

For Immediate Release**Tuesday, September 20, 2011****Contact: JC Considine 781-338-3112****Governor Patrick Celebrates Encouraging MCAS Gains at Turnaround Schools Across the Commonwealth***127 Commendation Schools Named; 18 New Schools Meet AYP Target*

LOWELL - Governor Deval Patrick and state education officials today released the spring 2011 school and district MCAS results and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) determinations at the Charlotte M. Murkland Elementary School in Lowell, celebrating the strong improvement made by many of the state's 35 underperforming schools since last year.

Overall, the majority of schools statewide held their performance or improved since last year in English language arts (ELA) and Math. Statewide, 22 of the 35 underperforming ("Level 4") schools made combined gains in ELA and Math of 5 percentage points or higher in the percent of students scoring Proficient or higher between 2010 and 2011.

"I am extremely proud of the hard work and dedication these students and teachers put in every day to reach for success," said Governor Patrick. "The gains exhibited at Murkland Elementary demonstrate that when we focus efforts on providing schools with the tools they need, our students will rise to the challenge and progress will be made in closing achievement gaps."

An intense focus on redesigning chronically underperforming schools is a key part of the Patrick-Murray Administration's education reform efforts. The state's 35 most persistently low performing schools were designated as so-called "Level 4" schools in March 2010 under the state's new accountability and assistance framework and became eligible for federal aid and state support to bring about dramatic improvements in student performance through new school designs, improved instructional support and stronger leadership. This new framework is helping to place the state's lowest performing schools on a path to success, so all students can receive the education and the opportunities they deserve.

"The first-year results for the Commonwealth's underperforming schools are largely positive," said Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester. "Prior to the 2010-2011 school year, these 35 schools were stuck with low achievement and no clear improvement trend. Two-thirds of the schools increased achievement last year, whether compared to their prior record or to the statewide results. It is clear that low performance is not pre-ordained. When school districts take on the status quo, they are able to secure better outcomes for students."

The Level 4 schools with the biggest combined increase in the percent of students scoring Proficient and Advanced between 2010 and 2011, all grades combined, were:

- Charlotte M. Murkland, Lowell: up 13 percentage points in ELA; up 20 in math
- Homer Street, Springfield: up 12 in ELA; up 20 in math
- Alfred G. Zanetti, Springfield: up 11 in ELA; up 20 in math
- Elias Brookings, Springfield: up 12 in ELA; up 18 in math
- E J Harrington, Lynn: up 14 in ELA; up 14 in math
- John F Kennedy, Boston: up 9 in ELA; up 18 in math
- Orchard Gardens, Boston: up 10 in ELA; up 16 in math
- William P Connery, Lynn: up 12 in ELA; up 12 in math
- Elihu Greenwood, Boston: up 12 in ELA; up 8 in math

- Chandler Elementary, Worcester: up 7 in ELA; up 12 in math

"I applaud the hard work of our students, teachers and administrators and, in particular, the accomplishments of the Murkland Elementary School, which we celebrate today," said Secretary of Education Paul Reville. "Governor Patrick has been a forceful advocate for ensuring that all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential. The Murkland Elementary and many schools across the Commonwealth are proving that the Governor's vision is achievable with hard work and the right supports."

At the Murkland School, the leadership team has implemented tiered instruction that focused on supports for English language learners, effective instruction with an emphasis on student discourse, and aligned curriculum that emphasizes lesson objectives, quality of questioning, and continua of development related to content and learning. The school's principal also introduced a "morning meeting" when he arrived last year to ensure that students in every classroom understand the expectations for the day and their performance.

"We are proud of the growth at the Murkland School, and I congratulate each member of the team and the students and their families," said Lowell Public Schools Superintendent Jean Franco. "The progress at Murkland is a direct result of the focused strategic planning of a great many contributors at the state and district level, our teacher's union, the school-based leadership team, and the daily hard work of teachers, staff, and students. The Murkland School team responded to the challenge tirelessly, and their work has not only impacted their students but has assisted the entire district's redesign efforts."

Commendation Schools

Based on the 2011 MCAS and AYP results, 127 "Commendation" schools were recognized for their success in narrowing proficiency gaps for high needs students over a two-year period, demonstrating median growth of 60 or higher for two consecutive years, or exiting their NCLB Accountability Status.

Adequate Yearly Progress

Commissioner Chester today also released school and district AYP determinations, which measure progress toward annual performance targets in ELA and Math as required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. In 2011, a total of 18 schools made AYP for the second consecutive year and exited their accountability status. The 18 schools that exited status this year are located in the following 16 districts: Billerica (Billerica Memorial High School); Boston (Dante Alighieri School, James Otis School, New Mission High School); Concord (Concord Middle School); Easthampton (Neil A. Pepin School); Harvard (Harvard Elementary School); Leverett (Leverett Elementary School); Lowell (Charles W. Morey School); Medway (Medway Middle School); Milton (Glover School); North Andover (Thomson School); Norwell (William G. Vinal School); Norwood (F A Cleveland School); Quincy (Squantum School); Blackstone-Millville (John F. Kennedy Elementary School); Gill-Montague (Gill Elementary School); and Nashoba (Mary Rowlandson Elementary School).

The Murkland Elementary School was one of four underperforming ("Level 4") schools in 2011 – including the William P. Connery School in Lynn and the Homer Street and Alfred G. Zanetti Schools in Springfield – to make AYP in both ELA and Math in the aggregate and all subgroups.

According to the 2011 AYP determinations, 1,404 schools (82 percent) and 354 districts (91 percent) did not make AYP in 2011, up from 1,141 schools (67 percent) and 316 districts (79 percent) in 2010. Of those schools and districts not making AYP for two or more years consecutively, 1,089 schools (64 percent) and 151 districts (39 percent) were identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. This is an increase since last year, when 971 schools (56 percent) and 123 districts (32 percent) were identified. Schools and districts that are identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring are required to take steps to focus efforts on improving student performance.

For more information on MCAS or to view school or district results, look online at http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/mcas.aspx or <http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/>. For more information on AYP, go to <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sda/ayp>.