

**S**outh Carolinians are committed to excellence for our students, our schools and our communities. Building upon a commitment to every student learning, the General Assembly enacted the 1998 Education Accountability Act. The Act sets forth a bold vision of public education and the use of data and results to achieve that vision. The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee, working in concert with elected officials at state and local levels, established this goal:

**By 2010 South Carolina's student achievement will be ranked in the top half of states nationally. To achieve this goal, we must become one of the five fastest improving systems in the country.**

As the state's economy has shifted away from traditional agriculture and textiles, the level to which schools prepare students for continuing education and the workplace has become increasingly urgent in our lives. Today, more than ever, parents, educators and community members are working with students to broaden their perspective on careers — providing resources so that students may achieve their potential and creating communities that support our students.

#### ***How do we measure progress toward SC's school performance?***

Nine performance measures are used to measure our progress and achievement of the 2010 goal:

- 1.** South Carolina will rank in the top half of states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and other international and national measures.
- 2.** Nine out of ten South Carolina students will score proficient or above on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT).
- 3.** South Carolina will rank in the top half of states on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and American College Test (ACT).
- 4.** South Carolina's Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate program exam passage rates will be at or above the national average.
- 5.** South Carolina's high school completion rate will be at or above the national average.
- 6.** South Carolina's dropout rate will be in the lower half of states nationally.
- 7.** South Carolina will be in the top half of states in the percentage of students with disabilities earning a high school diploma.
- 8.** South Carolina will rank in the top half of states in freedom from drugs, weapons, violence, and teacher victimization by students.
- 9.** The achievement gap among students of different racial/ethnic groups and different economic status will be eliminated.

The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee is an independent, non-partisan, 18-member legislative committee composed of educators, business persons and elected officials who serve by virtue of their elected position or by appointment of the legislative leaders or the Governor. The Committee bears responsibilities for the development and improvement of South Carolina's educational accountability system and for making recommendations to ensure the continuous improvement of schools and their results.

The mission of the Education Oversight Committee is to affect dramatic, results-based and continuous improvement of South Carolina's educational system by creating a truly collaborative environment of parents, educators, community leaders and policy makers.

#### **2005-2006 Membership**

Robert Staton, Chairman, Columbia

Alex Martin, Vice-Chairman, Greenville

Traci Young Cooper, Blythewood

Bill Cotty, Columbia

Dennis Drew, Greenwood

Mike Fair, Greenville

Wallace Hall, Abbeville

Robert W. Harrell, Jr., Charleston

Robert W. Hayes, Jr., Rock Hill

Karen Iacovelli, Fountain Inn

Susan Marlowe, Charleston

Neil C. Robinson, Jr., Charleston

Harold C. Stowe, Pawleys Island

Inez M. Tenenbaum, Lexington

Robert E. Walker, Landrum

Judy H. Williams, Columbia

Kent M. Williams, Marion

#### **Executive Director**

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## **OBJECTIVES & CRITICAL ACTIONS 2005-2006**

By 2010 South Carolina's student achievement will be ranked in the top half of states nationally. To achieve this goal, we must become one of the five fastest improving systems in the country.

### ***What are the signs of progress?\****

- ◆ Students have made significant improvements in statewide PACT testing, with gains across all grade levels, subjects, and demographic groups.
- ◆ South Carolina high school seniors have improved their average SAT score by 27 points in the past five years, the largest gain in the country and three times the national increase.
- ◆ The national report card “Quality Counts,” published by the respected magazine *Education Week*, ranked South Carolina No. 1 in the nation for improving teacher quality in both 2003 and 2004, No. 2 in the nation for teacher quality improvement in 2005, and sixth in the nation for improving academic standards and accountability in 2005.
- ◆ South Carolina has the nation’s third-best improvement rate in mathematics, and the fourth best improvement in reading, on federal NAEP tests required by No Child Left Behind.
- ◆ South Carolina ranks third in the nation in the number of teachers certified by the prestigious National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (4,444).
- ◆ The Princeton Review ranked South Carolina’s testing system as No. 11 in the nation.
- ◆ Four independent research studies, including work by the Princeton Review and the Northwest Evaluation Association, have confirmed that South Carolina’s standards for student academic proficiency are among the nation’s most rigorous.
- ◆ South Carolina is a national leader in service-learning programs, which enable students to develop community service projects linked to their academic studies. Each year, more than 100,000 South Carolina students volunteer more than one million hours of community service through service-learning programs.

### ***What are the challenges before us?***

The 2005 school and district ratings, released in November 2005, revealed a larger number of schools rated *Below Average* or *Unsatisfactory* than in the previous three years. As the expectations increase, we must look for capacity-building interventions to assist underperforming schools.

Far too many South Carolinians are limited by low expectations for school and student performance. Too many students struggle because of limited language development as young children. This impacts their initial success in reading and, all too often, a cumulative deficit builds as students struggle through middle and high school.

Our population is becoming increasingly diverse and without doubt, our state is benefiting from the rich mix of ethnicities and ages. But that mix also means that our educators and community leaders must be prepared to work with parents and students from a variety of cultures who may speak languages other than English.

We know the elements of high performance: strong leadership; effective teachers; and partnerships among families, schools, and communities. We must be willing to take those actions that ensure these elements are present in every school and for every child.

### ***Can these barriers be overcome?***

Absolutely. Each and every South Carolinian must dedicate himself/herself to realizing the high expectations we have for our state and our students.

*\*This list is adapted from the State Department of Education’s “South Carolina education accomplishments,” January 2005.*

### ***How is the Education Oversight Committee organizing its work to contribute to and stimulate continued progress?***

At its October 2005 meeting, the Education Oversight Committee adopted the following objectives and critical actions for the year:

#### **OBJECTIVE 1:**

##### ***Continue the implementation of the Education Accountability Act of 1998.***

- 1.1** Advocate quality teaching and learning experiences so that every student can achieve at high levels
- 1.2** Advocate for strong professional development for educators and those who work with public schools
- 1.3** Extend parental and community involvement efforts to support young people as they progress through school, particularly at transitions between school levels
- 1.4** Increase the utilization of data published on the annual school and district report cards and from other sources in decision-making for students, schools and the state.
- 1.5** Prepare educators and communities to work with the system of increasing rigor.

#### **OBJECTIVE 2:**

##### ***Build a common vision for student, school and system achievement.***

- 2.1** Establish measurable goals that foster improvements
  1. Establish a statewide goal for high school graduation
  2. Continue tracking measures linked to the 2010 objectives
  3. Develop and distribute public-friendly reporting materials on the achievement of the goal to increase visibility
- 2.2** Promote the adoption of the 2010 goal and the objectives of No Child Left Behind and recognition of significant gains toward their achievement
- 2.3** Communicate the priorities developed through the long-range Common Ground planning process and work with local and state officials and citizens to implement the priorities.

#### **OBJECTIVE 3:**

##### ***Promote changes in policies that rapidly advance improvements in student achievement.***

- 3.1** Identify principles for school funding and provide research and information to decision-makers
- 3.2** Research current performance and best practices that improve student achievement in reading, particularly for students in the middle grades
- 3.3** Identify and advocate policy changes that accomplish the following:
  - (i) determine if early childhood programs are serving the children in most need and if the programs are providing the foundation for success;
  - (ii) increase the instructional utility of statewide assessments;
  - (iii) improve grade-level reading performance;
  - (iv) reduce the number of students retained in grade;
  - (v) provide instructional alternatives to better meet student’s needs; and
  - (vi), elevate the performance of high achieving students; and
  - (vii) develop understanding why student performance declines across the grades
- 3.4** Publish EOC recommendations in high visibility materials and communicate the urgency of actions to elevate student and school achievement
- 3.5** Work with state elected officials to enact and implement policies, programs and funding that support the highest levels of achievement

#### **OBJECTIVE 4:**

##### ***Build alliances for higher performance***

- 4.1** Develop partnerships with teacher preparation institutions that provide pre-service and in-service teacher education and identify measures of excellence for those institutions that are linked to pre-kindergarten through grade twelve student achievement
- 4.2** Work with elected, professional and citizen leaders to promote the highest levels of student performance
- 4.3** Engage the public in their individual, civic and professional lives to support actions so that every student achieves at high levels

#### **OBJECTIVE 5:**

##### ***Fulfill the responsibilities assigned to the EOC by the General Assembly including those within the Teacher Quality Act, the Parental Involvement in Their Children’s Education Act, the Education and Economic Development Act.***