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Kathy Cox
State School Superintendent

PRESS RELEASE

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58% of Georgia Schools Meet Accountability Goals

ATLANTA – State Superintendent of Schools Kathy Cox announced today the release of the comprehensive 2003 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report for all schools, an update of last week’s list for Title I schools that incorporates all non-Title I schools and those schools whose status has changed during the verification process. The release of AYP information for non-Title I schools does not affect public school choice options or parental notification for school choice.

“Today we can see where we stand as a state on our journey towards a quality education for all of Georgia’s children,” said Cox. “The AYP status report points the way in our efforts for Georgia to lead the nation in improving student achievement. It gives us unprecedented access to data—sorted by ethnicity, race, income, and disability—that will enable us to target help to struggling students and schools with laser-like precision. To paraphrase [U.S. Secretary of Education] Rod Paige, it will help us to eliminate the achievement gap that has for too long split us into two Georgias: one that dreams and one that doesn’t; one that is hopeful, and one that is hopeless.”

Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, each school, school system, and the State itself must meet annual performance goals for reading and math on state assessments for each student group—as categorized by race, ethnicity, disability, English proficiency, and socioeconomic status--in order to make Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP. These performance goals increase each year until the 2013-2014 school year, when every child in Georgia must achieve at grade level. Those schools that do not make AYP for one or more groups of students for two or more consecutive years are placed on a Needs Improvement list, and parents are given the option of transferring children to another, higher performing school. Because 2003 is the first year of making AYP determinations for non-Title I schools, none of them will be in school improvement

status for the 2003-2004 school year. Next year, however, *all* schools that have not made AYP for two or more consecutive years will face consequences.

The highlights of the report include:

- ❑ 1152, or 58%, of 2003 schools made AYP;
- ❑ 846, or 42%, of schools did not make AYP;
- ❑ 536 schools (211 Title I, 325 non-Title I) did not make AYP because of 95% participation rate;
- ❑ 395 schools (222 Title I, 173 non-Title I) did not achieve AYP in only 1 or 2 cells.

Asked if schools that did not make AYP are all “failing schools,” Cox said, “Absolutely not. In fact, you’ll find that some of these schools have been among our most successful in terms of average test scores. Many have been very successful at meeting the overall needs of their student populations, but need to improve with one particular group of students, such as limited English proficient students. The problem with average test scores is that they mask disparities between students. Under No Child Left Behind, we’re shining the light on those achievement gaps where we didn’t know they existed before.”

“NCLB raises the bar for what it means to be a successful school. It defines success not on average test scores or on those of the highest achieving group of students, but on those of every group of students, including the lowest of achievers. This law means what it says. For too long, we’ve had a system that educates some of our students well. We need a system that educates *all* of Georgia’s children well.”

The superintendent also addressed the 536 schools that did not make AYP because they did not meet the 95% participation requirement—some in one student group only. “Under No Child Left Behind, we can no longer test only certain groups of our students, leaving many students out. Every child—regardless of race, disability, or income level—deserves to be assessed on his or her performance. That belief is foundational to everything this law is about.”

Cox also stressed efforts to ensure that schools and students improve. The newly created Division of School Improvement will implement a statewide school improvement infrastructure involving the collaboration of Georgia Department of Education, Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA), and local school system experts. Additionally, school turnaround teams will identify and target for improvement specific areas of student and school performance & provide targeted resources and assistance.

“Under No Child Left Behind,” the superintendent concluded, “we can truly say for the first time ever that we’re going to focus on the performance of every child in every classroom in every school across the state. I’m confident that we will reach the end of our journey and achieve our goal: that Georgia will lead the nation in improving student achievement.”

You may access the interactive 2003 AYP status report at http://db1.doe.k12.ga.us/ows-bin/owa/ayp_main.entry_form. You can access a summary report for Title I schools at http://techservices.doe.k12.ga.us/ayp/title1_2003ayplist.pdf. A statewide summary is available at http://db1.doe.k12.ga.us/ows-bin/owa/osa_pack_ayp_dis_summary_test.entry_form?p_fiscal_year=2003.