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Six out of 10 Virginia Schools Exceed NCLB Objectives *Higher AYP Benchmarks for Graduation & Students with Disabilities*

Six out of 10 Virginia schools exceeded or met all No Child Left Behind (NCLB) objectives during 2009-2010 despite new accountability provisions related to high school graduation and the testing of students with disabilities.

Sixty percent, or 1,104, of the 1,836 public schools earning accountability ratings during 2009-2010 made “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) by surpassing objectives in reading and mathematics and meeting other indicators of academic progress, compared with 71 percent last year.

Adequate Yearly Progress for Virginia Public Schools

	Made AYP	Did Not Make AYP	To Be Determined	Total
School Results	1,104 (60%)	726 (40%)	6 (<1%)	1,836

The schools that made AYP include 928 that also met all benchmarks during 2008-2009 and 171 schools that did not make AYP last year. Of the 726 schools that did not make AYP this year, 385 made AYP last year.

The Board of Education voted in June to require that, on average, at least 80 percent of students graduate with an advanced or standard diploma within four years for a high school, school division or the state to make AYP. Forty-one high schools and nine school divisions missed the mark this year solely because of the new graduation AYP benchmark.

The bar for students with disabilities was raised in February with the U.S. Department of Education (USED) decision to discontinue flexibility that allowed states to supplement the pass rates of disabled students. The flexibility had been allowed since 2005 in recognition of limited testing options for some students with disabilities. Eighty-seven schools and 15 school divisions did not make AYP this year as a result of the change in calculating pass rates for students with disabilities.

“The aggressive objective for graduation set by the Board of Education and the change in federal special education policy were factors as the number of schools and school divisions making AYP declined — even though overall achievement was steady in reading and up in mathematics,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright said. “These results send a clear message about the importance of graduating more students within four years.”

Eighty-eight percent of students passed mathematics tests during 2009-2010, compared with 86 percent during 2008-2009 and 84 percent during 2007-2008. The gains in mathematics were especially dramatic in the middle school grades.

- Mathematics achievement in grade six increased four points to 77 percent, compared with 73 percent during 2008-2009 and 68 percent in 2007-2008.

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- In grade seven, mathematics achievement also increased four points to 75 percent, compared with 71 percent during 2008-2009 and 65 percent in 2007-2008.
- Eighty-seven percent of students in grade eight passed in mathematics, compared with 85 percent during 2008-2009 and 83 percent in 2007-2008.

Reading achievement also was up in all three middle school grades.

- Reading achievement in grade six increased two points to 88 percent, compared with 86 percent during 2008-2009 and 85 percent in 2007-2008.
- In grade seven, reading achievement increased one point to 89 percent, compared with 88 percent during 2008-2009 and 86 percent in 2007-2008.
- Ninety percent of students in grade eight passed in reading, compared with 87 percent during 2008-2009 and 83 percent in 2007-2008.

“The gains that middle school students have made over the last three years in reading and mathematics suggest that the Board of Education’s efforts to improve adolescent literacy and prepare more students for success in Algebra I by the ninth grade are bearing fruit,” Board of Education President Eleanor B. Saslaw said.

Overall, 89 percent of Virginia students passed state reading tests, the same percentage as during 2008-2009. Eighty-seven percent passed in reading during 2007-2008.

USED last month approved the Board of Education’s request to maintain last year’s AYP benchmarks for reading and mathematics — provided that the targets are exceeded — as the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) develops a growth model for measuring the progress of schools, divisions and the state based on increases in the achievement of individual students.

“Virginia has reached a point with its annual benchmarks that it is more appropriate to look at growth in the performance of individual students rather than simple pass rates that apply to all subgroups equally to determine if schools are succeeding in raising the achievement of their most challenging students,” Wright said.

For a school, school division or the state to have made AYP, more than 81 percent of students overall and students in all AYP subgroups — white, black, Hispanic, limited English proficient (LEP), students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged — must have demonstrated proficiency on Standards of Learning (SOL) and other assessments in reading, and more than 79 percent must have passed state tests in mathematics.

Eighty-nine schools made AYP through “safe harbor” — reducing the failure rate of one or more subgroups by 10 percent — compared with 166 last year and 194 two years ago.

Virginia as a state did not make AYP as black and economically disadvantaged students each missed the objective in reading by less than half of a percentage point and the achievement of students with disabilities fell short in both reading and mathematics. The commonwealth made AYP last year.

AYP for Virginia School Divisions

	Made AYP	Did Not Make AYP	Total
Division Results	12 (9%)	120 (91%)	132

Twelve of Virginia’s 132 school divisions — Fairfax County, Henry County, Highland County, Lexington, Martinsville, Mecklenburg County, Patrick County, Radford, Salem, Scott County, Warren County and West Point — made AYP, compared with 60 last year. In seven of these divisions — Highland County, Lexington, Patrick County, Radford, Salem, Scott County and West Point — every school in the division also made AYP.

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In six divisions — Bland County, Buckingham County, Floyd County, Mathews County, Norton and Surry County — all schools made AYP even though the divisions did not.

Title I Schools No Longer Sanctioned

Fifteen formerly sanctioned Title I schools exited “school-improvement” status. These schools are Arcadia Middle in Accomack County; Patrick Henry Elementary in Alexandria; Caroline Middle in Caroline County; Charles City County Elementary in Charles City County; Hollin Meadows Elementary, Hybla Valley Elementary and Mount Vernon Woods Elementary in Fairfax County; Trevilians Elementary in Louisa County; Gordon Barbour Elementary, Lightfoot Elementary and Unionville Elementary in Orange County; Dublin Elementary in Pulaski County; Blackwell Elementary in Richmond; Fairfield Elementary in Rockbridge County; and Kate Waller Barrett Elementary in Stafford County.

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 make AYP 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 escapes federal sanctions by making AYP in the same content area for two consecutive years.

Sixty-six percent, or 472, of the commonwealth’s 716 Title I schools made AYP. The AYP status of two Title I schools remains to be determined.

- Sixty-eight Title I schools must offer students the option of transferring to a higher-performing public school.
- Thirty-six Title I schools — in addition to offering transfers — must also provide supplemental educational services or tutoring free-of-charge to children who request these services.
- Thirteen 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.
- Five schools — Pearl Sample Elementary in Culpeper County, Dogwood Elementary in Fairfax County, L.F. Palmer Elementary in Newport News, Orange Elementary in Orange County and Hurt Park Elementary in Roanoke — must develop alternative governance plans while offering transfers and tutoring and continuing to implement corrective action.
- Ten 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; Essex Intermediate and Tappahannock Elementary in Essex County; Vernon Johns Junior High, Peabody Middle and J.E.B. Stuart Elementary in Petersburg; Thomas C. Boushall Middle in Richmond; and Sussex Central Middle in Sussex County.

AYP ratings and student achievement data for all Virginia public schools and school divisions are available in the Virginia School Report Card section of the VDOE website (http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/school_report_card/index.shtml).

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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