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State Superintendent Says 2011 Virginia AYP Results Emphasize Need for New Federal Accountability Model

Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright says the latest Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) ratings for Virginia schools and school divisions show that the 10-year-old accountability system established under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has outlived its usefulness and should be overhauled.

Because of the intricacies of the AYP calculation and higher benchmarks, only 697, or 38 percent of the commonwealth's 1,839 schools, made AYP based on achievement on 2010-2011 state tests. Sixty-one percent of schools made AYP during the previous ratings cycle. Only four of Virginia's 132 school divisions made AYP based on 2010-2011 achievement, compared with 12 during the previous cycle.

Wright said she will recommend that the state Board of Education ask U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan for a waiver from NCLB's increasingly unrealistic requirements. On Monday, Duncan announced he will provide a process for states to seek relief from key provisions of the law, with the specifics to be announced next month.

"Accountability is not advanced by arbitrary rules and benchmarks that misidentify schools," Wright said. "During the coming weeks, I will begin a discussion with the state board on creating a new model for measuring yearly progress that maintains high expectations for student achievement, recognizes growth — overall and by subgroup — and accurately identifies schools most in need of improvement."

Adequate Yearly Progress for Virginia Public Schools & Divisions

Table with 6 columns: Made AYP, Did Not Make AYP, To Be Determined, New School, Total. Rows for Schools and Divisions.

For a school, school division or the state to have made AYP, more than 86 percent of students must have demonstrated proficiency on state tests in reading, and 85 percent must have passed state tests in mathematics. Students in all AYP subgroups — white, black, Hispanic, limited-English proficient (LEP), students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged — must also meet the benchmarks. By grade span, the AYP results are as follows:

- 547, or 47 percent, of 1,175 elementary schools made AYP.
• 29, or 9 percent, of 308 middle schools made AYP.
• 109, or 35 percent, of 308 high schools made AYP.
• 12, or 25 percent, of 48 combined schools (schools with multiple grade spans) made AYP.

The benchmarks were five points higher in reading and six points higher in mathematics than the objectives for assessments taken by students during 2009-2010. As a consequence, 342 schools that made AYP during the previous cycle — and would have made it had benchmarks not gone up — are now in the "did not make AYP" column.

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“In just three years, Virginia schools will have to have 100 percent pass rates in both reading and mathematics — and for all student subgroups — to make AYP under the current system,” Wright said. “While this is a laudable goal — and one we must continue to strive toward — it is not a basis for a workable accountability system.”

Of the schools that made AYP, 103 did so through NCLB’s “safe harbor” provision — reducing the failure rate of one or more subgroups by 10 percent — compared with 93 during the previous ratings cycle.

Only four divisions — Highland County, Lexington, Norton and West Point met or exceeded the benchmarks, compared with 12 divisions during the previous cycle. In addition — all schools in these small divisions made AYP based on 2010-2011 tests.

In two other divisions — Middlesex County and Patrick County — all schools made AYP even though the divisions did not.

For a second consecutive year, Virginia as a state did not make AYP as black students, economically disadvantaged students, Hispanic students, limited-English proficient students and students with disabilities fell short of the higher benchmarks in reading and mathematics.

While Virginia did not make AYP, the state’s students overall met the annual federal benchmark for graduation as 80 percent of the students who entered the ninth grade for the first time during 2006-2007 graduated within four years with either a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma. While all subgroups did not meet the 80-percent mark, all posted improvements. The U.S. Department of Education only recognizes Virginia’s standard and advanced diplomas for accountability purposes.

Achievement levels on state tests were little changed during 2010-2011, with the exception of results in history/social science, which declined slightly as students adjusted to new tests and item types:

- 88 percent of students passed state reading tests, compared with 89 percent during 2009-2010.
- 89 percent passed state writing tests, compared with 88 percent during 2009-2010.
- 87 percent passed state mathematics tests, compared with 88 percent during 2009-2010.
- 90 percent passed state science tests, the same percentage as during 2009-2010.
- 84 percent passed state history/social science tests, compared with 89 percent during 2009-2010.

Title I Schools No Longer Sanctioned

Eleven formerly sanctioned Title I schools exited “school-improvement” status. These schools are Red Oak-Sturgeon Elementary in Brunswick County; McCleary Elementary in Craig County; Dogwood Elementary, London Towne Elementary and Washington Mill Elementary in Fairfax County; King and Queen Elementary in King and Queen County; Lancaster Primary in Lancaster County; Middlesex Elementary in Middlesex County; Orange Elementary in Orange County; Pulaski Elementary in Pulaski County; and Westside Elementary in Roanoke.

Schools receiving federal funding under Title I of NCLB provide educational services to low-income children and are the focus of most of the law’s accountability provisions. Under the law, Title I schools that do not meet annual benchmarks in the same subject area for two or more consecutive years are identified for improvement. School-improvement sanctions increase in severity if a school fails to make AYP in the same subject area for additional consecutive years. A Title I school exits federal sanctions by meeting the annual benchmarks in the previously deficient area for two consecutive years.

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Forty percent, or 292, of the commonwealth's 730 Title I schools made AYP. One-hundred-seven Title I schools are in the first year of "school improvement" and must offer students the option of transferring to a higher-performing public school.

- 52 Title I schools — in addition to offering transfers — must also provide supplemental educational services or tutoring free-of-charge to eligible children who request these services.
- 25 Title I schools must take at least one of several corrective actions specified in federal law to raise student achievement in addition to providing transfers and tutoring.
- 11 — Cora Kelly Magnet Elementary in Alexandria; Central Elementary in Amherst County; Central Elementary, Columbia District Elementary and Cunningham District Elementary in Fluvanna County; Potomac Elementary in King George County; Kiptopeke Elementary and Occohannock Elementary in Northampton County; A.P. Hill Elementary in Petersburg; Dan River Middle in Pittsylvania County; and Elephant's Fork Elementary in Suffolk must develop alternative governance plans while offering transfers and tutoring and continuing to implement corrective action.
- 11 Title I schools are required to implement or continue implementing restructuring or alternative governance plans — while continuing to offer tutoring and choice — because of their repeated failure to make AYP. These schools are: Jefferson-Houston Elementary in Alexandria; Hoffman-Boston Elementary and Randolph Elementary in Arlington County; Pearl Sample Elementary in Culpeper County; Essex Intermediate and Tappahannock Elementary in Essex County; L.F. Palmer Elementary in Newport News; Hurt Park Elementary in Roanoke; and Vernon Johns Junior High and Peabody Middle and J.E.B. Stuart Elementary in Petersburg.
- 5 Title I schools — J.M. Langston Focus School in Danville; Armstrong High and Thomas C. Boushall Middle in Richmond; and Ellen W. Chambliss Elementary and Sussex Central Middle in Sussex County — are in the second year of "restart status" under the federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) program. Under the SIG restart model, educational management organizations are contracted to manage persistently low-performing schools. Restart schools have two years to make AYP before again becoming subject to school-improvement sanctions.

AYP ratings and updated online report cards for all Virginia public schools and school divisions are available in the [Statistics and Reports](#) section of the VDOE website.

State school accreditation ratings, which also are based on student achievement on SOL tests and other statewide assessments, will be released by VDOE in September.

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