

Report of the
South Carolina
High School Assessment Task Force

January 14, 2011

Submitted to the

Senate Finance Committee
Senate Education Committee
House Ways and Means Committee
House Education and Public Works Committee
State Board of Education
Education Oversight Committee

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Executive Summary

The South Carolina Department of Education, in collaboration with the Education Oversight Committee, was charged by the 118th Session of the South Carolina General Assembly to convene a task force to include, but not be limited to, district level instructional and assessment personnel to examine the feasibility of shifting from the use of HSAP to end-of-course assessments for meeting federal assessment requirements. .2010 S.C. Acts 337. The task force was charged with examining the utility of the High School Assessment Program (HSAP) and End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) and the benefits and information each provides, as well as implementation considerations, costs factors, and appropriate transition timelines the State may encounter in shifting from HSAP to end-of-course assessments for federal purposes. The task force was also charged with submitting its findings by January 15, 2011. The task force was supported with facilitation, documentation of the meetings, and research by the Southeast Comprehensive Center at SEDL.

The South Carolina Department of Education, in collaboration with the Education Oversight Committee, convened the task force on September 8, 2010 to provide task force members with a common base of knowledge regarding state and federal law, assessments, and current initiatives. The task force met again on October 29, 2010 to receive and discuss additional information about the relationship between performance of students on the HSAP and EOCEP, the student information system capabilities for tracking student assessment data, the relationship between student performance on HSAP and PLAN® assessments, end-of-course assessments administered by other states, and assessment cost information for a sample of Southern states. The task force also began drafting options for high school assessment. On November 9, 2010 the task force met to develop a recommendation for the high school assessment program. A draft report and recommendations were developed and provided to task force members for feedback. Task force members provided feedback in writing and by means of a conference call on December 3, 2010. A second draft of the report and recommendations was developed and again task force members provided feedback in writing and by means of a conference call on January 4, 2011.

Recommendations

The task force formulated its recommendations for high school assessment after careful consideration of the current state assessment programs, WorkKeys® and other commercially available assessments, task force values, state and federal requirements, and other contextual considerations. The task force members had thorough dialogue and debate about the complex and interwoven elements of high school assessment. The task force members wrestled with the dilemma of the efficiencies of reduced assessment and cost against the desired effectiveness of high school assessments in the best interests of students. The task force members agreed that while the current assessments do serve a purpose, they are not ideal. Task force members believe strongly that the *ideal high school assessment* is characterized as a) providing useful and meaningful information to students, educators, the public, employers, and post-secondary institutions; b) supportive of the wide variety of career paths students may seek following high school; and c) a valid indicator of effective implementation of curriculum. If unconstrained by state and federal laws, evolving initiatives, and the timeline for their work, the task force may have reached a different set of recommendations than those presented below.

The task force members recognize, however, that any decision is context dependent and a change in context may lead to a different conclusion than the one reached by the task force at this time. Given the current context and the values expressed, the task force makes the following recommendations.

- 1. Maintain the High School Assessment Program (HSAP) until 2014-15, when the assessments developed by the consortia based on the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics are implemented.**
- 2. Maintain the Biology 1 End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) test and eliminate all other EOCEP tests.**
- 3. Implement a separate funding program to support local option administration of the Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics, and Locating Information WorkKeys® assessments.**
- 4. Reconvene this task force or another similar group to review the direction of high school assessment during November 2011.**

The task force *strongly encourages* policy makers to read the full report so that they will have a more robust understanding of the values, contextual considerations, and rationale for the task force recommendations.

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Introduction

The South Carolina Department of Education, in collaboration with the Education Oversight Committee, was charged by the 118th Session of the South Carolina General Assembly to convene a task force to include, but not be limited to, district level instructional and assessment personnel to examine the feasibility of shifting from the use of HSAP to end-of-course assessments for meeting federal assessment requirements. .2010 S.C. Acts 337. The task force was charged with examining the utility of the High School Assessment Program (HSAP) and End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) and the benefits and information each provides as well as implementation considerations, costs factors, and appropriate transition timelines the State may encounter in shifting from HSAP to end-of-course assessments for federal purposes. The task force was also charged with submitting its findings to the Senate Finance Committee, Senate Education Committee, House Ways and Means Committee, House Education and Public Works Committee, the State Board of Education, and the Education Oversight Committee by January 15, 2011. The task force was supported with facilitation, documentation of the meetings, and research by the Southeast Comprehensive Center at SEDL.

In December 2009 the Education Oversight Committee appointed a High School Working Group to address the following charge:

The Education Oversight Committee (EOC) is requesting advice on the criteria used to evaluate high schools in promoting higher levels of student achievement and high school graduation rates. The EOC requests specific advice on the following: (a) accountability for scores earned in virtual and dual credit settings; (b) performance of students with disabilities; (c) fifth-year-graduation success; (d) utilization of HSAP generally and the longitudinal measure; and (e) utilization of a workforce readiness measure.

The Working Group issued its Report and Recommendations to the Education Oversight Committee on May 26, 2010. Among the recommendations of the Working Group, one was directed at the work of the task force.

The Working Group asks that the responsibilities of the High School Assessment Program task force, pursuant to H4823, be expanded to include study of the use of a workforce readiness credential in lieu of the HSAP exit examination. The study should include alignment with the content standards, comparison of

performance for those students already taking both HSAP and a workforce readiness exam and a pilot study to compare student and school performance.

The Working Group also made a separate recommendation that WorkKeys® be considered as an alternate method by which students can demonstrate competency to satisfy state-mandated testing requirements.

The South Carolina Department of Education, in collaboration with the Education Oversight Committee, convened the task force on September 8, 2010 (see Appendix A for a list of task force members). The purpose of this meeting was to provide task force members with a common base of knowledge regarding:

- the task force purpose,
- current high school assessment programs (HSAP and EOCEP),
- WorkKeys®,
- current use of assessments in state and federal accountability,
- high school assessment in other states,
- Common Core State Standards and assessment consortia,
- requirements under the state law and Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and
- anticipated changes as a result of reauthorization of ESEA.

The result of presentations and discussion on these topics was a request from task force members for some additional information.

The task force met again on October 29, 2010 to receive and discuss additional information about the relationship between performance of students on the HSAP and EOCEP, the student information system capabilities for tracking student assessment data, the relationship between student performance on HSAP and PLAN® assessments, end-of-course assessments administered by other states, and assessment cost information for a sample of Southern states. The task force then developed options for high school assessment taking into consideration the legislative charge, the 2010 High School Working Group recommendations, and all the information presented to the task force. These activities generated extensive discussion of the merits of the EOCEP and HSAP, the relationship between performance of students on the EOCEP and HSAP assessments, and possible options. There was also extensive discussion about the need for the high school assessment to provide meaningful information to students, parents, educators, and employers. Task force members discussed the value of the ACT®, SAT®, PLAN®, PSAT® and WorkKeys® assessments. Task force members expressed support for implementing the WorkKeys® assessments because of the information it provided for students seeking a variety of career paths following high school. There was not agreement on whether these assessments should be

required for all students or whether school districts individually should make that decision. The task force developed four options and task force members were asked to discuss these options with the groups they represented prior to the next task force meeting.

On November 9, 2010 the task force met to develop a recommendation for the high school assessment program. The task force members had a thorough discussion of the various options and contextual considerations. Again, there was extensive discussion about the utility of the EOCEP and HSAP. Task force members again expressed strong support for including WorkKeys® as part of high school assessment and debated whether WorkKeys® should be required or an option for school districts. As a result of the discussion, the task force set out the following values, contextual considerations, summary of the current high school assessment programs, and a draft report and recommendations were developed and provided to task force members for feedback. Task force members provided feedback in writing and by means of a conference call on December 3, 2010. A second draft of the report and recommendations was developed and again task force members provided feedback in writing and by means of a conference call on January 4, 2011.

Values

The High School Assessment Task Force thinks it is important for stakeholders to understand the values that guided their discussion and recommendation.

- Assessments should inform students, parents, and educators about strengths and weaknesses.
- High school assessments should provide a credential that is useful and meaningful to students, the public, employers, and post-secondary providers.
- Requirements for exiting high school should support students' alternate paths for successfully exiting high school.
- Effective implementation of curriculum should be a predictor of student performance on assessments.
- The amount of state-mandated assessment should be reduced when possible.

The task force encourages the decision-making bodies responsible for determining high school assessment policy to embrace these values in the process of deliberating and making decisions about high school assessment going forward.

Contextual Considerations

Every decision must take place within the context of the time, place, law, and other considerations. The High School Assessment Task Force wants stakeholders to understand that

their recommendations are based on a specific context. Given a change in that context, the task force might have reached a different set of recommendations. To help stakeholders understand the context of the task force's recommendations, the key contextual considerations are presented here.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act Requirements

Any decisions made at the state level have to be made within the context of federal education law. The current federal law requires that students be assessed at least once in grades 10-12 in reading or language arts, mathematics, and science. The academic standards for reading or language arts, mathematics, and science and the assessments based on those standards must be reviewed and approved by the U.S. Department of Education. The U.S. Department of Education will only review and approve academic standards and assessments *after* the standards have been developed and *after* the assessments have been developed, administered, and results reported. Any changes in the assessments implemented by the state to meet federal requirements have to be reviewed and approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

States have met the federal assessment requirements at the high school level in three general ways. One approach, used by the majority of states, is a comprehensive assessment of the content area (e.g., mathematics) based on the knowledge and skills students should have acquired by a particular point in time (e.g., the end of 10th grade).¹ The HSAP is in this category of assessments. A second approach is an assessment of the content area based on a specific course (e.g., Algebra I) that students are required to take in high school. A third approach, used by Michigan, is to use a combination of the ACT®, WorkKeys®, and state assessments to meet the requirements. In all approaches, the assessments must be administered to all students with the exception of students with significant cognitive disabilities who may take an alternate assessment.

South Carolina's standards and assessments for reading/language arts and mathematics have received approval from the U.S. Department of Education. Approval of the high school science standards and assessment (Biology 1) will not be approved until the results of the 2010-11 administration of the assessment are released and submitted for federal review.

The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* was last reauthorized as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* in January of 2002. Reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* is expected to occur in 2011 or 2012. While it is anticipated that many of the assessment

¹ [http://www.educationfirstconsulting.com/files/WA%20State%20Board%20of%20Education%20End-of-Course%20Assessments%20Study%20\(Full%20Report,%20Final%201-4-08\).pdf](http://www.educationfirstconsulting.com/files/WA%20State%20Board%20of%20Education%20End-of-Course%20Assessments%20Study%20(Full%20Report,%20Final%201-4-08).pdf)

requirements will be the same or similar when the law is reauthorized, changes in the law may necessitate changes in the state assessment program. Since the earliest time that any changes in high school assessments could be implemented is the 2011-12 school year, it is possible that changes in the federal law as a result of reauthorization could require changes in the assessments within one to two years of implementing any change.

Common Core State Standards and Assessments

According to statements on the Common State Standards Initiative web site (<http://www.corestandards.org>):

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts, to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce.

The NGA Center and CCSSO received initial feedback on the draft standards from national organizations representing, but not limited to, teachers, postsecondary educators (including community colleges), civil rights groups, English language learners, and students with disabilities. Following the initial round of feedback, the draft standards were opened for public comment, receiving nearly 10,000 responses.

The standards are informed by the highest, most effective models from states across the country and countries around the world, and provide teachers and parents with a common understanding of what students are expected to learn. Consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live.

These standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs. The standards:

- Are aligned with college and work expectations;
- Are clear, understandable and consistent;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;

- Are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society; and
- Are evidence-based.

The Common Core State Standards were initially developed for English language arts and mathematics. Work has begun on the development of science standards and it is anticipated that social studies standards eventually will be developed.

South Carolina was among 48 states, the District of Columbia, and two territories that agreed to the development of the Common Core State Standards.² The final standards were released in June 2010. The standards were adopted in South Carolina by the State Board of Education on July 14, 2010 following adoption by the Education Oversight Committee on June 14, 2010.³ The standards will be implemented and the South Carolina statewide testing programs for grades 3-8 and high school will be aligned to those standards beginning with the 2012-13 school year. As of November 2010, 43 states and the District of Columbia, have adopted the Common Core State Standards.⁴

On September 2, 2010, the U.S. Department of Education announced the award of \$330 million to two state consortia to develop a new generation of tests that will be aligned to the Common Core State Standards.⁵ These assessments are required to measure student knowledge and skills against the full range of the college- and career-ready standards.⁶ The grant application encouraged collaboration with institutions of higher education (IHEs) and the commitment of IHEs to use the assessments to exempt students from remedial courses. South Carolina's public technical colleges, community colleges, and universities have committed to using the assessments based on the Common Core State Standards as an indicator of a student's readiness for non-remedial, credit-bearing, college-level coursework in English and mathematics.⁷

South Carolina is a member of both the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) which received the awards. The two state consortia together represent 44 states and the District of

² <http://www.ed.sc.gov/news/more.cfm?articleID=1301>

³ <http://ed.sc.gov/news/more.cfm?articleID=1600>

<http://eoc.sc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/92CDBBDA-2F85-41CF-BDE4-386138FA0036/35842/CommonCorerelease.pdf>

⁴ http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2010/11/common-standards_watch_south_d.html

⁵ <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-secretary-education-duncan-announces-winners-competition-improve-student-asse>

⁶ <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/comprehensive-assessment-systems-app.doc>

⁷ <http://www.fldoe.org/parcc/pdf/IHEAxvSC.pdf>

http://www.k12.wa.us/SMARTER/pubdocs/SBAC_Narrative.pdf (see pages 155-6)

Columbia. The assessments developed by the consortia are required to be implemented by states participating in either consortium by the 2014-15 school year. The significance of the Common Core State Standards and the assessments based on them is that across a large number of states all students in grades 3-8 and high school will be taking the same assessments and results will be reported on the same standard. Consequently, the performance of a student in one state could be compared to the performance of a student in another state or the performance of a school in one state could be compared to the performance of a school in another state. These types of comparisons have not been possible on a widespread basis up to this point in time.

Cyclical Review of Academic Standards and Assessments

The South Carolina Department of Education and the Education Oversight Committee jointly developed the Procedures for the Cyclical Review of Current South Carolina K–12 Academic Standards and for the Development of New Academic Standards.⁸ Section 59-18-350 of South Carolina's Education Accountability Act states that "at a minimum, each academic area should be reviewed and updated every seven years." The South Carolina English language arts standards and mathematics academic standards were revised relatively recently (in 2008 and 2007 respectively). The South Carolina science academic standards were revised in 2005.

In South Carolina, the Common Core State Standards will be implemented in the 2012-13 school year. The assessments for English language arts and mathematics based on the Common Core State Standards will be operational in 2014-15. Implementation of these standards and assessments may meet the requirements of Section 59-18-350 to review and update the academic standards and assessments every seven years, as determined by the Education Oversight Committee and the State Board of Education.

State Budget

The *Three-Year General Fund Financial Outlook FY 2010-11 to FY 2012-13* issued by the State Budget and Control Board, Office of State Budget in December 2009 indicates that relative to the 2009-10 budget state revenues will decrease in 2010-11 and 2011-12 and only increase by approximately \$150 million in 2012-13.⁹ The projected decrease in revenues from 2009-10 to 2011-12 is over \$873 million.

⁸ <http://ed.sc.gov/agency/Standards-and-Learning/Academic-Standards/old/cso/documents/ProcedureforCyclicalReviewofAcademicStandards.pdf>

⁹ http://www.budget.sc.gov/webfiles/OSB/historical/FY_10-11_to_FY_12-13_Three_Year_Financial_Outlook.pdf

Utility, Benefits and Information Provided by the High School Assessment Program (HSAP) and End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP)

HSAP

The HSAP was developed to comply with both state and federal laws and consists of two tests—one in English language arts and one in mathematics. The HSAP provides information about students' general performance in English and mathematics. The HSAP covers a broad range of content that is appropriate for all students except students with significant cognitive disabilities. The HSAP tests are first administered to public high school students in the spring of the second year after a student's initial enrollment in ninth grade. The HSAP tests were administered for the first time in spring 2004. The HSAP is implemented at an FY11 cost of \$3,261,840. Of that cost, \$125,957 was supported by state funds and the remainder was funded by federal funds.

The HSAP was developed to meet the requirements of the *Education Accountability Act* to develop or adopt and administer standards-based assessments, including a high school exit examination. Thus, passing the HSAP tests is a requirement which all students must meet in order to graduate from a South Carolina public school. South Carolina is one of 24 states with mandatory exit examinations as of 2009; two additional states plan to implement mandatory exit examinations by 2012.¹⁰ The HSAP also fulfills the requirement of federal law to administer an assessment of reading or language arts and mathematics to students in grades 10-12.

The HSAP tests are based on the South Carolina academic standards for English language arts and mathematics. The HSAP tests provide information to students about the kinds of skills they have demonstrated on the tests based on the academic standards. The HSAP tests also provide information to teachers, school administrators, and district administrators about the performance of students on each of the broad academic standards. This information can aid teachers and administrators in making decisions about the effectiveness of instructional programs.

While the HSAP tests meet state and federal requirements, the task force members think HSAP has shortcomings. One inadequacy of the HSAP tests is they do not provide a credential that is useful and meaningful to students, the public, employers, and post-secondary providers, which was a key value delineated by the task force. Outside of the school environment, the HSAP does not provide information that is used by post-secondary providers or employers to

¹⁰ <http://www.cep-dc.org/document/docWindow.cfm?fuseaction=document.viewDocument&documentid=297&documentFormatId=4558>

evaluate students exiting high school. The public and others recognize that higher performance on the HSAP tests is better, but there is not an understanding of what that better performance means or how it relates to career paths a student may take after high school from technical training to college/university entrance to direct entry into the workforce. A second inadequacy of the HSAP tests is they provide information about a student's knowledge and skills in language arts and mathematics well after they have received instruction. A more effective instructional model would provide assessment results for students in a timely manner throughout the instructional process so that instruction could be modified to meet the individual needs of students and to better help each student progress toward the exit examination goal.

EOCEP

The EOCEP was developed to comply with the *Education Accountability Act* requirement to develop end-of-course examinations in gateway or benchmark courses. The examinations ensure that all students taking the designated courses are evaluated on a common standard. The examinations currently include Algebra 1/Mathematics for the Technologies 2, English 1, Physical Science, U.S. History and the Constitution, and Biology 1/Applied Biology 2. The Biology 1 examination will also be used to meet the federal requirement that all students in grades 10-12 be assessed in science pending final approval from the U.S. Department of Education. Administration of Physical Science is scheduled to be discontinued after the 2010-11 school year. The EOCEP is implemented at an FY11 cost of \$ 3,097,392 in state funds.

All public school students who are enrolled in courses in which the academic standards corresponding to the EOCEP tests are taught, regardless of course name or number, must take the appropriate tests. Each examination is administered to the students at the end of the semester in which they are scheduled to complete the course. The Algebra 1/Mathematics for the Technologies 2 test was administered for the first time during the 2002-03 school year. English 1, Physical Science, and Biology 1/Applied Biology 2 were administered for the first time during the 2003-04 school year. The U.S. History and Constitution test was administered for the first time in 2006-07. The Biology 1 test was discontinued after the 2005-06 school year. Upon Education Oversight Committee approval, the Biology 1 test became operational again beginning in the 2010-11 school year.

The EOCEP examinations provide students and teachers reports expressed in scores from 0-100 and in letter grades from A-F so they can easily be incorporated into the calculation of a student's course grade. The examinations are required to count as 20 percent of a student's final grade in each gateway or benchmark course. The examinations also provide summary

information to teachers, school administrators, and district administrators about the performance of students. This information can aid teachers and administrators in making decisions about the effectiveness of instructional programs.

The task force found that the EOCEP examinations, like the HSAP, also fall short of what is desired in high school assessment. The EOCEP examinations do not provide a credential that is useful and meaningful to students, the public, employers, and post-secondary providers. Not all students (e.g., some special education students, general education students pursuing an alternative diploma, general education students who do not pass a prerequisite course) take the courses assessed by the EOCEP examinations, which further limits the usefulness of these tests to the public, employers, and post-secondary providers. Also, the EOCEP examinations provide students a score after they have received instruction, which is not the most effective instructional model.

Feasibility of Shifting from the Use of HSAP to EOCEP Assessments for Meeting Federal Assessment Requirements

The task force members had lengthy discussions about the pros and cons of the HSAP and EOCEP and of the feasibility of using the EOCEP to meet federal requirements, to reduce the amount of testing, and to reduce state costs for assessments. The task force members concluded that shifting from the use of HSAP to EOCEP assessments was not the most effective or efficient decision at this time for several reasons.

One reason was the potential impact on student graduation. An analysis presented to the task force indicated that a significant number of students that passed the HSAP in either English language arts or mathematics did not attain a score of 70 or higher on the English I or Algebra I EOCEP examinations respectively. The implication is that if the EOCEP examinations served to meet the exit examination requirement of the Education Accountability Act, it is possible that a significant number of students may not meet the graduation requirement. Also, if the EOCEP examinations served to meet the exit examination requirement, implementation would have to meet the standard of adequate notice and curricular validity as established by the *Debra P. v. Turlington* decision. Generally, any change in exit examination requirements would need to be made and students and parents notified three years prior to implementation of a new exit examination requirement. Therefore, a shift from the HSAP to the EOCEP could not be made immediately. Even if such an immediate shift were possible, there would be students who have not met the HSAP exit requirement and the state would have to continue to provide opportunities to these students to take and pass the HSAP for at least two years or more after

such a change. The task force members generally agreed that the potential impact of these changes was not in the best interest of students.

A second reason was the potential financial impact. Remember that the federal requirement is that all students, with the exception of students with significant cognitive disabilities, must be assessed on the same standards in English language arts, mathematics, and science at least once in grades 10-12. Currently, not all students (with the exception of students with significant cognitive disabilities) take these courses since they are not the only courses a student can take to meet the state graduation requirements. Requiring all students to take these courses would increase student enrollments in these courses, which would require some school districts to hire additional teachers for these courses at additional cost or to reduce teacher units in other areas. In addition, teachers providing instruction for these courses must meet the highly qualified teacher requirements of the federal law. In many areas there are currently shortages of teachers meeting the highly qualified teacher requirements, especially in mathematics and science. Having to possibly hire more teachers to teach these courses would possibly put a financial and recruiting strain on school districts. Because the HSAP is not based on any one course in English language arts or mathematics, school districts have flexibility in how they allocate staff to meet these requirements.

A third reason was the potential for the development of a new assessment. A few states have been approved by the U.S. Department of Education to use an Algebra I assessment to meet the requirements of the federal law to assess mathematics. It is less clear if the English I EOCEP examination would be approved by the U.S. Department of Education to meet the English language arts requirement. In North Carolina, for example, students must be assessed in both English I and a 10th grade writing assessment to meet the federal requirements. Therefore, there is strong potential that a new assessment would have to be developed to meet the federal requirement. That new assessment might be a 10th grade writing assessment like North Carolina's English II examination, some other assessment or combination of assessments. Development and implementation of any new assessment generally takes three years, which means that the HSAP would have to continue to be implemented until such a new assessment was developed, implemented, and finally approved by the U.S. Department of Education. The task force generally agreed that because the HSAP has been approved by the U.S. Department of Education continued implementation of the HSAP to meet the federal requirements for English language arts and mathematics was the most cost efficient decision at this time.

Recommendations

The task force formulated its recommendations for high school assessment after careful consideration of the current state assessment programs, WorkKeys® and other commercially available assessments, task force values, state and federal requirements, and other contextual considerations. The task force members had thorough dialogue and debate about the complex and interwoven elements of high school assessment. The task force members wrestled with the dilemma of the efficiencies of reduced assessment and cost against the desired effectiveness of high school assessments in the best interests of students.

The task force members agreed that while the current assessments do serve a purpose, they are not ideal. Task force members believe strongly that the *ideal high school assessment* is characterized as:

- a) providing useful and meaningful information to students, educators, the public, employers, and post-secondary institutions;
- b) supportive of the wide variety of career paths students make seek following high school; and
- c) a valid indicator of effective implementation of curriculum.

If unconstrained by state and federal laws, evolving initiatives, and the timeline for their work, the task force may have reached a different set of recommendations than those presented below.

The task force members recognize, however, that any decision is context dependent and a change in context may lead to a different conclusion than the one reached by the task force at this time. Given the current context and the values expressed, the task force makes the following recommendations.

1. **Maintain the High School Assessment Program (HSAP) until 2014-15, when the assessments developed by the consortia based on the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics are implemented.** The Common Core State Standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in workforce training programs and in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses. The Common Core State Standards are aligned with work and college expectations, include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills, and are informed by other top performing countries, so that all students are prepared to succeed in our global economy and society. The assessments based on the Common Core State Standards will allow

something that has not been widely possible up to this point in time: comparison of the performance of a student, a school, or school district in one state to the performance of students, schools, or school districts in another state. The state's public institutions of higher education have committed to using the results from the assessments based on the Common Core State Standards to make decisions about the placement of students in non-remedial, credit-bearing, college-level courses in English and mathematics. Therefore, implementation of the assessments based on the Common Core State Standards would support the task force principle that high school assessment should provide a credential that means something to students, the public, employers, and post-secondary providers. Also, the goal of the Common Core Standards to prepare students for success in workforce training programs and college courses is consistent with the task force principle of supporting students' alternate paths for exiting high school. The intent of the assessments based on the Common Core Standards is to provide information so that valid inferences can be made about student, subgroup, and school performance and that the assessment information can be used to evaluate and adjust instructional programs. This goal is congruent with the task force principle of effective implementation of curriculum and should be a predictor of student performance on assessments.

The timing of implementing the Common Core State Standards and the assessments based on them, if they serve as high school exit examinations, will meet the standard of adequate notice and curricular validity as established by the *Debra P. v. Turlington* decision. Notice requires that students are notified well in advance of the standard they will be required to meet. Curricular validity can be established by demonstrating that the assessment is based on the academic standards. Generally, any change in exit examination requirements would need to be made and students and parents notified three years prior to implementation of a new exit examination requirement. The implementation of the assessments based on the Common Core State Standards by 2014-15 would align well with the adequate notice standard and with providing appropriate opportunity for curricular materials and instruction to be revised to establish curricular validity.

- 2. Maintain the Biology 1 End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) test and eliminate all other EOCEP tests.** The state must administer an assessment in science at least once to students in grades 10-12 to meet federal requirements. The South Carolina Department of Education is currently in the process of implementing this assessment and receiving approval from the U.S. Department of Education. Using an assessment that is currently developed and implemented will be the most cost effective option for the state. This action would require a revision in the *Education Accountability Act* so that end-of-course examinations in gateway courses are not required. Elimination of the other end-of-course

examinations is consistent with the task force's principle that the amount of state-mandated assessment should be reduced when possible. Implementation of this recommendation would reduce the cost of the EOCEP by \$856,866. The task force would like for this cost savings to be used to support the third recommendation.

- 3. Implement a separate funding program to support local option administration of the Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics, and Locating Information WorkKeys® assessments.** One of the primary reasons that a high school examination requirement was established was to address the concerns of the business community that students exiting high school had some minimal skills when entering the workforce. The WorkKeys® assessments are nationally recognized and provide students with a National Career Readiness Certificate¹¹ that informs students and employers about the types of jobs into which a student is prepared to enter. Implementing WorkKeys® would support the task force's principles of high school assessment providing a credential that means something to students, the public, employers, and post-secondary providers and assessments providing students, parents, and educators about strengths and weaknesses. While the task force believes that the WorkKeys® assessments and the National Career Readiness Certificate can provide useful information for all students, the task force also recognizes that in some cases school districts have built relationships in their communities where other assessments of career readiness (e.g., ASVAB) are more highly desired by employers. The task force believes school districts should be strongly encouraged and supported in implementing the WorkKeys® assessments, but that school districts should have the flexibility to decide if the WorkKeys® assessments meet the needs of their community. Implementation of this action should include a plan by the Department of Education to recognize schools and districts that participate in the administration of WorkKeys®. The Department of Education should work with representatives of the business community in this effort.

The cost of the Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics, and Locating Information WorkKeys® assessments is \$5.50 each based on a statewide contract between ACT® and the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce for a reduced cost (this pricing is effective through June 2011). If the WorkKeys® assessments are made available to all students in eleventh grade (with an estimated daily membership of 47,000 students), the cost to implement this recommendation would be approximately \$775,500. The state provided \$427,552 to support administration of the PSAT® and PLAN® in the 2009-10 school year. In 2010-11, districts can opt to use these funds for administration of PSAT®, PLAN®, or WorkKeys®. The contract between ACT® and the South Carolina Department of

¹¹ <http://www.act.org/certificate/about.html>

Employment and Workforce also provides free of charge to all school districts and all students online access to practice tests and WorkKeys tutorials that may be accessed at any time.

Ideally one assessment, like WorkKeys®, would meet all the needs and requirements at the state and federal levels. Currently, WorkKeys® and other similar assessments would have to be supplemented by other assessments to meet all these requirements. Since the goal of the assessments based on the Common Core State Standards is to provide information about students' readiness to enter workforce training programs and in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses, the need for an assessment like WorkKeys® should be reexamined as the Common Core assessments are developed and implemented.

- 4. Reconvene this task force or another similar group to review the direction of high school assessment during November 2011.** These recommendations had to be made at a time during which there are significant changes possibly occurring at the state and national levels. These recommendations are highly dependent on the current context and that context may be considerably different in just one year. In addition, the work of this task force had to be completed by January 15, 2011 and at a time when there are still many unknowns at the state and national levels.

Appendix A
South Carolina High Assessment Task Committee Force Members

Committee Members

Audrey Allan, Director of Middle and Secondary Programs, York School District One

Velna Allen, Principal, Carolina Forest High School, Horry County School District

Joanne Campbell, Principal, Alternative School, Greenwood County School District Fifty-Two

Sally Cauthen, Research Director, K-12 Senate Education Committee, South Carolina Senate

Jennifer Coleman, Executive Director of Accountability, Assessment, Research and Evaluation, Richland County School District One

Joyce Gerald, Director, Title I, Jasper County School District

J.R. Green, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Chesterfield County School District

John Hogan, Special Services Executive Director, Richland County School District Two

David Jenkins, Director of Elementary Education, Newberry County School District

Rainey Knight, Superintendent, Darlington County School District

David Longshore, South Carolina State Board of Education

Renee Mathews, Chief Academic Officer, Richland County School District 1

Jason McCreary, Associate Superintendent, Greenville County School District

Jeff Potts, Director of Accountability and Evaluation, Richland County School District Two

Terry Pruitt, Deputy Superintendent, Spartanburg County School District Seven

Jim Reynolds, CEO, Total Comfort Solutions; member of Education and Economic Development Coordinating Council

Valerie Richardson, Workforce Development Manager, Palmetto Health

Valerie Truesdale, Superintendent, Beaufort County School District

Education Oversight Committee (EOC) Staff

Jo Anne Anderson, Executive Director

Kevin Andrews, Director of Research

South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) Staff

Michelle Bishop, Education Associate, Office of Exceptional Children

Nancy Busbee, Director, Federal and State Accountability

Elizabeth Jones, Director, Office of Assessment

Sabrina Moore, Director, Regional Services

Teri Siskind, Deputy Superintendent, Division of Accountability

Sandy Smith, Deputy Superintendent, Policy and Legislation

Southeast Comprehensive Center Support

Kris Kaase, Facilitator

Robyn Madison-Harris, Recorder

**Attendees at the High School Assessment Task Force Meeting
September 8, 2010**

Audrey Allan

Rene Mathews

Velna Allen

Jason McCreary

Sally Cauthen

Jeff Potts

Jennifer Coleman

Terry Pruitt

David Green

Valerie Richardson

John Hogan

Valerie Truesdale

David Jenkins

SCDE Staff

EOC Staff

Michelle Bishop

Jo Anne Anderson

Nancy Busbee

Elizabeth Jones

Sabrina Moore

Sandy Smith

Teri Siskind

Southeast Comprehensive Center Support

Kris Kaase

Robyn Madison-Harris

**Attendees at the High School Assessment Task Force Meeting
October 29, 2010**

Sean Alford	Rainey Knight
Audrey Allan	David Longshore
Velna Allen	Rene Mathews
Joanne Campbell	Jason McCreary
Joyce Gerald	Jeff Potts
JR Green	Terry Pruitt
John Hogan	Jim Reynolds
Mary Margaret Hoy	Valerie Richardson
David Jenkins	

SCDE Staff

Michelle Bishop
Nancy Busbee
Joe Saunders
Teri Siskind
Sandy Smith
Gary West

EOC Staff

Kevin Andrews

Southeast Comprehensive Center Support

Kris Kaase
Robyn Madison-Harris

**Attendees at the High School Assessment Task Force Meeting
November 9, 2010**

Audrey Allan	David Longshore
Joanne Campbell	Rene Mathews
Jennifer Coleman	Jeff Potts
Joyce Gerald	Lance Redford
JR Green	Jim Reynolds
John Hogan	Valerie Richardson
David Jenkins	Valerie Truesdale
Rainey Knight	

SCDE Staff

Michelle Bishop
Nancy Busbee
Elizabeth Jones
Teri Siskind

EOC Staff

Jo Anne Anderson

Southeast Comprehensive Center Support

Kris Kaase
Robyn Madison-Harris

**Attendees at the High School Assessment Task Force Conference Call
December 3, 2010**

Sean Alford	Rainey Knight
Audrey Allan	Rene Mathews
Jennifer Coleman	Jason McCreary
Joyce Gerald	Terry Pruitt
John Hogan	Jim Reynolds
David Jenkins	Valerie Richardson

SCDE Staff

Michelle Bishop
Nancy Busbee
Elizabeth Jones
Teri Siskind

EOC Staff

Kevin Andrews

Southeast Comprehensive Center Support

Kris Kaase
Robyn Madison-Harris

**Attendees at the High School Assessment Task Force Conference Call
January 4, 2011**

Audrey Allan	David Longshore
Joanne Campbell	Jason McCreary
Jennifer Coleman	Jim Reynolds
Joyce Gerald	Valerie Richardson
JR Green	Valerie Truesdale
John Hogan	

SCDE Staff

Nancy Busbee

Elizabeth Jones

EOC Staff

Kevin Andrews

Southeast Comprehensive Center Support

Kris Kaase

Robyn Madison-Harris