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More Alaska schools are making adequate yearly progress (Updated to reflect final results)

Alaska Education Commissioner Roger Sampson today released lists of those Alaska schools that did and did not meet the “adequate yearly progress” targets of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Under the law, schools are held accountable for showing progress in the percentage of students who score proficient on assessments in language arts and math. The national goal is that all students will be proficient by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. Schools also must meet targets in participation in assessments, attendance rates and graduation rates.

For the school year 2005-2006, 307 Alaska schools made adequate yearly progress (AYP) and 190 schools did not. Fifteen more schools made AYP in 2005-2006 than in 2004-2005. The lists of schools released today are preliminary. Continued review of the data could change the status of a school.

In school year 2005-2006, 61.7 percent of Alaska schools made AYP. This is a statistically significant increase over the 2004-2005 school year, in which 59 percent of schools made AYP.

In 2003-2004, using a different assessment system, 58 percent of schools made AYP. In 2002-2003, the first year the state released lists, 42 percent of schools made AYP.

Many of the schools that do not make AYP are falling short in fewer categories as the years go by. Schools are held accountable in 31 categories. Failure to meet targets in even one category puts a school on the “does not make AYP” list.

- In 2005-2006, 66 percent of schools that did not make AYP missed in three or fewer categories. In 2004-2005, the comparable figure was 60 percent.
- In 2005-2006, 78 schools did not meet the state’s target for the graduation rate, compared to 95 schools in 2004-2005.
- In 2005-2006, 3 percent of schools did not make AYP because they did not meet the target for student participation in the assessments, compared to 5.1 percent in 2004-2005.

It's important for the public and the media to closely examine schools' AYP reports and assessment data.

"There are many excellent schools in Alaska, some of which did not meet every AYP target," Commissioner Sampson said. "In fact, many schools have made substantial improvements in student achievement, but they have not yet made AYP."

In reading, writing and math assessments given in grades three to nine in 2005-2006 -- a total of 21 assessments -- 10 assessments showed statistically significant improvement in proficiency while two assessments showed a decline. (The tenth grade assessment was new last year and cannot be compared to results from 2004-2005.)

At the same time, some Alaska schools have shown low rates of proficiency since the law took effect in the 2002-2003 school year.

Starting this fall, the Department of Education & Early Development will send teams of experienced and successful educators to certain low-performing schools to review key elements that directly relate to effective instruction in high-performing schools. The results of the instructional audits will be used to develop improvement plans for the struggling schools.

In addition, the department has implemented a number of initiatives that reach into the classroom to increase achievement:

- The Alaska Statewide Mentor Project helps nearly 500 beginning teachers and principals a year quickly gain the skills that typically take years to learn.
- The newly created Alaska Reading Course will show teachers how to use proven methods to effectively teach reading.
- Teachers will soon have assessments they can give in class. The results will guide teachers to meet the individual needs of students.
- The department will implement the Alaska Public School Performance Incentive Program in the upcoming school year. The program ties bonuses for school staffs to significant increases in student achievement on assessments in reading, writing and math. The program is intended to encourage everyone on a school's staff to collaborate and take shared responsibility for all students, use instructional time effectively, and use the results of standards-based assessments to target each student's academic needs.

The media packet regarding AYP will be available at 11 a.m. August 11 on the front page of the department's web site at www.eed.state.ak.us. The web site also will contain detailed one-page reports about each school's AYP.

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