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Department Releases Accountability Determinations for Schools

MONTPELIER – The Vermont Department of Education released 2011 school accountability determinations as required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) today.

A school makes Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) by meeting targets set by the state as required by NCLBA. These targets increase every three years with the goal of 100 percent proficiency by 2014. The 2011 AYP targets reflect the final substantial increase before the goal reaches the expectation of 100% of students proficient.

As a consequence, the department has seen a significant increase in the number of schools that did not make AYP. Ninety-eight schools are identified for school improvement in one or more area. Twenty of those are new schools entering the first year of school improvement.

Additionally, 118 schools did not make AYP for the first time. There are no formal consequences for those schools. If they don't make it in the same area for a second time, they enter school improvement. See the following table for a complete breakdown.

"Vermont did not choose to lower our standards in the face of these federal accountability requirements," said Commissioner Vilaseca, "therefore we continue to see more schools identified. Nationally, an estimated 82 percent of schools in the country will not make AYP this year."

A school that does not make AYP for two consecutive years in the same indicator enters School Improvement status, which requires schools to take specific actions designed to improve student achievement in the area(s) designated as not making AYP.

A school must make adequate yearly progress for all students, as well as for students in several sub-groups if there are at least 40 students in the subgroup. AYP determinations are made for sub-groups of students by race, socio-economic status, English language learners and students with disabilities.

We recognize the important goal was to ensure that all students were prepared for college and careers in the 21st century," said Director of Research, Standards and Assessment Gail Taylor. "We are confident that as we work with other states to develop a strong assessment of the new Common Core Standards, reasonable modifications to the accountability system will allow us to retain high expectations for students but to demonstrate Vermont's relatively strong performance amongst other states."

The development of a set of Common Standards in mathematics and literacy known as the Common Core and currently adopted by 43 states, including Vermont, as well as common assessments built on those standards is, in part, to ensure that all states hold students to common content and achievement standards.

"There is a challenge at this point as we transition in the future to new standards, new assessments and new accountability systems as to how to support schools that do not make AYP under the current system," said Deputy Commissioner Rae Ann Knopf. "The Department will work with schools during this transition period to tailor requirements as best we can within state and federal requirements."

AYP determinations are based on the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) assessments and the Vermont Alternate Assessment Portfolio given to Vermont public school students in grades three through eight and 11. The NECAP was administered in October 2010. This is the sixth year these exams have been given in the elementary and middle grades, and the fourth time they were given to students in grade 11.

More information on school and district performance can be found on the department's Web site at http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_accountability.html#AYP. The complete press release packet can be found at http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/press_releases.html#ayp.

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