

Education Oversight Committee 1999 Annual Report

The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee
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Greetings:

On behalf of the Education Oversight Committee, I am pleased to present our initial Annual Report for your consideration. The report details the activities of the Committee in the first eight months of its operation and references the manner in which the Committee is addressing its current and future responsibilities.

The effort to bring South Carolina's students and schools to higher levels of achievement requires the time and talents of all South Carolinians. This effort also requires a commitment which must extend beyond the temporary pain of change. The members our Committee applaud South Carolina's educators, parents, and policymakers for their willingness to envision change and strive toward a stronger system. We accept that this is a journey that will require all of our best efforts and energies in the months and years ahead.

Sincerely,

William Barnet, III
Chairman

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INTRODUCTION

In accordance with § 59-6-10, South Carolina Code of Laws, this report is submitted to the members of the General Assembly for their consideration. The report consolidates the requirements contained in the Education Accountability Act of 1998 for the Education Oversight Committee to accomplish the following:

- (1) Review and monitor the implementation and evaluation of the Education Accountability Act and Education Improvement Act programs and funding;
- (2) make programmatic and funding recommendations to the General Assembly;
- (3) report annually to the General Assembly, State Board of Education, and the public on the progress of the programs; and
- (4) recommend Education Accountability Act and EIA program changes to state agencies and other entities, as it considers necessary.

The Committee also has responsibilities that include:

- (5) establishing an on-going public information campaign to apprise the public of the status of public schools and the importance of high standards for academic performance;
- (6) (through a task force) reviewing current state programs and policies for parent participation in their children's education; and
- (7) conducting other studies as may be required by law.

Committee Organizational Structure

Members of the Committee and their appointed positions on the Committee are listed below:

Member	Position	Appointed By	Term
William Barnet, III	Business	Speaker of the House	1998-2002
James A. Bennett	Business	Chair, House Education	1998-2000
Rosie Marie Berry	Education	President Pro Tempore	1998-2001
James Bryan	Designee	President Pro Tempore	coterminous
William Gummerson	Education	Governor	1998-2002
Bobby Harrell	Designee	Chairman, Ways & Means	coterminous
Susan Hoag	Designee	Speaker of the House	coterminous
Douglas McTeer	Designee	Governor	coterminous
Alex Martin	Education	Speaker of the House	1998-2001
John Matthews	Designee	Chair, Finance	coterminous
Nikki Setzler	Chairman, Senate Education Committee		coterminous
Joel A. Smith, III	Business	President Pro Tempore	1998-2002
Henry Spann	Education	Chairman, House Educ.	1998-2002

Member	Position	Appointed by	Term
Robert E. Staton	Business	Chairman, Senate Education	1998-2000
Lynn D. Thompson	Education	Chairman, Senate Education	1998-2002
Ronald Townsend	Chairman, Education and Public Works Committee		coterminous
Larry Wilson	Business	Governor	1998-2002

At its July 1998 meeting the Education Oversight Committee elected William Barnet, III, to serve as chairman and Clara H. Heinsohn as vice-chairman. Mrs. Heinsohn's term of office, which was coterminous with Governor David M. Beasley, ended in January 1999. Rosie Marie Berry was elected vice-chairman after Mrs. Heinsohn's term ended.

The Committee has met monthly since its inception. Much of the work of the Committee is accomplished through its five subcommittees outlined here:

- (1) Academic Standards and Assessments, chaired by G. Larry Wilson, includes William Gummerson, Susan Hoag, Douglas McTeer and John Matthews;
- (2) Education Improvement Act and Improvement Mechanisms, chaired by Robert E. Staton, includes Rosie Marie Berry, Nikki Setzler, Henry Spann and Lynn D. Thompson;
- (3) Parent Involvement, chaired by James Bennett, includes Rose Marie Berry, Joel A. Smith, III, Lynn D. Thompson, and Ronald Townsend;
- (4) Public Awareness, chaired by Joel A. Smith III, includes William Barnet III, James A. Bennett, Bobby Harrell, Alex Martin, Henry Spann, Robert E. Staton, and Larry Wilson,
- (5) Staff and Administration, chaired by William Barnet III, includes James A. Bennett, James Bryan, Douglas McTeer and Susan Hoag.

The enabling legislation provided for staff designated as the Division of Accountability. The Committee has employed six staff persons. Dr. Jo Anne Anderson serves as Executive Director. Other staff persons include Mrs. Valerie Harrison, Dr. Theresa Siskind, Ms. Trisha P. Bockus, Ms. Sharon Miller and Ms. Doris Edwards

Establishment of the Committee's Goals

At its October 1998 meeting the Committee adopted two goals to guide its work:

By 2002, South Carolina will have the fastest improving education system in the country; and

By 2010, South Carolina's education system will be ranked in the top half of education systems in the country by the year 2010.

Potential measures for achievement of these goals include:

- Gain measurers reported by the National Education Goals Panel including measures on school readiness; school completion; student achievement and citizenship; teacher education and professional development; measures of mathematics and science performance; adult literacy and lifelong learning; safe, disciplined, and drug free schools, and parental participation;
- Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) performance: The first group of PACT tests is to be administered to third through eighth graders in 1999 in the content areas of mathematics and English/language arts. The testing program eventually is to encompass first and second grade readiness tests, a revised high school exit examination, and end-of-course assessments in selected high school courses. The criterion referenced tests are linked to the curriculum content standards adopted by the State Board of Education in 1998;
- National norm-referenced test performance: Consistent with §59-18-340, the State Department of Education is administering a norm-referenced test to a statistically valid random sample of students in three grades (between grade three and eleven) each year. The selected test was judged on criteria including alignment with the content standards. The 1999 administration of the norm-referenced test is to students in grades three, six and nine; or
- Performance of fourth and eighth grade students on National Assessment of Education Progress Assessments which are administered every two years varying among academic disciplines.

STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

I. §59-6-10 Review and Monitor the Implementation of the Education Accountability Act and Education Improvement Act Programs and Funding

The major components of South Carolina's accountability system are the following: standards; assessments; technical assistance and professional development; rewards and sanctions; and public reporting. During this initial year of implementation there has been progress in each area and, within each area, needs for additional study and understanding have surfaced.

A. This section addresses the progress towards implementation of standards. The Education Oversight Committee and the State Board of Education bear responsibilities for a "cyclical review by academic area of the state standards and assessments to ensure that the standards and assessments are maintaining high expectations for teaching and learning." The State Board of Education is to establish the cyclical review outlined in the statute. By agreement between the Board and the Committee an extraordinary review of the science standards is to be conducted this spring.

Curriculum content standards, as approved by the State Board of Education, in mathematics, English/language arts and science were distributed to school districts and schools in August 1998. Although teachers had access to the curriculum frameworks and other drafts of the standards, many teachers had not incorporated the standards into their teaching and learning plans prior to the fall semester 1998. At this writing, standards for social studies are under review by the State Board of Education.

The review of science content standards is beginning in the Winter 1999. The science standards were identified as those about which the teaching community felt least consensus. The statutorily defined issues of rigor, relevancy and high expectations for all students form the core of the review process. That review process encompasses the application of the criteria addressing comprehensiveness, balance, rigor, measurability, manageability, organization, and communication and applied through three screens: (1) leaders in the discipline drawn from across the nation; (2) members of the South Carolina science teaching community; and (3) the focus group inclusive of parents, business and industry persons, community leaders and educators, including special education teachers.

The degree and effectiveness of standards implementation must be a focus of continuing research by state agencies, school districts and those investing in the achievement of South Carolina's students. That research agenda must address factors including, but not limited to, the following:

- The quantity and quality of professional development to current teachers as they implement the content standards;
- The need for increased knowledge and understanding of the content of the academic disciplines and of the pedagogy necessary for higher student achievement;

- The degree to which teacher or in-school assessments align with the standards and the emphasis on higher order cognitive skills in the PACT assessments;
- The alignment of instructional materials with the standards; and
- The utilization of re-teaching and/or enrichment strategies to ensure and extend student learning.

B. The Education Oversight Committee conducted the review of the field tests of the PACT assessments as outlined in law. After study, the Education Oversight Committee outlined fourteen recommendations (published and distributed in December 1998)). These recommendations, to which the State Department of Education has agreed, form the basis for revisions to the assessments prior to Spring 1999 administration

C. Technical assistance and/or professional development provided with the Education Accountability Act and its funding can be organized within four targets of services: the student, the professional, the school, and the district.

Assistance to the student is channeled through the teaching and learning of the content standards; that is, through the provision of a more rigorous curriculum linked to national and international performance expectations and through the resources applied through the academic planning process. Students performing below grade level were identified for special assistance. As many as 111,000 students may qualify for academic plans. State Board of Education guidelines provide that students in grades three through eight who do not meet the Basic Skills Assessment Program standard or who score in the bottom quarter on the 1998 administration of the Metropolitan Achievement Test, Seventh Edition (MAT-7) should be included in the academic planning process. Applying those guidelines to the 1998 student performance, students are identified in the number and by subtest as shown in Chart One (pg. 7).

The Education Accountability Act provides for a sequence of assistance efforts to students which include revised or additional teaching and learning strategies within the traditional school year, summer school programming, a year of academic probation and, within professional standards, retention in grade. Each of these interventions generated questions among South Carolina educators. At this writing, the professional community has requested guidance in a number of areas that are to be addressed by the State Department of Education in its technical assistance role.

Other efforts to provide assistance to students include the establishment of homework centers in schools within districts which have been designated as impaired; the establishment of alternative schools; and the awarding of grants for extended day/year programs.

Ten school districts or consortia of school districts received grants for alternative school programs. The State Board of Education awarded grants to the following:

- McCormick/Abbeville Consortium (Abbeville is the fiscal agent);
- Barnwell 45

- Berkeley
- Laurens 56
- Consortium of Marion School Districts One, Two, Three and Four (Marion One is the fiscal agent)
- Consortium of Anderson County School Districts One, Two, Three, Four and Five (Anderson Five is the fiscal agent)
- Clarendon One
- Darlington
- Greenville
- Consortium of Lee and Sumter Two and Seventeen (Lee is the fiscal agent)

Awards for extended school day/year are to be reviewed by the State Board of Education at its January meeting.

- Allendale
- Clarendon One
- Florence Four
- Lee
- Marion Three

Assistance to the profession generally (i.e., regardless of district and school assignment) is to be accomplished through improvements in the professional development program; evaluation of the current professional development efforts; and increases in the delivery of quality technical assistance services by the State Department of Education. Efforts in each of these areas are in the early stages.

The Education Accountability Act specifically called for the following:

- § 59-18-1590 requires the State Department of Education to increase the delivery of quality technical assistance services and assessment of instructional programs, including a process for monitoring information and assessing improvement efforts;
- §59-18-1930 requires the Education Oversight Committee to provide for a comprehensive review of state and local professional development to include principal leadership development and teacher staff development;
- §59-24-50 requires the State Department of Education's Leadership Academy to develop continuous professional development programs which meet national standards for professional development and focus on the improvement of teaching and learning;
- §59-24-80 requires each school district or consortium of school districts to provide an induction program for principals; and
-
- §59-24-30 requires all school administrators to develop an on-going individual professional development plan with annual updates, which is appropriate for their roles or positions.

Chart One

EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 1998
STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR ACADEMIC PLANS

Grade	BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM: Below Standard					MAT-7 BOTTOM QUARTER				
	# Tested	Reading	Math	Writing	Science	# Tested	Reading	Language	Math	3 Rs
3	50,695	7,908 (15.6 %)	7,705 (15.2 %)	Not included	18,504 (36.5 %)					
4						47,840	15,309 (32 %)	10,046 (21%)	10,524 (22 %)	11,960 (25 %)
5						46,718	14,482 (31 %)	9,343 (20 %)	9,343 (20 %)	11,212 (24 %)
6	47,855	Not included	Not included	14,356 (30 %)	22,635 (47.3 %)					
7						48,470	14,056 (29 %)	14,056 (29 %)	10,663 (22 %)	13,087 (27 %)
8	47,269	14,937 (31.6 %)	16,544 (35 %)	10,068 (21.3 %)	26,281 (55.6 %)					

Technical assistance programs to schools and districts are included in intervention services to schools in districts that are identified as impaired. The programs include ongoing programs and services offered by the State Department of Education; significant grants for retraining personnel; a mentoring program for principals; and the teacher specialist and principal specialist programs. The State Department of Education has implemented the grants programs and the mentoring program. Guidelines for the teacher specialist program are under development; work on the principal specialist program should begin in the spring.

The Education Accountability Act also requires a public school assistance fund in support of poorly performing schools to be established by the State Board of Education.

C. Rewards and sanctions linked to the Education Accountability Act are built upon the foundation of two existing programs: the School Incentive Reward Program and the impaired district program. Changes relative to the Education Accountability Act are linked to the school report card that is to be issued in November 2001.

D. The public reporting component of South Carolina's accountability system is addressed through two mechanisms: the reports on public and educator attitudes toward the value of education and the annual school report card. The activities with regard to attitudes are addressed in Section V of this report.

§59-18-900 The Annual School Report Card The Education Oversight Committee, working with the State Board of Education, is directed to establish an annual report card and its format to report on the performance for individual elementary, middle, high schools, vocational schools, alternative schools, and school districts of the State. The report card is to serve four purposes:

- (1) inform parents and the public about the school's performance;
- (2) assist in addressing the strengths and weaknesses within a particular school;
- (3) recognize schools with high performance; and
- (4) evaluate and focus resources on schools with low performance.

The statute instructs us that the report card should (a) incorporate five academic performance ratings to include designations of excellent, good, average, below average or unsatisfactory; (b) include ratings for absolute level of performance and the rate of improvement; (c) incorporate information that informs parents and communities about their schools including the forty-five day enrollment, the performance of subgroups within the school population, comparisons with the improvement rate of schools enrolling similar students, information on promotion and retention patterns, disciplinary climate descriptors, dropout ratios, student teacher ratios, attendance data, and information on the trends in performance over several years; and (d) inform the parents and community about school leadership, parental support, programs and curriculum and evaluations by parents, students and teachers.

To gain knowledge of the elements parents, educators, and community members desired to know about their schools, the Committee distributed information surveys to school, school district and postsecondary education personnel and education-related organizations. The SC School Boards Association posted the survey on its

website. Nearly two thousand (1874) responses were received from South Carolina educators, parents, and business and community members.¹ Items receiving the "should include" designation from more than 40 percent of the respondents within each grouping (parent, teacher, school administrator, district administrator, business or community member, and unknown) are the following:

- Required performance measures:
 - (1) Comparisons of school performance with the district, state, and schools enrolling similar students; and
 - (2) Reports on the performance of students in the four academic disciplines with respect to grade level, gender, race/ethnicity and participation in the free and reduced price lunch program.
- Potential performance indicators:
 - (1) For all schools, expenditures per student and for classroom instruction, enrollment in school, grades in school, pupil-teacher ratio, pupil-computer ratio, and percentage of non-speech disabled students;
 - (2) For high schools, dropout rate, grade 8-12 survival rate, number/rate of seniors earning diplomas, percentage of enrollment in college preparatory or technical preparatory programs, percentage of students participating in the Advanced Placement program², and SAT scores (math, verbal and composite);
 - (3) For middle schools, percentage of students retained and number of students earning the SC Junior Scholar designation;
 - (4) For elementary schools, rate of participation in full-day kindergarten programs, first and second grade readiness scores, number/percentage of students retained, and participation in the Arts in Basic Curriculum programs;
 - (5) With respect to teachers, the average daily attendance and annual turnover rate;
 - (6) With respect to students, the average daily attendance, retention rates, expulsion and suspension rates, the percentage of students classified as disabled and the percentage of students participating in the free or reduced price lunch program;
 - (7) Regarding attitudes toward the school, parent involvement indicators, parent conferences and perceptions of student discipline; and

¹ NOTE: Those who chose to respond mailed Responses to the Committee. The sample is not representative of the population or of the profession. Only 110 responses were received from parents. Additional efforts to elicit public reaction to the report card are continuing.

² NOTE: The Subcommittee on Academic Standards and Assessments has requested that participation in International Baccalaureate courses be listed with the Advanced Placement program listings.

- (8) With respect to the leadership, names and addresses of principals, superintendents and district board chairpersons.

Development of the format and content of the report card is to continue through 1999. The Education Oversight Committee also has responsibility for determining the academic performance ratings of excellent, good, average, below average and unsatisfactory. A number of strong technical issues must be addressed in the development of the report card. These technical issues may be categorized into three broad areas: setting achievement levels on the state developed tests; making national comparisons using the statewide tests; and translating performance data into performance ratings for the report card. The State Board of Education bears the responsibility for establishing student achievement levels and, referring to the test design materials, is reviewing four levels of performance designation: below basic, basic, proficient and advanced. The staff of the Accountability Division is working through the technical issues around national comparisons and should convene a group of national and state leaders to work through those issues this spring. The performance ratings for schools are to be developed with consideration of the following issues: combination of data from various grade levels and across disciplines into a single rating; school organization patterns; statistical treatment of small schools; and establishment of the longitudinal data system.

II. §59-6-10 Make Programmatic and Funding Recommendations to the General Assembly

Amendments to the Education Accountability Act

During these initial months of implementation, needs have been identified for professional development, technical assistance to schools and school districts and additional time for teachers to work with parents and for students to master the standards. While the initial months of implementation have not been easy, the needs can be characterized as supports for implementation or technical clarifications rather than calls for changes in either the goals or processes outlined in the Act.

Funding for Implementation of the Education Accountability Act and Initiatives to Improve the Academic Performance of SC Schools and Students

The Education Oversight Committee reviewed the Fiscal Year 2000 requests of the State Department of Education and requests from other agencies receiving Education Improvement Act funds. In that review the members of the Education Oversight Committee determined that, for a significant number of programs or initiatives, there is insufficient information on results to inform recommendations for increases or decreases in funding. The Committee, acting through its Subcommittee on the EIA and Improvement Mechanisms, has outlined a plan for sequential program evaluation which focuses on the relationship of the services provided to student academic achievement gains and, with particular attention to Education Improvement Act funds, how those funds are used to promote change within the system.

The Committee expresses support for funding increases in the following areas:³

- 1999 and beyond Summer School programs must be funded from sources other than Act 135 funds or through increases in Act 135 funds. School districts currently use these funds to provide interventions within the traditional school year including lowering pupil: teacher ratios, tutorial services, Reading Recovery, computer-assisted instruction and other supplemental instruction. The South Carolina Association of School Administrators estimated that only 4 percent of Act 135 funds were available for Summer School in 1999. Transportation costs for summer programs must be funded. Opportunities for multi-district collaborations should be encouraged within the funding of transportation costs;
- Alternative schools that address student academic as well as behavioral issues must be funded at a higher level and in greater number. Fifty-nine school districts applied for 1998-99 grants, either independently or in consortia. The need is great as is evident from the number of students performing poorly on academic assessments, the number of students overage for grade, and the number of students suspended or expelled;
- Significant and immediate efforts must be undertaken to recruit teachers to the profession and to South Carolina. At mid-year South Carolina schools had 335 teaching vacancies and, with the addition of federal funds to reduce class size, the number of vacancies could expand to 800;
- Funding should be provided for significant professional development experiences for teachers so that they can accomplish the levels of achievement necessary for South Carolina's success; and
- Teacher salaries should be increased to a rate competitive with other states and with other professions and in recognition of the time required for work in the development and implementation of academic plans.

III. §59-6-10 Report Annually to the General Assembly, the State Board of Education and the Public on the Progress of the Program

South Carolina's public education system was celebrated recently as one of the fastest improving systems in the country.⁴ The 1998 report of the National Education Goals Panel, coupled with the recent State Department of Education reports on student readiness for school, as measured by the Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery (CSAB), suggest that the proportion of students entering school ready to learn is increasing.^{5, 6} The percentage of mothers receiving early prenatal

³ These recommendations were sent to Representative Henry Brown, Chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means and Senator John Drummond, Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, in separate correspondence in December 1998.

⁴ National Education Goals Panel, January 1999 Press Release and Education Week, "Quality Counts," Washington, D. C. January 1999.

⁵ National Education Goals Panel, 1998 National Education Goals Report, Washington, D. C. December 1998.

care has risen from 69 percent in 1990 to 79 percent in 1996. In other “ready to learn” measures identified by the National Education Goals Panel, South Carolina also improved: (1) the percentage of infants born with one or more of the four health risks decreased from 43 percent in 1990 to 38 percent in 1996; (2) the number of children with disabilities enrolled in preschool increased from 52 per 1000 three-to five-year-olds in 1991 to 65 per 1000 three-to five-year-olds in 1997. The percentage of students scoring “ready” on the CSAB increased to 81.2 percent in 1998, rising from 79.6 percent.

Student performance on measures linked to in-school activities and learning did not reveal gains of the aforementioned proportion. Student performance on the state’s criterion-referenced test, the Basic Skills Assessment Program, is similar in 1998 to 1997 and 1996. The proportion of students meeting the third grade standard in reading and mathematics was virtually the same (84 percent); at grade eight the proportion of students meeting the reading standard declined four percent (from 72.4 to 68.4) and the number of students meeting the mathematics standard declined slightly (from 66.1 to 65 percent). The percentage of students meeting the standard on the first attempt of the grade 10 Exit Exam (64.9 percent) dropped one percentage point from 1997 to 1998.⁷

The state administers a nationally norm-referenced test to students at grades 4, 5, 7, 9, and 11. Four scores are reported at each grade level: reading, language, mathematics and the 3Rs Battery (a compilation of performance on the three previous subtests). South Carolina fourth graders perform at the national average on the 3Rs Battery, above the national sample in mathematics and language and below the national average in reading. Only 41 percent of South Carolina fourth graders score above the national average in reading while 56 percent score above the national average in mathematics. A similar performance profile holds for students in grade five. The performance of seventh grade students is not as stable. The number of students doing well in reading increases, but the percentage scoring above the fiftieth national percentile declines significantly. Only 48 percent of seventh graders score above the fiftieth national percentile in mathematics, in contrast to their cohort group performance two years previously when 56 percent scored above the national average. By grade nine the decline is more apparent, as is evident from examining the 1998 ninth graders. As a cohort group, three percent fewer students exceeded the national average *on every subtest report*. Eleventh grade performance is higher than ninth grade performance. Reviewers of the scores should be cautious in interpretations of eleventh grade performance. Educators point out at least two factors that may impact on scores. There are concerns that the dropping out behaviors alter the composition of the eleventh grade cohort which could inflate its scores. Others express concern those eleventh graders do not take the tests seriously; therefore, their scores may be lower than expected. Across all years, the within grade year-to-year comparisons do not provide evidence of progress in meeting the state’s goals for higher achievement.⁸

⁶ South Carolina State Department of Education, 1998 Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery Report. Columbia, South Carolina. November 1998.

⁷ South Carolina State Department of Education. 1998 Results of the Basic Skills Assessment Program. Columbia, South Carolina, September 1998.

⁸ South Carolina State Department of Education. 1998 Results: Metropolitan Achievement Tests, Seventh Edition. Columbia, South Carolina, September 1998.

Examinations of the test scoring patterns of South Carolina students should consider a multitude of curriculum and instructional issues. The scoring patterns reported above are only a brief view. What is evident, even at a cursory glance, is that the State's performance is not moving as rapidly as is necessary for our schools to be globally competitive. While scores are more stable in elementary schools, the relationship between the readiness measure and performance on academic measures beyond grade one should be studied as should the pattern of decline. For example, the 1998 ninth graders entered grade one in 1989-90. Seventy-four (74.5) percent scored "ready" on the Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery. Yet at grade seven only 46 percent scored above the national average and by grade nine, that percentage had slipped to 43 percent.

Performance on the Scholastic Assessment Tests (SAT) is one of the most public measures of school effectiveness. South Carolina is one of twenty-three (23) states considered "SAT states." Among those states, the percentage of senior student participation in the program ranges from a low of 47 percent in California to a high of 83 percent in the District of Columbia. South Carolina ranks 15th in participation rate (61 percent of seniors) and last in combined scores. South Carolina's gain rate falls below the national rate. In 1998, South Carolina's verbal scores declined one point compared with no change nationally; the state's five-year gain in verbal scores was five points; that nation's was six points. On the mathematics subtest, the state declined one point from 1997 to 1998 while the nation gained one point. The five year change in math scores was zero for South Carolina in contrast with an eight point gain nationally. The composite score change between 1994 and 1998 was positive five points for the state and positive fourteen points for the nation.⁹ The SAT challenges students at all levels of performance. The State Department of Education's analysis includes examination by courses completed; performance by national quarter; performance by parental education level; race; and gender. In every comparison, South Carolina students do not perform as well as their national counterparts.

IV. §59-6-10 Recommend Education Accountability Act and EIA program changes to state agencies and other entities, as it considers necessary.

As previously indicated (II.B.) the Education Oversight Committee reviewed Fiscal Year 2000 requests and outlined a plan for sequential program evaluation. The plan includes four phases: In the first phase, the EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee members will become familiar with assigned programs by reviewing materials and holding discussions with program administrators and budget officers. Program history, status, mission and the relationship to the goals of the State's system will be emphasized in this phase. During the second phase, the subcommittee will conduct extensive and intensive briefings of the programs under review. Additional questions about the programs may be generated and posed to program administrators. In the third phase of review, subcommittee members will consider responses to the questions, and either request additional information or make recommendations about the program and its funding. In the last phase of review, the subcommittee will forward recommendations to the full committee, and

⁹ South Carolina State Department of Education. 1998 SAT Report. Columbia, South Carolina. November 1998.

upon approval the full committee will provide its recommendations to the General Assembly.

V. §59-18-1700 Establishing an On-Going Public Information Campaign to Apprise the Public of the Status of Public Schools and the Importance of High Standards for Academic Performance

Public and Educator Attitudes toward the Education Accountability Act and the Importance of Improvement

The Education Accountability Act requires an on-going public information campaign to apprise the public of the status of the public schools and the importance of high standards for academic performance for the public school students of South Carolina. To establish a benchmark for these efforts, two surveys were designed to assess general attitudes toward the current state of education in South Carolina and to evaluate awareness and perceptions of the education reform movement underway. A report on the survey is included in Appendix A.

Study findings show that residents of South Carolina and educators share a common interest in making schools better, as well as an optimism that we can improve schools if we all work together. This optimism crosses all segments of the population, including gender, race, income and education level. Although most believe schools need improving, the views of residents and educators differ significantly on several key issues. Residents feel the problems with our education system are much more serious than teachers feel they are.

Among the key findings:

- ✓ There is broad agreement on the need for education reform in South Carolina (95 percent of the general public and 92 percent of educators agree that it is very important or somewhat important for South Carolina to improve how it compares to other states relative to education);
- ✓ Educators are more positive about the current state of education, while the public feels the education problem is more serious (79 percent of the general public graded South Carolina's public education system as a C, D, or F; 61 percent of South Carolina educators awarded the system a C, D, or F);
- ✓ There is a strong united belief that it is possible to make the necessary changes and improve South Carolina's education system (88 percent of the general public agreed and 92 percent of educators agreed);
- ✓ South Carolinians believe in shared responsibility for making improvements to public education (98 percent of the general public believe that shared responsibility is important; 96 percent of educators agreed that shared responsibility is important);
- ✓ However, some residents express reservations about government support of the Accountability Act (as many as 20 percent of educators

are not confident that the legislators will find the funds for Implementation); and

- ✓ Even so, the skepticism about government support does not overshadow their optimism for progress and positive change (73 percent of the general public and 75 percent of the educators felt that teachers could meet the new standards of the Act).

Using the results of the survey, the Committee is planning a campaign to include public service announcements for the media and other such avenues as deemed appropriate for informing the public. The components of that campaign include

- A general campaign to apprise the public of the status of public schools and the importance of high standards for academic performance;
- Surveys of public and educator attitudes;
- Informational communications targeted to the various constituencies;
- Coordination with print and broadcast media; and
- Consistent messaging which promotes expectation and understanding.

The Committee also has complied with the requirements of the statute by establishing a separate fund within the state general fund to accept grants, gifts and donations from public and private sources to be used in the implementation of the public information campaign.

VI. Section 10 Review Current State Programs and Policies for Parent Participation in Their Children's Education

The Education Oversight Committee's twenty-nine member Parent Involvement Task Force¹⁰ has been appointed and its work is underway. The Education Accountability Act (Section 10) directs the Task Force to review South Carolina parent involvement programs and policy, and also challenges the Task Force to: "... look for ways to encourage and induce parents to oversee and support student academic performance and behavior that contributes to academic improvement." To address these aspects of accountability, the Task Force will include in its work, the following:

- identify critical issues and barriers relating to parent involvement, and analyze parent involvement changing needs for the various grade levels;
- review state and local parent involvement programs and current practices, and compare them to the best practices identified from a review of national and state research;

¹⁰ The membership of the Task Force, as required by statute, is comprised of parents who have children enrolled in public schools educators from urban, rural and suburban schools and school districts, and representatives from social services and juvenile justice. The individuals selected for the Task Force also represent the state by congressional districts and are balanced in terms of school level affiliation.

- learn from national leaders and administrators of state and local programs about parental involvement impact on academic performance; and
- address issues relating to home-school communications with emphasis on parent understanding of the changes in our public education system (*E.g. receive presentation on the grade level standards adopted by the State Board of Education for clarification of content, implications for students, and alignment with the new assessment program and receive presentation on criteria and indicators for school report card and role of the Education Oversight Committee for development, and current status.*)

The recommendations of the Task Force are to be reported to the Education Oversight Committee by October 15, 1999.

VII. Conduct Other Studies as May Be Required by Law

A. Proviso I. A. 14 of the Fiscal Year 1999 General Appropriations Act: District and School Strategic Plans: The Education Oversight Committee assumed the responsibilities of the Select Committee to Oversee the Implementation of the Education Improvement Act of 1984. Among those duties is the requirement to evaluate district and school strategic plans. This requirement as outlined in Proviso I. A. 14 of the 1998 General Appropriations Act states, “. . . *The Department of Education shall provide the Select Committee, no later than August 1, 1998 with a plan for an in-depth review and evaluation of district and school strategic plans; to examine the alignment of the instructional activities and benchmarks to achieve those goals; examine the alignment of instructional activities and strategies undertaken by the districts and schools with their plans; and their use of academic development funds. The review shall serve as a basis for providing technical assistance to schools and school districts and recommendations for needed changes in the law. The Select Committee shall contract for the evaluation and provide a report on the findings to the General Assembly no later than September 1, 1999.* A request for proposals was issued by the State this fall, using a study design suggested by the State Department of Education and presented to the Education Oversight Committee. There were no responses to the request for proposals. The staff from the Accountability Division is working with a professor at the University of South Carolina on the design of a research project that could accomplish the requirements of the proviso.

B. §59-63-65 Class Size Study:
The South Carolina State Department of Education, working with the Accountability Division, is required to develop a plan for evaluating the impact of the class size initiative and report to the Education Oversight Committee no later than December 1, 2001.

C. Proviso I. A. 32 of the Fiscal Year 1999 General Appropriations Act: Middle Grades Project: Again, drawing upon authority transferred from the Select Committee to Oversee the Implementation of the Education Improvement

Act of 1984, the Education Oversight Committee has responsibility for the disbursement of funds in support of the Middle Grades Project, a joint effort of the Budget and Control Board, selected middle schools and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. A report on this project is shown in Appendix B.

D. §59-18-1930 Professional Development Evaluation:

The Education Accountability Act requires a comprehensive evaluation of professional development programs. A request for proposals for an external evaluation is under development and scheduled for release in early spring 1999. The request for proposals is build around the statutory requirements to include "an analysis of training to include what professional developed is offered" at the state and local levels, "how it is offered," support mechanisms and "how the professional development enhances the academic goals outlined in district and school strategic plans." In addition to the review of programs, the Education Oversight Committee must make recommendations for "better ways to provide and meet the needs for professional development, to include the use of existing five contract days for inservice." The evaluation structure is to include a strong foundation from the National Standards for Staff Development.

Appendix A

Report of the Public Opinion Survey

Appendix B

Report on the Middle Grades Project

History of the Middle Grades Project

In 1990 the EIA Select Committee received a planning grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to investigate ways to promote middle grades reform. In 1989, the Carnegie Corporation had released its report, Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century. *Turning Points* addresses comprehensive reform based on eight essential principles:

- ◆ Large middle grade schools are divided into smaller communities for learning.
- ◆ Middle grade schools transmit a core of common knowledge to all students
- ◆ Middle grade schools are organized to ensure success for all students.
- ◆ Teachers and principals have the major responsibility and power to transform middle grade schools.
- ◆ Teachers for the middle grades are specifically prepared to teach young adolescents.
- ◆ Schools promote good health; the education and health of young adolescents are inextricably linked.
- ◆ Families are allied with school staff through mutual respect, trust, and communication.
- ◆ Schools and communities are partners in educating young adolescents.

At the beginning of the SC Middle Grades Project, the EIA Select Committee contracted with the SC Association of School Administrators to survey the practices and preferences of middle grades schools in our state as compared with *Turning Points* recommendations. The survey found an extremely high degree of agreement but a low degree of actual conformity with the principles and practices outlined in *Turning Points*.

For nine years, the SC Middle Grades Project has worked steadily to explore and promote effective practices to enhance the academic learning and personal responsibility of early adolescents ages 10-15, primarily in grades 6-8. Beginning in 1993-94, the State Department of Education formally joined the project and designated a co-director to serve with the project director appointed by the EIA Select Committee, Dr. A. Baron Holmes. The middle grades project has sought whenever possible to integrate middle grades reform with the prevailing education improvement approaches sponsored by the State Department of Education and other organizations statewide. The Middle Grades project has sought to work with and through major departmental efforts such as the SSI math and science initiative, the 200 schools project, curriculum frameworks and standards-based assessment. The limitations of these major departmental efforts are clearly reflected in the modest accomplishments of the Middle Grades Project in promoting academic reform through curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

For six years the Carnegie Corporation has required each state project to work closely with a small number of reforming schools, known as “systemic change schools” which seek to implement *Turning Points* principles and practices. These schools have been selected from disadvantaged communities and have a majority of students from low-income families eligible for free and reduced lunch. At the present time 16 middle grades schools participate in the project. These schools are:

School

Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School
Bates Middle School
Bennettsville Middle School
Camden Middle School
W. J. Clark Middle School

District

Bamberg School District One
Sumter School District 17
Marlboro County School District
Kershaw County School District
Orangeburg School District 5

School

Great Falls Middle School
John Ford Middle School
Johnson Middle School
Lakeview Middle School
McClellanville Middle School
Myrtle Beach Middle School
Newberry Middle School
North District Middle School
R. D. Schroder Middle School
Southwood Middle School
Tanglewood Middle School

District

Chester County School District
Calhoun County School District
Florence School District 4
Greenville County School District
Charleston County School District
Horry County School District
Newberry County School District
Hampton School District 1
Charleston County School District
Anderson School District 5
Greenville County School District

The Middle Grades Project has worked with professional associations, school districts, and systemic change schools on the full array of reform principles and practices recommended in *Turning Points*. For curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the project has sought to acquaint practitioners with the specifics of standards-based assessment and the instructional changes required, at least to the extent that linkages have been defined for math, science, and language arts. The project has also assisted practitioners in reviewing the results of the existing BSAP and MAT-7 tests. Instructional assistance has been offered in language arts through Cunningham 4-blocks training and in math through problem solving math workshops at special training sessions and at the Middle Grades Summer Institute.

The Middle Grades Project has also taken the lead in providing training and assistance in evaluating practices for such critical areas as parent involvement, health promotion, prevention of risk-taking behaviors, community youth-serving programs, church youth programs, and media literacy. The purpose of these efforts has been to engage the greatest possible support for responsible youth development through active efforts of family, community, media, and other groups in partnership with middle-level schools. The results of these efforts have been limited because state-level support is either non-existent (parent involvement, community youth programs, church youth programs, and media literacy) or narrowly categorical (prevention of substance abuse, delinquency, pregnancy, etc.) and seldom well articulated as support for schools. Only comprehensive school health offers strong support for the middle grades.

For five years the project has promoted middle grades reform at the university level. Numerous universities have acquainted their teacher training faculties with middle grades practices and have planned the redesign of their schools of education to prepare teachers in effective middle level pedagogy, academic content, and organizational practices. The leading efforts have occurred at Coastal Carolina University, USC-Columbia, the College of Charleston, and Winthrop University. Also participating actively have been Lander University, USC-Aiken, Columbia College, SC State University, Furman University, Francis Marion University, and Clemson University. The Middle Grades Project has provided funding support to these institutions. Implementation progress has been delayed while waiting for policy changes through the State Department and Board of Education regarding licensure of middle level teachers as a distinct certification separate from elementary and secondary levels. During 1998 the State Board has deliberated carefully regarding a comprehensive package of licensure reforms, of which middle grades certification is just one part. During these deliberations, most of the colleges and universities have slowed or suspended development of their middle grades teacher training programs, pending final action by the State Board of Education.

In order to assess the effectiveness of these efforts, the Middle Grades Project collects detailed data on academic and youth development practices, attitudes, and behaviors. By the end of 1999, the project will have collected five years of data from over 5,000 students and from approximately 500 teachers per year. This data is stored at the national Center for Public Education at the University of Rhode Island as part of a pool of data collected from Carnegie systemic change schools across the entire nation.

With successive Carnegie Corporation grants from 1990 to 1997, the SC Middle Grades Project sought to implement systemic reform addressing the broad range of practices recommended by *Turning Points*. The Middle Grades Project has pursued comprehensive school improvement through such diverse areas as (1) assessment of current practices, (2) networking and engagement of all critical parties in systemic reform, (3) curriculum instruction, and assessment, (4) youth development, and (5) teacher training.

Carnegie Project Activities

- ◆ Assessment of Practices (compared with *Turning Points*)
 - ◆ SCASA (middle-level principals) regional assessment by 40 school teams
 - ◆ Self-study assessments of 17 systemic change schools for 5 years
 - ◆ Special assessments of status of parent involvement, health services, and community youth-serving activities

- ◆ Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
 - ◆ Training of systemic change schools in interdisciplinary units, testing alignment, and frameworks-based standards.
 - ◆ Summer institutes for 3 years (one week each), addressing language arts, math, and teaching at-risk students
 - ◆ A middle grades curriculum frameworks document

- ◆ Youth Development (assessing and planning appropriate practices)
 - ◆ Health
 - ◆ Community youth serving organizations (scouts, boys and girls clubs, churches, recreation authorities, etc.)
 - ◆ Media literacy
 - ◆ Adolescent risk behaviors

- ◆ Teacher Training
 - ◆ Assessment of current practices in training teachers for the middle grades
 - ◆ Funding support for investigating development of middle-level teacher training programs at 9 colleges/universities
 - ◆ Funding for development of middle-level programs at 3 universities (Coastal, College of Charleston, Winthrop)
 - ◆ Advocacy for district certification of middle grades teachers

- ◆ Engagement of Professional Organizations
 - ◆ SCASA-middle level principals
 - ◆ SCMSA
 - ◆ ASCD
 - ◆ SCACTE

- ◆ Networking for Policy and Professional Development
 - ◆ Regional professional development networks
 - ◆ School district middle level coordinators
 - ◆ ETV “Middle-Level Update”
 - ◆ Center for Advancement of Teaching and School Leadership

Findings Regarding Challenges to Reform in the Middle Grades

The adolescent years are a very challenging time for promoting academic achievement in the middle grades. Factors hindering academic achievement must be addressed significantly in many middle grade schools, families, and communities if adolescents are to achieve their academic potential.

Carnegie Assessment

Evidence

- ◆ 32% poor work habits
- ◆ 27% poorly motivated to achieve
- ◆ 31% underachieving

λ Early adolescents typically seek to assert independence from adult authority but do not have the maturity to choose a path toward a fulfilling or productive life. They have not developed commitment to hard work and self-advancement. Families, schools, and communities have not succeeded in channeling the energies of many early adolescents into self-assertion through academic pursuits.

λ Relationships with peers tend to be the focal point in the lives of early adolescents. Socializing with friends, including girl-boy relationships, is a major distraction from schoolwork and erodes the climate for learning.

- ◆ 44% would not go to a teacher if they had a problem

λ Moving away from the single teacher per class group of elementary school leaves students much less attached to adults at the school. Teacher teams can minimize the impersonal environment. Unfortunately, many middle grades schools do not have an extra non-instructional period for team meetings and parent conferences. Furthermore, extra planning periods are not always utilized with sufficient effectiveness.

- ◆ 41% of parents do not talk with teachers about child's performance
- ◆ 55% of parents do not go to the school

λ Many parents cease their close relationship with teachers and school after the elementary level. Over half of all middle grades parents seldom or never visit middle level schools. As a result, teachers and parents typically do not share observations or collaborate to meet student needs.

- ◆ 40-45% watch TV or play video games 3 or more hours per day

λ Today's adolescents tend to be “media addicted.” The customary perceptual mode of students is electronic since they are heavy consumers of TV, movies, and music. They tend to have an aversion to printed text and say repeatedly that they “hate reading.”

- ◆ 30% in-school suspension
 - ◆ 20% out of school suspension
- λ Cultural norms regarding respect for and compliance with adult authority have made youth less responsive to adults, whether teachers, parents, or others.

When these cultural/behavioral trends are combined with low family literacy, middle grades schools are confronted with large numbers of poorly prepared, passive or reluctant learners. These problems are compounded by several school factors

- ◆ 14% teachers are certified specifically from the middle grades

λ Very few teachers have been trained specifically to teach in the middle grades. Therefore, too many teachers are neither prepared for middle-level organization and pedagogy practices nor sufficiently knowledgeable in the academic content in the middle grades.

λ The middle level is not defined as a separate area in terms of law or customary administrative practice. State-level officials, district offices, universities and others organize for elementary programs and secondary programs that do not address the middle level adequately.

- ◆ average student size of school
493 elementary
652 middle
- ◆ number of teachers each student has
- K-3 = 1
- 4-5 = 2 or 3
- 6-8 = 4-7
- ◆ 37% perform below grade level
- ◆ 61% of 8th graders read 0-2 books outside school over three months
- ◆ 35% of 8th graders below standards in math and 31% in reading

λ The scale of many middle level schools has increased the current alienation of young adolescents from adult authority in today's culture.

λ Instructional support for middle grades teachers in the core subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies is limited and often not tailored to the middle grade students' developmental needs.

λ Too many students reach middle school far behind in academic skills. They read poorly or dislike reading. Their math and science knowledge and skills are deficient. Therefore, before the complications of adolescence and the less personalized environment of middle school hinders learning, at least one-quarter of all students are already well below minimal standards. Actually, depending on how "high the bar is set", one-third or even one-half reach the middle grades below standards.

Recommended Approaches for Systemic Reform

In order to address the academic deficiencies and personal development problems of early adolescents in the middle grades, the Carnegie project has worked both on systemic reform statewide and with a small group of 17 pilot "systemic change schools." Through these experiences, some important lessons have been learned about school reform to improve the academic and personal development of early adolescents in middle-level schools.

λ Support from the Department of Education and state agencies tends to be very narrow, guided primarily by categorical funding sources and program objectives. Organizing effective support for systemic change in 225 individual middle grades schools is virtually impossible under current circumstances of fragmented state programs.

λ The state does not presently have the capacity to provide effective school-specific coaching and support of continuing, systemic nature for more than a small number of schools. To develop such capacity, the entire array of state and district services would have to be

restructured. **Recommendation: The State Department of Education should reorganize its programs to provide to all schools support that is accessible, sufficiently intensive, and articulated as needed for preschool, elementary, middle, high, and adult levels.**

λ Useful support for subject-specific academic improvement is generally rare. The only area for which substantial support could be arranged was Cunningham literacy training in reading and language arts which has supported most of the language arts teachers in the 17 Carnegie schools and about 85 other middle level teachers in 20 middle schools at the Middle Level Summer Institute. This is only a fraction of the needed support for reading improvement in the 225 schools statewide. Despite steady progress by the SSI math and science initiative, it has not yet developed sufficient hands-on training and assistance to reach more than a small percentage of math and science teachers. Other subjects such as social studies or health have not been a serious matter of attention, probably because they are not reported as part of the battery scores from MAT-7 or on BSAP, so they “don’t count.” **Recommendation: The State Department of Education in collaboration with professional associations, universities, and school districts, should design and organize appropriate support for curriculum and instruction in each of the subjects tested through the new state assessment system.**

λ Articulation of support from state-level organizations through districts to schools is an exceedingly complex phenomenon and therefore cannot be summarized easily. Overall, academic support for middle-level schools from state and district sources is grossly inadequate, and state-district collaboration regarding the middle grades is quite weak. **Recommendation: The State Department of Education should restore relationships with school districts as effective partners in academic achievement and youth development.**

λ Although the entire enterprise of schools is evaluated by the “bottom line” of test scores, the specific substance of the tests (BSAP and MAT-7) and their relationship to the curriculum taught in the schools have not been understood by most middle grades educators. The priority learning objectives, as evaluated by the tests, are not defined concretely enough to guide curriculum and instruction. Failure to return to teachers, students, and parents the test items with answers marked correct or incorrect (as the PSAT does) is very destructive of any reasonable process of correction and improvement. As a result, test-driven curriculum and instruction attempt frantically to cover everything possible (at least in the textbook) so that students may conceivably be prepared for whatever questions might be asked on the tests. Any possibility of concentrating on depth of engagement and learning is severely undercut by the assessment-driven obligation to cover everything that might possibly appear on the tests. Given the developmental process of early adolescence and the unsupportive learning culture of the late 1990s, the test-driven struggle for maximum content coverage violates the common sense rule of “more is less and less is more.” **Recommendation: The new tests should be designed to achieve a balance between depth and breadth of learning; and scored test items should be released to parents, students, and teachers for review and appropriate action to remedy incorrect and substandard performance.**

λ Middle grades reform is typically focused on organizational approaches such as teams and advisory programs and on a difficult struggle to achieve personalized attention to the developmental needs and interests of individual students. Middle grades reform is not well defined or widely practiced in terms of curriculum-focused academic content. Middle grades curriculum reform is most frequently discussed in terms of interdisciplinary units and integrated or coordinated instruction by the team. Content-focused reform as articulated by curriculum frameworks and standards has not been the major focus of middle grades reform. Even though

standards-based reform is critical, it must be seen as an additional challenge added to the efforts of middle-level schools to provide personalized attention and to deal with the problems of adolescent development. **Recommendation: Reform efforts for the middle grades school give equal attention to both academic achievement and the more traditional middle level emphasis on school organization and youth development.**

λ There is almost no assistance available for schools in developing effective relationships with parents. No one in the State Department of Education or any other statewide organization is assigned to work on involvement of parents with students above age 5. **Recommendation: Funding should be appropriated for staff and consultants to promote effective practices of parent involvement.**

λ There is too little support for schools in developing community partnerships for the personal and academic development of early adolescents. There are many categorical programs to address alcohol and drugs, delinquency, pregnancy and other problems, but these programs are narrow in focus, limited in effective statewide coverage, and poorly coordinated among programs. As a result, the typical middle level school receives little or no support to create school-community-family partnerships as envisaged by the new Schools of Promise initiative sponsored by SCASA. **Recommendation: The State Department of Education and the Governor through his cabinet and other agencies should organize meaningful support for positive youth development through schools, parents, and communities.**

For the past year, the Middle Grades Project has focused its school reform efforts on systemic reform statewide to support all middle level schools, rather than only just a few high profile categorical initiatives or a limited number of pilot schools. The systemic reform priorities are:

- ◆ Enhancing SEA capacity to support systemic change among middle grades schools. This should include utilizing and coordinating multiple funding sources and multiple programs.
- ◆ Strengthening professional associations as effective promoters of middle grades reform.
- ◆ Developing effective relationships with school districts to promote middle grades reform.
- ◆ Creating regional professional development networks.
- ◆ Developing a compelling vision for middle grades reform, built around specific practices and principles.
- ◆ Implementing excellent teacher and administrator training and licensure for the middle grades.
- ◆ Achieving accountability through the use of testing, self-study, and other data to assess the effectiveness of our reform efforts.
- ◆ Enlisting the support of all partners in promoting systemic change for the middle grades.

Stated simply, systemic reform for the middle grades (and for elementary or secondary) requires engagement of all appropriate parties to develop reform practices as part of their routine work, not as specially funded add-on projects. Because this approach requires radical reform of independent, fragmented programs and organizations, systemic reform will not occur until the leadership of the state decides to restructure the way school improvement is promoted. Systemic reform requires all programs to become relevant to and supportive of restructuring by typical elementary, middle, and secondary schools (also, preschool, vocational/school to work, and adult programs). Furthermore, school districts must become knowledgeable and committed regarding the essential elements of middle grades reform.

Programs, funding, training, and support must become accessible and consumable at and through each individual school. This requires a virtual revolution, redesigning the prevailing array of narrow categorical programs, each of which typically has its own handful of pilot schools pursuing discrete elements of improvement. Instead, all these efforts must become integrated through coordinated state and district efforts to support all schools in their varying circumstances. There must be well-designed systems of support for reform networks at the pre-school, elementary, middle, secondary, vocation/school-to-work and adult level. The reform systems must be designed and managed through the collaboration of front-line practitioners with state and district support personnel. The resulting systemic support must be directed toward and utilized by all schools on a consistent basis. This requires reallocation of resources to local and regional professional development networks led by school practitioners, as well as continuing statewide electronic communication to all schools via e-mail and televised communication.

The SC Middle Level Project has explored such systemic reform approaches. The project has sponsored regional professional development networks organized for and by middle school practitioners, in collaboration with district personnel, university professors, and others. The project has designed and broadcast a monthly ETV program via satellite, "The Middle-Level Update". The project has planned and delivered its programs through existing practitioner organizations such as SCMSA, ASCD, and SCASA. And the project has sought to reach practitioners through local university outreach programs. The consequences of these efforts will remain limited until (1) the vast array of narrow state categorical and/or single purpose programs restructure to promote school-based, practitioner-driven systemic reform; (2) South Carolina establishes the middle-level as a formal component of education equivalent in law, practice, and funding to elementary and secondary levels; and (3) school districts, universities, and other organizations become active in promoting best practices for academic achievement and personal growth of all early adolescents in middle grades schools.

In accordance with the requirements of Proviso 72.43 of the Fiscal Year 1998-99 Appropriation Act, a total of 300 copies of this public document were printed by the Office of Information Resources Print Shop at a cost of \$570.00, or \$1.90 per copy. These figures include only direct costs of reproduction. They do not include preparation, handling or distribution costs. The APPLE Survey report (included in Appendix A) was printed by the Office of Information Resources Print Shop at a separate cost of \$2819.25 for 7500 copies or a cost of \$0.375 per copy. These figures also only direct costs of reproduction.