

NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION **NEWS RELEASE**

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-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -

Carson City, Nevada, August 1, 2008 – Middle and High Schools Successfully Jump Over Higher Achievement Bar.

Dr. Keith Rheault, Superintendent of Public Instruction, released the annual adequate yearly progress (AYP) results today. The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) and Nevada school districts have finalized the school and school district accountability designations for the 2007-2008 school year. Dr. Rheault comments that, "this year was extremely challenging as school districts and the Nevada Department of Education faced the first round of budget cuts while the AYP measurable objectives took a significant jump to meet the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) proficiency target of 100% by the 2013-2014 school year. In spite of these challenges, the State had a 27% increase in the number of middle and high schools making AYP, while the number of elementary schools hitting the mark, declined."

Of the State's 654 public school sites, 404 fulfilled the challenging requirements to successfully attain Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). This represents 62% of Nevada public schools. By contrast, 69% of schools made AYP in 2006-2007 and just fewer than 47% made AYP in 2004-2005. Had the proficiency targets not been increased this year, the NDE projected that 72% of the schools would have made AYP.

Sixty-three of the schools making AYP demonstrated performance that was significantly above the expected levels of achievement. These schools have exceeded State expectations for overall performance (Status) and/or have significantly reduced the percentage of non-proficient students (Growth). These outstanding schools will be recognized by the Nevada Department of Education as High Achieving or Exemplary Schools.

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Among the sixty-three schools receiving this honor for 2007-2008, 57 will be recognized as High Achieving and 6 will be recognized as Exemplary. Attaining Exemplary status is particularly challenging as schools must not only exceed achievement targets but must also continue to improve on their own previous high performance. As schools get closer to 100% proficiency, it becomes more difficult to maintain their top ranking because they have already reduced the number of non-proficient students so significantly.

The school as a whole receives an AYP designation of overall performance based on achievement and participation in the English language arts and math assessments, and on a third indicator (average daily attendance or graduation rate as appropriate). The AYP analysis provides similar data about the nine student groups that may comprise a school's population. As prescribed by the NCLB and Nevada statute, AYP provides data about the performance of the school as a whole, American Indian/Alaska Natives, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Hispanic/Latinos, Black/African Americans, White/Caucasians, students with Individual Educational Plans, Limited English Proficient students, and students of low socio-economic status. Lack of success of any one student group in hitting the achievement target or other indicator may result in the school not making AYP for the year.

Of the 246 schools not making AYP for 2007-2008, 119 are on the Watch List which allows them a period of one year to improve before they are judged as In Need of Improvement (not making AYP for two consecutive years). Twenty-eight schools are designated as In Need of Improvement Year 1, 26 schools are In Need of Improvement Year 2, 27 schools are In Need of Improvement Year 3, 28 schools are In Need of Improvement Year 4, and 19 schools are In Need of Improvement Year 5. All of these schools will receive assistance in their improvement efforts through financial support and technical assistance provided by the State and school districts.

Several schools which were designated as In Need of Improvement last year have met the expectations for AYP this year, and are now labeled as "Hold." The addition of "Hold" to the designation indicates that the school has successfully made AYP, but will need to make AYP again during the 2008-2009 school year in order to regain its Adequate designation.

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Based on 2007-2008 AYP results, the State as a whole, and 16 of 17 Nevada school districts made AYP, with a single rural school district not making the mark. Of particular note is the improvement shown by Clark County School District, which represents 56% of the school sites in the state and 72% of our student population. Clark County has been removed from “In need of Improvement” status by making AYP for the second consecutive year, in spite of the jump in the achievement bar.

The Adequate Yearly Progress analysis is an important tool in planning for school and district improvement. The AYP analysis depends heavily on school performance on Nevada’s standards-based assessments which measure school progress in reading, writing, and mathematics. The assessments are closely aligned to Nevada content and achievement standards. These standards were created in response to landmark legislation passed by the Nevada Legislature during its 1997 and 1999 sessions. The Nevada standards were established in order to clearly identify what students should know and be able to do in academic content areas.

Data about school and specified student group performance is a necessary component in planning for school improvement. In support of school improvement efforts, the Nevada Legislature has required that all schools create school improvement plans. Federal legislation provides support for school improvement to schools eligible for Title I funds, but does not provide such funding for non-Title I schools. However, the Nevada Legislature has appropriated funding for non-Title I schools.

In closing, Dr. Rheault praised the commitment of schools and districts. “We knew schools would be facing an increased challenge during the 2007-2008 school year as state expectations for AYP performance were raised for English language arts and for mathematics, to meet the ultimate goal of one-hundred percent of students meeting proficiency by 2013-2014. We are proud that the number of middle and high schools making AYP has gone up significantly. The Nevada Department of Education and the school districts are concerned about the impact of additional budget cuts on student achievement while higher expectations and increased proficiency targets remain in our future. “