



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Tuesday, Feb. 11, 2014

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## **Minnesota Schools Post Strong Progress Toward Closing Achievement Gaps for Students**

ROSEVILLE – With all eyes focused on closing achievement gaps, new data from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) show that districts and charter schools across the state are largely on track to meet an aggressive statewide goal of closing gaps by 50 percent by 2017.

The data have been provided to all districts and charter schools in Minnesota, and offer school officials a concrete measure of how close to on-track they are in closing the gaps between students of color and white students within the timeline.

“For the first time, we have concrete goals around gaps, and are letting our school leaders know exactly how far they need to go to be fully on track to close these gaps,” said Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. “When you look at the numbers, you begin to realize not only how far we’ve come, but that our goal of reducing these disparities is actually within our reach and very doable.”

The data are part of Minnesota’s new accountability system, developed as part of its No Child Left Behind Flexibility waiver, which measures how students in every subgroup—white, black, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, special education, low-income and English language learners—are performing academically while also setting yearly goals for increasing student achievement that will ensure all gaps for each school are closed by 50 percent by 2017. Minnesota is one of the waiver states, if not the only one, providing this kind of data to school districts.

Forty-three percent of districts have met their 2013 targets in reading for every single subgroup. In math, nearly 40 percent of districts met their 2013 targets for every subgroup. Just as encouraging, 32 percent were meeting their reading targets for all but one subgroup, while 26 percent of districts were meeting their 2013 targets in math for all but one subgroup.

“To have three quarters of our districts there or nearly there in reading, and two-thirds of our districts at the same place in math is remarkable,” continued Cassellius. “Clearly, we still have work to do, but the kind of accelerated growth we’re seeing in so many districts shows that with focused attention, it can be done. When I see these numbers, I feel confident that school leaders and teachers are working harder than ever to ensure every child has what they need to succeed.”

Each year, in order to meet the 2017 goal, districts will have new targets they must meet for each subgroup to ensure all gaps will be closed by half. Later this month, MDE will release 2013 graduation rates which will also show dramatic acceleration of improvement across the state.

“Every child deserves the opportunity to succeed,” Commissioner Cassellius said. “But for too long achievement gaps in Minnesota not only persisted, they grew until they were some of the worst in the nation. That is no longer the case. We are reclaiming Minnesota as a leader in education and a place where all kids can thrive.”

Commissioner Cassellius will present this information and other data on Minnesota’s efforts to address achievement gaps to the Minnesota Senate E-12 Education Division on Wednesday, February 12 at 9 a.m.

[View the excel spreadsheet on the MDE website.](#)