CHAPTER 18

Education Accountability Act

Article 1

General Provisions

**SECTION 59-18-100. Performance based accountability system for public education established; "accountability" defined.**

 The General Assembly finds that South Carolinians have a commitment to public education and a conviction that high expectations for all students are vital components for improving academic achievement. It is the purpose of the General Assembly in this chapter to establish a performance-based accountability system for public education which focuses on improving teaching and learning so that students are equipped with a strong academic foundation. Moreover, to meet the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate, all students graduating from public high schools in this State should have the knowledge, skills, and opportunity to be college ready, career ready, and life ready for success in the global, digital, and knowledge-based world of the twenty-first century as provided in Section 59-1-50. All graduates should have the opportunity to qualify for and be prepared to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses, without the need for remedial coursework, postsecondary job training, or significant on-the-job training. Accountability, as defined by this chapter, means acceptance of the responsibility for improving student performance and taking actions to improve classroom practice and school performance by the Governor, the General Assembly, the State Department of Education, colleges and universities, local school boards, administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the community.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008; 2017 Act No. 94 (H.3969), § 4, eff June 10, 2017.

**SECTION 59-18-110. Objectives.**

 The system is to:

 (1) use academic achievement standards to push schools and students toward higher performance by aligning the state assessment to those standards and linking policies and criteria for performance standards, accreditation, reporting, school rewards, and targeted assistance;

 (2) provide an annual report card with a performance indicator system that is logical, reasonable, fair, challenging, and technically defensible, which furnishes clear and specific information about school and district academic performance and other performance to parents and the public;

 (3) require all districts to establish local accountability systems to stimulate quality teaching and learning practices and target assistance to low performing schools;

 (4) provide resources to strengthen the process of teaching and learning in the classroom to improve student performance and reduce gaps in performance;

 (5) support professional development as integral to improvement and to the actual work of teachers and school staff; and

 (6) expand the ability to evaluate the system and to conduct in-depth studies on implementation, efficiency, and the effectiveness of academic improvement efforts.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008.

**SECTION 59-18-120. Definitions.**

 As used in this chapter:

 (1) "Oversight Committee" means the Education Oversight Committee established in Section 59-6-10.

 (2) "Standards-based assessment" means an assessment where an individual's performance is compared to specific performance standards and not to the performance of other students.

 (3) "Disaggregated data" means data broken out for specific groups within the total student population, such as by race, gender, level of poverty, limited English proficiency status, disability status, gifted and talented, or other groups as required by federal statutes or regulations.

 (4) "Longitudinally matched student data" means examining the performance of a single student or a group of students by considering their test scores over time.

 (5) "Academic achievement standards" means statements of expectations for student learning.

 (6) "Department" means the State Department of Education.

 (7) "Performance rating" means the classification a school will receive based on the percentage of students meeting standard on the state's standards-based assessment, student growth or student progress from one school year to the next, graduation rates, and other indicators as determined by federal guidelines and the Education Oversight Committee, as applicable. To increase transparency and accountability, the overall points achieved by a school to determine its 'performance rating' must be based on a numerical scale from zero to one hundred, with one hundred being the maximum total achievable points for a school.

 (8) "Objective and reliable statewide assessment" means assessments that yield consistent results and that measure the cognitive knowledge and skills specified in the state-approved academic standards and do not include questions relative to personal opinions, feelings, or attitudes and are not biased with regard to race, gender, or socioeconomic status. The assessments must include a writing assessment and questions designed to reflect a range of cognitive abilities beyond the knowledge level. Constructed response questions may be included as a component of the writing assessment.

 (9) "Division of Accountability" means the special unit within the oversight committee established in Section 59-6-100.

 (10) "Formative assessment" means assessments used within the school year to analyze general strengths and weaknesses in learning and instruction, to understand the performance of students individually and across achievement categories, to adapt instruction to meet students' needs, and to consider placement and planning for the next grade level. Data and performance from the formative assessments must not be used in the calculation of elementary, middle, or high school ratings, but may be used in determining primary school ratings.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2006 Act No. 254, §§ 2.A, 2.B, eff March 24, 2006; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008; 2017 Act No. 94 (H.3969), § 5, eff June 10, 2017.

Article 3

Academic Standards and Assessments

**SECTION 59-18-300. Adoption of educational standards in core academic areas.**

 The State Board of Education is directed to adopt grade specific performance-oriented educational standards in the core academic areas of mathematics, English/language arts, social studies (history, government, economics, and geography), and science for kindergarten through twelfth grade and for grades nine through twelve adopt specific academic standards for high school credit courses in mathematics, English/language arts, social studies, and science. The standards are to promote the goals of providing every student with the competencies to:

 (1) read, view, and listen to complex information in the English language;

 (2) write and speak effectively in the English language;

 (3) solve problems by applying mathematics;

 (4) conduct research and communicate findings;

 (5) understand and apply scientific concepts;

 (6) obtain a working knowledge of world, United States, and South Carolina history, government, economics, and geography; and

 (7) use information to make decisions.

 The standards must be reflective of the highest level of academic skills with the rigor necessary to improve the curriculum and instruction in South Carolina's schools so that students are encouraged to learn at unprecedented levels and must be reflective of the highest level of academic skills at each grade level.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008.

**SECTION 59-18-310. Development or adoption of statewide assessment program to promote student learning and measure student performance.**

 (A) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, is required to develop or adopt a statewide assessment program to promote student learning and to measure student performance on state standards and:

 (1) identify areas in which students, schools, or school districts need additional support;

 (2) indicate the academic achievement for schools, districts, and the State;

 (3) satisfy federal reporting requirements; and

 (4) provide professional development to educators.

 Assessments required to be developed or adopted pursuant to the provisions of this section or chapter must be objective and reliable, and administered in English and in Braille for students as identified in their Individual Education Plan.

 (B)(1) The statewide assessment program must include the subjects of English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies in grades three through eight, as delineated in Section 59-18-320, and end-of-course tests for courses selected by the State Board of Education and approved by the Education Oversight Committee for federal accountability, which award units of credit in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. A student's score on an end-of-year assessment may not be the sole criterion for placing the student on academic probation, retaining the student in his current grade, or requiring the student to attend summer school. Beginning with the graduating class of 2010, students are required to pass a high school credit course in science and a course in United States history in which end-of-course examinations are administered to receive the state high school diploma. Beginning with the graduating class of 2015, students are no longer required to meet the exit examination requirements set forth in this section and State Regulation to earn a South Carolina high school diploma.

 (2) A person who is no longer enrolled in a public school and who previously failed to receive a high school diploma or was denied graduation solely for failing to meet the exit exam requirements pursuant to this section and State Regulation may petition the local school board to determine the student's eligibility to receive a high school diploma pursuant to this chapter. The local school board will transmit diploma requests to the South Carolina Department of Education in accordance with department procedures. Petitions under this section must be submitted to the local school district. Students receiving diplomas in accordance with this section shall not be counted as graduates in the graduation rate calculations for affected schools and districts, either retroactively or in current or future calculations. On or before January 31, 2019, the South Carolina Department of Education shall report to the State Board of Education and the General Assembly the number of diplomas granted, by school district, under the provision. The State Board of Education shall remove any conflicting requirement and promulgate conforming changes in its applicable regulations. The department shall advertise the provisions of this item in at least one daily newspaper of general circulation in the area of each school district within forty-five days after this enactment. After enactment, the department may continue to advertise the provisions of this item, but it shall not be required to advertise after December 31, 2017. At a minimum, this notice must consist of two columns measuring at least ten inches in length and measuring at least four and one-half inches combined width, and include:

 (a) a headline printed in at least a twenty-four point font that is boldfaced;

 (b) an explanation of who qualifies for the petitioning option;

 (c) an explanation of the petition process;

 (d) a contact name and phone number; and

 (e) the deadline for submitting a petition.

 (C) While assessment is called for in the specific areas mentioned above, this should not be construed as lessening the importance of foreign languages, visual and performing arts, health, physical education, and career or occupational programs.

 (D)(1) Beginning with the 2025-2026 School Year, the State Board of Education shall create a statewide adoption list of no more than five nationally normed formative assessments for use in kindergarten through eighth grade aligned with the state content standards in English/language arts and mathematics that satisfies professional measurement standards in accordance with criteria jointly determined by the Education Oversight Committee and the State Department of Education. The formative assessments must provide diagnostic information in a timely manner to all school districts for each student during the course of the school year. Subject to appropriations by the General Assembly for the assessments, local districts must be allocated resources to select and administer formative assessments from the statewide adoption list to use to improve student performance in accordance with district improvement plans.

 (2) Districts shall ensure all students in kindergarten through eighth grade are assessed using a state-approved, nationally normed formative assessment tool during the fall, winter, and spring each year. School districts shall provide all formative assessment data and scores by grade level and school to the department from the prior school year. The department is directed to compile the information received and submit a comprehensive report regarding performance on the formative assessments to the General Assembly by June 1, annually. Any school district failing to provide this data to the department shall have ten percent of their State Aid to Classroom funding withheld until the data is provided.

 (3) The state-approved, nationally normed formative assessments shall be periodically reevaluated pursuant to a timeline established by the department not to exceed four years.

 (E) The State Department of Education shall provide on-going professional development in the development and use of classroom assessments, the use of formative assessments, and the use of the end-of-year state assessments so that teaching and learning activities are focused on student needs and lead to higher levels of student performance.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2001 Act No. 39, § 3; 2006 Act No. 254, § 3, eff March 24, 2006; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008; 2014 Act No. 155 (H.3919), § 1, eff April 14, 2014; 2016 Act No. 207 (S.933), § 1, eff June 3, 2016; 2017 Act No. 94 (H.3969), § 6, eff June 10, 2017; 2024 Act No. 114 (S.418), § 12, eff March 11, 2024.

**SECTION 59-18-320. Review of field test; general administration of test; accommodations for students with disabilities; adoption of new standards.**

 (A) After the first statewide field test of the assessment program in each of the four academic areas, and after the field tests of the end of course assessments of high school credit courses, the Education Oversight Committee, established in Section 59-6-10, will review the state assessment program and the course assessments for alignment with the state standards, level of difficulty and validity, and for the ability to differentiate levels of achievement, and will make recommendations for needed changes, if any. The review will be provided to the State Board of Education, the State Department of Education, the Governor, the Senate Education Committee, and the House Education and Public Works Committee as soon as feasible after the field tests. The Department of Education will then report to the Education Oversight Committee no later than one month after receiving the reports on the changes made to the assessments to comply with the recommendations.

 (B) After review and approval by the Education Oversight Committee, and pursuant to Section 59-18-325, the standards-based assessment of mathematics, English/language arts, social studies, and science will be administered for accountability purposes to all public school students in grades three through eight, to include those students as required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act and by Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. To reduce the number of days of testing, to the extent possible, field test items must be embedded with the annual assessments. To ensure that school districts maintain the high standard of accountability established in the Education Accountability Act, performance level results reported on school and district report cards must meet consistently high levels in all four core content areas. For students with documented disabilities, the assessments developed by the Department of Education shall include the appropriate modifications and accommodations with necessary supplemental devices as outlined in a student's Individualized Education Program and as stated in the Administrative Guidelines and Procedures for Testing Students with Documented Disabilities.

 (C) After review and approval by the Education Oversight Committee, the end of course assessments of high school credit courses will be administered to all public school students as they complete each course.

 (D) Any new standards and assessments required to be developed and adopted by the State Board of Education, through the Department of Education for use as an accountability measure, must be developed and adopted upon the advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2006 Act No. 254, § 4, eff March 24, 2006; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008; 2017 Act No. 94 (H.3969), § 7, eff June 10, 2017.

**SECTION 59-18-325. College entrance and career readiness assessments; summative assessments.**

 (A) Beginning in eleventh grade for the first time in School Year 2017-2018 and subsequent years, all students must be offered a college entrance assessment that is from a provider secured by the department. In addition, all students entering the eleventh grade for the first time in School Year 2017-2018 and subsequent years must be administered a career readiness assessment. The results of the assessments must be provided to each student, their respective schools, and to the State to:

 (1) assist students, parents, teachers, and guidance counselors in developing individual graduation plans and in selecting courses aligned with each student's future ambitions;

 (2) promote South Carolina's Work Ready Communities initiative; and

 (3) meet federal and state accountability requirements.

 (B) Students subsequently may use the results of these assessments to apply to college or to enter careers. The results must be added as part of each student's permanent record and maintained at the department for at least ten years. The purpose of the results is to provide instructional information to assist students, parents, and teachers to plan for each student's course selection. This course selection might include remediation courses, dual-enrollment or dual-credit courses, advanced placement courses/International Baccalaureate, internships, career and technology courses that are aligned with appropriate industry credentials or certificates, or other options during the remaining semesters in high school.

 (1) For purposes of this section, "eleventh grade students" means students in the third year of high school after their initial enrollment in the ninth grade.

 (2) Valid accommodations must be provided according to the students' IEP or 504 plan. If a student also chooses to use the results of the college readiness assessment for post-secondary admission or placement, the student, his parent, or his guardian must indicate that choice in compliance with the testing vendor's deadline to ensure that the student may receive allowable accommodations consistent with the IEP or 504 plan that may yield a college reportable score.

 (3) In the twelfth grade, and as aligned to the student's Individual Graduation Plan, if funds are available, the State shall provide all students the opportunity to take or retake a college readiness assessment, the career readiness assessment, and/or earn industry credentials or certifications at no cost to the students. The results of the assessments must be provided to each student, the respective schools, and to the State.

 (4) A student with a disability, whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) team determines, and agrees in writing, that taking either of these assessments would not be aligned with the student's program of study and the student should not be administered either assessment, must not be administered either assessment.

 (C) To maintain a comprehensive and cohesive assessment system that signals a student's preparedness for the next educational level and ultimately culminates in a clear indication of a student's preparedness for postsecondary success in a college or career and to satisfy federal and state accountability purposes, the State Department of Education shall procure and maintain a summative assessment system.

 (1) The summative assessment must be administered to all students in grades three through eight. The summative assessment must assess students in English/language arts and mathematics, including those students as required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and by Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. For purposes of this subsection, "English/language arts" includes English, reading, and writing skills as required by existing state standards. The assessment must be a rigorous, achievement assessment that measures student mastery of the state standards, that provides timely reporting of results to educators, parents, and students, and that measures each student's progress toward college and career readiness. Therefore, the assessment or assessments must meet all of the following minimum requirements:

 (a) compares performance of students in South Carolina to other students' performance on comparable standards in other states with the ability to link the scales of the South Carolina assessment to the scales from other assessments measuring those comparable standards;

 (b) be a vertically scaled, benchmarked, standards-based system of summative assessments;

 (c) measures a student's preparedness for the next level of their educational matriculation and individual student performance against the state standards in English/language arts, reading, writing, mathematics, and student growth;

 (d) documents student progress toward national college and career readiness benchmarks derived from empirical research and state standards;

 (e) establishes at least four student achievement levels;

 (f) includes various test questions including, but not limited to, multiple choice, constructed response, and selected response, that require students to demonstrate their understanding of the content;

 (g) be administered to all students in a computer-based format except for students with disabilities as specified in the student's IEP or 504 plan, and unless the use of a computer by these students is prohibited due to the vendor's restrictions on computer-based test security, in which case the paper version must be made available; and

 (h) assists school districts and schools in aligning assessment, curriculum, and instruction.

 (2)(a) Beginning in the 2017-2018 School Year, each school district shall administer the statewide summative assessment, with the exception of alternate assessments, for grades three through eight during the last twenty days of school as determined by the district's regular instructional calendar, not including make-up days. If an extension to the twenty-day time period is needed, the school district or charter school may submit a request for an extension to the State Board of Education before December first of the school year for which the waiver is requested. The request must clearly document the scope and rationale for the extension. The request also must be accompanied by an action plan showing how the district or charter school will be able to comply with the twenty-day time frame for the following school year.

 (b) Statewide summative testing for each student may not exceed eight days each school year, with the exception of students with disabilities as specified in their IEPs or 504 plans.

 (c) The State Board of Education shall promulgate regulations outlining the procedures to be used during the testing process to ensure test security, including procedures for make-up days, and to comply with federal and state assessment requirements where necessary.

 (d) In the event of school closure due to extreme weather or other disruptions that are not the fault of the district, or significant school or district technology disruptions that impede computer-based assessment administration, the school district or charter school may submit a request to the department to provide a paper-based administration to complete testing within the last twenty days of school. The request must clearly document the scope and cause of the disruption.

 (3) Beginning with the 2017-2018 School Year, the department shall procure and administer the standards-based assessments of mathematics and English/language arts to students in grades three through eight. The department also shall procure and administer the standards-based assessment in science to students in grades four, six, and eight, and the standards-based assessment in social studies to students in grades five and seven.

 (4) The State Department of Education shall reimburse districts for the administration of the college entrance and career readiness assessments.

 (5) Formative assessments must continue to be adopted, selected, and administered pursuant to Section 59-18-310.

 (6) Within thirty days after providing student performance data to the school districts as required by law, the department must provide to the Education Oversight Committee student performance results on assessments authorized in this subsection and end-of-course assessments in a format agreed upon by the department and the Oversight Committee. The results of these assessments must be included in state ratings for each school beginning in the 2017-2018 School Year. The Oversight Committee also must develop and recommend a single accountability system that meets federal and state accountability requirements by the Fall of 2017. While developing the single accountability system that will be implemented in the 2017-2018 School Year, the Education Oversight Committee shall determine the format of a transitional report card released to the public in the Fall of 2016 and 2017 that will also identify underperforming schools and districts. These transitional reports will, at a minimum, include the following: (A) school, district, and statewide student assessment results in reading and mathematics in grades three through eight; (B) high school and district graduation rates; and (C) measures of student college and career readiness at the school, district, and statewide level. These transitional reports will inform schools and districts, the public, and the Department of Education of school and district general academic performance and assist in identifying potentially underperforming schools and districts and in targeting technical assistance support and interventions in the interim before ratings are issued.

 (7) When standards are subsequently revised, the Department of Education, the State Board of Education, and the Education Oversight Committee shall approve assessments pursuant to Section 59-18-320.

HISTORY: 2014 Act No. 155 (H.3919), § 4, eff April 14, 2014; 2014 Act No. 200 (H.3893), § 3, eff June 19, 2014; 2016 Act No. 281 (H.5140), § 2, eff June 22, 2016; 2017 Act No. 94 (H.3969), § 8, eff June 10, 2017.

**SECTION 59-18-330. Coordination and annual administration of National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).**

 The State Department of Education is directed to coordinate the annual administration of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) to obtain an indication of student and school performance relative to national performance levels. A school randomly selected by NAEP must comply with the administration of the assessment to obtain an indication of state performance relative to national performance levels.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2006 Act No. 254, § 5, eff March 24, 2006; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008.

**SECTION 59-18-340. PSAT, pre-ACT, or tenth grade Aspire tests to assess tenth grade students; availability; use of results.**

 High schools shall offer state-funded PSAT, pre-ACT, or tenth grade Aspire tests to each tenth grade student in order to assess and identify curricular areas that need to be strengthened and reinforced. Schools and districts shall use these assessments as diagnostic tools to provide academic assistance to students whose scores reflect the need for such assistance. Schools and districts shall use these assessments to provide guidance and direction for parents and students as they plan for postsecondary experiences.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2006 Act No. 254, § 6, eff March 24, 2006; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008; 2017 Act No. 94 (H.3969), § 9, eff June 10, 2017.

**SECTION 59-18-350. Cyclical review of state standards and assessments; analysis of assessment results.**

 (A) The State Board of Education, in consultation with the Education Oversight Committee, shall provide for a cyclical review by academic area of the state standards and assessments to ensure that the standards and assessments are maintaining high expectations for learning and teaching. At a minimum, each academic area should be reviewed and updated every seven years. After each academic area is reviewed, a report on the recommended revisions must be presented to the Education Oversight Committee and the State Board of Education for consideration. The previous content standards shall remain in effect until the recommended revisions are adopted pursuant to Section 59-18-355. As a part of the review, a task force of parents, business and industry persons, community leaders, and educators, to include special education teachers, shall examine the standards and assessment system to determine rigor and relevancy.

 (B) For the purpose of developing new college and career readiness English/language arts and mathematics state content standards, a cyclical review must be performed pursuant to subsection (A) for English/language arts and mathematics state content standards not developed by the South Carolina Department of Education. The review must begin on or before January 1, 2015, and the new college and career readiness state content standards must be implemented for the 2015-2016 school year.

 (C) The State Department of Education annually shall convene a team of curriculum experts to analyze the results of the assessments, including performance item by item. This analysis must yield a plan for disseminating additional information about the assessment results and instruction and the information must be disseminated to districts not later than January fifteenth of the subsequent year.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008; 2014 Act No. 200 (H.3893), § 4, eff June 19, 2014.

**SECTION 59-18-355. Content standards revisions; required approval.**

 (A)(1) A revision to a state content standard recommended pursuant to Section 59-18-350(A), as well as a new standard or a change in a current standard that the State Board of Education otherwise considers for approval as an accountability measure, may not be adopted and implemented without the:

 (a) advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee; and

 (b) approval by a Joint Resolution of the General Assembly.

 (2) General Assembly approval required by item (1)(b) does not apply to a revision recommended pursuant to Section 59-18-350(A), other approval of a new standard, and other changes to an old standard if the revision, new standard, or changed standard is developed by the State Department of Education.

 (B) A revision to an assessment recommended pursuant to Section 59-18-350(A), as well as a new assessment or a change in a current assessment that the State Board of Education otherwise considers for approval as an accountability measure, may not be adopted and implemented without the advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee.

 (C) Upon initiating a change to an existing standard, including a cyclical review, the Education Oversight Committee and the Department of Education shall provide notice of their plans and intent to the General Assembly and the Governor.

 (D) Nothing in this section may be interpreted to prevent the Department of Education, Board of Education, and Education Oversight Committee from considering best practices in education standards and assessments while developing its own standards and assessments.

HISTORY: 2014 Act No. 200 (H.3893), § 2, eff June 19, 2014.

**SECTION 59-18-360. Dissemination of assessment results.**

 Beginning with the 2010 assessment administration, the Department of Education is directed to provide assessment results annually on individual students and schools by August first, except when assessments are being updated and new achievement standards are being set, in a manner and format that is easily understood by parents and the public. In addition, the school assessment results must be presented in a format easily understood by the faculty and in a manner that is useful for curriculum review and instructional improvement. The department is to provide longitudinally matched student data from the standards-based assessments and include information on the performance of subgroups of students within the school. The department must work with the Division of Accountability in developing the formats of the assessment results. Schools and districts are responsible for disseminating this information to parents.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2003 Act No. 89, § 5, eff July 23, 2003; 2006 Act No. 254, § 7, eff March 24, 2006; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008; 2017 Act No. 94 (H.3969), § 10, eff June 10, 2017.

**SECTION 59-18-370. Renumbered as SECTION 59-18-360 by 2008 Act No. 282, SECTION 1, eff June 5, 2008.**

Article 7

Materials and Accreditation

**SECTION 59-18-700. Alignment of criteria for instructional materials with educational standards.**

 The criteria governing the adoption of instructional materials must be revised by the State Board of Education to require that the content of such materials reflect the substance and level of performance outlined in the grade specific educational standards adopted by the state board.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008.

**SECTION 59-18-710. Recommendations regarding state's accreditation system.**

 The State Department of Education shall provide recommendations regarding the state's accreditation system to the State Board of Education. The recommendations must be derived from input received from broad-based stakeholder groups. In developing the criteria for the accreditation system, the State Board of Education shall consider including the function of school improvement councils and other school decision-making groups and their participation in the school planning process.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008; 2008 Act No. 353, § 2, Pt 1A.B, eff July 1, 2009.

Article 9

Reporting

**SECTION 59-18-900. Annual report cards; performance ratings; criteria; annual school progress narrative; trustee training; data regulations; military-connected student performance reports.**

 (A) The Education Oversight Committee, working with the State Board of Education, is directed to establish the format of a comprehensive, web-based, annual report card to report on the performance for the State and for individual primary, elementary, middle, high schools, career centers, and school districts of the State. The comprehensive report card must be in a reader-friendly format, using graphics whenever possible, published on the state, district, and school websites, and, upon request, printed by the school districts. The school's rating must be emphasized and an explanation of its meaning and significance for the school also must be reported. The annual report card must serve at least six purposes:

 (1) inform parents and the public about the school's performance including, but not limited to, that on the home page of the report there must be each school's overall performance rating in a font size larger than twenty-six and the total number of points the school achieved on a zero to one hundred scale;

 (2) assist in addressing the strengths and weaknesses within a particular school;

 (3) recognize schools with high performance;

 (4) evaluate and focus resources on schools with low performance;

 (5) meet federal report card requirements; and

 (6) document the preparedness of high school graduates for college and career.

 (B)(1) The Education Oversight Committee, working with the State Board of Education and a broad-based group of stakeholders, including, but not limited to, parents, business and industry persons, community leaders, and educators, shall determine the criteria for and establish performance ratings of excellent, good, average, below average, and unsatisfactory for schools to increase transparency and accountability as provided below:

 (a) Excellent—School performance substantially exceeds the criteria to ensure all students meet the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate;

 (b) Good—School performance exceeds the criteria to ensure all students meet the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate;

 (c) Average—School performance meets the criteria to ensure all students meet the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate;

 (d) Below Average—School performance is in jeopardy of not meeting the criteria to ensure all students meet the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate; and

 (e) Unsatisfactory—School performance fails to meet the criteria to ensure all students meet the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate.

 (2) The same categories of performance ratings also must be assigned to individual indicators used to measure a school's performance including, but not limited to, academic achievement, student growth or progress, graduation rate, English language proficiency, and college and career readiness.

 (3) Only the scores of students enrolled continuously in the school from the time of the forty-five-day enrollment count to the first day of testing must be included in calculating the rating. Graduation rates must be used as an additional accountability measure for high schools and school districts.

 (4) The Oversight Committee, working with the State Board of Education, shall establish student performance indicators which will be those considered to be useful for inclusion as a component of a school's overall performance and appropriate for the grade levels within the school.

 (C) In setting the criteria for the academic performance ratings and the performance indicators, the Education Oversight Committee shall report the performance by subgroups of students in the school and schools similar in student characteristics. Criteria must use established guidelines for statistical analysis and build on current data-reporting practices.

 (D) The comprehensive report card must include a comprehensive set of performance indicators with information on comparisons, trends, needs, and performance over time which is helpful to parents and the public in evaluating the school. In addition, the comprehensive report card must include indicators that meet federal law requirements. Special efforts are to be made to ensure that the information contained in the report card is provided in an easily understood manner and a reader-friendly format. This information should also provide a context for the performance of the school. Where appropriate, the data should yield disaggregated results to schools and districts in planning for improvement. The report card should include information in such areas as programs and curriculum, school leadership, community and parent support, faculty qualifications, evaluations of the school by parents, teachers, and students. In addition, the report card must contain other criteria including, but not limited to, information on promotion and retention ratios, disciplinary climate, dropout ratios, dropout reduction data, dropout retention data, access to technology, student and teacher ratios, and attendance data.

 (E) After reviewing the school's performance on statewide assessments and results of other report card criteria, the principal, in conjunction with the School Improvement Council established in Section 59-20-60, must write an annual narrative of a school's progress in order to further inform parents and the community about the school and its efforts to ensure that all students graduate with the knowledge, skills, and opportunity to be college ready, career ready, and life ready for success in the global, digital, and knowledge-based world of the twenty-first century as provided in Section 59-1-50. The narrative must be reviewed by the district superintendent or appropriate body for a local charter school. The narrative must cite factors or activities supporting progress and barriers which inhibit progress. The school's report card must be furnished to parents and the public no later than November fifteenth for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 School Years. To further increase transparency and accountability, for the 2018-2019 School Year, the school's report card must be furnished to parents and the public no later than October first. For the 2019-2020 School Year, and every subsequent year, the school's report card must be furnished to parents and the public no later than September first.

 (F) The percentage of new trustees who have completed the orientation requirement provided in Section 59-19-45 must be reflected on the school district website.

 (G) The State Board of Education shall promulgate regulations outlining the procedures for data collection, data accuracy, data reporting, and consequences for failure to provide data required in this section.

 (H) The Education Oversight Committee, working with the State Board of Education, is directed to establish a comprehensive annual report concerning the performance of military-connected children who attend primary, elementary, middle, and high schools in this State. The comprehensive annual report must be in a reader-friendly format, using graphics whenever possible, published on the state, district, and school websites, and, upon request, printed by the school districts. The annual comprehensive report must address at least attendance, academic performance in reading, math, and science, and graduation rates of military-connected children.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2001 Act No. 40, § 1; 2002 Act No. 265, § 2; 2005 Act No. 88, § 3, eff May 27, 2005; 2006 Act No. 274, § 3, eff May 3, 2006; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008; 2014 Act No. 289 (S.825), Pt V, § 5, eff June 23, 2014; 2017 Act No. 94 (H.3969), § 11, eff June 10, 2017.

**SECTION 59-18-910. Cyclical review of accountability system; stakeholders; development of necessary skills and characteristics.**

 Beginning in 2020, the Education Oversight Committee, working with the State Board of Education and a broad-based group of stakeholders, selected by the Education Oversight Committee, shall conduct a comprehensive cyclical review of the accountability system at least every five years and shall provide the General Assembly with a report on the findings and recommended actions to improve the accountability system and to accelerate improvements in student and school performance. The stakeholders must include the State Superintendent of Education and the Governor, or the Governor's designee. The other stakeholders include, but are not limited to, parents, business and industry persons, community leaders, and educators. The cyclical review must include recommendations of a process for determining if students are graduating with the world-class skills and life and career characteristics of the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate to be successful in postsecondary education and in careers. The accountability system needs to reflect evidence that students have developed these skills and characteristics.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008; 2017 Act No. 94 (H.3969), § 12, eff June 10, 2017.

**SECTION 59-18-920. Report card requirements for charter, alternative, and career and technology schools.**

 A charter school established pursuant to Chapter 40, Title 59 shall report the data requested by the Department of Education necessary to generate a report card and a rating. The performance of students attending charter schools sponsored by the South Carolina Public Charter School District must be included in the overall performance ratings of each school in the South Carolina Public Charter School District. The performance of students attending a charter school authorized by a local school district must be reflected on a separate line on the school district's report card. An alternative school is included in the requirements of this chapter; however, the purpose of an alternative school must be taken into consideration in determining its performance rating. The Education Oversight Committee, working with the State Board of Education and the School to Work Advisory Council, shall develop a report card for career and technology schools.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2005 Act No. 49, § 7, eff May 3, 2005; 2006 Act No; 274, § 2, eff May 3, 2006; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008; 2012 Act No. 164, § 16, eff May 14, 2012; 2017 Act No. 94 (H.3969), § 13, eff June 10, 2017.

**SECTION 59-18-930. Publication of report cards; issuance date; advertising results.**

 (A) The State Department of Education annually shall publish on its website home page the report card to all schools and districts of the State no later than November fifteenth, for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 School Years. To further increase transparency and accountability, for the 2018-2019 School Year, the school's report card must be furnished to parents and the public no later than October first. For the 2019-2020 School Year, and every subsequent year, the school's report card must be furnished to parents and the public no later than September first. The home page report card must be capable of being downloaded into a portable document format (PDF) and must contain National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores or other national scores or comparisons, if available. The report card summary must be made available to all parents of the school and the school district.

 (B) The school, in conjunction with the district board, also must inform the community of the school's report card by advertising the results in at least one South Carolina daily newspaper of general circulation in the area. This notice must be published within forty-five days of receipt of the report cards issued by the State Department of Education and must be a minimum of two columns by ten inches (four and one-half by ten inches) with at least a twenty-four point bold headline.

 (C) If an audited newspaper of general circulation in a school district's geographic area has previously published the entire school report card results as a news item, the requirement of subsection (B) may be waived.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008; 2008 Act No. 353, § 2, Pt 1A.C.1 eff July 1, 2008; 2009 Act No. 34, § 1, eff June 2, 2009; 2017 Act No. 94 (H.3969), § 14, eff June 10, 2017.

Article 11

Awarding Performance

**SECTION 59-18-1100. Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program established; criteria.**

 The State Board of Education, working with the division and the Department of Education, must establish the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program to recognize and reward schools for academic achievement and for closing the achievement gap. Awards will be established for schools attaining high levels of absolute performance, for schools attaining high rates of growth, and for schools making substantial progress in closing the achievement gap between disaggregated groups. The award program must base improved performance on longitudinally matched student data and may include such additional criteria as:

 (1) student attendance;

 (2) teacher attendance;

 (3) graduation rates; and

 (4) other factors promoting or maintaining high levels of achievement and performance. Schools shall be rewarded according to specific criteria established by the division. In defining eligibility for a reward for high levels of performance, student performance should exceed expected levels of improvement. The State Board of Education shall promulgate regulations to ensure districts of the State utilize these funds to improve or maintain exceptional performance according to their school's plans established in Section 59-139-10. Funds may be utilized for professional development support.

 Special schools for the academically talented are not eligible to receive an award pursuant to the provisions of this section unless they have demonstrated improvement and high absolute achievement for three years immediately preceding.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008.

**SECTION 59-18-1110. Grant of flexibility of receiving exemption from regulations; criteria; continuation of and removal from flexibility status.**

 (A) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a school is given the flexibility of receiving exemptions from those regulations and statutory provisions governing the defined program provided that, during a three-year period, the following criteria are satisfied:

 (1) the school has twice been a recipient of a Palmetto Gold or Silver Award, pursuant to Section 59-18-1100;

 (2) the school has met annual improvement standards for subgroups of students in reading and mathematics; and

 (3) the school has exhibited no recurring accreditation deficiencies.

 (B) Schools receiving flexibility status are released from those regulations and statutory provisions referred to above including, but not limited to, regulations and statutory provisions on class scheduling, class structure, and staffing.

 (C) To continue to receive flexibility pursuant to this section, a school must annually exhibit school improvement at or above the state average as computed in the school recognition program pursuant to Section 59-18-1100 and must meet the gains required for subgroups of students in reading and mathematics. A school which does not requalify for flexibility status due to extenuating circumstances may apply to the State Board of Education for an extension of this status for one year.

 (D) In the event that a school is removed from flexibility status, the school is not subject to regulations and statutory provisions exempted under this section until the beginning of the school year following notification of the change in status by the State Department of Education. Subsequent monitoring by the State Department of Education in a school that is removed from flexibility status shall not include a review of program records exempted under this section for the period that the school has received flexibility status or for the school year during which the school was notified of its removal from flexibility status.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008.

**SECTION 59-18-1115. Noncertified teachers; pilot program.**

2025 Act No. 30, § 4, provides that this section remains effective until June 30, 2030, unless extended by the General Assembly.

 (A) The Department of Education is directed to establish a five-year pilot program by May 1, 2025, that will permit a school to hire noncertified teachers in a ratio of up to ten percent of its entire teaching staff. This pilot does not include individuals seeking employment as work-based, career, and technical education teachers. The State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, shall approve guidelines that at a minimum include the following:

 (1) the requirement that a noncertified teacher must possess a suitable baccalaureate or graduate degree for the position he is hired to teach and must have at least five years of relevant workplace experience;

 (2) procedures for requiring noncertified teachers to participate in the evaluation process pursuant to Section 59-26-30(B)(4) and (5);

 (3) initial and ongoing training and support requirements; and

 (4) the requirement that a noncertified teacher must demonstrate enrollment in an educator certification program within three years of employment, including any state-approved alternative or traditional route program.

 (B) Participation in the pilot program is optional, and the decision to participate rests solely with the Department of Education and the school principal, upon approval of the district superintendent. Participating schools and districts are encouraged to collaborate on recruitment, training, and implementation of the pilot program and to assist the Department of Education with establishing best practices.

 (C) The Department of Education shall establish a separate code in the professional coding system to capture noncertified teachers and shall continue to report this information on school report cards.

 (D) Beginning November 1, 2026, the Department of Education shall submit an annual report that includes recommendations for improving, expanding, or continuing the pilot program to the General Assembly. The annual status report submitted by November 1, 2029, shall include a recommendation regarding continuance of the program beyond June 30, 2030.

 (E)(1) The Department of Education shall establish procedures for the registration, clearance, and approval of all noncertified teachers working in any public school pursuant to this section. Teachers shall submit the required documentation and fees to the Department of Education, which shall include, but are not limited to:

 (a) a completed registration form;

 (b) any associated fee; and

 (c) transcripts, which shall be subject to review.

 (2) An individual applying for registration as a noncertified teacher must undergo a state criminal records check, supported by fingerprints, by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, and a national criminal records check, supported by fingerprints, by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The results of these criminal record checks must be reported to the Department of Education. The South Carolina Law Enforcement Division and the Federal Bureau of Investigation are authorized to retain the fingerprints for identification and certification purposes and for notification of the department regarding criminal charges. Costs of conducting a criminal history background check must be borne by the applicant. The Department of Education shall keep information received pursuant to this section confidential, except that such information may be disclosed to the State Board of Education as may be necessary. The results of these criminal record checks must not be shared outside the department.

 (3) An individual whose South Carolina educator certificate has been suspended or revoked shall not be employed as a noncertified teacher during the term of suspension or revocation. If a noncertified teacher is dismissed, resigns, or is otherwise separated from employment with a district following allegations of misconduct, the district superintendent shall report to the Chair of the State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Education the educator's name and registration information. Upon a finding of just cause as defined in Section 59-25-160, the State Board of Education is authorized to revoke the noncertified teacher's registration.

 (F) The Department of Education shall not add a full-time equivalent (FTE) position or partial FTE position to implement the provisions of this section.

HISTORY: 2025 Act No. 30 (S.79), § 1, eff May 12, 2025.

**SECTION 59-18-1120. Grant of flexibility of exemption from regulations and statutes to school designated as school/district at-risk; extension to other schools.**

 (A) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a school designated as school/district at-risk while in such status is given the flexibility of receiving exemptions from those regulations and statutory provisions governing the defined program or other State Board of Education regulations, dealing with the core academic areas as outlined in Section 59-18-120, provided that the review team recommends such flexibility to the State Board of Education.

 (B) Other schools may receive flexibility when their school renewal plan explains why such exemptions are expected to improve the academic performance of the students and the plan meets the approval by the State Board of Education. To continue to receive flexibility pursuant to this section, a school must annually exhibit overall school improvement as outlined in its revised plan and must meet the gains set for subgroups of students in content areas included in the accountability assessments. A school which does not requalify for flexibility status due to extenuating circumstances may apply to the State Board of Education for an extension of this status for one year according to the provisions of Section 59-18-1110(D).

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008.

**SECTION 59-18-1130. Use of funds appropriated for professional development.**

 (A) Notwithstanding another provision of law to the contrary, funds appropriated for professional development must be used for certificated instructional and instructional leadership personnel in grades kindergarten through twelve in the academic areas for which State Board of Education standard documents have been approved to better link instruction and lesson plans to the standards and to statewide adopted readiness assessment tests, to develop classroom assessments consistent with the standards and testing measures, and to analyze assessment results for needed modification in instructional strategies. No more than five percent of funds appropriated for professional development may be retained by the State Department of Education for administration of the program; however, a district may choose to purchase professional development services provided by the State Department of Education with the funds allocated to the districts for professional development. Funds also may be expended for certificated instructional and instructional leadership personnel in grades six through twelve to achieve competency in teaching reading to students who score below proficient on the reading component of assessment tests.

 (B) Two hundred fifty thousand dollars of the funds allocated to professional development must be provided to the State Department of Education to implement successfully the South Carolina Readiness Assessment by creating a validation process for teachers to ensure reliable administration of the assessment, providing professional development on effective utilization, and establishing the relationship between the readiness measure and third grade standards-based assessments. Multi-day work sessions must be provided around the State during the summer, fall, and winter using staff development days and teacher workdays. Two of the remaining professional development days must be set aside for the specific purpose of preparing and opening schools. District instructional leaders, regional service centers, consortia, development personnel, university faculty, contracted providers, and the resources of the Educational Television Network may be used to implement the professional development initiative. Teachers participating in the program shall receive credit toward recertification according to State Board of Education guidelines. Funds provided for professional development on standards may be carried forward into the current fiscal year to be expended for the same purpose. No less than twenty-five percent of the funds allocated for professional development may be expended on the teaching of reading, which includes teaching reading across content areas in grades three through eight.

HISTORY: 2008 Act No. 353, § 2, Pt 1A.A, eff July 1, 2009.

Article 13

District Accountability Systems

**SECTION 59-18-1300. District accountability system; support, development, and review.**

 The State Board of Education, based on recommendations of the division, must develop regulations requiring that each district board of trustees must establish and annually review a performance based accountability system, or modify its existing accountability system, to reinforce the state accountability system. Parents, teachers, and principals must be involved in the development, annual review, and revisions of the accountability system established by the district. The board of trustees shall ensure that a district accountability plan be developed, reviewed, and revised annually. In order to stimulate constant improvement in the process of teaching and learning in each school and to target additional local assistance for a school when its students' performance is low or shows little improvement, the district accountability system must build on the district and school activities and plans required in Section 59-139-10. In keeping with the emphasis on school accountability, principals should be actively involved in the selection, discipline, and dismissal of personnel in their particular school. The date the school improvement reports must be provided to parents is changed to February first.

 The Department of Education shall offer technical support to any district requesting assistance in the development of an accountability plan. Furthermore, the department must conduct a review of accountability plans as part of the peer review process required in Section 59-139-10(H) to ensure strategies are contained in the plans that shall maximize student learning.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008.

**SECTION 59-18-1310. Consolidation of strategic plans and improvement reports; annual submission dates.**

 The strategic plans and improvement reports required of the public schools and districts in Sections 59-18-1300, 59-18-1500, and 59-20-60 are consolidated and reported as follows: district and school five-year plans and annual updates and district programmatic reports, and school reports developed in conjunction with the school improvement council to parents and constituents to include recommendations of Education Accountability Act external review teams as approved by the State Board of Education and the steps being taken to address the recommendations, and the advertisement of this report are due on a date established by the Department of Education, but no later than April thirtieth annually; schools reviewed by external review teams shall prepare a report to the parents and constituents of the school, to be developed in conjunction with the School Improvement Council, and this report must be provided and advertised no later than April thirtieth annually. The school report card narrative in Section 59-18-900 continues on its prescribed date.

HISTORY: 2003 Act No. 89, § 4, eff July 23, 2003; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008.

Article 15

Intervention and Assistance [Repealed]

§§ 59-18-1500 to 59-18-1610. Repealed.

HISTORY: Former Section 59-18-1500, titled Schools rated below average or school/district at-risk; renewal plan and compensation packages; notice to parents and publication in newspaper; department support; regional workshops, had the following history: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008. Repealed by 2021 Act No. 44, § 2, eff July 1, 2022.

HISTORY: Former Section 59-18-1510, titled Implementation of external review team process; activities and recommendations, had the following history: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008. Repealed by 2021 Act No. 44, § 2, eff July 1, 2022.

HISTORY: Former Section 59-18-1520, titled Declaration of emergency; hearing; courses of action, had the following history: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008. Repealed by 2021 Act No. 44, § 2, eff July 1, 2022.

HISTORY: Former Section 59-18-1530, titled Teacher and principal specialists; recruitment, eligibility, duties, and incentives, had the following history: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 1999 Act No. 100, Part II, § 76; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008. Repealed by 2021 Act No. 44, § 2, eff July 1, 2022.

HISTORY: Former Section 59-18-1540, titled Mentoring program for principals, had the following history: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008. Repealed by 2021 Act No. 44, § 2, eff July 1, 2022.

HISTORY: Former Section 59-18-1550, titled Grant programs for schools designated as below average and for schools designated as unsatisfactory; funding, had the following history: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008. Repealed by 2021 Act No. 44, § 2, eff July 1, 2022.

HISTORY: Former Section 59-18-1560, titled External review committee, had the following history: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008. Repealed by 2021 Act No. 44, § 2, eff July 1, 2022.

HISTORY: Former Section 59-18-1570, titled Designation of state of emergency in school district designated as school/district at-risk; remedial actions, had the following history: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2, eff June 10, 2008; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008. Repealed by 2021 Act No. 44, § 2, eff July 1, 2022.

HISTORY: Former Section 59-18-1575, titled Technical assistance to underperforming schools and districts, had the following history: 2016 Act No. 178 (H.4940), § 1, eff May 23, 2016. Repealed by 2021 Act No. 44, § 2, eff July 1, 2022.

HISTORY: Former Section 59-18-1580, titled Continuing review of instructional and organizational practices and delivery of technical assistance by Department of Education, had the following history: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2004 Act No. 282, § 1, eff July 22, 2004; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008. Repealed by 2021 Act No. 44, § 2, eff July 1, 2022.

HISTORY: Former Section 59-18-1590, titled Reallocation of technical assistance funding, had the following history: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008. Repealed by 2021 Act No. 44, § 2, eff July 1, 2022.

HISTORY: Former Section 59-18-1600, titled Parent orientation classes, had the following history: 2007 Act No. 105, § 1, eff June 20, 2007; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008. Repealed by 2021 Act No. 44, § 2, eff July 1, 2022.

HISTORY: Former Section 59-18-1610, titled Assistance to districts; monitoring of performance, had the following history: 2016 Act No. 241 (H.4939), § 2, eff June 5, 2016. Repealed by 2021 Act No. 44, § 2, eff July 1, 2022.

Article 16

Assistance and Intervention

**SECTION 59-18-1615. Definitions.**

 As used in this article:

 (1) "Chronically underperforming school" means:

 (a) a school that receives an overall rating of unsatisfactory for three consecutive years on its annual school report card, as provided in Section 59-18-900; or

 (b) in the absence of the annual school report card, the Department of Education shall apply the same metrics as established in the state and federal combined accountability model, as defined in the Every Student Succeeds Act to identify "chronically underperforming schools".

 (2) "School district" or "district" is defined pursuant to Section 59-1-160.

 (3) "Turnaround plan" means a plan outlining goals for a school or district's educational improvement that includes specific strategies designed to increase student achievement and measures to evaluate the success of the implementation of the plan so that the school or district is no longer underperforming or chronically underperforming. The department is required to provide schools and districts with a template to complete the turnaround plan.

 (4) "Underperforming district" means a district in which sixty-five percent or more of the schools in the district have an overall rating of unsatisfactory or below average on their annual school report cards, as provided in Section 59-18-900, or as defined in item (5).

 (5) "Underperforming school" means:

 (a) a school that receives an overall rating of unsatisfactory or below average on its annual school report card, as provided in Section 59-18-900; or

 (b) in the absence of the annual school report card, the Department of Education shall apply the same metrics as established in the state and federal combined accountability model, as defined in the Every Students Succeed Act to identify "underperforming schools".

HISTORY: 2021 Act No. 44 (S.201), § 1, eff July 1, 2022.

**SECTION 59-18-1620. Implementation of tiered system for providing technical and other assistance, professional development, and monitoring for schools and districts; reports.**

 (A) The department shall implement a tiered system for providing technical and other assistance, professional development, and monitoring for schools and districts. By December thirty-first of each year, the State Superintendent of Education shall report to the General Assembly on the tiered system's progress relating to assistance provided to schools and school districts. The report shall include data documenting the impact of the assistance on student academic achievement, college and career readiness, and high school graduation rates.

 (B) As a component of determining if and where assistance and changes are necessary, the department shall:

 (1) monitor the professional development of teachers, staff, and administrators provided by or approved through districts and schools;

 (2) monitor local school board operations for efficient and effective management; and

 (3) identify and provide a summary of improvements and changes to the school districts, district school boards, and other involved parties.

HISTORY: 2021 Act No. 44 (S.201), § 1, eff July 1, 2022.

**SECTION 59-18-1625. Designation as an underperforming school or district; notification; turnaround plan; revised strategic plan.**

 (A) Upon a school's or district's designation as an underperforming school or district, the department shall immediately place the school or district into a tiered status to provide technical assistance. The department shall notify the underperforming school or district and the district superintendent of the tiered status.

 (B)(1) Upon receiving notification from the department, the district superintendent, in consultation with school and community stakeholders, must review and revise the school and district's strategic plan with the assistance of the School Improvement Council, as established in Section 59-20-60, to include a turnaround plan component for any underperforming school or district.

 (2) The turnaround plan component of the revised strategic plan must:

 (a) be based on data or needs assessments to identify specific improvement strategies related to underperforming school turnaround;

 (b) include, at a minimum, specific and measurable goals, actions, activities, resource needs, student achievement goals, professional development plans, and academic interventions that are reasonable and necessary to improve student progress toward achieving the Profile of the Graduate for each school;

 (c) include broad-based community input including, but not limited to, input from parents, teachers, principals, local school board members, businesses, community leaders, health providers, social services agencies, school improvement councils, or early childhood providers; and

 (d) be submitted by the district superintendent to the local board of trustees for approval.

 (C) Upon approval by the local board of trustees, the turnaround plan component of the revised strategic plan must be submitted to the department for review and approval. Thereafter, the district superintendent and the local board of trustees annually shall submit updates to the department regarding the implementation of the turnaround and revised strategic plan, including metrics assessing the impact of the activities included in the plan.

 (D) Once approved by the department, the revised strategic plan must be prominently posted on the respective websites of the department, district, and school. The department shall monitor the district's implementation of the revised strategic plan and evaluation of students' academic progress, as provided for in the plan, and shall apprise the State Board of Education of the district's progress once a quarter.

 (E) For a school receiving an underperforming rating, the district and local board of trustees must work with the school principal to inform the parents of students of the rating. The notification must outline the steps in the revised strategic plan to improve performance, including the support that the local district board of trustees has agreed to give the plan.

HISTORY: 2021 Act No. 44 (S.201), § 1, eff July 1, 2022.

**SECTION 59-18-1630. Schools receiving overall unsatisfactory rating.**

 Upon the release of the annual report card issued pursuant to Section 59-18-900, the department shall notify the appropriate legislative delegation of any school receiving an overall unsatisfactory rating. The local school board and district superintendent with jurisdiction over the unsatisfactory school shall:

 (1) notify parents of students in writing and electronically;

 (2) schedule, prominently publicize, and hold a public meeting to explain the school's rating, its implications, how it must develop and implement a revised strategic plan for improvement, and how it will involve and engage the community in its plans, within thirty days of receiving the rating;

 (3) immediately review and revise its strategic plan, which must incorporate and focus on turnaround plan components for each school designated as unsatisfactory in accordance with the template and guidelines provided by the department; and

 (4) upon department approval, immediately list the revised strategic plan as a topic on the local district board meeting agenda at least once a quarter.

HISTORY: 2021 Act No. 44 (S.201), § 1, eff July 1, 2022.

**SECTION 59-18-1635. State-of-education emergency declarations for schools.**

 (A) The State Superintendent of Education may seek a state-of-education emergency declaration for a school that he has the capacity to serve under the following circumstances:

 (1) the school is chronically underperforming;

 (2) the school's accreditation is denied; or

 (3) the State Superintendent of Education determines that a school's turnaround plan results are insufficient.

 (B) If the State Superintendent of Education determines that a school state-of-education emergency declaration is justified, then he must request that the State Board of Education meet to approve or disapprove the declaration. The State Board of Education must meet within ten days of the request to approve or disapprove the declaration.

 (C) Upon the approval of a state-of-education emergency declaration, the State Superintendent of Education shall:

 (1) notify the appropriate district superintendent, local school board, and local legislative delegation and the Governor; and

 (2) assume management of the school.

 (D) The local district board may, upon a majority vote, appeal the State Board of Education's approval of the declaration to the Administrative Law Court within ten business days of receipt of the notice of the declaration. A request for a hearing must be made in accordance with the court's rules; provided, however, that a request for a contested case hearing for an emergency declaration does not stay the declaration.

 (E) Once a school subject to subsection (C) has met annual targets identified in the revised strategic plan for sustained improvement for a minimum of three consecutive years, the State Superintendent of Education shall submit to the State Board of Education documentation of such. Upon an affirmative vote by the State Board of Education to end the state-of-education emergency, the department, in consultation with the district and local board of trustees, shall develop a transition plan and timeline for returning management of the school to the district.

 (F) After a school has been in a state-of-education emergency for three consecutive years, the State Superintendent of Education may extend the state-of-education emergency for an additional three-year period only upon the approval of the State Board of Education. The State Superintendent of Education may make requests every three years, which must be approved or disapproved by the board. If the State Superintendent of Education does not request additional time, or if the State Board of Education disapproves a request, then the school shall revert back to the control of the local school board.

HISTORY: 2021 Act No. 44 (S.201), § 1, eff July 1, 2022.

**SECTION 59-18-1640. State-of-education emergency declarations for districts.**

 (A) The State Superintendent of Education may seek a state-of-education emergency declaration for a district that he has the capacity to serve under the following circumstances:

 (1) the district is identified as underperforming for three consecutive years;

 (2) the district's accreditation is denied;

 (3) the Superintendent of Education determines that a district's turnaround plan results are insufficient; or

 (4) the district is classified as being in a fiscal emergency status pursuant to Section 59-20-90, or financial mismanagement resulting in a deficit has occurred.

 (B) If the State Superintendent of Education determines that a district state-of-education emergency declaration is justified, then he must request that the State Board of Education meet to approve or disapprove the declaration and cite the circumstances justifying that the district has failed to satisfactorily address circumstances. The State Board of Education must meet within ten days of the request to approve or disapprove the declaration.

 (C) Upon the approval of a state-of-education emergency, the State Superintendent of Education shall:

 (1) notify the Governor and the appropriate district superintendent, local school board, and local legislative delegation; and

 (2) assume management of the district and all schools in the district.

 (D) The local district board may, upon a majority vote, appeal the State Board of Education's approval of the declaration to the Administrative Law Court within ten business days of receipt of the notice of the declaration. A request for a hearing must be made in accordance with the court's rules; provided, however, that a request for a contested case hearing for an emergency declaration does not stay the declaration.

 (E)(1) The local district board of trustees shall be dissolved upon the State Board of Education's approval of the state-of-education emergency declaration and upon the expiration of the ten-business-day appeal window as provided in subsection (D).

 (2)(a) Once a district subject to subsection (C) has met annual targets identified in the district's revised strategic plan for sustained improvement for a minimum of three consecutive years, the State Superintendent of Education shall submit to the State Board of Education documentation of such. The State Board of Education shall approve that an interim local district board of trustees be appointed. The interim local district board of trustees shall consist of five members appointed in the following manner with a chairman elected by the appointees:

 (i) one member appointed by the Governor;

 (ii) one member appointed by the local legislative delegation; and

 (iii) three members appointed by the State Superintendent of Education in consultation with the local legislative delegation.

 (b) All appointees must be residents of the school district for which the interim appointments are being made. In making appointments to the interim local district board of trustees, the appointing authority shall consider knowledge and experience in the field of education and also shall take into account race, gender, and other demographic factors, such as residence in a rural or urban area, so as to represent, to the greatest extent possible, all segments of the population of the affected district. However, consideration of these factors in making an appointment in no way creates a cause of action or basis for an employee grievance for a person appointed or for a person who fails to be appointed. The members of the interim local district board of trustees shall represent the educational needs of the district.

 (c) The interim local district board shall be appointed to begin serving within forty-five days of the State Board of Education's approval of the appointments of the interim local district board and shall serve for a minimum of three years.

 (d) Any vacancy shall be filled in the original manner of appointment.

 (3) For a minimum of three years and until the State Board of Education votes to end the state-of-education emergency, the interim local district board shall remain in place, and its appointed members shall continue to serve.

 (F)(1) Upon an affirmative vote by the State Board of Education to end the state-of-education emergency, the department, in consultation with the district and interim board, shall develop a transition plan and timeline for returning management of the district to a local board of trustees. Beginning with the next regularly scheduled election, members for the local district board of trustees will be elected or appointed pursuant to statutory requirements.

 (2) Upon the swearing in of a new local district board of trustees, the declaration of a state-of-education emergency shall expire, and the powers and duties of the district superintendent and local district school board of trustees are restored.

 (G) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a district in a state-of-education emergency pursuant to this section shall have its fiscal authority relating to taxing authority and levying millage transferred to its county council until the state-of-education emergency is lifted. The county council may not exceed millage limitations established pursuant to Section 6-1-320 or otherwise established prior to the state-of-education emergency declaration.

HISTORY: 2021 Act No. 44 (S.201), § 1, eff July 1, 2022.

Article 17

Public Information

**SECTION 59-18-1700. Public information campaign; development and approval; funding.**

 (A) An on-going public information campaign must be established to apprise the public of the status of the public schools and the importance of high standards for academic performance for the public school students of South Carolina. A special committee must be appointed by the chairman of the Education Oversight Committee to include two committee members representing business and two representing education and others representing business, industry, and education. The committee shall plan and oversee the development of a campaign, including public service announcements for the media and other such avenues as deemed appropriate for informing the public.

 (B) A separate fund within the state general fund will be established to accept grants, gifts, and donations from any public or private source or monies that may be appropriated by the General Assembly for the public information campaign. Members of the Oversight Committee representing business will solicit donations for this fund. Income from the fund must be retained in the fund. All funds may be carried forward from fiscal year to fiscal year. The State Treasurer shall invest the monies in this fund in the same manner as other funds under his control are invested. The Oversight Committee shall administer and authorize any disbursements from the fund. Private individuals and groups shall be encouraged to contribute to this endeavor.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008.

Article 19

Miscellaneous

**SECTION 59-18-1910. Homework centers.**

 Schools receiving below average or school/district at-risk designations may use technical assistance funds allocated pursuant to Section 59-18-1590 to provide homework centers that go beyond the regular school hours where students can come and receive assistance in understanding and completing their school work. Technical assistance funds provided for these centers may be used for salaries for certified teachers and for transportation costs.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008.

**SECTION 59-18-1920. Modified school year or school day schedule; grant program established; application; implementation plan.**

 (A) The State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, shall establish a grant program to encourage school districts to pilot test or implement a modified school year or school day schedule. The purpose of the grant is to assist with the additional costs incurred during the intersessions for salaries, transportation, and operations, or for additional costs incurred by lengthening the school day. For a district to qualify for a grant, all the schools within a specific feeder zone or elementary-to-middle-to-high-school attendance area, must be pilot testing or implementing the modified year or day schedule.

 (B) To obtain a grant, a district shall submit an application to the state board in a format specified by the Department of Education. The application shall include a plan for implementing a modified year or day that provides the following: more time for student learning, learning opportunities that typically are not available in the regular student day, targeted assistance for students whose academic performance is significantly below promotion standards, more efficient use of facilities and other resources, and evaluations of the impact of the modified schedule. Local district boards of trustees shall require students whose performance in a core subject area, as defined in Section 59-18-300, is the equivalent of a "D" average or below to attend the intersessions or stay for the lengthened day and receive special assistance in the subject area. Funding for the program is as provided by the General Assembly in the annual appropriations act. Each grant award for program pilot testing or implementation may not exceed a three-year period.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008.

**SECTION 59-18-1930. Review of state and local professional development; recommendations for improvement.**

 The Education Oversight Committee shall provide for a comprehensive review of state and local professional development to include principal leadership development and teacher staff development. The review must provide an analysis of training to include what professional development is offered, how it is offered, the support given to implement skills acquired from professional development, and how the professional development enhances the academic goals outlined in district and school strategic plans. The Oversight Committee shall recommend better ways to provide and meet the needs for professional development, to include the use of the existing five contract days for in-service. Needed revisions shall be made to state regulations to promote use of state dollars for training which meets national standards for staff development.

 Upon receipt of the recommendations from the comprehensive review of state and local professional development, the State Department of Education shall develop an accountability system to ensure that identified professional development standards are effectively implemented. As part of this system the department shall provide information on the identified standards to all principals and other professional development leaders. Training for all school districts in how to design comprehensive professional development programs that are consistent with the standards also shall be a part of the implementation. A variety of staff development options that address effective teaching and assessment of state academic standards and workforce preparation skills shall be included in the information provided to principals and other professional development leaders to ensure high levels of student achievement.

HISTORY: 1998 Act No. 400, § 2; 2001 Act No. 39, § 4; 2008 Act No. 282, § 1, eff June 5, 2008.

**SECTION 59-18-1940. Pilot district accountability models.**

 Working with the Education Oversight Committee, the State Department of Education shall design and pilot district accountability models that focus on competency-based education for a district or school or on regional or county economic initiatives to improve the postsecondary success of students. A district may apply to the department and the committee to participate in the pilot.

HISTORY: 2017 Act No. 94 (H.3969), § 1, eff June 10, 2017.

**SECTION 59-18-1950. Longitudinal data system.**

 (A) The General Assembly recognizes the importance of having a state longitudinal data system to inform policy and fiscal decisions related to early childhood education, public education, postsecondary preparedness and success, and workforce development.

 (B)(1) The Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office, working with the Office of First Steps to School Readiness, the South Carolina Department of Education, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Social Services, the South Carolina Technical College System, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Employment and Workforce, and other state agencies or institutions of higher education, shall develop, implement, and maintain a universal identification system that includes, at a minimum, the following information for measuring the continuous improvement of the state public education system and the college and career readiness and success of its graduates:

 (a) students graduating from public high schools in the State who enter postsecondary education without the need for remediation;

 (b) working-aged adults in South Carolina by county who possess a postsecondary degree or industry credential;

 (c) high school graduates who are gainfully employed in the State within five and ten years of graduating from high school; and

 (d) outcome data regarding student achievement and student growth that will assist colleges of education in achieving accreditation and in improving the quality of teachers in classrooms.

 (2) All information disseminated will conform to state and federal privacy laws.

HISTORY: 2017 Act No. 94 (H.3969), § 2, eff June 10, 2017.

**SECTION 59-18-1960. School growth measurement system.**

 In measuring annual school growth, with approval of the State Board of Education and the Education Oversight Committee, the State shall use a value-added system that calculates student progress or growth. A local school district may, in its discretion, use the value-added system to evaluate classroom teachers using student progress or growth. The estimates of specific teacher effects on the educational progress of students will not be a public record and will be made available only to the specific teacher, principal, and superintendent. Furthermore, the estimates of specific teacher effects also may be made to any teacher preparation programs approved by the State Board of Education. The estimates made available to the teacher preparation programs shall not be a public record and shall be used only in evaluation of the respective teacher preparation programs. Furthermore, educator effectiveness data must be exempt from public disclosure pursuant to Section 30-4-30, and may not be subject to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act. An institution or postsecondary system receiving the estimates shall develop a policy to protect the confidentiality of the data.

HISTORY: 2017 Act No. 94 (H.3969), § 3, eff June 10, 2017.