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Contact: Charles B. Pyle, Director of Communications, (804) 371-2420
Julie C. Grimes, Communications Manager, (804) 225-2775

VDOE Identifies Priority & Focus Schools for 2013-2014 *Interventions Produce Results as Achievement Rises on New SOLs*

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has identified 37 low-performing schools as Priority schools that must engage state-approved turnaround partners to help design and implement school-reform models that meet state and federal requirements. Another 73 schools, designated as Focus schools, must employ state-approved, school-improvement coaches. The designations are based on student achievement and outcomes during 2012-2013.

Under a two-year flexibility waiver granted in 2012 by the US Department of Education (USED), interventions under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act — also known since 2001 as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) — are focused on Virginia’s lowest-performing schools.

The waiver granted Virginia schools relief from outdated NCLB-era rules and requires the state to designate the lowest-performing five percent of Title I schools as Priority schools. Another 10 percent of Title I schools are identified as Focus schools based on the achievement of historically low-performing subgroups. Title I of NCLB provides funding for schools with high percentages of low-income students.

The waiver also sets annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for narrowing achievement gaps in reading, mathematics and high school graduation rates. The AMOs serve as yearly progress goals for students in low-performing schools. Higher-performing schools are to improve or maintain achievement levels.

“It is important to consider the increased rigor of Virginia’s new reading and mathematics Standards of Learning (SOL) tests before making conclusions about schools that missed annual objectives,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright said. “Virginia has raised the bar to prepare students for the realities of the 21st century. Our challenge — from the superintendent’s office to the classroom — is to make sure students have the instruction and interventions they need to achieve the commonwealth’s college- and career-ready expectations, regardless of who they are or where they live.”

Status	Priority Schools	Focus Schools	Met All Requirements (Does Not Include Priority or Focus Schools)	Did Not Meet All Requirements		New Schools	Total
				Improvement Plan Required	Improvement Plan Not Required		
Number of Schools	37	73	715	459	534	10	1,828

Forty-one percent, or 743 of the commonwealth’s 1,828 schools — including one of the 37 Priority schools and 27 of the 73 Focus schools — met all of the objectives. Since Priority and Focus schools comprise set percentages of Title I schools, it is possible for a school to meet all AMOs and receive one of these designations. Twenty-five percent, or 459 schools, must implement improvement plans to raise the achievement of student subgroups that fell short of one or more benchmark pass rates. No plans are required for 534 higher-performing schools that met all of the annual benchmark pass rates but experienced slight declines in the performance of one or more subgroups.

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The AMOs represent the percentage of students within each demographic subgroup that must pass SOL tests in reading and mathematics in order to make what the state board and USED define as acceptable progress toward reducing — and ultimately closing achievement — gaps. High schools must also meet benchmarks for raising graduation rates.

“In setting the objectives, the Board of Education started with actual achievement on the new SOLs in our lowest-performing schools and then created goals that require the students who are farthest behind to make the largest annual gains,” Board of Education President David M. Foster said. “The AMOs are challenging but achievable goals that, if met, will considerably reduce achievement gaps, while holding schools accountable for continuous improvement for all students.”

Ten schools designated as Priority schools during 2012-2013 exited this status for the just-commenced 2013-2014 school year as they are no longer among the lowest-performing five percent of Title I and Title I-eligible schools. These schools are as follows:

- Alexandria — T.C. Williams High
- Brunswick County — James S. Russell Middle
- Colonial Beach — Colonial Beach High
- Grayson County — Fries School
- King and Queen County — Central High
- Norfolk — William H. Ruffner Middle
- Petersburg — Peabody Middle and Vernon Johns Junior High
- Prince Edward County — Prince Edward County High
- Roanoke — Westside Elementary

“All of these schools have made gains in collaboration with lead turnaround partners that were assigned as a result of corrective action plans approved by the state Board of Education or as a condition for receiving federal school-improvement grants administered by VDOE,” Wright said. “However, students in several former Priority schools continue to perform well below state accreditation standards. And two former Priority schools, Peabody Middle and Ruffner Middle, and two current Priority schools, Jefferson-Houston Elementary and Lafayette-Winona Middle, are on the list of schools that could come under the authority of the Opportunity Educational Institution.”

The 37 schools identified as Priority schools for 2013-2014 are:

- Alexandria — Jefferson-Houston Elementary
- Buckingham County — Buckingham County Elementary and Buckingham County Primary
- Franklin — Joseph P. King Jr. Middle and S.P. Morton Elementary
- Hampton — Jane H. Bryan Elementary
- Henrico County — L. Douglas Wilder Middle
- Hopewell — Hopewell High
- Martinsville — Albert Harris Elementary
- Newport News — Newsome Park Elementary, Sedgefield Elementary and Willis A. Jenkins Elementary
- Norfolk — Campostella Elementary, Jacox Elementary, Lafayette-Winona Middle, Lake Taylor Middle, Lindenwood Elementary, P.B. Young Sr. Elementary and Tidewater Park Elementary
- Northampton County — Kiptopeke Elementary and Northampton High
- Petersburg — A.P. Hill Elementary and J.E.B. Stuart Elementary
- Richmond — Armstrong High, Binford Middle, Blackwell Elementary, Elkhardt Middle, Fred D. Thompson Middle, Ginter Park Elementary, Henderson Middle, John Marshall High, Martin Luther King Jr. Middle, Oak Grove/Bellemeade Elementary, Richmond Alternative and Thomas C. Boushall Middle
- Roanoke — Lincoln Terrace Elementary and William Fleming High

Roanoke’s Lincoln Terrace Elementary was the only Priority school to meet all AMOs.

Focus schools retain their designation for a minimum of two years — unless they are subsequently identified as Priority schools or no longer receive federal Title I funding. Twenty-seven of the Focus schools identified in the fall of 2012 — and that retain this status for 2013-2014 — met all AMOs for reading, mathematics and graduation.

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“Every student subgroup in these schools met its achievement goal on the new reading SOLs and every subgroup improved and met its AMO in mathematics as well,” said Wright. “I congratulate the teachers, principals and other educators in these schools and the VDOE-assigned coaches who helped them achieve this success.”

The 27 improving Focus schools are as follows:

- Arlington County — Barrett Elementary
- Augusta County — Edward G. Clymore Elementary
- Bedford County — Big Island Elementary and Body Camp Elementary
- Campbell County — Altavista Elementary and Rustburg Elementary
- Chesterfield County — Crestwood Elementary
- Danville — Schoolfield Elementary
- Fairfax County — Annandale Terrace Elementary and Forestdale Elementary
- Hampton — Alfred S. Forest Elementary
- Hanover County — Elmont Elementary
- King George County — Sealston Elementary
- Loudoun County — Rolling Ridge Elementary
- Lunenburg County — Victoria Elementary
- Lynchburg — Heritage Elementary, Paul Munro Elementary and Robert S. Payne Elementary
- Manassas — Richard C. Haydon Elementary
- Northumberland County — Northumberland Elementary
- Nottoway County — Crewe Primary
- Prince Edward County — Prince Edward Elementary
- Prince William County — Elizabeth Vaughan Elementary and Suella G. Ellis Elementary
- Smyth County — Marion Elementary and Oak Point Elementary
- Stafford County — Rocky Run Elementary

The other 46 Focus schools — many of which also saw increased student achievement — for 2013-2014 are as follows:

- Albemarle County — Scottsville Elementary and Woodbrook Elementary
- Alexandria — John Adams Elementary and Patrick Henry Elementary
- Amherst County — Madison Heights Elementary
- Arlington County — Campbell Elementary and Drew Model Elementary
- Bedford County — Bedford Elementary, Bedford Primary and Moneta Elementary
- Bristol — Washington-Lee Elementary
- Buena Vista — Enderly Heights Elementary and F.W. Kling Jr. Elementary
- Campbell County — Brookneal Elementary
- Culpeper County — Pearl Sample Elementary and Sycamore Park Elementary
- Fairfax County — Sleepy Hollow Elementary
- Fauquier County — Margaret M. Pierce Elementary
- Fluvanna County — Carysbrook Elementary
- Frederick County — Indian Hollow Elementary
- Fredericksburg — Hugh Mercer Elementary and Lafayette Upper Elementary
- Greene County — Greene County Primary and Nathanael Greene Elementary
- Greensville County — Greensville Elementary
- Hampton — Cesar Tarrant Elementary and John B. Cary Elementary
- Loudoun County — Guilford Elementary and Sugarland Elementary
- Louisa County — Moss-Nuckols Elementary
- Lunenburg County — Kenbridge Elementary
- Manassas — Jennie Dean Elementary
- Mecklenburg County — LaCrosse Elementary
- New Kent County — George W. Watkins Elementary
- Newport News — Carver Elementary, L.F. Palmer Elementary and Magruder Elementary
- Norfolk — Richard Bowling Elementary and Sherwood Forest Elementary
- Northampton County — Occohannock Elementary
- Nottoway County — Blackstone Primary
- Page County — Luray Elementary
- Prince William County — West Gate Elementary and Yorkshire Elementary
- Shenandoah County — W.W. Robinson Elementary
- Staunton — Bessie Weller Elementary

Additional information on the progress of Virginia schools and divisions toward meeting the goals of the commonwealth’s NCLB flexibility waiver is available on the [Federal Accountability](#) page of the VDOE website.

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