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Education Department Releases Statewide School Performance Status *Preliminary "AYP List" Points Out Strengths and Weaknesses of Each School*

Education Commissioner Roger Sampson today released a preliminary list of schools that did not meet all the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, the most sweeping school reform legislation in our nation's history.

More schools made AYP this year than last year. This year 290 schools made AYP targets and 207 did not make AYP out of a total of 497 schools. Last year 206 schools met AYP out of 488 schools; 282 schools did not make AYP. This year 58% of schools made AYP and 42% did not make AYP. Last year 42% of schools made AYP and 58% did not make AYP.

Sampson cautioned that the preliminary AYP list reveals just part of the story about a school. He urged school officials, teachers, parents and communities to examine local school results closely to discover the strengths of their schools and to pinpoint where progress needs to be made. "There are many excellent schools in Alaska, some of which did not meet every AYP target," said Sampson.

The preliminary AYP list gives the Alaska public important information about the performance of public schools. The information is based on how students scored on state examinations in language arts and math in grades three through nine and, for tenth graders, on the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam.

Alaska's schools have a lot of work to do to fully meet the No Child Left Behind Act, Sampson said today at a statewide news conference originating in Anchorage.

The State Department of Education & Early Development today posted the preliminary AYP list on the web, as well as other information helpful in interpreting the information. The list is at www.eed.state.ak.us/NCLB under "Press Kit for Statewide AYP List Release."

NCLB, passed by Congress in January 2002, requires schools to meet AYP with groups of students or be designated as needing improvement. Groups of students include: students with limited English proficiency; students with disabilities; economically disadvantaged students; African-Americans; Alaska Natives; American Indians; Asians; Hispanics; and Caucasians. There are a number of targets a school must meet:

- 64.03% of students schoolwide and nine ethnic and socio-economic groups must achieve a score of proficient in language arts on statewide tests.
- 54.86% of the same groups of students must achieve proficient on statewide math tests.
- The test scores used for determining AYP are the Alaska Benchmark Exams for grades 3, 6 and 8; the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam at grades 10; and the CAT-6 (TerraNova) normed referenced tests in grades 4, 5, 7, 9.
- 95% of a school's student body, and each group of students, need to take the assessments in order to meet the AYP target.
- 85% attendance rate, or, if a school includes 12th grade, a 55.58% cohort graduation rate.

There are up to 31 targets that a school must reach or the school does not make AYP. A school can be on the list by not making AYP with as few as one group of students on one test or by not making AYP with all categories of students on both tests. This means NCLB does not allow schools to hide the performance of a single group of students in a school's average performance. The AYP targets are so rigorous that if all students in a school score proficient on tests, a school will not make AYP if 95% of the students in a school are not tested.

Schools on the list for the first time are called Level 1 schools; for the second year, Level 2; for the third, Level 3; for the fourth, Level 4, for the fifth, Level 5.

Once a school has reached Level 2, the school must meet AYP targets for two consecutive years for the group for which it missed making the target in order to be removed from the list. This year Alaska has 12 schools that are Level 2 or higher that met AYP this year.

Targets, called Annual Measurable Objectives by NCLB, increase over time. In 2013-2014, 100% of students in every group and schoolwide must achieve proficiency on state tests, as depicted in the following table:

School Year	Annual Measurable Objective for Language Arts	Annual Measurable Objective for Mathematics
2001-02	64.03%	54.86%
2002-03	64.03 %	54.86 %
2003-04	64.03 %	54.86 %
2004-05	70.03 %	62.38 %
2005-06	70.03 %	62.38 %
2006-07	70.03 %	62.38 %
2007-08	76.03%	69.9 %
2008-09	76.03 %	69.9 %
2009-10	76.03 %	69.9 %
2010-11	82.03%	77.42 %
2011-12	88.03 %	84.94 %
2012-13	94.03 %	92.46 %
2013-14	100%	100 %

Schools can meet AYP and not be at the target through the improvement provision of NCLB, often referred to as safe harbor. To meet AYP using safe harbor a school must reduce by 10% the number of students scoring not proficient on exams from the previous year. This is significant because these schools, while not meeting the target, are demonstrating improvement. Forty-three Alaska schools met AYP using safe harbor this year.

Sampson urged Alaskans to exercise caution when examining the AYP list. “It is very difficult for a school to make AYP. There’s one way to make AYP and 31 ways of not making it.” Sampson asked the news media to be cautious and accurate when referring to the preliminary AYP list. He quoted a publication of The Business Roundtable, a national organization of chief executive officers of leading corporations, to make his point:

“The problem is that people sometimes lump together all the schools that don’t make AYP - the ones that miss it by a lot and the ones that miss it by a little -- and call all of them ‘failures.’ That’s just unfair, and doesn’t give the public a truly accurate picture about what’s going on in our schools. Worst of all, mislabeling a school a ‘failure’ can demoralize students, teachers, parents, and the community. None of us wants that.

“Think of it this way: If two people go on a diet and set out to lose 10 pounds, is it fair to say they’ve both ‘failed’ if one lost 9-1/2 pounds while the other didn’t lose an ounce?

The federal government suggests ‘in need of improvement’ to describe schools that do not make AYP for two years... We realize that reporters sometimes use the word ‘failing’ to describe schools because education officials themselves use it. The fact is that we all need to be as accurate as we can. We know you’re a stickler for accuracy. And we know you want to be fair to kids and teachers. So if a school is a failure, call it a failure. But please don’t call a school a failure if it isn’t.”

Sampson said NCLB is also important for further pinpointing achievement gaps between groups of students. By requiring groups of students to make AYP, NCLB does not allow a school’s average test scores to mask problem areas.

Different consequences apply to schools that receive federal Title I funding from those that do not receive Title I funding. However, all Level 1 schools need to inform parents about their AYP status, and develop and implement a plan for improvement.

If a Title I school does not make AYP for two consecutive years, the school enters Title I school improvement status. In that case, parents will be given a choice, if practical, for their child to attend a different school in their district that is not at level 2 or higher, or the school must offer supplemental services to students.

Consequences are more comprehensive for Level 3 and higher schools. The majority of schools on this year's AYP list are Level 2 schools. A list of consequences is among information on the web at www.eed.state.ak.us/NCLB under "Press Kit for Statewide AYP List Release."

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