

REPORT ON THE EDUCATIONAL CREDIT FOR EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS CHILDREN (ECENC) PROGRAM

Compliance and Assessment
Results for 2017–18



**SC EDUCATION
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**



PO Box 11867 | 227 Blatt Building | Columbia SC 29211 | WWW.SCEOC.ORG

Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	3
Background	7
Collection of Assessment Data	9
Compliance and Analysis of Assessment Data	13
Appendix	29

Executive Summary

This report is the first annual report on the impact of the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children (ECENC) program as required by Act 247 of 2018. The ECENC program provides grants and parental tax credits to exceptional needs students attending private schools that meet specific eligibility requirements and that are approved by the Education Oversight Committee (EOC). Exceptional SC is a 501(c)(3) that raises and accepts funds and reviews student grant applications. The law defines qualifying students and eligible schools for participation in the ECENC program. The law also specifically requires the EOC annually to:

issue a report to the General Assembly documenting the impact of the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Program on student achievement. In addition, the report must include information on individual schools if at least fifty-one percent of the total enrolled students in the private school participated in the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Program in the prior school year. The report must be according to each participating private school, and for participating students, in which there are at least thirty participating students who have scores for tests administered. If the Education Oversight Committee determines that the thirty participating-student cell size may be reduced without disclosing personally identifiable information of a participating student, the Education Oversight Committee may reduce the participating-student cell size, but the cell size may not be reduced to less than ten participating students. (*Section 12-6-3790(E)(6) of the SC Code of Laws*)

Act 247 of 2018 requires schools participating in the ECENC program to submit to the EOC student test scores that are used to provide program level reports to determine if students participating in the program have experienced measurable improvement.

(b) student test scores, by category, on national achievement or state standardized tests, or both, for all grades tested and administered by the school receiving or entitled to receive scholarship grants pursuant to this section in the previous school year. The school also shall provide individual student test scores on national achievement or state standardized tests, or both, for any student in grades one through twelve who received a grant from the program during the prior school year. The information must be used to provide program level reports to determine whether students participating in the program have experienced measurable improvement. Students with disabilities for whom standardized testing is not appropriate are exempt from this requirement; (*Section 12-6-3790(E)(1)(b) of the SC Code of Laws*)

This report, which meets the requirements of Act 247 of 2018, includes the following:

- Information about the process for collecting individual student assessment results used to document the impact of the program on student achievement;
- Information on the participation and compliance of schools;
- Information on the 2017-18 academic achievement of students who received grants from the ECENC program. Because there was no information on the ethnicity or socioeconomic status of students who received grants in 2017-18, assessment results could not be analyzed by subgroup performance; and
- Initial, though limited, state-level information on academic gains from school year 2016-17 to 2017-18 for students who received grants from the ECENC program in 2017-18.

The authors of this report acknowledge that making direct comparisons between the academic performance of students receiving grants from the ECENC program on national assessments and South Carolina public-school students with disabilities and their performance on state summative assessments are not equitable.

Finally, in designing the components of this report, the EOC staff reviewed the evaluations of the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship Program that were conducted by the Learning Systems Institute at Florida State University for Fiscal Years 2015-16 and 2016-17.¹ The FTC Scholarship Program was established in 2001 to award scholarships to children from low-income families who attend a private school or to assist with transportation costs to attend a public school in an adjacent district.² Florida also provides scholarships for students with disabilities who attend a private school or transfer to another public school, the John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program. To be eligible for a McKay Scholarship, a student must have attended a public school in the state of Florida in October and February of the prior year. The Florida Department of Education does not collect or report assessment data on students who receive a McKay Scholarship; however, the Department does provide quarterly reports containing information on student statistics.³

¹ Evaluation of the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program – Participation, Compliance and Test Scores in 2015-16 and in 2016-17. Learning Systems Institute. Florida State University. http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5606/urlt/FTC_Report1516.pdf
<http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5606/urlt/FTC-Report1617.pdf>.

² Fact Sheet on Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program. Florida Department of Education. September 2018. <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5606/urlt/FTC-Sept-2018.pdf>.

³ Quarterly Reports, McKay Scholarships. Florida Department of Education. <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/mckay/quarterly-reports.stml>.

Findings

1. Schools participating in the ECENC program responded to the request for assessment data by providing either assessment information or a reason for not having the information for 95 percent of the 2,327 students who received grants from Exceptional SC in 2017-18 and who were enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12.
2. Actual assessment information for school year 2017-18 was obtained from schools participating in the ECENC program for approximately two-thirds of all students who received a grant from Exceptional SC in school year 2017-18.
3. Of the assessment data provided, the EOC could use assessment data for 1,399 students, or 60 percent of all students who received a grant from Exceptional SC in 2017-18 to calculate median percentile rankings in Reading and Mathematics.
4. At the state level, the assessment data results for school year 2017-18 for students who received a grant from Exceptional SC showed:
 - a. The median Reading percentile rank was 47, and the median Mathematics percentile rank was 40. In Reading, approximately half of the students scored higher than 47 percent of students in a national representative sample of students. In Mathematics, half of the students scored higher than 40 percent of students in a nationally representative sample of students.
 - b. The mean Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) for Reading was 49.0 and for mathematics, 45.7, which is slightly lower than the national norm which includes students with and without exceptional needs.
 - c. The data must be reviewed accordingly. Students receiving grants from Exceptional SC all have documented exceptional needs. One would expect that students participating in the ECENC program would score lower than a nationally representative sample of students that includes students with and without exceptional needs. However, using median national percentile ranks over time will provide information on the relative performance of ECENC students and information on their academic growth.
5. Based on the limited number of assessment results for students for whom assessment scores were provided for school years 2016-17 and 2017-18, there appears to be a slight decline in Reading scores but no difference in Mathematics scores from school year 2016-17 to school year 2017-18.
6. There were eight schools with more than 51 percent of its total school enrollment who received grants from Exceptional SC in 2017-18. However, of these eight schools, three utilized assessments that could not be used in this evaluation. One school used portfolios to monitor student progress while two schools used hand-scored assessment results. The EOC is hiring an outside consultant to determine

if the hand-scored assessments can be used in next year's evaluation and to monitor how student portfolios are being used to measure student progress in reading, mathematics or acquiring other skills.

7. For the remaining five schools that had more than 51 percent of its total school enrollment who received grants from Exceptional SC in 2017-18:
 - a. The median percentile ranks in Reading ranged from 11.5 to 46, with all medians less than 50; similarly, the mean NCE ranged from 27.3 to 50, with all values less than or equal to 50.
 - b. For Mathematics a similar pattern is present. The median percentile ranks ranged from 13.5 to 56 with one school having a median percentile rank above 50. The mean NCE in Mathematics ranged from 28.2 to 51.1.
 - c. These values suggest that the students in these five schools generally scored lower on the assessments than did students nationally. Again, one would expect that students participating in the ECENC program would score lower than a nationally representative sample of students that includes students with and without exceptional needs, especially in these schools that have a majority of its students receiving grants from Exceptional SC. However, using median national percentile ranks over time will provide information on the relative performance of ECENC students in these schools and information on their academic growth.

Recommendations:

1. For future submissions, the EOC recommends that Exceptional SC also provide the following information - child's date of birth as well as gender and race – to verify the student's identity.
2. The EOC will work with schools to increase the percentage of valid assessment data reported by schools participating in the ECENC program.

Background

Since creation of the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children (ECENC) program in Fiscal Year 2013-14 through a proviso in the state budget, eligible independent schools participating in the program are required to administer a national achievement or state standardized tests to determine student progress. Furthermore, when applying to the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) for approval to participate in the ECENC program, a school had to submit student test scores for all grades tested and administered in the school. The EOC posted the school-level results as submitted by the schools on its website each year.

Act 247 of 2018 codified the ECENC program into permanent law and created an additional reporting requirement. In addition to school-level test scores being provided and made public, the EOC must evaluate the ECENC program using individual student assessment results to determine the impact of the program on educational outcomes of students who received grants from Exceptional SC. The law specifically requires the EOC annually to:

issue a report to the General Assembly documenting the impact of the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Program on student achievement. In addition, the report must include information on individual schools if at least fifty-one percent of the total enrolled students in the private school participated in the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Program in the prior school year. The report must be according to each participating private school, and for participating students, in which there are at least thirty participating students who have scores for tests administered. If the Education Oversight Committee determines that the thirty participating-student cell size may be reduced without disclosing personally identifiable information of a participating student, the Education Oversight Committee may reduce the participating-student cell size, but the cell size may not be reduced to less than ten participating students. (*Section 12-6-3790(E)(6) of the SC Code of Laws*)

Act 247 of 2018 requires schools participating in the ECENC program to submit to the EOC student test scores that are used to provide program level reports to determine if students participating in the program have experienced measurable improvement.

(b) student test scores, by category, on national achievement or state standardized tests, or both, for all grades tested and administered by the school receiving or entitled to receive scholarship grants pursuant to this section in the previous school year. The school also shall provide individual student test scores on national achievement or state standardized tests, or both, for any student in grades one through twelve who received a grant from the program during the prior school year. The information must be used to provide program level reports to determine whether students participating in the program have experienced

measurable improvement. Students with disabilities for whom standardized testing is not appropriate are exempt from this requirement; (*Section 12-6-3790(E)(1)(b) of the SC Code of Laws*)

The law requires that an evaluation of the program's impact on student achievement at the following levels to address the following questions:

- At the state level, how did exceptional needs students who received grants from Exceptional SC under the ECENC program performing academically, both in terms of overall achievement and growth?
- In schools where a majority of students enrolled in the school, as defined as fifty-one percent of the students received a grant from Exceptional SC, how did exceptional needs students perform academically, both in terms of overall achievement and growth?

Collection of Assessment Data

To maintain student privacy and to ensure the highest level of data security, the EOC contracted with the South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs (RFA) Office to oversee the collection of the individual student assessment results. RFA was selected because of its mission and work in collecting, storing and safeguarding health, demographic, and other state data. Following is a description of the data collection protocol and compliance.

Data Collection Timeline and Protocol

Upon passage of Act 247 of 2018, the EOC met on two occasions in the spring and summer of 2018 with individuals who serve on or work for Exceptional SC and for schools that participated in the ECENC program. The goal of the meetings was to provide information about the process to be taken in obtaining the student assessment data and to solicit input on the actual information to be obtained on the secure portal. The EOC was particularly interested in knowing how to capture explanations from the schools on why a student assessment test score could not be provided.

Below is the timeline of activities in the design of the secure portal:

September 4, 2018 – RFA sent a data sharing memorandum of understanding (MOU) to Exceptional SC. RFA needed to have the names of students by school who received a grant from Exceptional SC in school year 2017-18 to be able to pre-populate the school-level information.

September 10, 2018 – Schools participating in the ECENC program in school year 2018-19 were emailed a data sharing memorandum of understanding assuring the confidentiality of any and all individually identifiable information shared between the parties. A copy of the memorandum is included in the Appendix.

Between **September 10, 2018 and January 7, 2019** - Schools completed the MOU

October 4, 2018 - RFA and Exceptional SC finalized data sharing memorandum of agreement.

October 22, 2018 – Exceptional SC provided to RFA a list of students by school who received a grant from Exceptional SC in 2017-18. The data included: the child's first, middle and last name, child's grade, school name, and student ID.

Between **November 7, 2018 and January 14, 2019** - Schools that completed the MOU were able to upload student assessment results.

Only schools that completed the data sharing agreement with RFA were given access to the secure portal. Furthermore, RFA implemented the following procedures to maintain the confidentiality and security of the data portal:

- Access restrictions based on enrollment information provide by Exceptional SC through a MOU with RFA. Every school is restricted to only seeing student data that has a matching enrollment for their school. A subset of RFA staff, specifically assigned to this project, can see all student data and uploaded assessments to conduct reviews and enter scoring data; however, these staff members must have been confirmed to have had their annual privacy training.
- Schools must go through the project manager for access to the data portal, following execution of a MOU.
- All users are given a login and one-time password, unique to them, to access the data portal. They must change their password upon login before accessing the rest of the data portal. RFA staff must also setup two-factor authentication before accessing the rest of the data portal due to their elevated data privileges. All passwords must comply with NIST 800-63 Authentication standards.
- Data portal is hosted at the SC Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) secured data center. Physical access to the building is restricted by State Government ID, where guests must sign-in and be escorted. The data center is further restricted to a subset of IDs controlled by SCDHHS and RFA servers are in a locked cabinet that only RFA IT may access.
- Assessment data on the servers are GPG encrypted with the key only known by a select subset of the RFA staff with access to the data portal codebase.

The following screen shots provide information on data elements and the data portal:

School assessment upload form:

Data elements viewable: Student Name, School year/grade

Data elements keyed: Assessment Type, If “Other” the name of the assessment

The screenshot shows a web interface for 'ECENC - Individual Student Assessment Results'. The breadcrumb trail is: Dashboard → 2017-2018 enrollments → Aisaka, Taiga Toradora → New assessment result. The main heading is 'Add new assessment result for Aisaka, Taiga Toradora'. The form contains a dropdown menu for 'Assessment Type', a text input for 'Name', and a file upload section for 'Assessment Results for 2017-2018 academic year (PDF file)'. The file upload section includes a 'Choose File' button, the text 'No file chosen', and a note: 'Please upload a PDF file under 20MB in size.'. At the bottom of the form are two buttons: 'UPLOAD' and 'CANCEL'.

RFA Reviewer’s data entry form:

Data Elements for verification: Name, Assessment type, School year/ grade

Data elements keyed: Assessment date, Verbal Score, Non-verbal score (Mathematics)

Advanced Placement (AP) - Test File

📎 17eaf5b5f1848f462937191e8985f5b4.pdf (7.76 kB)

S Accepted R developers+super@rfa.sc.gov
📅 School Year: 2017-2018 V developers+super@rfa.sc.gov

Needs internal review?

Name
Test File

Assessment Type
Advanced Placement (AP)

Assessed on
02/28/2019

Verbal Score
700

Non-Verbal Score
800

Are these scores national percentiles?

Do you verify the data above to be correct?

SAVE CANCEL

Only the official result from the testing vendor was accepted; unofficial handwritten or typed assessment data were rejected. Assessment data submitted without the student's name or testing date visible were also rejected.

Recommendation: For future submissions, the EOC recommends that Exceptional SC also provide the following information - child's date of birth as well as gender and race – to verify the student's identity.

Compliance and Analysis of Assessment Data

As required by state law, schools participating in the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children (ECENC) program are required to administer national achievement or state standardized assessments, or both, at progressive grade levels to determine student progress. To date, private schools cannot administer state assessments which include, but are not limited to, SC READY in grades 3 through 8 and end-of-course assessments in Algebra 1, English 1, Biology and US History and The Constitution. Instead, private schools have the flexibility to choose any assessment to measure student performance. Schools that administer national assessments typically select an assessment or assessments that measure reading or English language arts (ELA) competencies and mathematics competencies. Examples of assessments that are used in elementary and middle school grades are the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). Examples of assessments that are unique to high school are the ACT, PSAT, and SAT.

Exceptional SC provided to RFA a datafile that contained a list of 2,327 students in kindergarten through grade 12 who received grants in the 2017-18 school year (Table 1). There were an additional 28 students with an indicated grade level of 4K that were submitted by Exceptional SC to RFA. These 28 students were not included in the data collection process because 4K students are not eligible to receive grants.

Table 1
Count of Children by Grade (K-12) who Received Grants from Exceptional SC
2017-18

Grade Level	Number of Students
Kindergarten	75
1	130
2	174
3	182
4	241
5	240
6	261
7	248
8	255
9	159
10	154
11	123
12	85
TOTAL	2,327

Source: RFA as provided by Exceptional SC.

Using this list, RFA populated the secure portal with the name and grade level of each student by school. To reiterate, only schools that completed the data sharing agreement with RFA were given access to the secure portal to upload individual student assessment reports for students whom Exceptional SC verified had received a grant in 2017-18 and had attended their school in 2017-18. Schools were asked specifically to upload a score report from a test publisher; therefore, scores obtained from hand-scoring of assessments by school officials or by the classroom teacher were not accepted. Schools that did not provide student scores from a test publisher score report were asked to provide a reason for not providing the information.

Scores from achievement tests that were judged to best align with the content of Reading Comprehension and Mathematics Concepts were recorded. Similarly, scores from aptitude tests that best aligned with the content names Verbal and Non-Verbal were recorded. Although the assessments differ in meaning across publishers, they were treated as if they measure the areas of Reading Comprehension/Verbal Skills and Mathematics Concepts/Non-Verbal similarly: the labels used for the subjects in this report are Reading and Mathematics. Assessment data that included the national percentile rank or the national percentile rank score were documented. Recording national percentile rank scores enables comparability of scores across assessments, because the scores are assumed to be referenced to comparable nationally representative samples of students. A similar process was also utilized in analyzing the academic performance of students receiving a Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program.

The EOC staff reviewed the evaluations of the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship Program that were conducted by the Learning Systems Institute at Florida State University for Fiscal Years 2015-16 and 2016-17.⁴ The FTC Scholarship Program was established in 2001 to award scholarships to children from low-income families who attend a private school or to assist with transportation costs to attend a public school in an adjacent district.⁵ Florida also provides scholarships for students with disabilities who attend a private school or transfer to another public school, the John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program. To be eligible, a student must have attended a public school in the state of Florida in October and February of the prior year. The Florida Department of Education does not collect or report assessment data on students who receive a McKay Scholarship; however, the Department does provide quarterly reports containing information on student statistics.⁶

⁴ Evaluation of the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program – Participation, Compliance and Test Scores in 2015-16 and in 2016-17. Learning Systems Institute. Florida State University.

http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5606/urlt/FTC_Report1516.pdf

<http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5606/urlt/FTC-Report1617.pdf>.

⁵ Fact Sheet on Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program. Florida Department of Education. September 2018.

<http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5606/urlt/FTC-Sept-2018.pdf>.

⁶ Quarterly Reports, McKay Scholarships. Florida Department of Education. <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/mckay/quarterly-reports.stml>.

If schools had assessment data from school year 2016-17 on each student, they were given the option of uploading that information. It was not a requirement to upload the 2016-17 assessment data since Act 247 was not enacted until 2018. EOC staff reviewed the assessment data that were provided. These data contained a random number generated by RFA, and no personally identifiable student information was provided to the EOC.

Analysis of Data

On March 5, 2019 the EOC received final data files from RFA to conduct the analyses. This dataset included records that had: (1) valid assessment reports or (2) a reason for not submitting an assessment score. All schools participating in the ECENC program in 2018-19 participated in the data collection process and provided either individual student assessment data or a reason for not providing the individual student assessment data to the EOC. There were 11 schools that participated in the program in 2017-18 but did not participate in 2018-19; six of these schools opted not to participate in 2017-18 and five schools were removed from the program due to non-compliance with program requirements.

This March 2019 datafile contained 3,338 assessment records, where each record contained information from one assessment administration or an explanation of why the assessment information was not provided. The datafile did not contain the names of any students; RFA redacted all personally identifiable information from the datafile and instead generated a number for each record. Of these 3,338 records, 1,574 records contained assessments for the 2017-18 academic year, 887 records contained assessments for the 2016-17 academic year, and 695 records did not contain assessment results. Schools entered more than one assessment administration for some students; duplicate assessment for students were resolved to a single observation by selecting the most recent assessment. Resolving these duplicate assessments resulted in 1,574 students with valid assessment information for the 2017-18 academic year, 836 students with assessment information for the 2016-17 academic year, and 695 students with no assessment results for 2017-18.

For these 1,574 students with valid assessment data for the 2017-18 school year, Table 2 documents the number and percent of students by grade level. Approximately 83 percent of all assessment results were for students in grades 3 through 10.

Table 2
Number and Percent of Valid Assessment Results by Grade Level, 2017-18

Grade Level	Number	Percent
Kindergarten	24	2
1	47	3
2	86	5
3	127	8
4	186	12
5	172	11
6	174	11
7	199	13
8	192	12
9	124	8
10	120	8
11	93	6
12	30	2
TOTAL	1,574	

The assessments reported are summarized in Table 3. The assessment most frequently reported at 32 percent was the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment, which is a computer adaptive achievement test that can be administered to students in kindergarten through grade 12. Approximately 15 percent of all assessments reported were the Stanford Achievement Test, which is administered to students in grades K through 12, and fourteen percent of all assessments were the PSAT, which is administered to high school sophomores and juniors.

Table 3
Number and Percent of Assessments Reported, 2017-18

Assessment	Number	Percent
ACT	28	2
ACT Aspire	93	6
AIMSWEB	3	Less than 1
Comprehensive Testing Program (CTP)	78	5
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)	113	7
Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)	507	32
Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT)	1	Less than 1
PSAT	222	14
SAT	29	2
Stanford Achievement Test	235	15
TerraNova	100	6
Woodcock-Johnson	148	9
Other	17	1
Total	1,574	

Of the 695 students without assessment results for 2017-18, schools provided specific reasons for not providing results for 631 of these students. Table 4 documents that 36 percent of the students were in a grade for which the school did not administer a norm-referenced test, such as kindergarten or grade 12. Another 43 percent were assessed using other means including portfolios, private testing, self-scored assessments and private testing. Schools did not provide a reason for not submitting assessment results for 64 students.

Table 4
Reasons for Not Providing Assessment Information

Reason	Number of Students
Student was sick or absent on the day of testing.	12
Student left school before or enrolled after testing.	39
School did not assess grade level (includes students in kindergarten and grade 12).	224
Parents opted their child out of testing.	73
Academic progress was assessed via other means including self-scored by teacher or staff.	271
School indicated student was not enrolled in school in 2017-18.	<u>12</u>
Total Reasons Given:	631
School provided no reason.	64

Compliance

For school year 2017-18, the EOC analyzed compliance of ECENC schools with submitting assessment data using three scenarios presented in Table 5.

Of the 2,327 students in kindergarten through grade 12 who received a grant from Exceptional SC in 2017-18, schools provided valid assessment data on 68 percent of the students. Only the official result from the testing vendor was accepted; unofficial handwritten or typed assessment data were rejected. Assessment data submitted without the student's name or testing date visible were also rejected. Calculating compliance as the percentage of students in grades 3 through 10 only for which assessment data were provided, resulted in a compliance rate of 67 percent (1,168 of 1,740 students, Table 5). The Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program measures compliance using grades 3 through 10. Students in K-2 and 11-12 typically have less opportunity to take assessments. In the early grades, assessments are generally administered for diagnostic purposes while assessments in grades 11 and 12 are typically used for college admissions tests. And, finally, if valid reasons for not submitting assessment data are included, compliance was approximately 95 percent.

Table 5
Indicators of School Compliance

Scenario 1: K-12 Students with Assessment Data	
Number of Students (K-12) Receiving Exceptional SC Grants*	2,327
Number of students with Valid Assessment Data	1,574
Percent of Students (K-12) with Valid Assessment Data	68%
Scenario 2: Grades 3-10 Students with Assessment Data	
Number of Students (3-10) Receiving Exceptional SC Grants*	1,740
Number of students with Valid Assessment Data	1,168
Percent of Students (3-10) with Valid Assessment Data	67%
Scenario 3: K-12 Students with Assessment Data or Valid Reasons	
Number of Students (K-12) Receiving Exceptional SC Grants*	2,327
Number of Students (K-12) with Valid Assessment Data	1,574
Number of Students (K-12) with Valid Reasons for Not Submitting Assessment Data	631
Percent of Students (K-12) with Valid Assessment Data or Reasons for Not Submitting Assessment Data	95%

*Excludes 28 students in 4K who received grants.

Assessment Data of Exceptional SC Students in 2017-18

The EOC staff analyzed the assessment data to determine: (1) for all students who received a grant from Exceptional SC in 2017-18 and for whom assessment data were collected, how well did students in grades kindergarten through grade 12 statewide perform based on national percentile ranks; and (2) how well did students perform in schools for which at least 51 percent of students in the school received grants from Exceptional SC.

The EOC staff used or converted assessment data into percentile rank scores based on the national norms for their students. When national percentile rank scores were not available, reports usually provided a scale score, for example, a reported score on the SAT of 540 or an ACT Score of 22 are examples of scale scores. For the ACT, SAT, and PSAT, EOC staff converted scale scores to percentile ranks using conversion tables published online. When national norms were not available, such as in the case with the Woodcock Johnson assessment, the assessment data were not included.

By reporting information from all assessments as percentile ranks, a common metric is in place; an assumption is made in this process that the national norms for different assessments are comparable – which may not be justified. For example, when a student has a national percentile rank score of 45, the student scored higher than 45 percent of students in a nationally representative sample of students. However, summarizing percentile ranks across students is still problematic, because whereas equal differences

between scale scores imply equal differences in student achievement (or aptitude), equal differences in percentile ranks do not. Therefore, percentile ranks should not simply be averaged. For example, on the SAT Verbal, the difference between scores of 530 and 550 (20 points) implies the same difference in student achievement as does the difference between scores of 640 and 660 (20 points). The corresponding percentile rank for an SAT Verbal score of 530 is 58 and for a SAT Verbal score of 550 is 65 (a 7-point difference in percentile rank), and the corresponding percentile rank for an SAT Verbal score of 640 is 88 and for a SAT Verbal score of 660 is 92 (a 4-point difference in percentile rank). Although the differences between SAT Verbal scores of 530 and 550, and 640 and 660 suggest the same differences in academic achievement, the differences between their percentile ranks are not the same.

Two possible solutions to this problem are available. The first is to report median percentile ranks. The median percentile rank is the percentile rank that half of the students are below, and half are above; it gives information about where a typical student performs. Percentile ranks can be computed for assessments in the 2016-17 school year and for assessments in the 2017-18 school year. If the median percentile rank from both academic years is the same, the inference can be made that these students increased in their academic achievement as a typical student would. If the median percentile rank from 2017-18 is higher than for 2016-17, these students may have made greater progress than typical students.

The second is to convert all percentile rank scores to Normal Curve Equivalent (NCEs). NCEs have a mean of 50, and a range from 0 to 100. A student with a percentile rank less than 50 will have an NCE less than 50. For example, a student with a percentile rank of 30 will have an NCE score of 39, while a student with a percentile rank of 70 has an NCE of 61. NCEs have the property that the difference between 35 and 45 implies the same difference in academic achievement as between 70 and 80 and can therefore be subtracted from one another and averaged. If the average of the NCEs for both years is the same (a difference of 0), the inference can be made that students made progress similar to a typical student. If the NCE in 2017-18 is greater than the NCE from 2016-17, these students appear to have gained more than students in 2016-17.

One advantage of using NCEs is that the scores from each student (2016-17 and 2017-18 are included in the indicator of student progress). A disadvantage of NCEs is that there is no simple reference for whether the difference in the average NCEs from 2016-17 to 2017-18 is large or small. What does it mean to have an average difference of NCEs of 5? It is not clear.

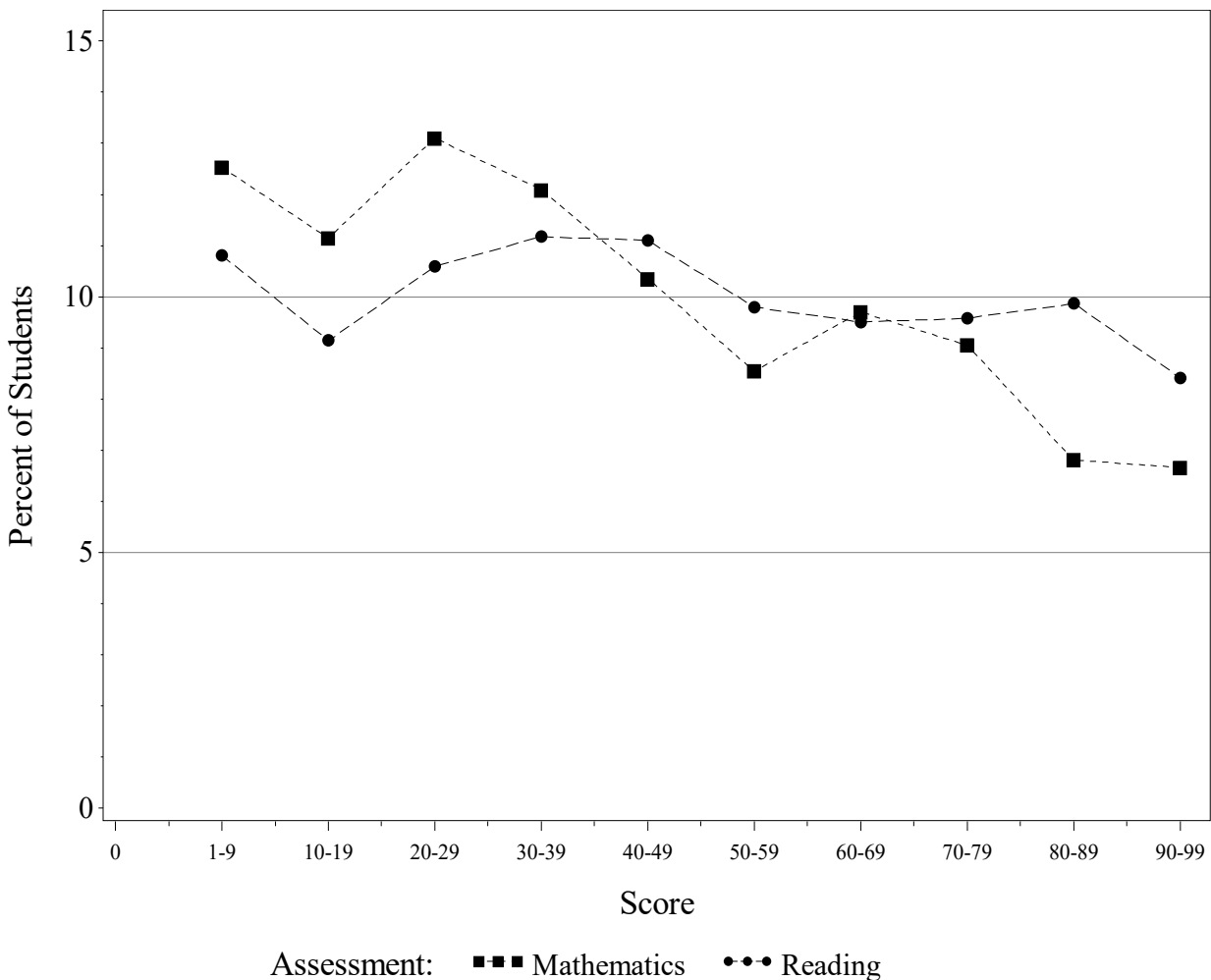
If percentile ranks are used, when the median 2017-18 percentile rank is 5 points higher than the median 2016-17 percentile rank, it means that in 2017-18 students scored higher than 5 percent more students than they did in 2016-17.

Statewide Results:

Of all students who received ECENC grants in school year 2017-18, 60 percent or 1,399 students had valid assessment data collected. Assessment data results for some assessments like the Woodcock Johnson assessment were excluded because the scores could not be converted into national percentile rankings.

The distribution of scores for Reading and Mathematics are presented in Figure 1. For Reading, assessment results were evenly distributed from high to low percentile ranks, with approximately 10 percent of students in each 10-point range of percentile ranks, and not clear associated with the assessment score. For Mathematics, there were slightly more assessment results at lower percentile ranks, with approximately 12 percent of students scoring in the lowest four ranges, and only 6 percent of students scoring in the highest two ranges displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Distributions of Mathematics and Reading Scores from 2017-18



The statewide results are presented in Table 6 below. The median Reading percentile rank was 47, and the median Mathematics percentile rank was 40; both of which suggest that the overall academic level of ECENC students is lower than students nationally. The mean NCEs for Reading was 49.0 and 45.7 for Mathematics, both of which are slightly lower than 50, which is the NCE for an average (typical) student, which again implies that ECENC students are slightly lower in their overall academic level than students nationally. A reminder: students receiving grants from Exceptional SC all have documented exceptional needs whereas national norms include students with and without disabilities.

Table 6
All Students in 2017-18
(n= 1,399)

	Reading	Mathematics
Median Percentile Rank	47	40
Mean Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE)	49.0	45.7

Making direct comparisons between the academic performance of students receiving grants from Exceptional SC and South Carolina public school students with disabilities is problematic for many reasons. First, students in private schools cannot take state summative assessments; therefore, these students do not take assessments that measure their progress in learning state academic content standards. Instead, students in private schools participating in the ECENC program take national assessments or formative assessments like the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). Second, students receiving grants from Exceptional SC are students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or are students who have been diagnosed by a licensed speech-language pathologist, psychiatrist or medical, mental health or health care provider as having a neurodevelopmental disorder, a substantial sensory or physical impairment or some other disability or acute or chronic condition that impedes the students' ability to learn and succeed in school. On the other hand, public school students with disabilities who take the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessment (SC READY) in grades 3 through 8 are students with an IEP. Public-school students with significant cognitive disabilities take the South Carolina Alternate Assessment on Alternate Achievement Standards (AA-AAS). Data from AA-AAS is not included in this report. Third, there are no data to confirm or deny that students with disabilities who are enrolled in public schools have comparable disabilities or exceptional needs to students receiving a grant from Exceptional SC or that students served in public schools or in the ECENC program have comparable socioeconomic status.

Schools with 51 percent or more students receiving grants from Exceptional SC: There were eight schools that had more than 51 percent of its total school enrollment receiving grants from Exceptional SC in 2017-18. Total school enrollment was determined using information provided by the schools on their 2017-18 application to participate in the ECENC program. These eight schools included:

- Camperdown Academy
- Einstein Academy
- HOPE Academy
- Miracle Academy Preparatory School
- St. John Catholic School-Charleston
- The Barclay School
- The Chandler School
- Trident Academy

However, of these eight schools, three utilize assessments in a way that scores could not be provided for this evaluation. The Barclay School uses portfolios rather than national assessments to measure student progress; national percentile ranks are not available for portfolios. Camperdown Academy and Trident Academy uses hand-scored assessment results; currently stipulated in law is that student scores come from a test publisher student score report, preventing the use of scores from hand-scored assessments. The EOC is hiring an outside consultant to determine if the hand-scored assessments can be used in next year's evaluation and to monitor how student portfolios are being used to measure student progress in reading, mathematics or acquiring other skills at The Barclay School.

A summary of the scores obtained from the schools for which data was available are provided in Table 7. For each school, the median percentile ranks in Reading range from 11.5 to 46, with all medians less than 50; similarly, the mean NCE ranges from 27.3 to 50, with all values less than or equal to 50. For Mathematics a similar pattern is present, the median percentile ranks range from 13.5 to 56 with only 1 school having a median percentile rank above 50. The mean NCE in Mathematics ranges from 28.2 to 51.1. These values suggest that the students in these schools score lower on their assessments than do students nationally.

Table 7

Reading, 2017-18

School	n	Median Percentile Rank	Mean NCE
Einstein Academy	53	39	43.1
HOPE Academy	44	12	27.3
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	47	46	50
St. John Catholic School-Charleston	16	11.5	31.3
The Chandler School	58	37.5	46

Mathematics, 2017-18

School	n	Median Percentile Rank	Mean NCE
Einstein Academy	55	14	30.5
HOPE Academy	38	16.5	28.2
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	47	56	51.1
St. John Catholic School-Charleston	16	13.5	30.1
The Chandler School	58	31.5	42.6

Gain scores from 2016-17 to 2017-18 for those that have scores

Schools were asked but not required to submit assessment data for school year 2016-17 for students who received grants from Exceptional SC in 2017-18.

Of the 1,399 students for whom the EOC had assessment data, there were 461 students with Reading scores in both the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years, which is 20 percent of the students with ECENC scholarships. For Mathematics, there were 820 matched students, which is 35 percent of the students with ECENC scholarships. Based on these sampling percentages, caution must be exercised not to over interpret the results presented here. Even greater caution must be exercised when considering data at the school level, as the numbers of students reported on for each school in the matched student samples are all less than 40.

Tables 8 through 12 document the assessment results for matched students in the schools having at least 51 percent of their students who received a grant from Exceptional SC as well as in all schools in the state.

For all students, the median Reading percentile rank in 2016-17 was 51, and the median percentile rank in 2017-18 was 47 (Table 8); the mean NCE in Reading was 51.1 in 2016-17, and 48 in 2017-18 (Table 10); and the average NCE gain was -3.1 (Table 12). All of

these measures suggest that the 2017-18 scores may be slightly lower than the 2016-17 scores.

For Mathematics, the median percentile rank in 2016-17 was 42, and the median percentile rank in 2017-18 was 40 (Table 9); the mean NCE in Reading was 45.2 in 2016-17, and 45.8 in 2017-18 (Table 11); and the average NCE gain was 0.6 (Table 12). All of these differences were very small. The most appropriate conclusion based on these data is that there is not enough evidence to suggest a change in student achievement from 2016-17 to 2017-18.

No evaluation was made of the pattern of scores over time for individual schools because the number of students with data for both 2016-17 and 2017-18 was too small.

Table 8

Median Reading Scores for All Students in 2017-18 and for Students with Data in Both 2016-17 and 2017-18 (Matched Students)

School	Matched Student		
	n	Median Percentile Rank	
		2016-17	2017-18
Einstein Academy	14	63	32.5
HOPE Academy	9	*	*
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	23	28	46
St. John Catholic School-Charleston	5	*	*
The Chandler School	20	61	45.5
All Schools	461	51	47

* Fewer than 10 students.

Table 9

Median Mathematics Scores for All Students in 2017-18 and for Students with Data in Both 2016-17 and 2017-18 (Matched Students)

School	Matched Students		
	n	Median Percentile Rank	
		2016-17	2017-18
Einstein Academy	34	40	14
HOPE Academy	18	40.5	6
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	36	29	54.5
St. John Catholic School-Charleston	10	53.5	22
The Chandler School	39	50	30
All Schools	820	42	40

Table 10

Mean Reading NCE Scores for All Students in 2017-18 and for Students with Data in Both 2016-17 and 2017-18 (Matched Students)

School	Matched Students		
	n	Mean	
		2016-17	2017-18
Einstein Academy	14	60.4	40.4
HOPE Academy	9	*	*
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	23	43.0	47.2
St. John Catholic School-Charleston	5	*	*
The Chandler School	20	56.7	45.0
All Schools	461	51.1	48.0

* Fewer than 10 students.

Table 11

Mean Mathematics NCE Scores for All Students in 2017-18 and for Students with Data in Both 2016-17 and 2017-18 (Matched Students)

School	Matched Students		
	n	Mean	
		2016-17	2017-18
Einstein Academy	34	45.4	29.7
HOPE Academy	18	47.0	24.6
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	36	39.7	51.0
St. John Catholic School-Charleston	10	50.3	34.6
The Chandler School	39	49.6	42.4
All Schools	820	45.2	45.8

* Fewer than 10 students.

Table 12

Average NCE Gain Scores for Reading and Mathematics

School	Reading		Mathematics	
	N	Mean	n	Mean
Einstein Academy	14	-20.0	34	-15.7
HOPE Academy	9	*	18	-22.4
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	23	-36.4	36	11.3
St. John Catholic School-Charleston	5	*	10	-15.7
The Chandler School	20	-11.6	39	-7.3
All Schools	461	-3.1	820	0.6

* Fewer than 10 students.

Findings

1. Schools participating in the ECENC program responded to the request for assessment data by providing either assessment information or a reason for not having the information for 95 percent of the 2,327 students who received grants from Exceptional SC in 2017-18.
2. Actual assessment information was obtained from schools participating in the ECENC program for approximately two-thirds of all students who received a grant from Exceptional SC in school year 2017-18.
3. Of the assessment data provided, the EOC could use assessment data for 1,399 students or 60 percent of all students who received a grant from Exceptional SC in 2017-18 to calculate median percentile rankings in Reading and Mathematics.
4. At the state level, the assessment data results for school year 2017-18 for students who received a grant from Exceptional SC showed:
 - a. The median Reading percentile rank was 47, and the median Mathematics percentile rank was 40. In Reading, approximately, half of the students scored higher than 47 percent of students in a national representative sample of students. In Mathematics, half of the students scored higher than 40 percent of students in a nationally representative sample of students.
 - b. The mean Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) for Reading was 49.0 and for mathematics, 45.7, which is slightly lower than the national norm which includes students with and without exceptional needs.
 - c. The data must be reviewed accordingly. Students receiving grants from Exceptional SC all have documented exceptional needs. One would expect that students participating in the ECENC program would score lower than a nationally representative sample of students that includes students with and without exceptional needs. However, using median national percentile ranks over time will provide information on the relative performance of ECENC students and information on their academic growth.
5. Based on the limited number of assessment results for students for whom assessment scores were provided for school years 2016-17 and 2017-18, there appears to be a slight decline in Reading scores but no difference in Mathematics scores from school year 2016-17 to school year 2017-18.
6. There were eight schools with more than 51 percent of its total school enrollment who received grants from Exceptional SC in 2017-18. However, of these eight schools, three utilized assessments that could not be used in this evaluation. One school used portfolios to monitor student progress while two schools used hand-scored assessment results. The EOC is hiring an outside consultant to determine if the hand-scored assessments can be used in next year's evaluation and to

monitor how student portfolios are being used to measure student progress in reading, mathematics or acquiring other skills.

7. For the remaining five schools that had more than 51 percent of its total school enrollment who received grants from Exceptional SC in 2017-18:
 - a. The median percentile ranks in Reading ranged from 11.5 to 46, with all medians less than 50; similarly, the mean NCE ranged from 27.3 to 50, with all values less than or equal to 50.
 - b. For Mathematics a similar pattern is present. The median percentile ranks ranged from 13.5 to 56 with one school having a median percentile rank above 50. The mean NCE in Mathematics ranged from 28.2 to 51.1.
 - c. These values suggest that the students in these five schools generally scored lower on the assessments than did students nationally. Again, one would expect that students participating in the ECENC program would score lower than a nationally representative sample of students that includes students with and without exceptional needs, especially in these schools that have a majority of its students receiving grants from Exceptional SC. However, using median national percentile ranks over time will provide information on the relative performance of ECENC students in these schools and information on their academic growth.

Recommendation: The EOC will work with schools to increase the percentage of valid assessment data reported by schools participating in the ECENC program.

Appendix



SOUTH CAROLINA REVENUE AND FISCAL AFFAIRS OFFICE

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Memorandum of Understanding

Between

[Click here to enter text.](#)

and

South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office

This Agreement is entered into by [Click here to enter text.](#), hereinafter referred to as “Data Owner” and the South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office, hereinafter referred to as “RFA.”

Data Owner and RFA mutually assure each other that they will protect the confidentiality of any and all individually identifiable information shared with or made available to other parties in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232(g), the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and other applicable State and federal privacy regulations.

The purpose of this Agreement is for Data Owner to submit the assessment results of students receiving a grant from Exceptional SC to RFA to support the Education Oversight Committee’s (EOC) annual report documenting "the impact of the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Program on student achievement" as required by Act 247 of 2018, Section 12-6-3790(E)(6).

Obligations and Activities of Data Owner.

- a) Data Owner shall obtain consent, authorization, or permission from the individuals that may be required by applicable state or federal laws and/or regulations prior to RFA furnishing the individually identifiable information pertaining to an individual. Such authorizations or permissions shall be furnished to RFA upon request.
- b) Provide to RFA with any changes in, or revocation of, permission by the individuals to use or disclose individually identifiable information, if such changes affect RFA’s permitted or required uses and disclosures.
- c) Provide to RFA a copy of the test score sheet of each student who received a grant from Exceptional SC in 2017-18, and if available, assessment results for 2016-17.

Obligations and Activities of RFA

- a) RFA will not use or disclose individually identifiable information other than as permitted or required by this Agreement or as required by state and federal law or as otherwise authorized by Data Owner.

- b) RFA will use appropriate safeguards to prevent use or disclosure of the individually identifiable information other than as provided for by this Agreement. RFA maintains and uses appropriate administrative, technical and physical safeguards to preserve the integrity and confidentiality of and to prevent non-permitted use or disclosure of individually identifiable information. These safeguards are required regardless of the mechanism used to transmit the information.
- c) RFA will mitigate, to the extent practicable, any harmful effect that is known to RFA of a use or disclosure of individually identifiable information by RFA or its workforce in violation of the requirements of this Agreement.
- d) RFA will report to Data Owner, in writing, any use and/or disclosure of individually identifiable information that is not permitted or required by this Agreement of which RFA becomes aware as soon as reasonable, but no more than 72 hours following knowledge of a breach of confidentiality, pursuant to Act No. 284, 2016 S.C. Acts, Proviso 117.
- e) RFA will ensure that any agent, including a subcontractor, to whom it provides individually identifiable information, received from, or created or received by RFA, executes a written agreement obligating the agent or subcontractor to comply with all the terms of the Agreement.

Permitted Uses and Disclosures by RFA

- a) **Functions and Activities:** Except as otherwise limited in this and any other agreement between RFA and Data Owner, RFA may use or disclose individually identifiable information only for purposes authorized by Data Owners in a separate written agreement or amendment to this agreement, if such use or disclosure of individually identifiable information would not violate any applicable state or federal laws if done by Data Owners themselves. RFA may pass individually identifiable information to any of its subcontractors for use in filling the obligations of this Agreement as long as the subcontractor adheres to the conditions of this Agreement. This includes, but is not limited to, data being sent directly to any subcontractor to be used in data aggregation and quality assurance on behalf of RFA or Data Owners.
- b) RFA may make available individually identifiable information, with permission of Data Owners and in compliance with any applicable state or federal laws, to other entities as authorized by Data Owners in a separate written agreement or amendment to this agreement, if such disclosure of individually identifiable information would not violate any state or federal laws.
- c) RFA and any of its subcontractors, except as otherwise limited in this Agreement, may use individually identifiable information to provide feedback on quality issues and comparative analyses using data solely from this project or data generated under the data aggregation authority of this Agreement.
- d) RFA upon entering into an agreement using individually identifiable information for any of its functions and activities on behalf of this project or in its general operations will make available that agreement to Data Owner or Data Owners upon request.

Term and Termination.

- a) **Term:** This Agreement shall commence upon the date of the last signature and shall terminate when all of the individually identifiable information provided by Data Owner to RFA, or created or received by RFA, is destroyed or returned to Data Owner, or, if it is infeasible to return or destroy individually identifiable information, protections are extended to such individually identifiable information in accordance with the provisions of this Section 4.
 - b) **Termination for Cause:** Upon Data Owner's reasonable determination that RFA has breached a material term of this Agreement, Data Owner shall be entitled to do any one or more of the following:
 - i) Give RFA written notice of the existence of such breach and an opportunity to cure upon mutually agreeable terms. If RFA does not cure the breach or end the violation according to such terms, or if RFA and Data Owner are unable to agree upon such terms, Data Owner may immediately terminate any agreement between Data Owner and RFA which is the subject of such breach.
 - ii) Immediately stop all further disclosures of individually identifiable information to RFA pursuant to each agreement between Data Owner and RFA which is the subject of such breach.
 - c) **Effect of Termination:** Upon termination of the contract or upon written demand from Data Owner, RFA agrees to immediately return or destroy, except to the extent infeasible, all individually identifiable information received from, created by, or received by RFA, including all such individually identifiable information which RFA has disclosed to its employees, subcontractors and/or agents. Destruction shall include destruction of all copies including backup tapes and other electronic backup medium. In the event the return or destruction of some or all such individually identifiable information is infeasible, individually identifiable information not returned or destroyed pursuant to this paragraph shall be used or disclosed only for those purposes that make return or destruction infeasible.
 - d) **Continuing Privacy Obligation:** The obligation of RFA to protect the privacy of individually identifiable information is continuous and survives any termination, cancellation, expiration, or other conclusion of this Agreement or any other agreement between Data Owner and RFA.
- 5) **Notices.** All notices pursuant to this Agreement must be given in writing and shall be effective when received if hand-delivered or upon dispatch if sent by reputable overnight delivery service, facsimile or U.S. Mail to the appropriate address or facsimile number as set forth at the end of this Agreement.
- 6) **Miscellaneous.**
- a) Data Owner and RFA agree that Individuals who are the subject of individually identifiable information are not third-party beneficiaries of this Agreement.
 - b) The parties acknowledge that state and federal laws relating to electronic data security and privacy are rapidly evolving and that amendment of this Agreement may be required to provide for procedures to ensure compliance with such developments. The parties specifically agree to take such action as is necessary to implement the standards and requirements any applicable laws relating to the security or confidentiality of individually identifiable information. The parties understand and agree that Data Owner must receive satisfactory written assurance from RFA that RFA will adequately safeguard all Information that it receives or creates pursuant to this Agreement. Upon request by Data Owner, RFA agrees to promptly enter into negotiations with

Data Owner concerning the terms of any amendment to the Agreement embodying written assurances consistent with the standards and requirements of any applicable laws. Data Owner may terminate this Agreement upon thirty (30) days written notice in the event RFA does not promptly enter into negotiations to amend this Agreement when requested by Data Owner pursuant to this Section.

- c) In the event that any provision of this Agreement violates any applicable statute, ordinance or rule of law in any jurisdiction that governs this Agreement, such provision shall be ineffective to the extent of such violation without invalidating any other provision of this Agreement.
- d) This Agreement may not be amended, altered or modified except by written agreement signed by Data Owner and RFA.
- e) No provision of this Agreement may be waived except by an agreement in writing signed by the waiving party. A waiver of any term or provision shall not be construed as a waiver of any other term or provision. Nothing in Section 2 of this Agreement shall be deemed a waiver of any legally-recognized claim of privilege available to Data Owner.
- f) The persons signing below have the right and authority to execute this Agreement for their respective entities and no further approvals are necessary to create a binding Agreement.
- g) Neither Data Owner nor RFA shall use the names or trademarks of the other party or of any of the respective party's affiliated entities in any advertising, publicity, endorsement, or promotion unless prior written consent has been obtained for the particular use contemplated.
- h) All references herein to specific statutes, codes or regulations shall be deemed to be references to those statutes, codes or regulations as may be amended from time to time.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the parties have executed this agreement effective upon last dated signature.

Click or tap here to enter text.

South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office
Health and Demographics

BY:

Date

BY:

W. David Patterson, Ph.D., Chief

Date

The SC Education Oversight Committee is an independent, non-partisan group made up of 18 educators, business persons, and elected leaders. Created in 1998, the committee is dedicated to reporting facts, measuring change, and promoting progress within South Carolina's education system.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you have questions, please contact the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) staff for additional information. The phone number is 803.734.6148. Also, please visit the EOC website at www.eoc.sc.gov for additional resources.

The Education Oversight Committee does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, or handicap in its practices relating to employment or establishment and administration of its programs and initiatives. Inquiries regarding employment, programs and initiatives of the Committee should be directed to the Executive Director 803.734.6148.