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NEWS RELEASE

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No New Schools Facing Sanctions Under No Child Left Behind Act 13 Schools Met Annual Goals and Avoid Sanctions

PROVIDENCE – Education Commissioner Peter McWalters announced this morning that no new schools will have to offer school choice or face additional sanctions mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Among Rhode Island public schools, 29 Rhode Island public schools must offer school choice at the beginning of the coming school year. Last Year, 39 schools had to offer school choice.

The schools that will offer choice this year, from 5 school districts (Central Falls, Lincoln, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket), must notify parents that the school has been identified as a “school in need of improvement.” Parents will have the right to transfer their children to another school within the district, under plans to be developed by the district.

There were nine schools that faced sanctions last year and will face none this year; four schools could have faced sanctions for the first time, but they met their targets and will face no sanctions.

Under the federal law, the state has to notify districts whose schools may have to offer choice or face other sanctions before the start of the school year. Staff at the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) reviewed test results and other data from all of the schools that might have faced sanctions – at total of 42 schools.

Of the 42 schools reviewed, 34 met all of their annual targets (i.e., made “adequate yearly progress”) for the 2004-05 school year. The law, however, requires schools to meet their targets for two years in a row before they are relieved of the obligation to offer school choice and are clear of other sanctions.

“The results released today show that many of our schools are making progress,” Commissioner McWalters said. “These results are only preliminary, however. This fall we will begin a new round of assessments for our elementary and middle schools, and we will be raising the bar for all schools, as we strive to bring all students to the level of proficiency by the year 2014. Our schools must continue to improve or they truly will be left behind.”

All schools must hit annual targets, in both English language arts and mathematics, for the school as a whole and for various groups of students within the school (Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American, and White students; students in poverty, students with limited English, and students with disabilities). They also must hit targets on either attendance rates or, for high schools, graduation rates. Schools that miss targets are classified as “in need of improvement.”

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State tests were not administered in elementary and middle schools during the 2004-05 school year. Students in those schools will take a newly created set of tests this fall. Because tests were not administered in the elementary and middle schools, determinations about whether these schools made “adequate yearly progress” were based on one target only: an attendance-rate goal of 90 percent.

The NCLB mandates that schools receiving Title I funds for high-poverty schools must offer school choice if they miss targets for two years in a row. There are about 150 Title I schools in Rhode Island.

If schools miss their targets for three years in a row, they must offer free tutoring (supplementary educational services) as well as school choice. After four years, they face “corrective action” and after five years they face “restructuring.”

The information released today concerns *only* Title I schools that potentially faced sanctions during the coming school year.

Here is a breakdown of the sanctions that Rhode Island schools face under NCLB:

School Improvement		2004-05	2005-06
Made targets/no sanctions		24 schools	13 schools
Made targets/face sanctions for one more year		9 schools	21 schools
Missed targets		30 schools	8 schools
Sanction	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
School Choice	12 schools	20 schools	15 schools
Tutoring & Choice	11 schools	13 schools	6 schools
Corrective Action	1 schools	5 schools	6 schools
Restructuring	None	1 school	2 schools
Total facing sanctions	33 schools	39 schools	29 schools

(Note that schools in corrective action and restructuring must also offer choice and tutoring.)

A list of the schools facing sanctions and cleared from sanctions is attached. The complete list of school-performance classifications and data on the 2004-05 state tests will be released in the fall. More information about the RIDE accountability system is available on the RIDE website, www.ride.ri.gov, see under “Assessment & Accountability News” or “2004 School, District, and State Report Cards.”

