

explanation of accountability terms

A list of common terms and acronyms associated with South Carolina's accountability system and the federal NCLB legislation

Absolute Rating: the Absolute Rating is a value of the school's level of performance on measures of research-based factors associated with student success during the school year on which the report card is based.

Achievement Gap: Differences in academic performance among groups of students which are identified by ethnicity and income level. The annual achievement gap report produced by the EOC studies the difference in achievement between the target group (the historically lower-scoring demographic group) and the statewide comparison group (the historically higher-scoring group) at various PACT performance levels (Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic.)

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): Adequate Yearly Progress is the minimum level of performance that school districts and schools must achieve each year as determined under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

Assessment: A method to measure a trait or characteristic. A test is one kind of assessment schools use.

Average Daily Membership (ADM): The number of days a student is in membership (part of the student body) at a school divided by the number of days in a school year.

Career and Technology Centers: One of 37 separate facilities, a typical career/technology center is defined as providing high school students credentials and preparation to be successful in the workplace and post-secondary education through career majors and clusters of industry certified programs.

Charter school: a public, nonreligious, non-home-based, nonprofit corporation forming a school that operates within a public school district or the South Carolina Public Charter School District, but is accountable to the school board of trustees of that district which grants its charter.

Cohort: a group of individuals having a statistical factor (as age or class membership) in common in a demographic study, such as a cohort of students.

Districts with Students Like Ours: Districts with a similar percentage of students eligible for Medicaid services and/or participating in free/reduced lunch programs.

Disaggregated Data: "Disaggregate" means to separate a whole into its parts. In education, this term means that test results are sorted by groups of students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic groups, have disabilities, have limited English proficiency or gender, or many other ways (e.g. program participation).

Education Accountability Act (EAA): Legislation passed in 1998, the EAA sets standards for improving the state's K-12 educational system.

Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA): State legislation which sets up a system called Personal Pathways to Success, giving students the guidance and career experiences or exposure. The EEDA establishes "career clusters" are courses of study organized around different sets of occupations.

Education Oversight Committee (EOC): a non-partisan, legislative agency, composed of legislators, educators, and business people, which provides regular, routine and ongoing review of the state's education improvement process, assesses how our schools are doing and evaluates the standards our schools must meet to build the education system needed to compete in the next century.

End-of-course tests: Assessments given to high school students in Algebra I, English I, Biology I, and Physical Science.

Graduation Rate: The percentage of original ninth-grade students who earn standard high school diplomas who graduate in four years or less.

"Highly Qualified" teacher: NCLB sets specific criteria for determining whether a teacher meets the federal definition of "highly qualified." In addition to certification, federal definitions will require a college major, master's degree, or passage of an assessment in each content area a teacher teaches.

High School Assessment Program (HSAP): the South Carolina High School Assessment Program (HSAP) is the state's high school exit exam and consists of English/language arts (ELA) and mathematics tests. Passage is required for graduation.

Growth Rating (formerly Improvement Rating): a measure of a school's progress toward attaining and/or maintaining higher levels of performance.

Limited English Proficient (LEP): students for whom English is a second language.

Longitudinal student data: repeated observation of individual student performance, comparing their tests scores over time.

Magnet school: Schools with specialized curricula designed to attract students throughout a school district or geographic area by instructing within an area of aptitude, talent, and interest.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): NCLB is the most recent authorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT): PACT is South Carolina's standards-based, criterion-referenced test administered to students in grades 3 through 8. PACT measures students' mastery of grade-level curriculum standards in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. PACT was administered for the final time in school year, 2007-2008.

Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS): Replacing PACT, the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS), will be administered in grades 3-8 for the first time in school year, 2008-2009.

Parental Involvement: Parental involvement is the participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving students' academic learning and other school activities.

Performance Ratings: Five terms are used in the ratings to describe the level of a school's performance:

- **Excellent** – School performance substantially exceeds the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.
- **Good** – School performance exceeds the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.
- **Average** – School performance meets the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.
- **Below Average** – School is in jeopardy of not meeting the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal.
- **At Risk (formerly Unsatisfactory)** – School performance fails to meet the standards for progress toward the 2010 SC Performance Goal

Prime Instructional Time: The percentage of instructional time available when both teachers and students are present.

Safe Harbor: "Safe Harbor" is a provision in No Child Left Behind intended for schools and districts that are making progress in student achievement but are not yet meeting target goals for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

School Improvement Plan: The written school improvement plan for each school includes strategies for improving student performance in the targeted goal areas, taking into account the performance on multiple assessments; how and when improvements will be implemented; use of federal and state funds; requests for waivers, etc. Each school improvement plan must be approved by the local board and may be in effect for no more than three years. The plans may be amended as often as necessary or appropriate.

Schools with Students Like Ours: Schools with a similar percentage of students eligible for Medicaid services and/or participating in free/reduced lunch programs.

South Carolina's Performance Goal - 2010 Goal: The 2010 Goal is used to establish expectations. The goal states, "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."

Student retention: the percentage of students required to repeat grade levels because of poor grades, low test scores, and/or teacher judgment in the last completed school year.

Student subgroups: Schools will receive their disaggregated AYP status for subgroups of students based on the following categories: racial/ethnicity, students with disabilities, Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and economically disadvantaged.

Supplemental Services: Students from low-income families who are attending Title I schools that have been identified as needing improvement for two years will be eligible to receive outside tutoring or academic assistance. Parents can choose the appropriate services for their child from a list of state approved providers. The school district will purchase the services.

Title I: Title I refers to a federal funding program aimed at students who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind. Title I Part A funding provides assistance to improve the teaching and learning of children in areas with high economic needs; it is based on the number of low-income children in a school, generally those eligible for the free lunch program. Title I is intended to supplement, not replace, state and district funds.