BUILDING, PASSING, IMPLEMENTING AND ASSESSING,
EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN SOUTH CAROLINA

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South Carolina Governor's Office

A Conference Exploring Issues in Certification,
Advancement and Instruction in Public Schools

Sponsored by Georgia State University

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BUILDING, PASSING, IMPLEMENTING AND ASSESSING, EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN SOUTH CAROLINA

PREPARED FOR:

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AUTHORS:

Terry Peterson         Barbara Kosovske

State of South Carolina
1986
NEED FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM:

Modern education reform is not a new concept to South Carolina. It has been an ongoing, dynamic process--starting with a series of legislative actions taken as early as 1977 with passage of the South Carolina Education Finance Act (EFA) and culminating most recently in 1984 with the passage of the South Carolina Education Improvement Act (EIA). With the state already responding to a need to improve public education and to help all children, the South Carolina Education Improvement Act was timely in light of the education reform movement that swept the nation in 1982-83. This national recognition of the erosion of American economic strength and the relationship of student performance to the job market and economic growth of cities, states and the nation made it possible for South Carolina to forge ahead with major education policy initiatives.

If the nation, as a whole, was "at risk" educationally, (and thus, economically) then South Carolina was "at risk" also. In the 1970's, we ranked poorly in some educational statistics. In 1979, a third of our beginning first graders were "not ready" to begin learning and were at risk of failure in school. The future for these children and youth was not encouraging unless major educational improvements took place. Despite being noted for a
very dependable and reliable workforce, we in South Carolina would not fully tap that potential unless educational improvements were made. With 30% of South Carolina's population under age 18, we recognized the urgent need to raise dramatically the quality of our public schools and to enable students to effectively perform in an increasingly competitive world. At the same time, we realized that by having such a large percentage of our population under 18, our State could make a permanent, long-lasting impact if the educational reforms worked well.

A comprehensive, creative and innovative plan of action to address the problems was needed. The South Carolina Education Improvement Act offered a strategy to establish new standards and to secure a permanent source of funding to meet the new standards and tackle the problems.

BUILDING AN EDUCATIONAL REFORM PACKAGE:

The South Carolina Education Improvement Act is a reality today because of the untiring efforts of the citizens and leaders of South Carolina who met the challenge. Its success is due to the vocal support of the Governor, State Superintendent of Education, parents, teachers, administrators, legislators, business and religious leaders and other concerned South Carolinians who were determined "to do something" about the need for excellence in public education.
In essence, a grassroots, bottoms-up reform effort was started in the summer of 1983 when Governor Dick Riley went to the people and announced a major education improvement program. He said, "we can raise our public schools from the bottom of the list, but it will take the involvement and the investment of the whole State to do it." *1

This grassroots effort for educational reform, which in a few communities was moving forward on its own, was greatly enhanced in these and other communities by a series of activities coordinated out of the Governor's Office and the State Superintendent's Office. These activities were actively supported by all the major education associations and assisted by two blue-ribbon committees of 61 state leaders in business, education and the legislature. The grassroots activities included:

1. The release of a public opinion poll in August 1983 highlighting the public's concern and support for major educational reforms in South Carolina.
2. Well-publicized visits in September and early October, 1983, to every county in South Carolina by state

*1 See Attachment "A" for an outline of the steps in building and passing the South Carolina Education Improvement Act.
leaders to visit schools and speak to meetings of the PTA's, educators, civic leaders, chambers of commerce, and the media about the needs in public education in South Carolina;

3. Regional public forums attended by 13,000 people in September and early October, 1983, to study the needs of public education and propose solutions in small group discussions;

4. Weekly coverage in the press from August to November, 1983, of meetings of the blue-ribbon committees' deliberations on the needs and possible initiatives to address the needs in education;

5. Formation of lobbying teams for educational reforms in every county;

6. Activation of a toll-free hot line on educational reform;

7. Formation of a speakers bureau on educational improvement; and

8. Launching of a privately paid media campaign on educational improvement kicked off by a 30 minute special address by the Governor on all major commercial television channels in South Carolina.

Local excitement was created for educational improvement in 1983 in each community throughout South Carolina. In addition,
this excitement lead to public support for the content of the Education Improvement Act as well as a one cent sales tax increase earmarked for the Act. This increase was in addition to a 6% increase in the regular state appropriation for elementary and secondary education. Thus, in 1984-85 South Carolina lead the nation in the percent of increase in state funding for public education.

CONTENT OF THE EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT:

The South Carolina Education Improvement Act has 61 new or expanded initiatives designed to affect all types of students in all grades (from at-risk students to gifted and talented), all members of the educational community, and the broad school community (parents and business). *2

The content is based on the latest research on effective schools and classrooms.

The eight sections of the Act deal with:

1. Raising student performance by increasing academic standards;

*2 See Attachment "B" for a summary of the Education Improvement Act.
2. Strengthening the teaching and testing of the basic skills;
3. Elevating the teaching profession;
4. Improving leadership, management, and fiscal efficiency;
5. Implementing quality controls and rewarding productivity;
6. Creating more effective partnerships among schools, parents, community, and business;
7. Providing school buildings conducive to improved student learning; and
8. Providing financial support needed to improve schools.

The South Carolina Education Improvement Act consists of higher standards as is the case in many states, but unlike many states, it provides extra help to meet those standards. For instance, it provides child development programs for any at-risk four year olds. Any student scoring below basic skills standards is provided extra help through remedial or compensatory programs. South Carolina's state funded program is larger than the Federal Chapter I remedial and compensatory program in the State. Additional funding is provided, also, to expand services to emotionally handicapped children and for alcohol and drug aversion initiatives for at-risk youth. Meeting graduation exit exam standards will be supported by remedial help for students
who, beginning in the tenth grade, have difficulty meeting these standards.

The South Carolina Education Improvement Act includes other important features of its own which we think set it apart. These relate to standards and opportunities for teachers and principals. Incentive pay programs for teachers, principals, and schools have been started to reward superior performance and productivity. School awards are closely tied to gains in pupil achievement. Thus, no matter where a school starts from, it has an incentive to improve. On the other extreme, local school districts which do not meet certain outcome standards must go through a special intervention process. Also, a Teacher Improvement Grant Program for innovative ideas/programs is directly available to teachers or groups of teachers.

Leadership training and assessment for potential school principals are a key component of our reform program. Practicing principals are required to participate in continuing education programs and to complete an approved training program and to be evaluated annually with State verification of the evaluation every four years. New prospective principals must be assessed by an independent Leadership Academy before being employed as a principal.

A special emphasis throughout the Education Improvement Act is placed on the importance of the teacher and the teaching profession, primarily in the areas of recruitment, training, and
professional support and development. These actions followed major revisions in requirements to become a teacher in South Carolina starting in 1983. These early requirements include passing a basic skills exam before entering a teacher preparatory program, a semester of closely monitored practice teaching, passing a subject matter evaluation upon graduation, and successfully completing seven performance evaluations in the first three years of teaching followed by regular evaluations thereafter.

A Teacher Recruitment Project involving 20 of our colleges and universities has been started, as well as a loan program for talented state residents who enter teaching to serve in critical need areas. The Education Improvement Act also funds Center of Excellence to establish programs in colleges and universities to train teachers in the critical areas. Tuition reimbursement for courses to improve teachers is also an important aspect of the Education Improvement Act.

What we have learned from the process of developing and implementing a reform education plan in South Carolina is that school reform cannot be done piecemeal. Comprehensive reform holds greater possibilities for success than narrow reform measures. In the same vein, each of the 61 initiatives is an integral part of a greater, total program. The elimination of one item would reduce the effectiveness of every other.
IMPLEMENTING THE EDUCATIONAL REFORM:

The South Carolina Education Improvement Act continues to be an evolving program, building on the strengths we have had and planning for future achievements. While it is designed to be fully implemented over a five year period, it can be easily built upon after the five years. To be responsive to the needs of students and economic changes, there is built-in flexibility allowing for funding adjustments, upgrading of standards, and modification of programs which allow for state policy to be translated into local practices. To insure the sound implementation of such a massive and elaborate undertaking, the South Carolina Education Improvement Act incorporates a strong system of accountability and oversight. Even prior to implementation, potential problems were anticipated so that they could be handled and resolved effectively.

To accomplish this task:

1. A Division of Public Accountability was created "for the planning and development of the implementation of the South Carolina Education Improvement Act." A unit head, created in the law, holds the position of deputy superintendent under the State Superintendent of Education. This Division is responsible for monitoring and reporting progress made in the implementation of the law and for developing specific products required by the legislation.
2. Major new initiatives, such as the incentive programs, have been developed through advisory councils comprised of state educators, legislators, and community leaders.

3. The two Blue Ribbon Committees of state leaders who helped draft the South Carolina Education Improvement Act continue to monitor the implementation, making recommendations on the development and progress of programs and related issues. Also, a legislative Select Committee makes recommendations to the State Board of Education and the legislature on funding specific programs as well as the development of programs, such as the incentive programs and gifted and talented programs. A rotating subcommittee, comprised of teachers and principals, gives specific input to the Select Committee on issues concerning implementation at the school level.

4. The State Department of Education set up a structure to deal with implementation problems. This structure includes local, regional and state councils of principals and superintendents. Problems are resolved at the lowest level possible, but can receive immediate attention at the state level.
5. School Improvement Councils, made up of parents, faculty, students, and business/community leaders contribute, at the school level by monitoring school improvement efforts, helping develop school goals, budgets and programs.

6. State associations continue to keep implementation items on their conference agendas. Taxpayers, business leaders and legislators are kept informed on the reform progress through newsletters, bulletins and formal reports.

One of the truly unique and innovative portions of the Education Improvement Act is the mandate for the creation of more effective partnerships between the schools and parents, communities and businesses. South Carolina is one of the first states in the nation to enact such policies into law. Other states have them on an informal basis, but not in their statutes. This school year, 1985-86, every school in South Carolina is scheduled to be visited by one or more business leaders.

*3 See Attachment "C" of one newspaper report of a school visit by a business person.
The provisions in the Education Improvement Act which call for assessing its implementation send a strong signal to the public and school districts that state leaders take implementation seriously. They are not only monitoring process, but are committed to giving technical assistance to schools to help develop sound educational programs at all levels, regardless of variability and capabilities. There is a commitment to continue the quest for school improvement.

EARLY RESULTS FROM THE EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT:

At this point you naturally are asking do we have any proof that the initiatives articulated actually work? While it's too early to know the long term impact, initial results are very, very encouraging. *4

SAT scores in South Carolina, while still too low, led the nation in points gained over the past four years, while testing 50% of our graduates. In the wake of the controversy in Washington, D.C. regarding whether private or public schools contributed to the gain, the South Carolina Governor's Office

*4 See Attachment "D" for a summary of the 1986 Assessment Report of the South Carolina reform efforts.
recently completed a study indicating that our gains were almost entirely attributable to improvements in the public schools' student scores. South Carolina saw a 25 point gain for all students (compared to the national gain of 15 points), but public school scores increased 33 points. For a comparison, in Washington, D.C., there was a 20 point overall gain with an increase of 4 points only in the public school scores. While such improvement can not be attributable only to the South Carolina Education Improvement Act, the series of recent reforms, including the grassroots support preceding the Education Improvement Act and the Act and accompanying funding surely were contributors.

In addition, basic skills and academic skills test scores showed remarkable gains in South Carolina during the past two years. The gains were found in all grades, in all subjects and on all tests are 3-10 times greater than previous gains before the reform movement began in South Carolina. I should add here that low achieving students, Black and all students, have made substantial progress since the combination of education reforms has been in process. I mention this because there are those who contend that some of the components of reform, such as higher standards and testing programs typically included in reform plans, may create new barriers blocking at-risk student progress. The package of reforms in South Carolina avoided this problem and in fact helped at-risk children make meaningful improvement.
As a point of reference, a set of schools in New York City were cited nationally for their test score gains after implementing effective school practices. Our annual gains during the past two years were equal to that set of schools' gains, but instead of being in only 27 schools, our average gains were over all 1,200 schools in the State.

The attendance and truancy rates in South Carolina schools have been cut by one third. Our students now attend school almost a week longer than the national average even though our school year is roughly the same length. Good attendance pays off now in fewer classroom interruptions and later in dependable work habits.

Finally, what do teachers think of the reforms? In a number of states teachers have been bitterly opposed to the changes resulting from reform legislation. In such circumstances, even if the reforms are good, they probably won't work. In an August, 1985, random sample poll of teachers in South Carolina, almost 80% said they (1) felt better about being a teacher "as a result of the South Carolina Improvement Act," and (2) felt that South Carolina Improvement Act money is well-spent and has improved the quality of public education. Ninety percent of the teachers believed that education is improving in South Carolina and that the annual salary adjustments will help the profession remain
attractive to teachers in the field and will attract more college students with greater ability to enter the teaching field. When have 80-90% of any group given such a positive rating?

The people of South Carolina believe that teaching and learning are serious business. The education of our children is a necessary base for economic vitality, social mobility, personal development, and an improved quality of life in our state.

We think we are on the right track to make that happen. South Carolina did what many believed to be impossible. Implementation will require time and hard work from all of us. But we are ready to tackle the challenge. We started on the road to progress, and intend to stay on the right path to make our goals a reality.
EVENTS LEADING TO THE PASSAGE OF
THE SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT

June 30, 1983  Committee on Financing Excellence in 
Public Education and the Business/ 
Industry/Legislative/Education 
Partnership Committee were formed and started meeting.

July, 1983  Public Opinion Poll on educational issues 
conducted in South Carolina

August, 1983  Public Opinion Poll released showing 
widespread support for improvements in education including support for a sales tax increase for certain specific initiatives.

September 15 - Over 13,000 participants attend the seven 
October 5, 1983  Governor's Forums on Excellence in 
Education held throughout the State of
South Carolina to provide input to the Governor's six goals which might improve education in South Carolina.

Another 40,000 persons participated in other activities related to assessing the needs and proposing solutions for public schools through a Speaker's Bureau, toll-free hotline, phone-banks, etc.

The Committee on Financing Excellence in Public Education makes recommendations, and these recommendations were refined and approved by the Business/Industry/Legislative Education Partnership.

An Address to the People of South Carolina on statewide television on the "New Approach to Quality Education" by Richard W. Riley.

House Education and Public Works Committee endorses program portion of "New Approach to Quality Education."
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<td>January, 1984</td>
<td>Massive grassroots lobbying team developed and started targeting key legislators and visiting State House often on a few hours notice.</td>
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<td>February 16, 1984</td>
<td>House Ways and Means Committee scales Riley's Education Plan back to $85 million of the proposed $210 million.</td>
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<td>February 21, 1984</td>
<td>House begins debate on three proposals: Riley ($210 million); Sheheen ($90 million); Ways and Means Committee ($83 million).</td>
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<td>February 23, 1984</td>
<td>House votes on Riley Education Plan section by section.</td>
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<td>March 14, 1984</td>
<td>House agrees to fund 96 percent of Governor Riley's education plan through a modified one-cent sales tax increase.</td>
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<td>March 24, 1984</td>
<td>House passes Riley Plan.</td>
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<td>May 9, 1984</td>
<td>Senate Finance Committee endorses a one-cent sales tax increase with $217 million going to the Education Improvement Act.</td>
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<td>June 1, 1984</td>
<td>Senate approves budget proposal for one-cent sales tax increase for Education Improvement Act.</td>
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<td>June 7, 1984</td>
<td>Senate passes Riley Plan.</td>
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<td>June 14, 1984</td>
<td>House-Senate Conference Committee begins debate on House and Senate versions of the Education Improvement Act.</td>
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<td>June 21, 1984</td>
<td>A final compromise budget with a fully funded Education Improvement Act and $32 million in tax credits from the General Fund wins endorsements from House and Budget conferees.</td>
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<td>June 22, 1984</td>
<td>General Assembly overwhelmingly approves a fully funded Education Improvement Act ($214 million in addition to a $74 million increase for elementary and secondary education out of the regular growth General Fund Revenues.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 28, 1984</td>
<td>Governor Riley signs the Education Improvement Act of 1984 at a special ceremony at the Governor's Mansion attended by 1,000 people.</td>
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Education Improvement Act of 1984

The Education Improvement Act of 1984 is South Carolina's blueprint for enacting a quality program of public instruction for current and future generations. A 1-cent state sales tax increase will provide an additional $217 million to educate the state's 610,000 students beginning in the 1984-85 school year.

As approved by the state General Assembly in June 1984, the act will provide $217,255,000 to implement provisions to improve public education. About $15 million of that amount will go toward increasing academic standards through such programs as increased graduation requirements, a 5-year-old kindergarten program, advanced placement programs, modern vocational equipment, handicapped student services, and expanded gifted and talented programs.

About $63 million will be spent on basic skills programs, including $50.5 million for compensatory/remedial instruction. A high school exit exam will be funded under this section.

Programs affecting the teaching profession are funded at $74.9 million, with about $50 million of this amount being spent to raise the average state teacher salary to the Southeastern average. This area will also include student loans for teachers, teacher training programs and a teacher incentive pay program.

Programs pertaining to administrative leadership and management are funded at $3 million. This funding includes money for a principal incentive pay program, evaluation of school administrators, in-service seminars for administrators and administrators, apprenticeship programs.

Quality control and productivity programs, including incentive grants for school improvement, innovative program grants, school improvement councils, and annual school improvement reports, are funded at $455,000.

The school building aid program is funded at about $359.7 million. Supportive activities for implementing the entire act's provisions are funded at $529,926.

Section 1: Raising student performance by increasing academic standards

1. Requirements for a high school diploma are increased from 18 to 20 credits, with a minimum of 3 units in math and 2 units in science required.
2. To participate in interscholastic activities, high school students must pass all academic subjects, including all required courses, and have an overall passing average in the preceding semester.
3. High schools must offer a clearly defined college preparatory program.
4. Higher order problem-solving skills will be emphasized in the curriculum at all grade levels.
5. Black history will be included in history and social studies courses.
6. Rules of student conduct will be established.
7. School officials must encourage student attendance, and any student absence exceeding 10 days must face disapproval or approval by the district school board.
8. The instructional day in high school will be no less than 6 hours, excluding lunch; the elementary day will be at least 5 hours, including lunch. Priority must be given to instruction. Class interruptions must be limited to emergencies.
9. Students who will be 5 years old on or before Nov. 1 must attend some type of kindergarten (public, private, or church-related). A child will be exempt from this requirement if a parent signs a written waiver.
10. All school days missed because of extreme weather conditions must be made up by student makeup days.

Section 2: Strengthening the teaching and testing of the basic skills

1. Beginning with school year 1989-90, graduating students must pass a basic skills exit exam to be awarded a high school diploma. The exit exam will

Section 3: Elevating the teaching profession

1. Teaching as a career will be stressed in high schools and colleges.
2. To encourage highly qualified persons to enter the teaching profession in areas of critical need, the Commission on Higher Education will develop a loan program: portions of the loans may be forgiven if recipients teach in areas of critical need.
3. Persons with bachelor's degrees in shortage areas may receive conditional teaching certificates for 3 years if the appropriate teaching exam is passed.
4. A teacher incentive program will be developed to reward teachers who
Section 4: Implementing quality controls and rewarding productivity
1. An incentive grants program will be established to reward schools and school districts for exceptional performance in meeting certain criteria determined by the State Department of Education.
2. Competitive grants will be awarded to schools to implement innovative programs to improve instruction.
3. Each school will develop an annual school improvement report that will focus on factors found to be effective in improving schools. This report will replace the annual school report required by the Education Finance Act.
4. School improvement councils, to replace school advisory councils, will assist with the development and monitoring of school improvement efforts.
5. A new unit, the Public Accountability Division, will be created in the State Department of Education. This unit will be responsible for the planning and development for the implementation of the Education Improvement Act of 1984. The unit head will assume a position of deputy superintendent. The unit will be eliminated 3 years from the date of implementation of the act.
6. Implementation of the Education Improvement Act will be monitored by outside committees. A joint subcommittee of the Committee on Financing Excellence in Public Education and Steering Committee of the Education-Business Partnership, will review and approve all products produced by the Division of Public Accountability. A select committee that includes legislative leaders will make recommendations to the State Board of Education for implementing the Education Improvement Act. The select committee will include the House Speaker, Lieutenant Governor, Chairman of the Senate and House Education Committees, Chairmen of the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committee, Governor, State Superintendent of Education and Chairman of the State Commission on Higher Education.
7. When the quality of education in a school district appears seriously impaired, the State Superintendent with approval of the State Board of Education shall appoint a review committee to study educational programs in the district. If recommendations approved by the State Board of Edu-

Section 5: Creating more effective partnerships among schools, parents, community and business
1. Regular conferences between parents and teachers are encouraged.
2. Parenting classes and seminars will be available in all school districts.
3. Encourage all schools and businesses to participate in adopt-a-school programs.
4. Encourage statewide business to initiate a Public Education Foundation to fund exemplary and innovative projects to improve schools.
5. Expand school volunteer programs.
6. The State Board of Education will initiate an awards program to recognize those individuals and groups contributing most significantly to public education.

Section 6: Providing school buildings conducive to improved student learning
1. State funds will be provided for renovation and construction of institutional facilities. If a school district issued bonds or otherwise undertaken capital improvement programs during the past 5 years, at least 50 percent of the funds must be used to reduce millage required to pay debt service outstanding bonds.

Section 7: Providing financial support needed to improve South Carolina schools
1. A 1-cent sales tax increase will be levied to fund the school improvement provisions of the South Carolina Education Improvement Act of 1984.

The South Carolina Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, national origin, sex, or handicap.
Marked Improvement Seen On Visit
Legislators And Business Representatives Take Notice

By KIM KINLEY COOPER
Staff Writer

Community leaders and legislators took a first-hand look at Spartanburg County schools recently in a project designed to gauge 1983's massive education improvement effort.

The program was sponsored jointly by the Business/Education/Legislative Partnership Committee of the Governor's Office and the S.C. Department of Education.

In addition to the primary objective of demonstrating progress, the governor's office and the state department of education cited two other goals for the visitation:

- To motivate educators to continue to work toward excellence by demonstrating that business and legislative leaders are genuinely interested in the progress in the schools.
- To encourage teamwork at the school site for educational improvement among principals, teachers, students and parents.

The visits began with American Education Week in November.

District 6 had their school visitation day, Dec. 15. The visitation schedule was divided into blocks — one for morning and another mid-morning until noon.

The elementary schools visitation took place during the morning and the middle schools were visited by business leaders and legislators in the afternoon.

Specific improvements in District 6, Spartanburg County and the state noted by these visitors included an increase in the number of students meeting reading, math and writing standards; test scores in basic skills approaching national averages; science, social studies and reference approaches exceeding national average; increased attendance and a decrease in truancy.

Other areas noted were the overall rate decrease and increase in Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores.

According to George Wideman, senator for the District 6 project, these visitors worked hard in doing and passing the Education Improvement Act and by their continued involvement are showing commitment to improving the quality of public education in the state.

To keep this educational momentum going, he says, students, educators, parents and citizens will need to exert effort.

Among companies visiting the schools were representatives from the AB Co., Duke Power, Milliken and Co., Aluminum Company of America, Mayfair Mills, Spallum Materials, Michelin Tires, Reeves Building Corp., S.C. National Bank, T.R. Ford, Fibers, Spartanburg Steel Products, Southern Bell and Telephone and Graphite Co.

Legislators who came to see progress at many of the schools were W. Richard Griffin, Elizabeth J. Patterson, Horace C. Hite, W. Sterling Anderson, R. Ralph Davis, T.W. Edwards, David O. Hawkinson, W. B. Lake, Joseph T. Petty, and John Hume.

Other districts completing the recommended visitations are District 1, which had visitation Dec. 1; District 2, which had visitation Dec. 3; and District 7, Nov. 30.

District 4 completed visitation last week and plans are being finalized for District 1 to hold visitation day.
Marked Improvement Seen On Visit

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To encourage teamwork at the school site for educational improvement among principals, teachers, students and parents.

The visits began with American Education Week in November.

District 6 had their school visitation day Dec. 10. The visitation schedule was divided into two blocks — one early morning and another mid-morning until noon.

The elementary schools visitation took place during the morning and the middle schools were visited by business leaders and legislators in the afternoon.

Specific improvements in District 6, Spartanburg County and the state noted by these visitors included an increase in the number of students meeting reading, math and writing standards; test scores in basic skills approaching national averages; science, social studies and references approaching or exceeding national averages; increased attendance and a decrease in truancy.

Other areas leaders noted were a drop in dropout rate and an increase in Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores.

According to George Wideman, coordinator for the District 6 project, many of these visitors worked hard in developing and passing the Education Improvement Act, and by their continued involvement are showing an commitment to improve the quality of public education in the state.

To keep this educational momentum going, he says, students, educators and citizens will need to exert an effort.

Among companies visiting the school were representatives from the Abilene Co., Duke Power, Milliken and Co., Monarch Materials, Mayfair Mills, Sparta Mills, Michelin Tires, Reeves Bros., S.C. National Bank, Tetix Corp., Pacific Fibers, Spartanburg Steel Products, Southern Bell and Telephone and Graph Co.

Legislators who came to see programs many of the schools were W. Richard, Elizabeth J. Patterson, Horace C. Smith, W. Sterling Anderson, R. Ralph Davis and T. W. Edwards, David O. Hawkins, E. B. Lake, Joseph T. Petty, and John Huddleston.

Other districts completing the recommended visitations are District 3, which had visitation the week of Dec. 8; District 7, which had visitation Dec. 5; and Spartanburg District 4, which had visitation Dec. 5.

District 4 completed visitations last year. Plans are being finalized today in Spartanburg District 1 to hold visitation day.
What Is the Penny Buying For South Carolina?
An Assessment of the Education Improvement Act

A Summary of the First Report
December 1985

The Education Improvement Act (EIA) represents a massive reform effort for South Carolina. Some 60 new policies and programs touch on practically every facet of education. This ambitious undertaking is funded by an increase in the state's sales tax from 4c to 5c on the dollar and has already provided an additional $202 million for 1984-85, the first year of implementation.

This summary provides the highlights of "What Is the Penny Buying for South Carolina?" The full report is the first in a series of annual reports required by the EIA to assess the use of the additional money generated by the Act. The report focuses on indicators in the areas of student achievement, services to special students, services to school personnel, school conditions, community involvement, and public confidence.

It will take time for this reform to impact on the state's school system and student performance. However, we can identify changes in the system which indicate that EIA is making a difference. After one year, we are making progress in realizing the Act's goals. Although several programs are not fully implemented, and other areas show that much work remains to be done, there are many reasons to be optimistic.
STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Academic Performance Improved

During the first year of the Education Improvement Act, students’ academic performance on standardized tests improved at all levels of achievement. This progress occurred in all grades in all areas except for grade three mathematics, which showed maintenance rather than gain.

The most significant gains in the history of the state’s testing program occurred in 1984 and 1985. The gains in test scores in these two years were more than double those attained in earlier years on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS).

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<td>+9.3%</td>
<td>+4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>+1.6%</td>
<td>+3.2%</td>
<td>+1.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>+2.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>+5.7%</td>
<td>+3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>+5%</td>
<td>+9%</td>
<td>+1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>+4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>+5.7%</td>
<td>+5.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students all along the spectrum of performance improved in 1984-85. There was a general “shift” of students upward from the bottom quarter to the top two quarters of the national distribution.

Absence Rate Reduced

Instead of missing an average of nine and a half days as in 1983-84, students missed only seven days, a 30% drop in absences for 1984-85. As a result, over 9,300 additional students were present each day—enough to fill 370 classrooms.

Dropout Rate Declined

Approximately 1,000 more students remained in school in 1984-85 than would have if the rate stayed at the 1983-84 level of 5.3%. The dropout rate for students in grades nine through 12 declined to 4.7%, the lowest point in the last five years.

No Improvement in Holding Power

South Carolina schools as a whole did not improve in their ability to keep students until high school graduation. For the last five years, at least one out of every four students has left the system after the ninth grade and before obtaining a diploma. This situation continued in 1984-85.

Unlawful Absences Down

The number of students with three consecutive days of unlawful absences dropped 46% and the number with five cumulative unlawful absences dropped by 30%.
STUDENT SERVICES

Impressive Gains Made in Remedial and Compensatory Programs

The preliminary evaluation of the 1984-85 remedial and compensatory programs indicates that students made impressive gains in both programs in reading and mathematics.

The compensatory program serves students who perform at or below the 25th percentile for the state's students while the remedial program serves students whose performance is above the 25th percentile but at or below the 50th percentile.

The Chapter I federal program considers a gain of 1.0 NCE to be good, therefore, the gains in the state programs, as shown in the table below, are remarkable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Statewide Average NCE Gain</th>
<th>Number of Students Evaluated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compensatory Reading</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>21,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensatory Math</td>
<td>8.91</td>
<td>23,036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedial Reading</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>20,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedial Math</td>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>20,032</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Advanced placement and gifted and talented programs

In 1984-85, 5,094 students were enrolled in advanced placement courses, nearly double the number from the previous year. The gifted and talented programs served 18,741 students.

Research conducted on effective schools indicates that certain factors such as positive school climate, high expectations, school-home-community relations and an emphasis on academics relate to school effectiveness. A July-August 1985 survey of a random sample of 302 members of the general public and 207 parents with children in public schools indicates:

- Only half of the parents and public think schools are safe and orderly.
- Sixty-three percent of the parents, but only 45% of the public, say misbehavior is handled effectively.
- Most respondents agree that teachers are responsible for all students learning the basic skills.
- Parents and the public were positive about schools' efforts to inform and involve parents, but 80% doubted that parents really know what goes on in the public schools.
- About half of the public were positive about schools' efforts to involve the community.

PERSONNEL SERVICES

Poll Shows Teacher Morale Up

In an August 1985 poll of 400 randomly selected public school teachers, almost 80% of the teachers:

- Feel better about being a teacher as a result of the EIA.
- Think EIA money is well spent.
- Say the EIA has improved the quality of education.
- Think the southeastern average salary adjustment will help the teaching profession remain attractive and encourage others to enter the field.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/OPINIONS TOWARD SCHOOLS

Over 750 businesses were involved in business/education partnerships in 1984-85. These groups are participating in such activities as subsidizing award programs for academic achievement, teaching a business course developed by the business community, instituting a cooperative work program, and providing a youth center.
PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

Forty-two percent of the public rated the quality of public education in South Carolina "excellent" or "good," an increase from 35% in a July 1983 poll. Those responding "poor" fell from 27% to 14%.

Of parents and the public who said the quality of public education was "good," "fair," or "poor," 60% of the parents and half of the public say education is improving. All of the teachers polled were asked whether "... the overall quality of education in South Carolina is improving, staying the same, or getting worse?" Ninety percent of the teachers responded that education is improving.

While 75% of the parents and the public agree that the money is well spent on the Education Improvement Act, 90% of the teachers think the money is well spent.

Over 80% of the parents and 70% of the public think, "Parents in our area are happy their children attend public schools."

SCHOOL CONDITIONS

$55.7 Million Used To Build and Repair Schools or To Reduce Millage Raised for Such Purposes

- 36 districts reduced millage
- 6 districts did not have to raise millage (2 districts also had a waiver for classroom needs or had repaid the 1979-84 debt)
- 16 districts received waivers for needed additional classroom space
- 7 districts obtained waivers due to favorable interest on bond rates
- 29 districts needed no waivers — they either had no debt increase in the last 5 years or had paid the debt

These are highlights of the first assessment report which documents progress in meeting the Act's goals. The full report is available from:

The Division of Public Accountability
South Carolina Department of Education
1429 Senate Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201