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NEWS RELEASE

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High-School Test Scores Unchanged from 2004; 14 Schools Honored for Improvements

LINCOLN – The test scores of Rhode Island high-school students remained virtually unchanged from 2004, according to the results of the 2005 state assessments in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics released today (November 9th, 2005) by the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE).

In ELA, 52.2 percent of the students achieved the level of proficiency, down 1.1 percentage point from last year. In mathematics, 45.1 percent achieved proficiency, up 1 point from last year. On the “index proficiency score,” a three-year score that RIDE uses to determine school-performance classifications, students achieved a score of 83.8 in ELA (down 1.1 points from 2004) and 73.6 in mathematics (up 0.8 points).

There were 14 schools in 11 districts (including two charter schools and two state-operated schools) that were named 2005 Regents’ Commended Schools, marking two years of significant progress in both ELA and mathematics.

Following the procedures of the state accountability system that RIDE developed to meet the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), this year for the first time Rhode Island raised the bar – the target that all schools and all groups of students within each school must meet in order to make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) as defined by the NCLB. Raising the bar had a significant effect on school-performance classifications. The bar will be raised in a series of steps over the next nine years.

Of the 57 high schools in the state, 27 were classified as high performing, 13 as moderately performing, and 17 as in need of improvement. There were 15 schools, however, that for the first year did not make AYP because they missed one target or the targets for one student group. They have been classified as high or moderately performing “with caution” because they are performing well on the whole but need improvement in specific areas. If they miss targets again next year, they will be classified as in need of improvement.

“Because we raised the bar, it’s no surprise that we are seeing some schools miss one or more targets,” Governor Donald L. Carcieri said. “But these results make it very clear that we have a lot of work ahead of us. Too many of our schools haven’t met their targets. We haven’t seen enough progress.

“We must have more high-performing schools like Davies Career and Technical High School,” Carcieri continued. “The school’s administrators and teachers set a goal to improve student achievement and made it a top priority. We must learn from schools like Davies if all of our schools are to succeed.”

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“About half of our high schools are high performing – that’s good news,” said James A. DiPrete, Chairman of the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. “Our schools are doing well, on the whole. But more than half of our high schools missed at least one target for one of the student groups – that’s the bad news. We must serve all of our students – every one of them.”

“This year, we have seen schools that have been high performing for many years, but now for the first time they have missed a target because we have raised the bar,” said Peter McWalters, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “So we have schools that are high performing but still need improvement. Our standards are high, and we are driving schools so that they meet these standards for all of their students.”

The test scores and classifications released today are based on the New Standards Reference Exam administered to 11th-graders in the spring of 2005. As Rhode Island was going through a transition to a new state assessment system, students in elementary school and middle schools were not tested during the previous school year. Those students were tested under the new state assessment system last month, and the results will be released in the spring of 2006.

Because elementary schools and middle schools were not tested during the previous school year, they had to meet only one target in order to make “adequate yearly progress” under NCLB: an attendance rate of 90 percent. All elementary schools met this target and all but 6 of the 57 middle schools did so.

The six early-grade schools (highest grade of K or 1) were tested through the Developmental Reading Assessment. All six were classified as high performing.

The test results released today resulted in *no changes* to the list that RIDE released in August of 29 schools facing sanctions under No Child Left Behind.

The Governor chose to release the results today in at the William M. Davies Jr. Career-Technical High School, a state-operated school. Three years ago, the school was classified as “low performing, not improving.” Today, the school is classified as high performing and improving, and it was honored as a Regents’ Commended School.

The following documents were enclosed with this news release or are posted on the RIDE website, www.ride.ri.gov:

- List of high schools, with 2005 school-performance classification percent proficient and index scores in each subject area, and graduation rate
- List of 2005 Regents’ Commended Schools
- Breakdown of #s of schools in each performance classification
- Brochure explaining the R.I. Accountability System