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Granholt Pledges to Join School Leaders, Communities to Help Schools Make Progress

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholt today announced that her administration will forge a new partnership with schools, businesses, and community organizations to take urgent action to help turn around “high-priority” Michigan schools. Granholt’s announcement followed the Department of Education’s release of a statewide accounting of schools that have not met goals for “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) as required by the new federal “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) law.

“The children in these schools need our help now,” said Granholt. “We cannot wait to support them. These children are the future of this state. Today, the entire Michigan community is responding to their call for help.”

Granholt called the partnership “unprecedented,” noting that this is the first time that the Department of Education, local school districts, intermediate school districts, private businesses, the faith community, social service organizations, teacher unions, state government, the State Board of Education, and the foundation community have joined forces to help low-performing schools achieve academic success for all of their children.

“We represent every sector of Michigan, but we are united by one goal: to help Michigan’s children succeed,” Granholt said.

Granholt praised the 1,990 Michigan schools that have achieved state goals for reading and math, calling them, the staff who work in them, and the parents who support them, “proof positive of our schools’ capacity for success.” She stressed, however, that the 216 schools that did not make adequate progress are now the state’s “highest priority.”

“We can now see precisely which schools are hurting, so we can see precisely where to target resources. We must focus our efforts to improve education on first improving these highest-priority schools.”

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Granholt explained that participants in this new partnership will commit their various resources to assist high-priority schools that agree to take urgent actions to improve their students' educational progress.

Granholt's plan calls for each high-priority school to send its administrators to a "Principals Academy" beginning next month and send its staff to a "Summer Leadership School" before the beginning of the next school year. By the end of this school year, each high-priority school will submit a rigorous, detailed "AYP Achievement Plan" to the State Department of Education for approval. The summer leadership academies will give principals and teachers the skills they need to implement these progress plans.

The Governor's partnership will, in turn, lend its resources to those high-priority schools that take immediate action to begin their turnaround. The state's Children's Action Network will focus coordinated, improved social service delivery to those schools; schools will be partnered with a local business and/or faith organization to offer support; scholarship money through the Governor's Great Lakes, Great Hopes scholarship program will be targeted at these high-priority schools; and Mentor Michigan will focus on finding mentors for children in these schools.

"For the first time, Michigan's Governor, the State Board of Education, the Department of Education, and other key educational stakeholders are aligned with a singular purpose: to uplift those Michigan schools that need our help the most," said Tom Watkins, Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction. "Together, we will move forward to strengthen all of our schools and ensure that all of our schools are accountable for success."

"This partnership's goals are in direct alignment with State Board of Education's singular strategic goal of improving academic achievement in all schools, especially those that are under performing," said Kathleen Straus, State Board of Education President. "This Board is thrilled to have such an active partner in spearheading this movement to ensure that we truly leave no child behind."

Under the terms of No Child Left Behind, every elementary and middle school must demonstrate that all of its children are making "adequate yearly progress" as measured by the state's math and reading MEAP tests. Though Michigan has been collecting AYP data for a number of years, this is the first time that schools are required to implement specific remedies at schools not making adequate progress. Data released today was compiled from MEAP tests administered during the 2001-2002 school year.

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Schools that do not meet AYP goals for two or more years are required to take steps to help their children demonstrate educational proficiency and progress ranging from offering outside tutoring, to allowing parents to transfer children to a school with higher test scores, to replacing teachers and leadership in a school building.

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