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SAR: Colorado schools get "report cards"

By Karen Rouse, Denver Post Staff Writer

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There are 75 fewer public schools carrying the performance label of "unsatisfactory" this year compared to the 2001-02 school year, and 60 more Colorado schools have an academic rating of "high."

But too many schools have not moved forward consistently and a few are in danger of being converted to a charter school because they continue to underperform, Gov. Bill Owens said Tuesday in a press conference announcing the release of the 2005 state School Accountability Reports.

"Not all the scores are positive this year," Owens said during a press conference at the Colorado Department of Education. "A handful of schools are on the brink of being converted." Still, he said the reports arm parents.

"They now have the ability to compare schools," said Owens. "It may not be perfect, but more information is better than less".

The so-called "report cards" include drop-out rates, teacher salaries and overall academic ratings for each of the state's 1,800 schools. There are five overall ratings: unsatisfactory, low, average, high or excellent, depending on how students who took the CSAP performed that year.

In addition, this year's report card, the fifth to be released by the state, also includes three new pieces of information - the school district's accreditation status, the number of federal education goals the school had to meet compared to how many it actually met, and a growth rating.

State Board of Education member Evie Hudak said the public will see some surprises when they compare the growth rating with the overall academic rating for each school.

While the overall rating is based solely on how students performed on the Colorado Student Assessment Program test in 2005, the academic growth rating compares the scores of students who took the CSAP in 2004 with those same students' scores in 2005.

As a result, a school could be rated "excellent," yet show a decline in academic growth. There were 499 schools that declined in the academic growth between 2004 and 2005.

Yet, of those, 7 percent actually had a better overall school rating.

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