

**MARCH 2009**

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

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**SC EDUCATION  
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

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## MAJOR PERFORMANCE STUDIES

### WHERE ARE WE NOW 2008

On December 8, 2008, the Education Oversight Committee announced South Carolina's progress toward the 2010 Goal, which states that SC will be in the top half of states by the year 2010. The annual release provided evidence of the accomplishments of SC's students, schools, and the education accountability system. Otis Rawl, CEO, SC Chamber of Commerce; Garrison Walters, Executive Director, SC Commission on Higher Education; and Thomas White, Jr., Superintendent of Spartanburg School District Seven provided perspectives on the goal from business, higher education, and K-12 public schools.

This year's release showed South Carolina is achieving the goal in some areas, but challenges persist. In 2008, South Carolina's achievement attained the following rankings:

**1** On the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) tests used as the Nation's Report Card:

4th Grade Reading	42 <sup>nd</sup>
8th Grade Reading	41 <sup>st</sup>
4th Grade Math	33 <sup>rd</sup>
8th Grade Math	28 <sup>th</sup> (one of 5 fastest improving systems)
4th Grade Science	33 <sup>rd</sup> (one of 5 fastest improving systems)
8th Grade Science	30 <sup>th</sup> (one of 5 fastest improving systems)

**2** With respect to the Advanced Placement Tests, South Carolina is in the top half of states, ranking 21st in the nation for participation and 22nd in the nation for the percentage of exams scored 3, 4 or 5.

**3** On college admissions tests, although South Carolina's SAT improvement is among the nation's best, scores on both the SAT and the ACT rank South Carolina 47th in the nation.

**4** South Carolina's standing among states on the measure of students graduating from high school on-time is highlighted in this year's release. Graduation rate historically has been difficult to compare because states have various ways of calculating high school graduation rates. SC is one of 15 states that currently report data using the "compact cohort rate" methodology agreed upon by the nations' governors in 2005. Of the 15 states, South Carolina ranks 11th, ahead of Arizona, New York, North Carolina and Rhode Island.

EOC members will use results from statewide public opinion research, which they will receive in Spring 2009, to establish a 2020 Goal.

## QUALITY COUNTS

In January 2009, *Quality Counts 2009: Portrait of a Population*, the 13th annual report card on the state of school reform nationwide, was released. This year's report, published by *Education Week*, featured an in-depth look at American's effort to educate 5.1 million public school students who are English-language learners (ELLs). Using a variety of sources, authors of the report also issued grades to states in a number of areas. This year, South Carolina earned a perfect score of 100 for school accountability, a 92.1 score for academic standards, and a score of 88.3 for assessment. In terms of rankings, South Carolina maintained its No. 1 ranking in state efforts to improve teaching and its No. 5 ranking for academic standards, assessment, and school accountability.

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-- *Quality Counts 2009*

## 2008 REPORT CARD RELEASE

The eighth annual school and district ratings were released at 12:01 a.m. Friday, February 20, 2009. These ratings developed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Accountability Act of 1998, as amended, document South Carolina's progress in improving the performance of its students and schools. The majority of SC schools showed improvement in this year's release. However, there is a deepening concern for persistently under-performing schools.

Some signs of encouragement in the 2008 release:

- + Schools kept up with the increased rigor in the ratings. For the first time in four years the statewide index increased (+.1); the high school index increased by +.21;
- + High school ratings improved dramatically reflecting increases in initial HSAP passage rates; HSAP longitudinal passage rates, end-of-course test scores, and graduation rates;
- + Over 80 percent of schools improved (12 percent) or maintained their ratings (72 percent);
- + 50 schools with student poverty levels above 70 percent were rated Excellent or Good; and
- + Increases in PACT performance in science and social studies contributed to higher ratings for elementary and middle schools.

Areas of concern include:

- + Eleven of the twelve school districts rated At Risk in 2008 have been rated either At Risk or Below Average for at least the past three years.
- + Only two of 50 persistently underperforming (i.e., rated Below Average or At Risk for four years) and two of the 16 Palmetto Priority schools elevated their ratings;
- + Fifty percent of charter schools are rated At Risk;
- + Improvement in some middle schools was matched by declines in others;
- + Reading performance continues to trail other content areas; and
- + Almost one-fourth (23.7 percent) of our schools serve school populations in which 90 percent or more students are poor. In contrast only 47 of over 1172 schools serve student populations in which 30 percent or fewer students are poor.

Visit <http://eoc.sc.gov/2008ReportCard.htm> for additional resources related to the 2008 school and district report card release.

## CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

In April, the Education Oversight Committee staff published the annual study on progress toward closing the gaps in Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) achievement among different demographic groups of South Carolina students enrolled in grades 3–8. Sixteen percent (141 schools) of elementary and middle schools were recognized for closing the achievement gaps in PACT English Language Arts (ELA) or Math in 2007 for at least one historically underachieving demographic group. Although statewide performance on PACT ELA and Math was flat, there was an increase overall in the number of schools recognized in April (135 schools recognized for their 2006 PACT performance in 2007.)

The size of the gaps identified in 2007 generally increased compared to 2006, reflecting the general lack of progress overall in performance on the ELA and Math tests. Gaps between white and African American students remain consistently larger than gaps between white and Hispanic students and between pay and free- or reduced-price lunch students. Although progress is being made, the sizes of the gaps are discouraging if South Carolina is to meet its 2010 achievement goal for all students.

In an effort to foster improvement efforts statewide, the EOC included an analysis of PACT ELA and Math performance by gender groups, ethnicity, federal free- or reduced-price lunch status, and 2007 Absolute ratings. Across both subjects, all performance levels, and across school rating categories, the highest-performing groups were white female and “Other” female students and white pay lunch and “Other” pay lunch students. African-American male students and African American free- or reduced-price lunch students were the lowest-performing groups in both subjects and across Absolute rating categories.

“Teachers care at our school and home/school relations are critical.”

-- *Charles Middleton, Principal of Walhalla Middle School (recognized for progress made toward closing the achievement gap)*

Consistent to revisions to the Education Accountability Act of 1998, enacted in June 2008, criteria for the Palmetto Gold and Silver program have been modified to include recognition for closing the achievement gap. Future reports on the achievement gap will be issued by the SCDE.

## CHILD DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION PILOT PROGRAM (CDEPP)

The goal of the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP) is to address school readiness of students in poverty. The annual evaluations of CDEPP provide information needed to support effective implementation of the program. Currently, CDEPP provides 6.5 hours per day for 180 days per year of high-quality instruction to 4-year-olds eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program and/or Medicaid and living in the plaintiff districts in Abbeville County School District et al. vs. South Carolina. The expectation is that CDEPP will provide the developmental and learning support necessary for these at-risk children to be better prepared to succeed in school. Public schools and private centers are eligible to participate in CDEPP. The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) is responsible for selecting qualified public school providers to participate in CDEPP. The Office of First Steps to School Readiness (OFS) is responsible for approving qualified non-public school providers to participate in CDEPP.

Since 2007, the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) staff working with an interdisciplinary team of evaluators from the University of South Carolina, has issued yearly evaluation reports on CDEPP. The 2008 evaluation of the program found:

- + In FY2007–08 approximately \$19.4 million in non-recurring funds was expended for instructional services and administration of CDEPP.
- + 35 of the 37 eligible school districts participated in CDEPP.

- + Enrollment in CDEPP increased significantly between the first and second years of the program, by approximately 30%, from 3,366 to 4,335 children.
- + The number of CDEPP classrooms and CDEPP-eligible children served increased significantly in four school districts – Berkeley, Florence 1, Florence 2 and Laurens 56 and in private centers in Florence County. However, expansion was uneven among school districts and private child care centers.
- + Approximately 77.5% of all four-year-olds in poverty in the plaintiff districts were served in a state or federal-funded full-day pre-kindergarten program in 2007-08. In comparison, in all other districts, 52.9% of all four-year-olds in poverty were served in a state or federal-funded full-day pre-kindergarten program in 2007-08.
- + Although OFS and SCDE have made extensive efforts to improve the data collection process, problems remain with the completeness and accuracy of the data needed both to administer and to evaluate the program.
- + Up to 20% of children in CDEPP either entered the program late or withdrew early in 2007-08.
- + When analyzing expenditures for the cost of new and existing classrooms, per child costs vary significantly across private childcare centers based on class size.
- + Due to space availability in the private sector and lack of space in the public sector, expansion of the program will require the continued participation of the private centers and innovative collaborations between public and private providers on space allocation.
- + Parents whose children participated in CDEPP in 2007-08 and who responded to a survey were overwhelmingly positive about the program. The popularity of CDEPP appears to be spreading most often through “word of mouth.” When asked if they believed that they had a choice in the type of CDEPP preschool program their child attended, approximately 64% of the parents responding indicated that they did not have a choice between private and public centers.
- + Based on an analysis of DIAL-3 results in 2007-08, the eligibility criteria for enrollment in CDEPP (eligibility for the federal school lunch program and/or Medicaid services) are successfully identifying students developmentally at risk for later school failure. Nevertheless, there are many students not income-eligible for the program with relatively low DIAL-3 scores, indicating that they may also be at risk of school difficulties later and in need of high-quality preschool instruction.
- + Although it is too early to determine clear relationships, children participating in CDEPP showed positive developmental and academic gains relative to the norms of the assessments used in the evaluation.
- + Differences in public school and private center teachers were evident in educational degrees held, early childhood certification, years teaching experience, and compensation for their professional efforts. These differences may be a direct result of differential requirements for lead teachers for the two administering entities, SCDE and OFS.
- + Statewide, the number of 4-year-olds is projected to increase by 5.6% by 2011; however, the number of four-year-olds at-risk due to poverty is projected to increase by 9.1%.

Expansion of CDEPP to improve school readiness of children in poverty should occur with data and information provided in this annual evaluation of CDEPP. While declines in state revenues may impede expansion in the immediate future, there are cost-saving measures that should be implemented now and measures taken to expand the program

“Expansion of CDEPP to improve school readiness of children in poverty should occur with data and information provided in this annual evaluation of CDEPP.”

-- *Report on the Implementation and Expansion of CDEPP, January 2009*

and prepare for statewide implementation in both public and private centers including: (1) funding of the program with recurring revenues; (2) collaboration and/or consolidation of administration and technical assistance; (3) expansion of the program into school districts with at least 90% of the children in poverty; and (4) minimum class size requirements and minimum provider participation commitments of at least three years.

## **PALMETTO PRIORITY SCHOOLS EVALUATION**

In 2007 Dr. James Rex, Superintendent of Education, identified a group of sixteen (16) schools that failed to make expected progress as defined in the State Board of Education regulations. Expected progress is based on two criteria: (1) attain a minimum absolute index of 1.8, and (2) increase the school's absolute index by a minimum of .3 of a point over a three-year period or improve the absolute rating at least one level. When a school does not make expected progress, the State Superintendent is responsible for determining if the state should assume management of the school. School and district leaders from the sixteen schools met with an advisory group to the Superintendent (Review of Academic Achievement Committee) and outlined challenges that the schools experience as well as efforts to improve their performance. The Palmetto Priority Schools project, which is an intensive long-term collaborative strategy with the 16 schools, was created as an alternative to a state takeover. The collaborative approach combines four strategies: collaboration, leadership mentoring, a dropout prevention initiative, and teacher recruitment and placement.

The Education Oversight Committee (EOC) agreed to conduct a formative, collaborative evaluation of the Palmetto Priority Schools Initiative. The evaluation includes an analysis of student and school performance data, examination of school climate as reported by school personnel, students, and families, and monitoring the degree to which the elements have been implemented. The evaluation is intended both to inform decisions about the Palmetto Priority Schools and to inform state-level policy decisions regarding actions to increase student and school performance. The evaluation will address questions focusing on student and school performance. For purposes of the review, successful change in performance is measured by the expectation that within five academic years:

- + at least 75 percent of students in each school will score Basic on state standards based assessments;
- + at least 50 percent of eighth graders will score Proficient on state standards-based assessments;
- + at least 75 percent of each high school's 2008 entering ninth grade class will graduate on-time; and
- + each school will achieve an absolute performance index of 3.3 or higher on a 5.0 scale.

The evaluation utilizes two sources of data. The first consists of information that is available through on-going SCDE data collections such as student academic performance data from state standardized tests, school profile data from the annual school and district report cards, and school climate surveys. The second data source encompasses primary data collected from the sixteen schools each spring between 2008 and 2011.



# STATE SUPPORT FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT CHANGES TO EAA

## 2008 REVISION OF THE EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (EAA)

During the 2008 legislative session, the Education Accountability Act of 1998 was amended to incorporate a new assessment in grades 3-8 and other revisions to increase the impact of the accountability system. (Act 282 )

Incorporating a new assessment involves changes to student performance levels, the ratings designations and reporting formats. In summary, the final legislation provided the following:

- + Implementation of a new assessment in grades 3-8 for 2009
  - + Testing to include English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies using the census and sampling design employed with PACT;
  - + Student performance levels include Exemplary, Met (performing at grade level) and Not Met (performing below grade level)
  - + The writing test is administered earlier in the school year;
  - + Performance to be reported at the standard level
  - + Beginning in 2010, student and school reports must be provided by August 1.
- + Funding for formative assessments in grades 1-9
- + The SCRA and first and second grade reading assessments were eliminated.
- + The term “unsatisfactory” changed to “at-risk;”
- + The name “improvement rating” changed to “growth rating;”
- + The current practice of including graduation rate in high school, career and technology center and district ratings were codified
- + Criteria for the Palmetto Gold and Silver program modified to include recognition for closing the achievement gap.
- + Report card format modified
  - + A summary document issued to parents;
  - + A comprehensive report is to be published on state, district and school websites, with printed copies made available upon request;
  - + Principals to access to student test scores before writing the report card narrative
  - + Local superintendents must review the report card narrative before publication.



- + Requirements for academic plans repealed.
- + Technical assistance provisos codified.
- + Beginning in 2013 the accountability system will undergo five-year reviews.

## **PALMETTO GOLD AND SILVER AWARDS PROGRAM**

The Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program was established by the Education Accountability Act (EAA) of 1998. The EAA was amended in 2008 to include closing the gaps in achievement between historically lower- and higher-achieving demographic groups of students as an additional reward path. Prior to the revisions, the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards program and the EOC award to schools closing the achievement gap existed independently.

Schools meeting the criteria for general performance may receive a Palmetto Gold or Silver Award for general performance based on the criteria in use since the inception of the Palmetto Gold and Silver Award program. Schools meeting the criteria for closing the gap may receive a Palmetto Gold or Silver Award for closing the achievement gap. All schools and career and technology centers having accountability test results or high school graduation rates are eligible for the awards. Schools with Absolute or Growth Ratings of "At Risk" for the current year are not eligible. Criteria for awards include:

### **Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards for General Performance:**

- + School meets criteria for Silver award for high general absolute performance, high growth, or a combination of the two based on criteria in original Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards program.
- + School meets criteria for Gold award for exceptional general absolute performance, exceptional growth, or a combination of the two based on criteria in original Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards program.

### **Palmetto Gold and Silver Award for Closing the Achievement Gap:**

- + School meets criteria for Silver award if end of year performance in English language arts (ELA) or mathematics or growth in achievement by at least one historically underachieving group meets or exceeds performance of historically high achieving students (elementary or middle schools), or, the growth in the graduation rate by at least one historically underachieving group meets or exceeds the annual growth rate needed to meet the state high school graduation rate goal of 88.3% by 2014 (high schools and career centers.)
- + School meets criteria for Gold awards if end of year performance in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics by at least one historically underachieving group meets or exceeds performance of historically high achieving students (elementary or middle schools), or, the graduation rate of at least one historically underachieving group of students meets or exceeds the statewide graduation rate of historically high achieving students (high schools and career centers.)

## **PASS ALIGNMENT REVIEW**

In accordance with EAA, the Education Oversight Committee conducted a review of the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) in January 2009. The review involved 145 educators from the various academic disciplines from across South Carolina. The review covered the alignment of the test items in Reading/Research and Writing to the South Carolina English Language Arts Academic Standards. The review also covered the alignment of the test items for Mathematics, Science and Social Studies to the corresponding South Carolina Academic Standards. The results of the review will be released later in Summer 2009.

## FUNDING

### ADOPTION OF SCHOOL FUNDING PRINCIPLES

In October 2008 the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) adopted a set of funding principles to guide its review of programs and services and the development of funding recommendations to the General Assembly. The EOC stated that “the school funding system should support teaching and learning experiences so that every child is educated for success in the twenty-first century.” The funding principles place priority on providing instruction and instructional support, even when it requires reallocation of other program funding. The nine principles are organized in four categories: realignment of current resources; weightings to address differences in the needs of young people, efficiency, and accountability and partnerships. These principles are evident in the 2009-2010 funding recommendations, the EOC-funding model and the comments offered on the funding recommendations of other groups.

### 2009-2010 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

In Fiscal Year 2008-09 the economic recession impacting the nation and South Carolina severely reduced available revenues for public education, especially for the Education Improvement Act (EIA) programs. Through December of 2008, EIA appropriations had been reduced by \$81.3 million. Consequently, the EOC budget recommendations for EIA for FY2009-10 reflected the austere economic conditions and reallocated as many EIA dollars as possible into the classroom. Specifically, the recommendations that totaled \$564 million included:

- + Preserving the South Carolina average teacher salary at the current year’s level of \$47,376;
- + Collapsing 13 EIA line item appropriations from categorical program allocations into 4 line item appropriations with funds following the child and districts having flexibility to provide instruction and instructional services that meet the needs of students. The four new line items would be: students at risk; students who are artistically or academically talented; professional development; and reading;
- + Restructuring professional development offered by 5 independent entities and requiring those entities to demonstrate at least a 25 % match of state funds;
- + Honoring the commitments made to teachers who are currently certified or who are in the process of being certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; however, the program would be discontinued in the future in lieu of a performance and/or assignment driven pay plan as devised by the Superintendent of Education and the South Carolina Department of Education;’
- + Restructuring technical assistance with fewer funds and allowing transferability for students enrolled in persistently underperforming schools to a school in or outside the district of residence;
- + Suspending for one year funding of several EIA programs; arts curriculum grants, competitive teacher grants, Palmetto Gold and Silver, external review team evaluations and instructional materials. The EOC recommended that the Department of Education determine how to integrate technology in textbook purchases;
- + Eliminating EIA funding for the Service Learning Engagement project and the Office of School Improvement Council Assistance;
- + Increasing funding for formative assessments by \$3.4 million;

The EOC budget recommendations for EIA for FY2009-10 reflected the austere economic conditions and reallocated as many EIA dollars as possible into the classroom.

- + Continued Funding of the Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP) of \$21.0 million in recurring EIA revenues;
- + Annualizing summer school funding of \$12.0 million

Regarding the Education Finance Act, in Fiscal Year 2008-09 revenue shortfalls resulted in a reduction in the EFA allocations to school districts of \$187.9 million through December of 2008. The EOC recommended that all efforts be made to fund the Education Finance Act at the current year's level without further reductions.

## FUNDING MODEL UPDATE

In 2003 the EOC adopted a funding model with a revised base student cost and new pupil weightings. Annually thereafter, the model has been updated to reflect changes in law or regulation, salary increases for instructional and administrative personnel and effective schools research. For example, the model incorporates a pupil teacher ratio of 21:1 in all grades because effective schools research on class size supports the lower size ratios.

In 2008 the base student cost of the model increased from \$5,606 to \$5,800, a 3.46% increase. The weights, which were added in 2006, were unchanged in 2008 and include a weight of 1.0 for all students plus add-on weights for students: (1) with disabilities; (2) served in gifted and talented education programs including Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs; (3) in poverty; (4) with limited English proficiency; (5) not meeting state standards on mathematics, English language arts or both; and (6) aged 17 to 21 who are pursuing a diploma or GED through adult education or other means but are no longer part of the regular school setting. The number of weighted pupil units funded in the model in 2008 totaled 914,483, an increase due to more students in the state who were non-English speaking, who were enrolled in career and vocational education, and who lived in poverty. Based upon the revised base student cost and weighted pupil units, the total cost to fund the EOC model in 2008 was projected to be \$5.3 billion. For comparison purposes, in Fiscal Year 2007-08, excluding revenues from the proceeds of bonds, school districts received \$6.9 billion in federal, state and local revenues.

The 2008 update also addressed the issue of implementation of the model. How can the EOC model be implemented when South Carolina is experiencing significant declines in revenues? The EOC recommended that the legislature in FY 2009-10 consolidate several EIA line item appropriations and allocate these funds to school districts on a per child basis. In turn, districts would expend the funds on instruction and instructional support for students who generated the funds. The consolidation would be the first step towards implementing a poverty factor and a weighting for gifted and talented education.

## FLEXIBILITY STUDY

In collaboration with Dr. Randolph C. Martin, chairman of the Economics Department at the Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina, EOC staff completed a comprehensive evaluation of the utilization and educational impact of the flexibility provisos. Since FY2003-04, 29 school districts have used the flexibility provisos to transfer funds every fiscal year with only three districts having never utilized the flexibility provisos. In FY 2007-08, 70 school districts and one special school district transferred a total of \$31.4 million or 9% of the total EIA and general funds available to be transferred. These school districts transferred approximately 48 percent of the funds initially appropriated to the Reduce Class Size program and 21 percent of the funds initially appropriated to the Summer School/Comprehensive Remediation program. Of all funds transferred, districts reallocated over 70% to Act 135 Academic Assistance.

A comparative analysis was also conducted to determine what differences, if any, exist between districts that have consistently utilized the flexibility provisos and those that have not. The analysis found that districts that consistently utilized the flexibility provisos were generally more rural, had smaller student enrollments and were more likely to experience student enrollment declines as compared to all other districts. These districts also had a slightly higher poverty index and greater concentrations of poverty. The study looked at the issue of whether utilization of the flexibility provisos enhanced or detracted from the educational achievement and goals of the state's education accountability system. Analyzing the impact of the flexibility provisos on student academic achievement as measured by the district absolute index, the data revealed that utilization of the flexibility provisos has not affected student academic outcomes. It is not possible to correlate utilization of the flexibility provisos with the absolute index or with changes in the absolute index over time. And, finally, the data do not demonstrate that the aggregate districts are using the flexibility provisos to increase the

percentage of per pupil expenditures for instruction. In fact, the average percent of per pupil expenditures for instruction actually declined between 2001-02 and 2005-06 across districts.

## ASSESSMENTS / RATINGS

### U.S. HISTORY AND CONSTITUTION END-OF-COURSE TEST

In October 2008, the EOC approved the U.S. History and the Constitution End of Course Test for administration beginning with the 2008-2009 school year. The approval contained language that directed the SCDE to disseminate all professional development support documents for the U.S. History and the Constitution course, including the *Prioritized Scope and Sequence and Instructional Planning Guide* for the course, as soon as possible.

### SC ALTERNATE (SC-ALT) SCIENCE APPROVAL

As part of its responsibilities listed in the Education Accountability Act of 1998 (EAA), the Education Oversight Committee reviewed the South Carolina Alternate Assessment (SC-Alt) Science field test administered in Spring 2007.

The SC-Alt Science assessment is designed for administration to students with significant cognitive disabilities. The SC-Alt Science field test was reviewed through two sets of studies. One study examined the alignment between the SC-Alt Science assessment and the state academic standards. This study was conducted by University of North Carolina-Charlotte and Western Carolina University professors of curriculum and special education, in cooperation with the SCDE and the National Alternate Assessment Center. The second study was a technical review of the task and item data from the 2007 test administration.

The studies identified strengths of the SC-Alt Science alternate assessment, as well as a number of concerns. According to the review, the alignment between the SC-Alt Science assessment items and the science grade level academic standards needs to be improved. Additionally, the SC-Alt Science Assessment Standards and Measurement Guidelines, a publication designed to provide guidelines to test developers and teachers for the development of assessment and implementation of classroom instruction, was found to not fully reflect the standards and indicators assessed in the SC-Alt Science test. Finally, the analysis of the technical quality of the assessment revealed that approximately one-fourth of the items were “flagged” for having statistical values outside the expected range.

In June 2008, the Education Oversight Committee made three recommendations regarding the SC-Alt Science field test: The SCDE responded to the recommendations and in August, the EOC recommended approval of the SC-Alternate Test-Science for grades 3-8 beginning in 2010. They also stated that approval of a high school science measure should follow development and review of the high school assessment in biology.

### CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER RATINGS

In Spring 2005, the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee asked the staff of the Education Oversight Committee to review the criteria for the report card ratings of the Career and Technical Education (CATE) Centers. The report card ratings received by the centers statewide are, and have been, higher, on average, than the report card ratings for elementary, middle, and high schools. The criteria for the CATE centers were reviewed and efforts were made to improve the alignment of the ratings criteria with the amended Perkins Act criteria. The criteria presented for approval match the Perkins criteria of Field Placement, Graduation Rate, and Mastery exams. The EOC approved the new ratings criteria in April 2008 for implementation in 2009. The EOC also approved new values for the different Mastery point levels.

## STANDARDS

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) STANDARDS

During the April 2007 Education Oversight Committee meeting, the committee considered and approved the revised English Language Arts Academic Standards. The State Board of Education requested changes to the revised standards, and the standards were implemented as a field test for the 2007-08 school year. After changes requested by the State Board of Education were made, the Education Oversight Committee approved the amended document in April 2008. The State Board of Education gave final approval to the new English Language Arts Academic Standards in May 2008, completing the revision process begun in the spring of 2006.

### COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF THE SC MATHEMATICS STANDARDS

In June 2007 the Education Oversight Committee approved the final revisions of the South Carolina Mathematics Academic Standards. In March 2008, the National Math Review Panel (NMRP) issued recommendations to improve mathematics standards and instruction. As a result of the NMRP recommendations, the South Carolina Department of Education established the South Carolina Mathematics Advisory Panel to ensure that the South Carolina Mathematics Academic Standards are vertically aligned and clearly understood by teachers, parents and the educational community. Staff from the Education Oversight Committee and the South Carolina Department of Education are working with South Carolina curricular leaders and postsecondary educators to review the 2007 mathematics document. Any substantive changes to the mathematics standards will be brought before the Education Oversight Committee and the South Carolina State Board of Education.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT / TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

### FIRST YEAR TEACHER READINESS IN SC REPORT

On several occasions over the last several years members of the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) heard the complaint from principals and superintendents that first year teachers were ill-prepared for the classroom. In response to the complaint, the staff of the EOC proposed conducting a survey of principals to gather data on the preparedness of individuals new to the classroom. The overall purposes of the study were: 1) To determine the readiness of teachers new to the classroom, 2) To determine specific concerns regarding new teachers, and 3) To determine the perceived strengths and weaknesses of teachers new to the classroom. The survey, conducted in Spring 2008, asked principals and directors of special schools and career centers, to rate up to three first year teachers as strong, between strong and weak, or weak. Respondents provided information on 971 first year teachers, examining how often first year teachers exhibited behaviors in six areas: Content Knowledge, Classroom Management, Instruction, Curriculum, Assessment, and Interpersonal Relationships. Findings of the study include:

- + According to the respondents, the areas where first years teachers exhibited behaviors most often, regardless of whether they were strong, between strong and weak, or weak, were Content Knowledge and Interpersonal Relationships.
- + The area where first year teachers exhibited behaviors the least, again regardless of whether they were strong, between strong and weak, or weak, was Assessment.
- + Further analysis of the data in regards to school poverty level, school location, school enrollment, school type, or the type of teacher preparation program the first year teacher participated in did not find any statistically significant differences among the three groups of first year teachers.
- + Data collected did indicate that first year teachers rated weak were just as likely to receive a contract for the next school year as the other two groups of teachers, and very few of the first year teachers rated weak were offered a contract with an improvement plan.

Specific recommendations for action are included in the full report.

## SC TEACHER LOAN PROGRAM

Education Oversight Committee staff completed the annual review of the Teacher Loan Program (TLP). The program continues to provide needed assistance to individuals seeking certification in a qualifying subject area or teaching in geographic-needs schools. The study noted that 40 states have loan cancellation programs for teachers but none operate like the South Carolina program. Recommendations to improve the program included a call for a Policy Board of Governance to set goals, facilitate communication among the cooperating agencies, advocate for the loan participants, and effectively market the program. A second recommendation called for the elimination of the requirement for incoming freshman that they score a minimum SAT score and graduate in the top 40 percent of their class; instead the freshmen would be required to make a minimum SAT score or graduate in the top 40 percent of their class. The recommendations were approved.

## ALTERNATIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

With authority provided in the 2005-2006 General Appropriations Act, schools rated Below Average or Unsatisfactory were allowed to pursue an alternative to the technical assistance strategies outlined in the Education Accountability Act. Of eleven applicant schools, seven were approved and five entered the program. Four schools (Whale Branch Middle, Spaulding Elementary, West Hartsville Elementary, MS Bailey Elementary) implemented the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP); Lake Marion High School implemented a ninth grade academy model. Of the TAP schools, MS Bailey Elementary was merged with Clinton Elementary School, Whale Branch Middle School struggled to make gains and substantial student performance gains were realized at Spaulding Elementary and West Hartsville Elementary. Both of the schools demonstrating gains are in Darlington County. Early data suggest progress is being made under Lake Marion High School's ninth grade academy model; however, full data for evaluation are unavailable at this time because high school accountability measures accumulate across the four high school years.

## TECH THINK

During the 2006 legislative session, the General Assembly commissioned a study on the feasibility of computerized testing in grades 1-10. A contract was awarded to Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) to conduct the feasibility study. Results of the study indicated that converting to computer-based testing would cost, at a minimum, \$54,250,000 for infrastructure and hardware costs; there would be additional costs for test development, item writing, comparability studies, additional staff, etc. The study also found that the vast majority of students spend 30 minutes or less on a school computer each day and that computer-based testing will not produce increased test scores unless instruction is technology-based. After careful consideration of the study and input from an advisory panel, the Education Oversight Committee recommended that the plan suggested by DRC not be implemented until a study on the use of technology in instruction was completed and that minimal standards for computer hardware purchased with state funds were established and put into practice. Staff from the Education Oversight Committee, the South Carolina Department of Education, the Chief Information Office of the Budget and Control Board and school districts studied the instruction issue and issued a report in late 2008. Called Tech Think, the Work Group recommended that the State provide funds for K-12 education's digital information systems 1) so that infrastructure, human resources, and professional development meet national "moderate or satisfactory" efficiency standards and 2) in order to provide for instruction that embeds digital information systems and assessment in all of our schools and school districts.

## PUBLIC REPORTING

### HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE GOAL

In April 2008, the EOC approved recommendations adopted by the High School Graduation Rate Goal Advisory Panel, a group convened to “establish a goal for high school graduation to include reporting data for different student groups and the inclusion of fifth year graduates.” In 2007-08, the EOC made the establishment of the goal a committee objective.

The adopted goal states that 88.3 percent of the high school class of 2014 should graduate from high school. The goal is based on the percentage of students achieving a high school diploma on-time, using the National Governor’s Association compact on the methodology for calculating high school graduation rates. A second goal was also established to measure a statewide success rate of 95 percent of 21-year-olds achieving readiness for postsecondary school and/or the workforce by the year 2018. The readiness measure should include successful completion of high school with a diploma, a GED, or a state occupational certificate for students with severe disabilities.

### ACCOUNTABILITY MANUAL

Each spring the Education Oversight Committee staff produces the *Accountability Manual*, which provides detail on the ratings system for educators and interested individuals. *Accountability Manuals* are distributed to school and school district administrators each summer and contain the current data on formulas, expectations, procedures, etc. on the accountability system.



## PUBLIC AWARENESS

### REVISIONS TO EAA -- PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Based on revisions to the EAA enacted in June 2008, the EOC is charged with working with the State Board of Education and a broad based group of stakeholders to determine the criteria for the five academic ratings schools and districts will receive. The EOC is also charged with establishing the criteria for student performance levels.

To help guide the committee in making these decisions, the EOC is working with Clemson University to conduct comprehensive, statewide opinion research to provide the EOC with information on setting statewide goals, student performance levels, and school ratings. The structure of the strategy includes:

- + Four preliminary focus groups to assist in the development of valid questions for the statewide surveying. Representatives from the general public, parents, business community, and teachers/administrators were included.
- + Following the preliminary focus groups, statewide surveying by phone and internet will occur until April 2009. Clemson will conduct the surveying, having built the surveying instruments from information gathered at the preliminary focus groups.
- + In March 2009, nine statewide focus groups will occur in rural, suburban, and urban areas around the state.
- + A final report will be completed and made available to the EOC by June 2009.
- + Following receipt of the report, six regional workshops for educators will be held in January 2010. Beginning in February 2010, the EOC will begin a statewide blitz to educate stakeholders and the general public about changes to the system.

### FAMILY-FRIENDLY STANDARDS

The Education Oversight Committee, in cooperation with the SC Department of Education, published the annual “Guide for Parents and Families about what Your Child Should Be Learning in School this Year.” The publication, available in both English and Spanish versions, provides current information on the standards in the four core content areas in grades K-12. In 2007, the publication was revised to be more “reader-friendly” with updated graphics. The EOC and the SCDE are currently working with the SC State Library on creating an interactive, web-based version of the family-friendly standards.



## PARENT SURVEY

Annually, a subgroup of parents in the state is surveyed to determine their perception of their child's public school with the EOC reporting on the statewide findings. The results of the 2007 parent survey documented that parent satisfaction with the learning environment, home and school relations and social and physical environment of their child's school increased to a six-year high. Parent satisfaction was highest for parents whose child attended an elementary school and improved as the absolute performance rating of their child's school improved. Parents continued to express concern with student behavior, with parents whose child attended a school with an absolute rating of Unsatisfactory more than twice as likely to feel that students misbehaved in school as compared to parents whose child attended a school with an Excellent rating. The biggest obstacle to parental involvement continues to be work schedules.

A second component of the 2007 report included analyses comparing the results of the parent and teacher surveys administered in 2007. Parents who had children in schools with higher absolute school indices and teachers employed in schools with higher absolute school indices tended to be more satisfied with the learning environment, home and school relations, and the social and physical environment of the school. Parent satisfaction of the social and physical environment was the strongest predictor of the absolute school index. On the other hand, teacher satisfaction with home and school relations was a predictor of a middle and high school's absolute index while teacher satisfaction with the learning environment and home and school relations was a predictor of an elementary school's absolute index. Teacher satisfaction with the social and physical environment was not a predictor of a school's absolute index. Furthermore, teacher satisfaction with home and school relations was the strongest indicator of the absolute school index for all three school levels.

## BE THERE PARENT INVOLVEMENT MEDIA CAMPAIGN

In FY2007-08, the EOC committed to funding a pilot media campaign in SC school districts focused on increasing parent involvement. Partnering with the SC School Board Association (SCSBA), the EOC worked with school districts committed to the campaign by funding facets of it within their districts. The EOC and SCSBA planned to produce billboards for participating pilot districts.

Due to budget constraints, the EOC maintained a commitment of \$1,000 to each pilot district. Jasper County School District, Laurens 55, and Beaufort County School District are utilizing their funding for newspaper advertisements and the printing of posters for schools.

## PARENTS AND ADULTS INSPIRING READING SUCCESS (PAIRS)

Launched in February 2005, Parents and Adults Inspiring Reading Success (PAIRS) is a project of SC's daily newspapers and is administered as a public awareness initiative of the Education Oversight Committee. The mission of PAIRS is to encourage and support the achievement of reading literacy on grade level for every child in South Carolina.

Highlights of the year include:

- + Announcement of the SC Literacy Champions Awards program, designed to promote sustainable models of higher education/K-12 public school service-learning partnerships to boost student reading achievement. Studies show that when service learning is connected to curriculum, young people make gains on achievement tests, complete their homework more often, and increase

their grade point averages. Materials were purchased and created for post-secondary institutions interested in applying for the award. The first awards are scheduled to be given out in Summer 2009.

- + In April 2008, at the SC Afterschool Alliance conference, PAIRS staff introduced the ability for individuals to sign up for PAIRS Affiliate status online.
- + This year, PAIRS partnered with the SC Afterschool Alliance's annual conference in April 2008, hosting a "literacy track" within the conference. Conference attendees had the opportunity to attend nine workshops tailored to enhancing the literacy component of their programs. Additionally, PAIRS offered a "door prize" of \$1,000 worth of free books to one affiliate program attending the conference. The prize was a collaborative effort between PAIRS and the SC Independent Booksellers Association and was designed to allow one program with the opportunity to build or enhance their program's existing library.
- + In May 2008, the printed Summer Reading supplement produced the past two years was replaced with a joint summer reading campaign with the SC State Library. Utilizing professional artwork created by the Collaborative Summer Library Program, online ads were created and ran on the websites of seven daily newspaper websites. The web ads linked to a web page that included literacy resources as well as information about the EOC, PAIRS and the SC State Library. Additionally, four print ads were created and ran during June and July in every SC daily and weekly newspaper. An op-ed was published in *The State* to bring awareness to the partnership and summer reading.

In their 2008 Evaluation Report, the SC State Library reported an increase in summer reading program participation this past summer over previous years. Of the 588,197 SC children who have library cards, 17 percent (99,500) children registered for the 2008 Summer Reading Program, and seven percent (39,802) children completed the program.

## IV

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