Education Department, with support from the Governor and the legislature, through Article 31, will continue to help schools that are in need of improvement."

"Rhode Island schools have responded well to the challenge of accountability," said Peter McWalters, the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. "In the past seven years, we have adopted new, rigorous state standards and we have developed a robust assessment and accountability system. Schools and districts are examining their data and revising their instructional practices to reach all students, and we are seeing the positive results."

"I am so proud of the gains made in Providence," said Melody Johnson, Superintendent of the Providence Schools. "Our students' test scores have shown improvement across the board, with increases as high as 21 percent in one area and averaging 9 percent for all grades and content levels tested – a figure unprecedented for us and considered by experts to be very statistically significant."

The classifications released today are based primarily on the results of the past four years of state assessments in English language arts and mathematics. Under provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, the state has adopted annual targets in each subject for each grade level. Each school must meet these targets for the school as a whole and for each of eight groups of students within the school (Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, and White students; students with limited proficiency in English; students who are economically disadvantaged; and students with disabilities). The school must also meet targets for attendance or (for high schools) graduation rates, plus targets for the participation rate on the state tests.

If a school misses any target, it is classified as "in need of improvement, insufficient progress." If it misses targets for two years in a row, it may be subject to sanctions under the federal law. At present, 39 schools in the state are subject to these federal sanctions, which include notifying parents that they may transfer their children to another school in the district and may range up to mandatory restructuring of the school.

Reports on the school-performance classifications are being compiled as School Report Cards for each public school in the state. These report cards will soon be posted on the RIDE Web site, and they will be disseminated to all families of public-school students.

The complete list of 2004 School-Performance Classifications is posted on the RIDE Web site, www.ridoe.net, see under "2004 School, District, State Report Cards." There you will also find additional information, including a pamphlet and a brochure explaining the state accountability system.

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