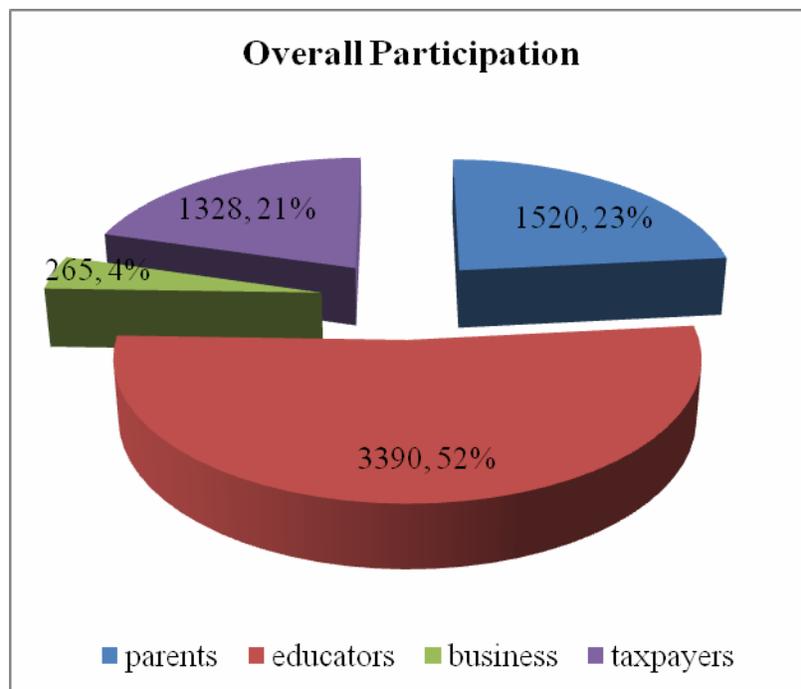


## South Carolinians Speak Out on Education

### Project Overview

Revisions to the Education Accountability Act of 1998 (EAA) were enacted in June 2008. Within the law, the South Carolina General Assembly charged the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) with specific responsibilities in refining and revising the state's educational assessment and accountability systems. Those duties included, among others, the direction to "work with the State Board of Education and a broad-based group of stakeholders, including, but not limited to, parents, business and industry persons, community leaders and educators" to "determine the criteria for and establish five academic performance ratings of excellent, good, average, below average, and school/district at-risk" (Section 59-18-900 B). This project offered South Carolinians an opportunity to engage in the definition of their aspirations for public schools and students. This process is to be repeated every five years beginning 2013.

Clemson University responded to EOC's call for support in carrying out the engagement project in an unprecedented collaboration among three of its five colleges; the College of Business and Behavioral Sciences, the College of Engineering Sciences, and the College of Health, Education & Human Development. Faculty, from Sociology, Computer Sciences, and Educational Leadership, Counseling Education, and Human & Organizational Development, developed electronic phone and web surveys and held 11 focus groups across the state.



Over 6500 South Carolinians participated in the engagement project from November 2008 through May 2009. Without question, this engagement project was influenced by the economic

conditions of the state as well as ongoing deliberations in the media, General Assembly, Governors Office, and US Congress. The results of this project show that South Carolinians are concerned about their schools, the future of public school students, and hold high expectations for both. This report focuses on four findings:

- All four groups of stakeholders share high expectations for schools and students.
- Stakeholders differ in views about achieving those expectations.
- Many South Carolinians are not familiar with educational trends regionally or nationally.
- South Carolinians expressed lack of awareness concerning achievement gaps among student groups.

## Processes

The project proceeded in three phases: (a) survey development, (b) survey administration and (c) survey analysis and interpretation. Two kinds of surveys provided the data collection vehicles; phone interviews and web surveys. Focus groups served to validate the surveys at the development and analysis phases.

### Survey Development

Under the provisions of Act 282 of 2008, the EOC formed a National Advisory Council (NAC) to address its multiple responsibilities. For the purposes of this project, the NAC was consulted concerning item development for the phone and web surveys. The NAC responded to an item pool developed from several national polls of public awareness and concerns regarding public schools. The NAC suggested wording for additional items and promoted strategies for engaging typically difficult to reach stakeholders, especially parents of color, in rural areas, and in poverty. NAC members were interested in gathering opinions of community leaders in religious and minority sectors also. The NAC also expressed concern about engaging South Carolina's increasing retiree population due to their role as taxpayers, typically without school-aged students in schools.

Simultaneous testing of the item pool included pilot focus groups and pilot phone interviews. Four focus groups included stakeholders named in Act 282 and divided as groups of parents, educators, business leaders, and community leaders/retiree taxpayers. Clemson held these focus groups in various public locations including a municipal building, a public library, a school, and a community education campus. Potential participants were randomly selected from phone and mailing lists provided by EOC, business listings on the web and some participation was obtained through nominations. A total of 34 educators, parents, community leaders/retiree taxpayers, and business leaders participated in the fall focus groups, and the results were used to reduce the item pool as well as validate pilot phone interview findings.

## Survey Administration

The finalized phone interview surveys ran from November 2008 through February 2009. Phone interviews, aided by electronic random selection and calling of SC landline phones statewide, yielded 1250 responses.

In February through mid-April, the public accessed web surveys through a variety of links on SC school district and other associations' web sites. The other associations included SC-AARP, SC Christian Action Council, Commission on Minority Affairs, SC School Boards Association, and of course, EOC's web site. The business survey was distributed through websites hosted by the SC Chamber of Commerce and local chambers: Kershaw, Lexington, Clemson, Beaufort, Anderson, Columbia, Florence, Spartanburg, Greenville, and Charleston. Also SC Child Care Association and SC Realtors Association distributed the business survey. EOC personnel issued invitations to participate in the web surveys through media releases, announcements on radio programs, and contacts with organizations encouraging their members to participate. These web surveys yielded over 5200 responses.

Simultaneous to the web surveys, from March through May, Clemson conducted 7 focus groups in the Upstate, Midlands, and Coastal regions with 61 participants. The purpose of these groups was to augment the phone survey responses in two ways. First, following the definition of stakeholders in Act 282, and the concerns of the NAC in reaching the typically underrepresented groups, the focus groups reached out to minorities, rural and urban populations in poverty, and those adults ages 18 to 34, who typically do not own/rent/use landline phones. Second, the focus groups provided insights into the phone results allowing representatives of the stakeholders to expand on their interpretations of what the responses meant to them.

## Survey Analysis and Interpretation

With over 6400 quantitative responses and several hundred open-ended comments from phone interviews and web surveys, the data reduction process presented challenges in meaningful interpretation. This is typical of primarily closed-ended polling of public opinion. One means of clarifying and validating quantified responses is to seek insights from similar groups, and thus the focus group process supplied such clarification. One limitation of the analyses using crosstabulations on stakeholder groups is that the definitions of stakeholders are not mutually exclusive. The analyses reported here focused on four groups roughly outlined by Act282: (a) parents, (b) educators, (c), business and community leaders and (d) taxpayers. But even these groupings pose challenges in analyses. For example, a SC business leader is also a taxpayer, and as well, may be a parent. The distribution of parents within the other three stakeholder designations included 50.9% of business/community leaders, 42.5% of educators and 44.8% of taxpayers. Given that the web surveys obtained the greatest number of voluntary participants in the project, the representation of parents among the other three stakeholder groups may be greater

than the general population, but such a result is typical among voluntary responses to a particular polling interest such as education.

Survey responses were analyzed with frequencies and crosstabulations using PASW<sup>1</sup> Statistics, 17.0. Note that the total response frequencies from all surveys and question sets appear in the appendix to this document. The Findings section of this report focuses primarily on crosstabulations across the stakeholders and a few other groupings of the three survey data sources (two web-based: (a) one for public and educators, (b) another for business leaders, and one phone-based). The Findings section explores common themes reported in tables with by-group frequencies enhanced in the narrative with selected survey comments and excerpts of the focus group transcripts. Discussion focuses chiefly on the thematic analysis of the participants' perceptions with very little interpretation beyond the survey data and direct quotes. South Carolinians' hold strong opinions about their public schools and the future of students and their voices fill this report's pages.

## Findings<sup>2</sup>

The project's findings offer four specific themes from its 6500 participants in phone interviews, two web-based surveys (one for business and one for the general public and educators), and selected focus groups held across South Carolina. Responses from these South Carolinians generated the following four themes:

1. High expectations for student success in school and beyond
2. Stakeholders differ in views about achieving expectations
3. Lack of awareness of national trends in education
4. Lack of understanding of the degree and extent of achievement gaps

The following narrative reports on these four primary themes using selected analyses of the three surveys, selected survey comments, and excerpts from the focus group transcripts. Educators differed from other stakeholders in several areas, and this report highlights those differences within the four findings. The appendix of this report lists frequency percentages of aggregate responses by question in the order found in the surveys. This narrative includes selected analyses supporting the themes found in the opinions expressed by South Carolinians.

### High Expectations for Student Success in School and Beyond

South Carolinians responded to questions concerning what skills students should possess upon graduation. These responses showed agreement on the fundamental importance of Reading, Math and Writing, as well as a strong desire that young people exit public schools ready to be productive citizens.

All Stakeholders					
I'm going to list a set of skills that may be important for young people leaving school in the 21st century ...	Very			Total [columns to the left]	
	Critical	Important	Important		
Reading	82.4%	15.0%	2.4%	99.80%	
Math	68.2%	24.7%	6.8%	99.70%	
Writing	64.6%	26.6%	8.3%	99.50%	
Skills to Succeed in the Workplace	68.3%	23.8%	7.0%	99.10%	
Knowledgeable Citizen	59.0%	30.1%	10.0%	99.10%	
Science	38.5%	36.4%	21.9%	96.80%	

Note: Remaining response options found in the appendix and are <1% of all responses.

The following charts illustrate the differences among stakeholders in attaching any *importance* (*Critical*, *Very* or *Important*) to the six skills. Business attaches more importance to math, writing and work readiness than other groups. The importance of math-based technical and scientific industries to SC's economy also may have been an influence on business responses. Parents place more importance on citizenship than other groups. Educators and taxpayers show allegiance to the traditional 3 Rs of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Business		Parents		Educators		Taxpayers	
Math	100.0%	Writing	99.7%	Reading	99.9%	Reading	99.7%
Writing	99.6%	Reading	99.5%	Math	99.8%	Math	99.5%
Work	99.1%	Citizen	99.3%	Writing	99.7%	Writing	99.4%
Citizen	98.3%	Work	99.0%	Work	99.5%	Citizen	98.8%
Science	93.6%	Math	97.9%	Citizen	99.4%	Work	98.7%
Reading	89.8%	Science	93.0%	Science	97.6%	Science	96.9%

Note: These tables show the totals of the combined selection of the three *importance* options: *Critical*, *Very Important*, and *Important*. Remaining response options  $\leq 3.2\%$ ; the appendix lists frequencies across all response options.

Comments from the surveys and the focus groups offer some insight into different stakeholders' concerns. Among the discussions of adhering to the traditional 3Rs, disagreement arose among groups as to the wisdom of that allegiance.

I'm not sure schools should be too concerned with workforce development beyond the basic skills of critical thinking, teamwork, and accepting responsibility. [African American taxpayer, 45-54 years old, Masters degree, survey comment]

My belief is that if we teach the basics every day, we can cull minds and assist them in growing into successful adults. [White taxpayer, 45-54 years old, no degree, survey comment]

I agree that the top three [Reading, Math and Writing], definitely are very important. I see that technology has pretty much replaced writing, the three Rs, as we know it. And

you know, technology is a part of the workplace, so they definitely need to have or be knowledgeable of the computer and software, hardware. [urban African American focus group, Upstate]

I think we need to place more emphasis on Science. I'm surprised that Science is [listed] so low. I thought that Science is, at least from my standpoint, should be emphasized more ... when you look at Science and Engineering and those types of things, that's where this job [market]'s gonna be in the future, then we need to elevate that discussion around that. [business focus group, Midlands]

I think you need creative skills to be important and flexible in the workforce. I think that kind of ties in with workplace skills. I was kind of glad to see that's pretty high, 'cause you need to be transferable, or able to move with the economy and the changing demographic groups that are coming up. [urban Hispanic focus group, Upstate]

Another portion of the surveys concerned expectations for determining the quality of public schools. Survey participants rated six potential measures of school performance.

Parent, Educator, and Taxpayer Stakeholders				
I'm interested in how you determine if a school is doing well. I'm going to list some measures. How important is...	Critical	Very Important	Important	Total [columns to the left]
Control of Student Behavior	57.4%	30.4%	11.2%	99.00%
High School Graduation Rates	45.3%	36.2%	15.8%	97.30%
Offering Advanced Coursework (AP / IB)	31.6%	38.7%	24.0%	94.30%
Scores for College Admissions Tests (ACT/SAT)	18.7%	37.8%	32.9%	89.40%
Rate of Promotion	17.9%	31.5%	35.0%	84.40%
Annual Standardized Tests	6.4%	16.6%	44.0%	67.00%

Note 1: The business survey did not include this question set.

Note 2: These tables show the totals of the combined selection of the three *importance* options: *Critical*, *Very Important*, and *Important*. The appendix lists frequencies across remaining response options, which range from  $\leq 1\%$  to 33%.

On these measures, there were few differences among stakeholder groups. The following charts show three stakeholders' overall responses as to the *importance* (*Critical*, *Very or Important*) of the six potential measures of a good school.

Parents		Educators		Taxpayers	
Behavior	98.8%	Behavior	99.4%	Behavior	98.3%
Graduation	94.4%	Graduation	97.9%	Graduation	96.6%
AP/IB	93.9%	AP/IB	94.8%	AP/IB	93.5%
ACT/SAT	91.2%	ACT/SAT	88.7%	ACT/SAT	90.0%
Promotion	83.9%	Promotion	85.2%	Promotion	83.2%
Ann. Test	72.6%	Ann. Test	65.0%	Ann. Test	68.7%

Note 1: The business survey did not include this question set.

Note 2: These tables show the totals of the combined selection of the three *importance* options: *Critical*, *Very Important*, and *Important*. The appendix lists frequencies across all response options, of which the range for the remaining options is  $\leq .6\%$  to  $35\%$ .

Participants used survey comments options and the focus group discussion to express concern about student discipline and many students' lack of motivation to learn.

Discipline is the # 1 issue we need to address. When one or two students constantly disrupt the learning environment in a classroom ... all students in the classroom suffer ... all students are denied the day's learning opportunity by the disruption of one or two. [White educator, 55-64 years old Masters degree, survey comment]

The amount of time a teacher has to spend on basic classroom control and handling the few problem children is unbelievable. Parents need to be held accountable to prepare their children with basic skills and manners to be able to function in the school system. I have seen cases where one child disrupted an entire class for the school year and though they tried different things for this child it always came to what this child needed, not what the other 21 children in the class needed. I think teachers need more discipline options and the families need to support the teacher and school. Could parents be given a grade that reflects the effort they put into the school, or require a certain amount of volunteer hours at the school? [White taxpayer, 35-44 years old, Bachelors degree, survey comment]

I mean I get a lot of parents that come to school, we go on behavioral issues and they say, "Well isn't there like a – can't you send them to, like, jail?" "Don't you have like a boot camp?" South Carolina doesn't – there are other states that have, but they think sending them to this boot camp they're going to come back out and they're going to be perfect kids. [urban Hispanic focus group, Upstate]

And I also look at extracurricular activities to get the kids involved in things so they won't become bored and have a interest to go to school every day. And I think sometimes with kids, even if it's sports or band or chorus, if you can discipline yourself to do that, then you can discipline yourself in the workplace. And if you go to school every day, as far as attendance, then you go to work every day. [urban African American focus group, Upstate]

These men and women are committed to teach and they go in there and they're afraid for themselves, for their well-being and safety and they're afraid for the other students to do well. It just is, to me, it's one of the things that's really broken. If you take care of something like that then other things should fall into place. [business focus group, Midlands]

'Cause I came from a school where our standardized tests [scores] were kind of low, and I feel like it was kind of like a failure on the teachers' behalf, not ours. They tried to say it was the students, but ... I can say it's more – they focus more on control over student behavior than they do on academics. [young adult focus group, Midlands]

High school graduation rates were a priority for all the participants. The following table was generated from a question that guided people to think about today's First Graders who will be graduating in 2020.

What would be an acceptable graduation rate for students graduating in 2020?	Parent	Educator	Taxpayer
70% or below	7.0%	7.5%	8.0%
75%	3.9%	8.1%	5.7%
80%	15.9%	16.8%	13.1%
85%	21.9%	20.7%	17.6%
90%	27.2%	25.8%	25.8%
95%	13.3%	14.7%	19.5%
100%	10.7%	6.3%	10.2%

Note: The business survey did not include this question.

The majority of parents (51.2%) and taxpayers (55.5%) selected 85% or higher for the goal graduation rate in 2020. Only 46.8% of educators set the rate that high. Some of their comments explain their concerns.

The graduation rate should not be based on the number of students who receive a diploma in exactly 4 years. The graduation rate should not exclude the students who complete their IEP requirements but are not on a diploma track. No Child Left Behind is not realistic nor is it a possibility. I work at a high school where 25% of our population has an IEP (roughly 400 students, many on a diploma track). Each year there are between 10 - 20 students who complete the goals of their IEP and participate in the graduation ceremony. These students are mentally, physically, and emotionally challenged and are not capable of earning a high school diploma. If they earn a certificate of completion by meeting the goals of their INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN, shouldn't they be considered successful? [White educator, 35-44 years old, Masters degree, survey comment]

On-time graduation rates do not matter if the child does not know the material! There are too many people already with a high school diploma that are barely reading on a 5th

or 6th grade reading level. What good does it do a child to be promoted or even graduate when they do not have the skills needed to succeed in the next grade or even in the real world. [White educator, 25-34 years old, Masters degree, survey comment]

It's not the graduation rate. You can give anyone a diploma. It's what's behind the diploma that counts. [Educator, survey comment]

A striking aspect of the way that survey participants rated potential measures of school quality was the very low ranking of standardized tests. Likely, this negative view is a holdover from the 2008 policy changes in the state's assessment program, which was known as the Palmetto Academic Challenge Test or PACT. At the time of the surveys as well as the focus groups, the new test, Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) had yet to be administered to SC students. The concern about testing, its purposes and uses permeated much of the web survey comments and some of the focus group discussions.

It does not matter how many kids are promoted or graduate or what there [sic] scores are on standardized tests are if they are not learning anything. You cannot promote or allow students to graduate if they cannot to the basic reading and math skills. Everybody is worried about numbers and not whether the kids are truly learning what they need to succeed in life. [White taxpayer, 35-44 years old, Bachelors degree, survey comment]

I think that if we start focusing on not so much the standardized test, but the skills. Because now teachers are teaching the test instead of teaching the skills. And that's why our children aren't really – they're memorizing it, so they don't have the skill. They may pass the test, but they don't have the skill. [young adult focus group, Midlands]

We found that you were teaching to the test and not teaching for understanding of the skill. You followed a book. You taught to a test. They graduated and they go to work and they can't write, they can't read, they can't do things but they passed the test. [retiree taxpayer focus group, Coastal]

South Carolinians hold high expectations for their students' futures and the measures of determining whether schools promote that future. The 3Rs dominate perceptions of what a good education is, but some community stakeholders, especially business, would like to see that traditional view of schools change. Overall, South Carolinians believe that safe and orderly schools are a foundation for assuring that students graduate on time. Educators have some reservations about measures of good schools and express concern that the measures may not achieve goals for some students. These differences emerge in questions about rating schools' provision of knowledge and achieving high standards.

### Stakeholders Differ in Views about Achieving Expectations

All stakeholders responded to the question of whether schools provided students with the key knowledge they need. Educators and parents responded differently than other stakeholders.

Do SC public schools provide students with key knowledge?	Business	Parents	Educators	Taxpayers
Yes	21.2%	46.4%	56.2%	36.0%
No	67.4%	45.7%	37.2%	55.6%
Don't Know	11.4%	7.9%	6.6%	8.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The majority of educators believe that schools provide key knowledge to students, but parents are split on this view. Taxpayers and business leaders do not believe that schools provide key knowledge. One way of interpreting why educators might view this question differently may be found in the voluntary survey comments: many stated that the school is required to offer too much to students or that students are not prepared to learn what's offered. Educators and other stakeholders also assign blame to parents, who seem to lack commitment to their children's education. More will be presented about this latter perception in another section of this report.

I feel that students need more time with the basics. Too many standards are being taught at an early age and actual retention of the basic skills are not being retained by the students. I feel that the teachers cannot spend enough time on the basics to provide a secure foundation for future skills. The teachers are trying to cover all the standards and the students are getting an overview of everything, but not understanding the foundational information. [White educator, 35-44 years old, Masters degree, survey comment]

I am a high school teacher and do think all of these are important, however, I feel that teachers and the educational system always gets blamed and students and parents are not held accountable for the child's education. Sometimes teacher, administrators, and others involved in the educational process do everything they can to keep children in school and help them perform satisfactorily so they can graduate on time, but parent support, the attitude of the student, and other outside factors often work against the schools desires. There needs to be some way to acknowledge this and not hold schools totally responsible nor penalize them with lower scores because of this. [White educator, 45-54 years old, Masters degree, survey comment]

If we are going to measure simply on a single test date to assess a child's progress, we are not taking into account what teachers have to [do] each day. What about the student whose mother was murdered by his dad? What about the students who lost his grandfather [with] whom he was very close right before the test? What about the child

whose mom gives him Tylenol because he has a fever but she can't miss work so she sends him anyway? We are dehumanizing out children and our teachers. [White educator, 35-44 years old, Masters degree, survey comment]

Granted, we do have extenuating circumstances beyond the child's control. We do have cases where a student has put in great time and effort and struggled in a subject area or two. We need to find ways to address situations like these in a fair manner. I have worked in a school where there were free after school tutorial/ homework help services along with snacks and free transportation home. I have known instances where parents could have their children participate in contracted tutorial programs with a provider of their choice (for free) but chose not to participate. If we want our state to move forward, we will have to set standards/ legislation that places more personal accountability and responsibility on students and parents. We need to set these standards and uphold them. [White educator, 35-44 years old, Bachelors degree, survey comment]

South Carolina... was formerly a miller's community. They're trying to change it to be more technology-based. So those people with that low mentality, that wasn't important, standardized tests. ... All the parents that I work with in the schools, to them that's not important, because they didn't need that to get to work in the mill. Now we have to re-educate them why we're giving them those tests. [urban Hispanic focus group, Upstate]

*Female 1:* It could be the family doesn't even know how to help 'em.

*Female 2:* But you can't control a child's home life. You just have to try and it only takes a few to create a lot of problems and a lot of it has to do with the society itself. [retiree taxpayer focus group, Coastal]

*Further concerns about key knowledge and SC workforce.* The business stakeholder group answered seven questions on their web survey about what they believe is lacking among skills necessary to succeed in the workplace. The following table describes the percentage of business stakeholders who responded that skill deficits in these seven areas represented a critical or serious issue.

Missing Skill Sets	Critical Issue	Fairly Serious Issue	Total [columns to the left]
Low Level of Commitment/Motivation	66.4%	24.9%	91.3%
Poor Communication Skills	63.2%	29.8%	93.0%
Inadequate Reading and Writing Skills	58.4%	31.9%	90.3%
Lack of Initiative/Entrepreneurship	49.1%	37.3%	86.4%
Poor Math Skills	45.0%	39.3%	84.3%
Insufficient Computer Skills	33.8%	43.0%	76.8%
Lack of Industry Specific Skills	28.5%	38.6%	67.1%

Note: Neither the web nor the phone surveys provided the general public or educators this question set. The appendix lists frequencies across all response options of which the range

of remaining responses are  $\leq 7\%$  (*poor communication skills*) to 71.5% (*lack of industry specific skills*).

Overwhelmingly, business stakeholders identified the ability to communicate effectively, commitment and motivation, and reading and writing skills as *critical* and/or *fairly serious issues*. Nearly half of business stakeholders identified initiative and math skills as critical deficits. These responses echo those of other stakeholder groups who expressed concern over student engagement and motivation in suggesting that it was unfair to hold schools accountable for factors that were beyond their control. In the focus groups, business stakeholders and other stakeholders expressed concern about work ethics and other soft skills.

*Male 1:* I imagine that [with workplace skills] ... looking at it in software, internet, all those kind of things. Those important things, again, is: "I do Microsoft ... I can do all this kind of stuff-"

*Male 2:* What can the employer do for me? ...

[Crosstalk]

*Male 2:* So may be two categories [to] mention: work place skills and work ethic. 'Cause I'm not sure is that [ethics are] teachable in the school system as work place skills ...

*Male 1:* Yeah. I'm willing to admit that I've not talked work ethic to my children as well as my father taught it to me.

*Male 2:* We're [my company] actually required to start teaching work ethic [at the] request of personnel supervisors. [business focus group, Midlands]

Sometimes I think kids need to be able to know how to network .... You may be able to read, but if you don't know how to get what you need to read, or how to network wherever you are, whether it's in school or part-time job. [urban Hispanic focus group, Upstate]

That's [critical thinking is] important, which means we're just going to create a populace of people who just receive whatever's told to them, and not have the skills needed to do research, to find it for themselves. And so [is] the ability to quickly think beyond, or higher order thinking, which is what you're going to require once you come out of the public schools and go off to college. [urban African American focus group, Upstate]

The business web survey also provided participants an opportunity to use the Work Keys Skills® framework<sup>3</sup> to identify skills of importance. The following table illustrates the percentage of business stakeholders who positively rated the importance of these skills.

Important Skills as Measured by Work Keys	Critical	Very Important	Important	Total [columns to the left]
Listening	56.1%	24.5%	4.3%	84.9%
Teamwork	56.5%	21.3%	6.7%	84.5%
Observation	45.5%	26.9%	11.9%	84.3%
Reading for Information	44.3%	28.1%	11.9%	84.3%
Writing	34.4%	28.1%	19.4%	81.9%
Locating Information	40.7%	29.2%	11.9%	81.8%
Applied Mathematics	20.6%	30.0%	24.9%	75.5%
Applied Technology	20.6%	32.0%	21.3%	73.9%
Business Writing	21.3%	29.6%	20.9%	71.8%

Note: Neither the web nor the phone surveys provided the general public or educators this question set. The appendix lists frequencies across all response options, of which the remaining responses vary from  $\leq 15.1\%$  to  $28.2\%$ .

Overwhelmingly, business stakeholders responded that the most important skills that students must acquire to be successful in the workforce are listening, teamwork, observation skills, and reading for information. Consistent with the previous table, business stakeholders did not identify use of technology as the most critical skill for the workplace. Business stakeholders expressed a strong preference for a workforce prepared in interpersonal skills, the acceptance of personal responsibility as well as personal initiative in addition to the ability to read and write.

*Opinions on Rating Schools.* Surveys offered respondents an opportunity to choose how schools should be rated. The questions called for stakeholders to select the degree of association between student achievement, student growth, and school rankings. Here the groups differed in their perceptions of how to determine whether a school should be considered *Excellent*. The following chart displays responses to two questions: what is an acceptable percentage of students not on grade level in an excellent school?; and what is an acceptable percentage of students who do not improve in an excellent school? The responses in the chart represent those selecting *0% - all should be performing at grade level* or *under 10%*, the two most popular selections on the surveys.

	Parent			Educator			Taxpayer		
	0%	<10%	Total [columns to the left]	0%	<10%	Total [columns to the left]	0%	<10%	Total [columns to the left]
Acceptable percentage of students not on grade level in an excellent school	17.6%	42.7%	59.6%	4.0%	56.8%	60.8%	11.3%	55.3%	66.6%
Acceptable percentage of students who do not improve in an excellent school	18.7%	40.7%	59.4%	8.0%	50.4%	58.4%	16.1%	46.0%	62.1%

Note 1: Business stakeholders did not have these items on their web survey.

Note 2: The appendix lists frequencies across all response options, of which the remaining responses range from  $\leq 33.4\%$  to  $41.6\%$

Most of the comments acknowledged the difficulty of setting high standards for both student achievement and school ratings; with educators expressing the least confidence in expectations that all students can or should perform at grade level.

To me, 0% is unrealistic no school, district, or governing state department of education is perfect. Under 10% would be wonderful and truly should be an ideal target. Reasonably, I believe 10-20% is acceptable. [African American educator, 35-44 years old, Masters degree, survey comment]

I truly believe this school report card rating system is deeply flawed and the rating of Excellent is unfairly tied to these performance objectives. Schools have no control over the quality of the product they are sent from the families in their neighborhood. They have to work with what they get and do the best they can with what comes in the door. Thus it is an injustice to compare them. [White educator, 55-64, Masters degree, survey comment]

It is extremely difficult to take a school with an excellent rating and keep wanting improvement. It is a lot easier for a school at the bottom to improve than a school already excellent and still showing "lots" of improvement. It's like losing weight. It is real easy at first to lose weight but as you get to a good weight for you, your weight tends to stay around the same. Hopefully this makes sense. I love improvement, I just don't want us to be unrealistic and unfair to those schools who have an "excellent" rating. [White educator, survey comment]

I actually believe that anything less than 100% is not acceptable, because in this time it is almost impossible to succeed without a high school degree. However, I believe that not all children can do it in 12 years. Some need more than 4 to get through high school and some children need to repeat grades in elementary school (due to differences in maturation). [White taxpayer, 45-54 years old, Masters degree, survey comment]

I volunteer in the school but I am also a substitute teacher and have been doing this for 3 years. You see a lot when you are in the schools and that is why I feel at times they are misjudged with the school ratings. People do not understand what is factored into these. Think of the number of schools with high poverty levels. Not being prejudiced but some scores are lower in African American males who are especially living in poverty. Many children just don't get what they need from home and that is what we need to remember. The teachers and staff can only do so much for the students especially if you do not get support from their parents. Children are not always handed a great deck of cards so it is important that we do what we can to help them succeed. Failure cannot be an option. [White taxpayer, 35-44 years old, high school/GED, survey comment]

In the focus group discussions, all groups acknowledged challenges in establishing ratings for schools as well as the obstacles to learning in many schools and communities. Most conversations concluded with a recommitment to high standards for schools and students, as well as for educators.

*Male* : I'd say they should all [succeed]. If you're gonna move from one grade to another ... say they're gonna continue to be [learning]

*Male*: So we accept them doing worse ... – or not?

*Female*: As you know kids grow at different rates so that's the question. What percent are you gonna let fail? ...

*Male*: Zero. [retiree taxpayer focus group, Coastal region]

*Male 1*: That was my point earlier. I wish there was some way we could track kids as they progress through the educational system. And maybe it is already done and I am not aware of it.

*Male 2*: They do. Don't you get an individual report that shows a child from one year to the next? I've seen some of my grandkids get one of those where they take the test this year and they have on there and it shows how much they have improved.

*Male 1*: But is it looked at by the State?

*Female*: That is the MAP [commercial test]. [rural taxpayer focus group, Midlands]

*Female 1*: If they're not going to the next grade, then how's that a successful school? ...

*Female 2*: I agree with 0% [failing to grow in an Excellent School] this time. I think – even if I'm not as good as you, I think I should at least move up one step in a year.

*Male*: It's just not realistic – everybody's not going to continually improve every year – it's not realistic it would happen. [young adult focus group, Midlands]

I say no[to permitting anything more than 0% performing at grade level]. And the reason why I say no, I don't believe that a school should be excellent if a particular population of its school is not performing well, because I believe what it would do is it would allow the school not to serve those kids. [urban African American focus group, Upstate]

Besides the survey and focus group comments that illustrate a tension between educators and families/communities, a couple of survey questions show the extent to which a disconnect between educators and their communities exists. These results are shown in the following tables.

Parents and families do not provide support at home for academic achievement.	Parent	Educator	Taxpayer
Strongly agree	4.7%	21.7%	15.5%
Agree	29.5%	31.0%	31.2%
Disagree	53.4%	35.5%	37.2%
Strongly disagree	12.4%	11.8%	16.1%

Note: The business survey did not include this question.

Although 52.7% of educators agree or strongly agree that families do not focus on students' schoolwork, almost 66% of parents disagree or strongly disagree. Taxpayers split on this point, but a slight majority (53.3%) takes a perspective similar to parents. These results suggest a communication gap between educators and the closest network for student support, families.

The community environment does not support academic achievement.	Parent	Educator	Taxpayer
Strongly agree	4.1%	10.6%	9.3%
Agree	20.7%	21.2%	22.9%
Disagree	64.3%	50.2%	51.4%
Strongly disagree	10.9%	18.0%	16.4%

Note: The business survey did not include this question.

This table shows that the three stakeholders share closer opinions about community support for education. About one-third of educators and taxpayers agree or strongly agree that the community does not support academics, which means that for about 66% of these participants, local communities seem favorable to schools. However, 75% of parents believe that communities support education. Therefore, even though all groups view the community as favorable, the two groups, families and educators, most closely associated with students have differing perceptions.

### Lack of Awareness of National Trends in Education

Surveys offered participants a chance to assign grades to schools in their communities, the state and the nation. The following table shows the degree to which those willing to answer the questions about public schools eroded as the degree of distance increased.

<i>Don't Know</i> responses to grading schools in your ...			
	Parents	Educators	Taxpayers
Community	2.1%	1.5%	3.9%
State	20.4%	5.4%	9.0%
Nation	23.2%	8.7%	14.1%

Note: The business survey did not include this set of questions.

As with many polls asking the public to grade schools, the grades dropped as the distance between the participant and the schools in question increased. The following table shows that the respondents in this project replicated this phenomenon to a certain extent.

Grade the schools in your ...			
	Community	State	Nation
A	24.4%	3.4%	2.9%
B	40.2%	23.8%	33.4%
C	22.3%	41.6%	42.1%
D	7.7%	19.0%	8.3%
F	2.9%	4.5%	1.5%

Note: The business survey did not include this set of questions.

Community schools earn a B from most of the respondents. But in general, more than 20% of survey participants rated schools in the nation higher than they rated those in South Carolina. More of the participants graded SC schools with a D than they did schools in the US. Even more gave schools in the rest of the nation, a B. These data are reported as aggregate totals because there were no differences among stakeholders on the state and national ratings of schools. However, the following chart shows how educators differ in rating their local schools from parents and taxpayers.

Grade the schools in your community ...			
	Parent	Educator	Taxpayer
A	24.4%	28.3%	18.6%
B	37.9%	42.6%	37.1%
C	24.2%	19.7%	25.9%
D	7.3%	6.1%	10.1%
F	4.0%	1.8%	4.4%

Note: The business survey did not include this set of questions.

As noted with public school opinion polling nationally, most respondents rate their own schools highly, and this table supports that finding. Over 70% of educators rate their own schools with an A or a B, and parents are close behind with 62.3% willing to grade the local school with an A or B. Taxpayers are not as convinced about the quality of their local schools with about 56% willing to give an A or a B.

Although the business web survey did not include the same set of questions about grading community, state or national public schools, the participants were asked to rate schools from

elementary level through graduate schools. The following table aggregates the business responses across levels of schooling.

Grade area schools thinking about work force needs ...	Elem	Middle	High	Technical	Undergrad	Grad	Continuing Ed
A	9.1%	4.6%	3.7%	21.3%	14.6%	20.8%	15.1%
B	31.0%	21.3%	23.1%	44.2%	49.0%	41.3%	40.2%
C	28.5%	38.9%	36.8%	17.5%	18.0%	11.3%	18.0%
D	10.7%	13.8%	22.3%	5.4%	5.4%	3.3%	5.4%
F	3.3%	5.4%	6.6%	.8%	.8%	.8%	1.7%
Don't Know	17.4%	15.9%	7.4%	10.8%	12.1%	22.5%	19.7%

Note: This set of questions was on the business survey only.

Given plenty of room for interpreting these results, one likely possibility is that business participants reflect the same phenomena of reluctance to grade schools as their working knowledge decreases and a tendency to rate schools lower for the same reason. Apparently, knowledge of continuing education and elementary/middle school education is thin given the rates of *Don't Know* responses. Conversely, higher grades are assigned to technical, continuing education, and undergraduate schools. Interestingly, graduate education earned both higher grades and better than 20% *Don't Know* responses. Other stakeholders were not given similar questions in their web or phone surveys.

*Views about SC School Accountability.* The differences between educators' perspectives and the other stakeholders are more apparent in the answer to a question about the fairness of the requirement for continuous improvement in schools to achieve higher ratings.

% responding YES				
	Parent	Educator	Taxpayer	Total
Is the practice of requiring increased performance fair?	57.0%	27.6%	46.8%	36.7%

Note: The business survey did not include this question.

Survey comments from educators made it clear that they viewed educational accountability policy as a purely South Carolina anomaly or as if, the South Carolina approach was out of step with other states. In most cases, the comments revealed a confusion of curriculum standards with achievement performance levels. Several studies have documented the rigor of South Carolina's performance levels, but few research studies question the general alignment of grade and subject level curriculum standards with typical expectations for learning for US school students (Cronin, Dahlin, Adkins, & Kingsbury, 2007; US Department of Education, 2007).

With SC standards being the 4th most difficult in the US, the 78% expectation of students being Proficient or Advanced (and climbing) is like shooting ourselves in the foot. Also, No Child Left Behind allows ESOL students to exempt from standardized testing for 3 years but SC only allows 1 year. With 55% of my school qualifying for ESOL, this dramatically hurts our students and school ratings. [White educator, 25-34 yrs, Masters degree, survey comment]

South Carolina has some of the most rigorous state standards. Because of this and the demand to meet criteria that constantly changes, schools are often unfairly labeled unsatisfactory when, in fact, their performance remains unchanged from the initial Excellent rating. This is why this is unfair. [White educator, survey comment]

Re: schools being required to increase rigor---I think this is promoting schools to go beyond what should be reasonably expected of children. [White educator, 35-44 years old, Bachelors degree, survey comment]

The testing system in SC is unfair. You cannot keep raising the bar every year. Why is our test so much harder than the rest of the nation? SC receives so much bad publicity because no one understands that our standards and testing are so much more difficult than other states. [White educator, 45-54 years old, Masters degree, survey comment]

Even though educators offered strong opinions concerning the rigor of South Carolina's accountability policy, the table below shows how respondents on two of the surveys expressed some optimism about students' ability to grow.

The school keeps raising requirements so some children will never be able to succeed	Phone Survey Respondents	Web Survey Respondents
Strongly agree	4.1%	18.0%
Agree	40.3%	26.9%
Disagree	48.5%	43.6%
Strongly Disagree	7.1%	11.5%

Note: The business survey did not include this question.

Overall, the survey participants disagreed with this statement (55.6%, phone) and (55.1%, web). That means that a majority believe that students can succeed as rigor increases.

Some with experience from other states remarked that they had not seen rigor from SC schools. Others were concerned about teachers' commitment to working with students.

I moved years ago and first to Georgia and for about a year neither of my kids had to do any work. Then we moved to South Carolina and for about a year they didn't have to do any work. [business focus group, Upstate]

When I was at [local school] Friday, I had five students tell me that they felt that their teachers did not care. They would raise their hand and say, "I have a question." [teacher's response was] "Well you didn't get it? Well good luck to you. You have to get it later. We have to move on, for the rest of the class." And five different kids told me that same thing. So they're feeling neglected. [urban African American focus group, Upstate]

You gotta test to know how your school's doin'. I like standardized tests. I just wish we'd use it to be able to evaluate educators and how successful they're being in moving kids from one grade. That's where it should be used. [business focus group, Upstate]

How much pressure is there on the teachers to get Joe into the next level? [retiree taxpayer focus group, Coastal region]

As a final note on the perceptions concerning SC's accountability system, two of the surveys, web for general public and educators, and the phone survey offered participants a chance to reflect on whether funds should be invested in improving schools where achievement is low. The following table shows the distribution of responses across stakeholders.

Do you think funds should be targeted toward schools with ...	Parents	Educators	Taxpayers
Low test scores	18.6%	11.9%	12.8%
Low improvement in scores	7.8%	7.6%	8.2%
Both equally	65.4%	75.3%	70.8%
Don't know	8.3%	5.3%	8.2%

Note: The business survey did not include this question.

Generally those participating in the web surveys for the public and educators, and those participating in the phone interviews would like to see funding for schools struggling with achievement and/or with improving achievement. These results support the finding that most participants believe that schools and students can meet increasing rigor in SC's accountability system.

Overall South Carolinians support features of the accountability system, even though they are not aware of national trends in this area. While many view their local schools as worthy of an A or a B grade, educators view their schools more favorably than other groups. Unlike typical polling responses across the US, South Carolinians generally rated schools nationally higher than SC schools. Despite comments about how SC standards are different and more rigorous than the rest of the nation, South Carolinians gave higher grades to schools in the nation than to SC schools. The majority of stakeholders believe that families and communities support schools, but educators do not share as strong a belief that families support schools as others do. Parents reported community support in larger proportions than did other stakeholders. Generally, regardless of stakeholder group, most South Carolinians view increasing rigor as an acceptable feature of accountability, although, comments from educators on the surveys expressed strong opinions otherwise. Views on funding support distribution of resources for schools with low scores as well as for schools that have trouble increasing scores. The latter group of schools may not have been completely understood as a separate category. South Carolinians do not have a strong awareness of differentials in student achievement.

### Lack of Awareness of Achievement Gaps

Through the web surveys, three groups of stakeholders (parents, educators, and taxpayers) had the opportunity to respond to questions concerning gaps in student achievement among four groupings of students: (a) White and African American students, (b) affluent students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, (c) native English-speaking students and English Language Learners (ELL), and (d) students with and without disabilities. Focus group participants, including business leaders, discussed graphs of the achievement gaps that typically reside on the EOC web site [See Appendix]. Those graphs show that with the most recent data the achievement gaps are greater in schools rated *Excellent* than in schools with lower ratings. In all schools, the gaps occur among all other groups and African American students, especially African American students in poverty.

The following chart is a summary chart of the degree to which many of the survey respondents expressed some level of lack of awareness of the differences in achievement among the four groupings of students.

Overall Awareness of Achievement Gaps				
<i>Those responding No Differences or Don't know</i>				
	Parents	Educators	Taxpayers	Total
White & Black Gap	34%	7%	18%	13%
Affluent & Disadvantaged Gap	21%	3%	12%	8%
Native English & English Language Learners Gap	22%	9%	19%	13%
Students without & Students with Disabilities Gap	25%	8%	22%	14%

Note: The Business survey did not include the question set about achievement gaps.

General expectations dictate that most educators understand differences among various groups of students' achievement than perhaps other stakeholders. Surprisingly, parents appear to be the group expressing the greatest lack of knowledge or underestimate of the gaps in students' achievement. Taxpayers also revealed a lack of knowledge or minimized the differentials in student achievement. The following tables show more specifics about the distribution of awareness of each of the four groupings of student comparisons across the three stakeholders.

Awareness of Achievement Gaps between White Students and Black Students across the State				
	Parents	Educators	Taxpayers	Total
Very large differences	13.6%	18.7%	19.1%	18.5%
Large differences	35.3%	51.1%	43.6%	47.3%
Small differences	17.6%	23.4%	19.0%	21.4%
No differences	13.4%	2.5%	6.3%	4.6%
Don't know	20.2%	4.3%	12.0%	8.2%

Note: The Business survey did not include the question set about achievement gaps.

According to these responses, parents are the least aware of the achievement gaps between White students and Black students. Focus group discussions confirmed these results. However, educators also supplied comments on their surveys indicating that they believed that achievement gaps between races no longer exist.

Most students today, whether black or white, have parents who received the same educational opportunity. I believe that this has closed the "achievement gap" between races. Those who are disadvantaged do not have the same support from parents and extended family, which causes the gap. Those with disabilities may or may not have the necessary innate ability to close the gap. On this subject, I find it appalling that Special Educations students are expected to test on grade level when they are not usually on grade level to begin with. [White educator, 35-44 years old, Bachelors degree, survey research]

That surprises me. I work with non-native English learners, and I thought the Hispanics would be below the African Americans. That's actually a very sad step, right there, that someone needs to reach out, especially in this day, to the African American community ... [urban Hispanic focus group, Upstate]

Why are there such gaps, you know? That's what I'm thinking, like geez? [urban African American focus group, Upstate]

I can talk about this because in the [local school district's] 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant [preparation] this came up. If you look at African American and free & reduced [priced meals] students' scores, you see, the environment causes low performance, due to lack of the involvement of parent/guardian in the education system. [minority community leader focus group, Coastal]

All stakeholders reported the same level of awareness of the achievement gaps between affluent students and those in poverty. Again, parents showed slightly less awareness of the gaps due to poverty.

Awareness of Achievement Gaps between Advantaged Students and Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds across the State				
	Parents	Educators	Taxpayers	Total
Very large differences	22.3%	39.6%	33.3%	36.1%
Large differences	43.8%	48.4%	42.1%	45.7%
Small differences	13.4%	8.8%	12.9%	10.6%
No differences	9.9%	.8%	4.3%	2.7%
Don't know	10.6%	2.5%	7.3%	4.8%

Note: The Business survey did not include the question set about achievement gaps.

Most of the survey comments as well as the focus groups revealed the greatest concern about achievement gaps due to poverty. To some extent, the beliefs about these gaps seemed to be attributed to one part of the state, the area of the state identified as the Corridor of Shame.

The largest gap in my opinion occurs between students from a low socioeconomic group vs. students from a high socioeconomic group. Generational poverty has a huge effect on the student's expectations for himself and whether he can see himself escaping this poverty trap. Yet, we continue to dish out educational choices that do not meet the needs of these students. We use a one-size-fits-all curriculum that emphasizes college preparedness. These students can't envision themselves going to college (either 2 or 4 year). If there were more vocational training opportunities, they could see themselves being trained. Look at the countries that exceed ours in education. They do not expect every student to go to college. They provide training in respected jobs while the students are in high school. We cannot hook these students into school if we don't meet their needs [White educator, 55-64 years old, Masters degree, survey comment]

Though I have not been in all the public schools in SC, as I sit here taking this survey the infamous SC "Corridor of Shame" is being broadcast nationwide on CNN. When our own state can't find a way to rid us of this "sin against our children," and one of those very children is compelled to write and ask for help from the national government, "SHAME" on us! We don't deserve a decent grade. A "C" is very generous. [White educator, 55-64 years old, Masters degree, survey comment]

The following table shows the same three stakeholder groups' awareness of the gap in achievement between English Language Learners (ELL) and native speakers.

Awareness of Achievement Gaps between Native English Speaking Students vs. Students Who Have English as a Second Language across the State				
	Parents	Educators	Taxpayers	Total
Very large differences	17.1%	21.9%	21.1%	21.3%
Large differences	39.0%	46.9%	41.8%	44.5%
Small differences	21.7%	22.7%	18.2%	20.9%
No differences	6.5%	1.1%	3.3%	2.3%
Don't know	15.6%	7.4%	15.7%	11.0%

Note: The Business survey did not include the question set about achievement gaps.

Based on trends in achievement gaps [see appendix], ELL tend to do a little better on achievement tests than some of the other groups. Comments by stakeholders showed some variety in concerns about this performance gap. In the surveys, educators tended to state their concern that any of these achievement gaps are included in accounting for school ratings. Moreover, with some language learners, educators note that schooling is complicated by immigration issues and other social needs such as homelessness. Many were hopeful about success for those who do learn English; this was apparent in focus group discussion.

My school has a sizable ESOL population that is in our country illegally. Often times, these students will return to their home country without withdrawing properly. Since the home school never requests records from us, my school is penalized by their not

graduating from our school since we cannot document where they went. [White educator, 35-44 years old, Masters degree, survey comments]

Although there are differences, there are reasons for these differences. Special Education Students are in Special Education for a reason. You cannot expect them to achieve at the same rate as other students so to compare them using the same criteria is crazy. The same goes for students who are ESOL. It takes about 7 years for someone to fully master the language in all areas. [White educator, 45-54 years old, Masters degree, survey comments]

There is a number of kids that were coming to the Hispanic afterschool program that were failing, because the parents didn't know a language. And they went from like 60s to 100s. Today, I was there, I had to meet someone. And [the students] came in, "Look, Ms. [Name], my first 100." They were like – "We understand." Why? Because someone took the time to explain, to sit and make them understand – you have to keep – it's repetition, it's study. [urban Hispanic focus group, Upstate]

The final table displays the awareness of parents, educators and taxpayers concerning achievement gaps between students with and without disabilities.

Awareness of Achievement Gaps between Students Without and Those With Disabilities across the State				
	Parents	Educators	Taxpayers	Total
Very large differences	18.9%	25.3%	23.4%	24.2%
Large differences	34.0%	44.1%	34.7%	40.0%
Small differences	21.9%	22.3%	20.1%	21.5%
No differences	8.3%	2.2%	3.8%	3.2%
Don't know	16.9%	6.0%	17.9%	11.1%

Note: The Business survey did not include the question set about achievement gaps.

The conversation about the potential for students with disabilities to learn raises a number of questions about awareness of disabilities and/or capabilities across all the stakeholder groups. Educators added a number of comments to their surveys frankly stating their beliefs that students with disabilities could not learn. Parents and other members of the public commented on their beliefs that educators were not aware of the approaches to take in insuring learning for students with disabilities.

The question about [achievement gaps for] disabled students is not relevant. Of course they lag behind, that is why they have been tested, identified, labeled and attend special programs or receive some form of special education. [White educator, 45-54 years old, doctoral degree, survey comment]

There are special education students that will never perform at grade level; that's why they are in special education. The scores of students that are not "regular" education

students should not be counted against a school, and they currently are. [White educator, 55-64 years old, Masters degree, survey comment]

Our school personnel still refuse to acknowledge that dyslexia is a real problem that must be addressed in the classroom. Parents are still told that the dyslexia is a medical problem, or that it doesn't exist, even though the word 'dyslexia' is listed in the IDEA law as a specific language-based learning disability. Schools do not have teachers trained to offer appropriate early intervention for students, nearly ten years after the IDEA law went into effect. I consider this educational malpractice. [White taxpayer, 55-64, Bachelors degree, survey comment]

I lead a grass roots group of parents and advocates for schoolchildren with disabilities. SC continues to be in grossed noncompliance with the Office of Special Education (OSEP, the enforcing arm of the US DOE) year after year. The SCDE has no reliable data collection, nor a plan to correct noncompliance issues, no leadership, nor the intelligence to educate children with disabilities. Seventy percent of children disabilities only have a mild disability (Specific Learning Disability or a Speech/Language Impairment) yet SC graduates only 25% (25th Annual Report to Congress). The SCDE will not enforce State Complaints and when parents go to due processes, so-called Hearing officers are biased and always find for the districts. [White taxpayer, 45-54 years old, Bachelors degree, survey comment]

I know that the kids who are special needs are allowed certain things that other kids are not, but even though they're allowed that extra whatever it is they help them on tests ...accommodations... They still don't perform at the level and they never will [business focus group, Midlands]

## Conclusion

### South Carolinians' Aspirations

South Carolinians want strong schools and successful adults but these aspirations come with some inherent contradictions. They believe that strong schools attend to the basics – Reading, Writing, and Math, but not all South Carolinians believe that traditional schooling is wise in the current or future eras. They believe that students should be ready for work, and employers believe work readiness includes “soft skills” such as, listening, work ethic/motivation, and teamwork, but these skills are not on the top of all South Carolinians' lists.

### South Carolinians and Standards

South Carolinians have two main concerns about determining measures of good schools: (1) control of disruptive students and general school safety and (2) higher rates for on-time high school graduation. South Carolinians expect *Excellent Schools* to ensure at least 90% achieving on grade level, and they believe that students can meet requirements for increasing rigor.

South Carolinians are ambiguous about testing and the degree to which achievement gaps persist among groups of students. More South Carolinians acknowledge gaps in student achievement due to poverty and the social conditions that may prevent students in poverty from higher achievement. However, although they believe that their communities support education, they don't believe that all SC communities support education. They express concern that some communities allow students and schools to suffer due to poor economic conditions. South Carolinians acknowledge the achievement gap between students with disabilities and those without, but many believe that this gap is inevitable and unchangeable. A large number of educators and the public believe that this gap is due to students with severe or challenging disabilities; yet, other stakeholders point out that the largest group of students with disabilities is comprised of those with learning disabilities, who have normal intelligence and can learn with proper teaching techniques. The conflict over this gap is whether educators have adequate knowledge for addressing students with learning disabilities' needs. Many participants in this project were surprised that the achievement gap for English Language Learners was not as great as they might have expected. The larger gap between White and Black students also surprised many of the participants. In the minds of many, this gap is confounded by poverty, but the most current data show that this gap persists among more affluent students in both races as well. Closing achievement gaps requires both acknowledgement and knowledge about the variety of educational approaches suited to each grouping of students.

The engagement project conducted by Clemson for the Education Oversight Committee involved South Carolinians across the state in garnering opinions, comments, and in generating discussion about expectations for schools and students. South Carolinians have high expectations and want their schools to improve. Even though they differ in their views about good schooling, South Carolinians want students to be productive citizens.

Appendix  
Survey Questions and  
Responses

Phone Survey

Are there school age children living in your household?

	Valid Percent
Yes	42.1%
No	57.9%
Total	100.0%

What grade is the oldest school age child in your household currently enrolled in?

	Valid Percent
Pre-school	1.7
Kindergarten	5.3
1st grade	4.4
2nd grade	3.3
3rd grade	4.3
4th grade	5.9
5th grade	5.1
6th grade	8.0
7th grade	5.3
8th grade	5.6
9th grade (freshman)	12.3
10th grade (sophomore)	9.8
11th grade (junior)	14.8
12th grade (senior)	14.1
Total	100.0

How many school age children live in your household?

	Valid Percent
One	41.2
Two	39.2
Three	14.9
Four	2.2
Five	1.8
Six or more	.6
Total	100.0

Where does the oldest school-age child in your household receive his or her education?

	Valid Percent
Public school	89.0
Private school	7.6
Home school	2.1
Other	1.4
Total	100.0

Since you have been an adult, have you lived in a household with school age children?

	Valid Percent
Yes	64.7
No	35.3
Total	100.0

The last time you lived with a school age child, where did that child receive his or her education?

	Valid Percent
Public school	82.8
Private school	7.4
Home school	.3
Other	6.8
Does not go to school	2.7
Total	100.0

Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D, and

What grade would you give the public schools in your community A, B, C, D, or F?

	Valid Percent
A	21.4
B	36.8
C	23.7
D	8.5
F	4.3
Don't know	5.5
Total	100.0

Now think about the public schools in the state of South Carolina. What grade would you give to the public schools in the state A, B, C, D, or F?

	Valid Percent
A	7.9
B	29.0
C	30.2
D	13.4
F	3.2
Don't know	16.2
Total	100.0

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally A, B, C, D, or F?

	Valid Percent
A	4.6
B	33.7
C	32.9
D	4.3
F	1.3
Don't know	23.2
Total	100.0

Consider the following set of skills for students graduating in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. How important are...

Math skills

	Valid Percent
Critical	31.9
Very important	41.9
Important	21.2
Not very important	4.1
Not at all important	.8
Don't know	.1
Total	100.0

Reading skills

	Valid Percent
Critical	40.7
Very important	43.9
Important	14.3
Not very important	.7
Not at all important	.4
Total	100.0

Writing skills

	Valid Percent
Critical	33.1
Very important	42.7
Important	22.0
Not very important	2.3
Not at all important	0
Total	100.0

Ability to be a knowledgeable citizen

	Valid Percent
Critical	31.7
Very important	44.2
Important	22.0
Not very important	1.1
Not at all important	.1
Don't know	.9
Total	100.0

Skills to succeed in the workplace

	Valid Percent
Critical	31.7
Very important	46.4
Important	18.5
Not very important	2.2
Not at all important	.5
Don't know	.7
Total	100.0

All in all, do you think the public schools in South Carolina are providing young people with the key knowledge they need?

	Valid Percent
Yes	47.9
No	44.8
Don't know	7.3
Total	100.0

Science skills

	Valid Percent
Critical	17.1
Very important	34.7
Important	36.2
Not very important	10.2
Not at all important	1.6
Don't know	.1
Total	100.0

I am going to list a number of factors that may be important in determining if a school is doing well. How important is . . .

Rates of promotion to the next grade

	Valid Percent
Critical	22.2
Very important	28.2
Important	31.3
Not very important	8.7
Not at all important	2.1
Don't know	7.6
Total	100.0

Annual standardized tests

	Valid Percent
Critical	13.3
Very important	20.3
Important	43.5
Not very important	16.5
Not at all important	4.7
Don't know	1.8
Total	100.0

Control over student behavior

	Valid Percent
Critical	41.5
Very important	36.5
Important	20.0
Not very important	1.1
Not at all important	.3
Don't know	.5
Total	100.0

High school graduation rate

	Valid Percent
Critical	40.2
Very important	39.2
Important	17.0
Not very important	1.9
Not at all important	.6
Don't know	1.0
Total	100.0

Scores for College Admissions tests (such as SAT or ACT)

	Valid Percent
Critical	18.9
Very important	35.9
Important	34.1
Not very important	4.9
Not at all important	1.7
Don't know	4.5
Total	100.0

Offering advanced coursework (such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate)

	Valid Percent
Critical	22.4
Very important	34.8
Important	35.3
Not very important	4.4
Not at all important	.5
Don't know	2.6
Total	100.0

Next, I'd like to talk with you about differences in achievement between groups of students.

First, how great are the differences in achievement between White students and Black students across the state?

	Valid Percent
Very large differences	15.3
Large differences	33.6
Small differences	18.6
No differences	13.4
Don't know	19.1
Total	100.0

How great are the differences in achievement between students from wealthy backgrounds vs. students from disadvantaged backgrounds across the state?

	Valid Percent
Very large differences	25.8
Large differences	37.4
Small differences	18.9
No differences	9.5
Don't know	8.3
Total	100.0

How great are the differences in achievement between Native English speaking students vs. students who have English as a second language across the state?

	Valid Percent
Very large differences	19.9
Large differences	37.2
Small differences	22.7
No differences	3.7
Don't know	16.5
Total	100.0

Finally, how great are the differences in achievement between students with a disability vs. students without a disability across the state?

	Valid Percent
Very large differences	20.3
Large differences	31.7
Small differences	20.9
No differences	7.5
Don't know	19.5
Total	100.0

Overall, how concerned are you about these differences?

	Valid Percent
Very concerned	64.9
Somewhat concerned	18.8
Little concern	2.0
No concern	2.7
Don't know	11.6
Total	100.0

The on-time high school graduation rate in SC is currently estimated to be around 70%, meaning approximately 70% of 9th graders graduate on time four years later. Children entering first grade this fall will be graduating in the year 2020. What do you think is an acceptable graduation rate?

	Valid Percent
70% or below	10.1
75%	5.7
80%	14.8
85%	22.0
90%	22.3
95%	13.1
100%	12.0
Total	100.0

Kentucky has set a goal to be in the top 20 of states in on-time high graduation rate by 2020. Do you think South Carolina can accomplish this?

	Valid Percent
Certainly can	26.3
Maybe can	62.7
Probably can't	6.7
Certainly can't	4.3
Total	100.0

Along with educating individual students, schools also serve other roles. How important is the school's role ...

As a source of community pride

	Valid Percent
Critical	18.7
Very important	39.8
Important	31.0
Not very important	5.1
Not at all important	2.3
Don't know	3.1
Total	100.0

example, needs to improve its performance over time to continue to be rated Excellent. This practice of increasing rigor is

	Valid Percent
Fair	65.2
Unfair	20.4
Don't know	14.4
Total	100.0

As a place for community members to meet

	Valid Percent
Critical	8.5
Very important	25.3
Important	44.3
Not very important	14.2
Not at all important	5.1
Don't know	2.6
Total	100.0

In a school rated 'Excellent' in South Carolina, what would be an acceptable percentage of students who do not perform at grade level?

	Valid Percent
0% - all should be performing at grade level	19.0
under 10%	36.8
10%-25%	19.5
26%-50%	9.1
over 50%	5.3
Don't know	10.3
Total	100.0

As a location for recreational activities

	Valid Percent
Critical	15.2
Very important	26.7
Important	42.9
Not very important	9.5
Not at all important	3.1
Don't know	2.6
Total	100.0

In a school rated 'Excellent' in South Carolina, what would be an acceptable percentage of students who do not improve their performance from one year to the next?

	Valid Percent
0% - all should be performing at grade level	22.8
under 10%	32.1
10%-25%	20.1
26%-50%	10.3
over 50%	5.2
Don't know	9.4
Total	100.0

As a symbol of community values

	Valid Percent
Critical	16.8
Very important	33.3
Important	40.0
Not very important	3.9
Not at all important	2.6
Don't know	3.3
Total	100.0

Since 2004, South Carolina schools have had to improve their performance in order to earn higher ratings. A school rated 'Excellent,' for

As people across South Carolina think about spending on schools, do you think funds should be targeted toward schools that have the lowest test scores or schools where test scores show little or no improvement over time?

	Valid Percent
Low test scores	21.1
Low improvement in scores	10.9
Both equally	54.9
Don't know	13.0
Total	100.0

Now, think about the school your oldest child attends.

The school climate promotes academic achievement

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	24.8
Agree	64.7
Disagree	9.3
Strongly disagree	1.2
Total	100.0

When someone at the school does a good job it is properly recognized.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	18.4
Agree	64.9
Disagree	14.6
Strongly disagree	2.0
Total	100.0

Teachers have the preparation needed for the subject they are teaching.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	15.3
Agree	61.0
Disagree	22.4
Strongly disagree	1.3
Total	100.0

Students have the preparation needed for the subject they are learning.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	12.4
Agree	63.7
Disagree	22.6
Strongly disagree	1.3
Total	100.0

Student behavior is a barrier to learning.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	26.2
Agree	57.2
Disagree	14.1
Strongly disagree	2.5
Total	100.0

Parents and families do not provide support at home for academic achievement.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	7.2
Agree	37.3
Disagree	46.2
Strongly disagree	9.3
Total	100.0

The community environment does not support academic achievement.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	5.1
Agree	27.7
Disagree	58.2
Strongly disagree	8.9
Total	100.0

The school lacks the books, equipment and other instructional material needed in the classroom.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	9.5
Agree	36.1
Disagree	45.0
Strongly disagree	9.4
Total	100.0

Too much time is spent on testing and not enough time on teaching.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	12.7
Agree	39.6
Disagree	42.1
Strongly disagree	5.6
Total	100.0

The school keeps raising requirements so some children will never be able to succeed.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	4.1
Agree	40.3
Disagree	48.5
Strongly disagree	7.1
Total	100.0

The principal provides appropriate leadership.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	13.4
Agree	64.0
Disagree	18.2
Strongly disagree	4.4
Total	100.0

Teachers who do a good job are properly recognized.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	9.3
Agree	64.3
Disagree	24.7
Strongly disagree	1.7
Total	100.0

Teachers can do a poor job and nothing is done about it.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	14.3
Agree	49.1
Disagree	30.2
Strongly disagree	6.5
Total	100.0

Using the A, B, C, D, and F scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?

	Valid Percent
A	27.9
B	44.2
C	20.2
D	4.8
F	1.9
Don't know	1.0
Total	100.0

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	8.3
Agree	51.1
Disagree	29.7
Strongly disagree	2.9
Don't know	8.0
Total	100.0

Next think about state achievement tests in South Carolina.

These tests produce unnecessary child stress.

First, think about ongoing subject-based classroom tests.

These tests produce unnecessary child stress.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	11.6
Agree	33.3
Disagree	43.9
Strongly disagree	7.5
Don't know	3.7
Total	100.0

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	19.3
Agree	43.1
Disagree	29.8
Strongly disagree	1.9
Don't know	6.0
Total	100.0

These tests help individual students learn.

These tests help individual students learn.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	5.9
Agree	65.1
Disagree	18.9
Strongly disagree	5.5
Don't know	4.6
Total	100.0

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	1.4
Agree	41.5
Disagree	42.1
Strongly disagree	9.4
Don't know	5.6
Total	100.0

These tests promote better school achievement.

These tests promote better school achievement.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	8.9
Agree	62.8
Disagree	22.9
Strongly disagree	.8
Don't know	4.6
Total	100.0

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	5.6
Agree	50.1
Disagree	34.1
Strongly disagree	3.2
Don't know	7.0
Total	100.0

These tests help the principal evaluate teachers.

These tests help the principal evaluate teachers.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	3.2
Agree	43.6
Disagree	37.6
Strongly disagree	6.8
Don't know	8.9
Total	100.0

These tests help the principal evaluate teachers.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	7.3
Agree	35.4
Disagree	43.3
Strongly disagree	4.0
Don't know	10.0
Total	100.0

Finally, think about college admissions tests such as SAT/ACT.

I am going to read a series of age groups, please stop me when I reach the group you belong to

These tests produce unnecessary child stress.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	13.1
Agree	40.9
Disagree	35.4
Strongly disagree	3.5
Don't know	7.1
Total	100.0

	Valid Percent
18 – 24 years old	19.3
25 – 34 years old	14.1
35 – 44 years old	16.5
45 – 54 years old	16.5
55 – 64 years old	16.0
65 years old or older	17.6
Total	100.0

These tests help individual students learn.

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	6.8
Agree	43.1
Disagree	39.7
Strongly disagree	4.6
Don't know	5.8
Total	100.0

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

	Valid Percent
Less than a high school degree	23.7
High school degree or GED	21.1
Some college or technical school (no degree)	23.3
Associates degree or technical degree	9.4
Bachelor's degree	12.8
Master's degree / professional degree (law, MBA)	7.6
Doctoral degree (including MD)	2.1
Total	100.0

These tests promote better school achievement

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	7.3
Agree	48.8
Disagree	33.3
Strongly disagree	3.0
Don't know	7.6
Total	100.0

When official forms ask you to select a category to describe your race or ethnicity, what category do you typically choose?

	Valid Percent
White	71.4
Black or African American	26.8

American Indian and Alaska Native	.9%
Asian	.5%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	.4%
Total	100.0%



Web Survey  
Public & Educators

**Are there school age children living in your household?**

	Valid Percent
Yes	50.8
No	49.2
Total	100.0

**How many school age children live in your household?**

	Valid Percent
One	43.3
Two	43.6
Three	10.3
Four	2.2
Five	.4
Six or more	.1
Total	100.0

**Where does the oldest school-age child in your household receive his or her education?**

	Valid Percent
Public school	92.1
Private school	5.7
Home school	.8
Other	1.1
Does not go to school	.3
Total	100.0

**What grade is the oldest school age child in your household currently enrolled in?**

	Valid Percent
Pre-school	4.0
Kindergarten	5.1
1st grade	4.8
2nd grade	5.8
3rd grade	5.7
4th grade	6.4
5th grade	5.4
6th grade	7.3
7th grade	7.4
8th grade	8.3
9th grade (freshman)	9.4
10th grade (sophomore)	8.8
11th grade (junior)	9.3
12th grade (senior)	12.3
Total	100.0

**Since you have been an adult, have you lived in a household with school age children?**

	Valid Percent
Yes	61.5
No	38.5
Total	100.0

**If, as an adult, you have ever lived with a school age child, where did that child last receive his or her education?**

	Valid Percent
Public school	89.4
Private school	5.9
Home school	.7
Other	1.4
Does not go to school	2.6
Total	100.0

Students are often given the grades of A, B, C, D; what grade would you give the public schools in your community: A, B, C, D, or F?

	Valid Percent
A	25.4
B	40.6
C	22.2
D	7.2
F	2.8
Don't know	1.7
Total	100.0

Now think about the public schools in the state of South Carolina.

What grade would you give to the public schools in the state: A, B, C, D, or F?

	Valid Percent
A	3.2
B	23.8
C	42.8
D	19.8
F	4.6
Don't know	5.8
Total	100.0

How about the public schools in the nation as a whole? What grade would you give the public schools nationally: A, B, C, D, or F?

	Valid Percent
A	2.8
B	33.5
C	43.6
D	8.9
F	1.5
Don't know	9.6
Total	100.0

Consider the following set of skills for students graduating in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. How important are...

**Math skills**

	Valid Percent
Critical	75.4
Very important	20.0
Important	4.3
Not very important	.2
Not at all important	.1
Don't know	.1
Total	100.0

**Reading skills**

	Valid Percent
Critical	89.6
Very important	9.1
Important	1.1
Not very important	.0
Not at all important	.1
Don't know	.1
Total	100.0

**Writing skills**

	Valid Percent
Critical	71.0
Very important	23.0
Important	5.6
Not very important	.3
Not at all important	.1
Don't know	.1
Total	100.0

**Skills to succeed in the workplace**

	Valid Percent
Critical	76.5
Very important	18.8
Important	4.2
Not very important	.3
Not at all important	.1
Don't know	.1
Total	100.0

**Science skills**

	Valid Percent
Critical	43.1
Very important	35.6
Important	18.7
Not very important	2.4
Not at all important	.1
Don't know	.1
Total	100.0

**Ability to be a knowledgeable citizen**

	Valid Percent
Critical	66.7
Very important	25.8
Important	6.8
Not very important	.4
Not at all important	.1
Don't know	.1
Total	100.0

**All in all, do you think the public schools in South Carolina are providing young people with the key knowledge they need?**

	Valid Percent
Yes	50.0
No	42.7
Don't know	7.3
Total	100.0

**Listed below are a number of factors that may be important in determining if a school is doing well. How important is**

**Rates of promotion to the next grade**

	Valid Percent
Critical	17.7
Very important	33.1
Important	34.9
Not very important	11.1
Not at all important	2.4
Don't know	.9
Total	100.0

**Annual standardized tests**

	Valid Percent
Critical	5.7
Very important	16.5
Important	44.4
Not very important	25.9
Not at all important	7.2
Don't know	.3
Total	100.0

**Control over student behavior**

	Valid Percent
Critical	59.5
Very important	29.3
Important	10.2
Not very important	.6
Not at all important	.1
Don't know	.2
Total	100.0

**High school graduation rate**

	Valid Percent
Critical	46.9
Very important	35.5
Important	15.3
Not very important	1.6
Not at all important	.4
Don't know	.2
Total	100.0

**Scores for College Admissions tests (such as SAT or ACT)**

	Valid Percent
Critical	18.9
Very important	38.3
Important	32.3
Not very important	8.6
Not at all important	1.7
Don't know	.3
Total	100.0

**Offering advanced coursework (such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate)**

	Valid Percent
Critical	33.2
Very important	39.0
Important	22.3
Not very important	4.2
Not at all important	.7
Don't know	.6
Total	100.0

**Given what you know about public elementary and high school students' achievement, how concerned are you about the differences in achievement:**

**... between White students and Black students across the state?**

	Valid Percent
Very large differences	19.1
Large differences	49.4
Small differences	22.3
No differences	3.2
Don't know	6.0
Total	100.0

**... between students from advantaged backgrounds vs. students from disadvantaged backgrounds across the state?**

	Valid Percent
Very large differences	38.7
Large differences	46.7
Small differences	9.5
No differences	1.2
Don't know	3.9
Total	100.0

**... between Native English speaking students vs. students who have English as a second language across the state?**

	Valid Percent
Very large differences	21.8
Large differences	45.7
Small differences	21.2
No differences	1.6
Don't know	9.7
Total	100.0

**... between students with a disability vs. students without a disability across the state?**

	Valid Percent
Very large differences	25.0
Large differences	41.2
Small differences	21.7
No differences	2.4
Don't know	9.8
Total	100.0

**Children entering first grade this fall will be graduating in the year 2020. What do you think is an acceptable graduation rate?**

	Valid Percent
70% or below	7.6
75%	7.2
80%	15.5
85%	19.8
90%	25.8
95%	17.0
100%	7.1
Total	100.0

**Along with educating individual students, schools also serve other roles. How import is the school's role as ...**

**As a source of community pride**

	Valid Percent
Critical	35.5
Very important	43.4
Important	16.6
Not very important	3.3
Not at all important	.8
Don't know	.4
Total	100.0

**As a place for community members to meet**

	Valid Percent
Critical	16.2
Very important	33.7
Important	31.2
Not very important	15.4
Not at all important	2.8
Don't know	.7
Total	100.0

**As a location for recreational activities**

	Valid Percent
Critical	15.0
Very important	29.5
Important	32.8
Not very important	17.7
Not at all important	4.5
Don't know	.6
Total	100.0

**As a symbol of community values**

	Valid Percent
Critical	38.5
Very important	37.6
Important	17.4
Not very important	4.4
Not at all important	1.6
Don't know	.5
Total	100.0

**In a school rated 'Excellent' in South Carolina, what would be an acceptable percentage of students who do not improve their performance from one year to the next?**

	Valid Percent
0% - all should perform at grade level	9.6
under 10%	50.2
10%-25%	26.1
26% or more	7.3
Don't know	6.8
Total	100.0

**Since 2004, South Carolina schools have had to improve their performance in order to earn higher ratings. What do you think of this practice?**

	Valid Percent
Fair	32.5
Unfair	59.0
Don't know	8.5
Total	100.0

**As people across South Carolina think about spending on schools, do you think funds should be targeted toward schools that have the lowest test scores or schools where test scores show little or no improvement over time?**

	Valid Percent
Low test scores	11.7
Low improvement in scores	7.4
Both equally	75.0
Don't know	5.9
Total	100.0

**Acceptable levels of failure to performing a school rated 'Excellent' in South Carolina, what would be an acceptable percentage of students who do not perform at grade level?**

	Valid Percent
0% - all should perform at grade level	5.5
under 10%	58.1
10%-25%	27.2
26% or more	3.5
Don't know	5.7
Total	100.0

**Now, think about the school your oldest child attends. To what extent do you agree ...**

**The school climate promotes academic achievement**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	50.3
Agree	40.8
Disagree	7.0
Strongly disagree	1.9
Total	100.0

**When someone at the school does a good job it is properly recognized.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	28.8
Agree	49.5
Disagree	18.8
Strongly disagree	2.8
Total	100.0

**Teachers have the preparation needed for the subject they are teaching.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	34.5
Agree	52.9
Disagree	10.2
Strongly disagree	2.4
Total	100.0

**Students have the preparation needed for the subject they are learning.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	27.1
Agree	52.4
Disagree	17.9
Strongly disagree	2.7
Total	100.0

**Student behavior is a barrier to learning.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	35.8
Agree	29.5
Disagree	25.0
Strongly disagree	9.8
Total	100.0

**Parents and families do not provide support at home for academic achievement.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	19.7
Agree	30.3
Disagree	35.8
Strongly disagree	14.1
Total	100.0

**The community environment does not support academic achievement.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	10.7
Agree	21.4
Disagree	49.8
Strongly disagree	18.1
Total	100.0

**The school lacks the books, equipment and other instructional material needed in the classroom.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	8.9
Agree	18.2
Disagree	50.3
Strongly disagree	22.6
Total	100.0

**Too much time is spent on testing and not enough time on teaching.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	31.1
Agree	35.6
Disagree	27.3
Strongly disagree	6.0
Total	100.0

**The school keeps raising requirements so some children will never be able to succeed.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	18.0
Agree	26.9
Disagree	43.6
Strongly disagree	11.5
Total	100.0

**The principal provides appropriate leadership.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	34.3
Agree	47.5
Disagree	11.6
Strongly disagree	6.5
Total	100.0

**Teachers who do a good job are properly recognized.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	18.8
Agree	49.6
Disagree	25.9
Strongly disagree	5.7
Total	100.0

**Teachers can do a poor job and nothing is done about it.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	18.5
Agree	32.2
Disagree	37.9
Strongly disagree	11.5
Total	100.0

**Using the A, B, C, D, and F scale again, what grade would you give the school your oldest child attends?**

	Valid Percent
A	31.2
B	39.6
C	17.1
D	4.8
F	2.2
Don't know	5.1
Total	100.0

**First, think about ongoing subject-based classroom tests ...**

**These tests produce unnecessary child stress.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	15.0
Agree	25.6
Disagree	47.3
Strongly disagree	9.5
Don't know	2.6
Total	100.0

**These tests help individual students learn.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	9.6
Agree	46.4
Disagree	27.0
Strongly disagree	14.3
Don't know	2.7
Total	100.0

**These tests promote better school achievement.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	9.9
Agree	47.2
Disagree	28.2
Strongly disagree	10.9
Don't know	3.9
Total	100.0

**These tests help the principal evaluate teachers.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	4.6
Agree	27.5
Disagree	39.2
Strongly disagree	19.5
Don't know	9.1
Total	100.0

**Next think about state achievement tests in South Carolina ...**

**These tests produce unnecessary child stress.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	33.4
Agree	37.3
Disagree	23.1
Strongly disagree	3.3
Don't know	2.9
Total	100.0

**These tests help individual students learn.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	2.8
Agree	17.0
Disagree	47.3
Strongly disagree	29.7
Don't know	3.1
Total	100.0

**These tests promote better school achievement.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	3.5
Agree	27.2
Disagree	42.0
Strongly disagree	23.0
Don't know	4.3
Total	100.0

**These tests help the principal evaluate teachers.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	4.2
Agree	23.9
Disagree	39.3
Strongly disagree	25.5
Don't know	7.1
Total	100.0

**Finally, think about college admissions tests such as SAT/ACT.**

**These tests produce unnecessary child stress.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	23.0
Agree	35.5
Disagree	32.5
Strongly disagree	4.5
Don't know	4.5
Total	100.0

**These tests help individual students learn.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	3.2
Agree	21.2
Disagree	51.2
Strongly disagree	19.3
Don't know	5.1
Total	100.0

**These tests promote better school achievement.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	4.0
Agree	30.0
Disagree	43.7
Strongly disagree	16.2
Don't know	6.2
Total	100.0

**These tests help the principal evaluate teachers.**

	Valid Percent
Strongly agree	2.4
Agree	13.0
Disagree	48.1
Strongly disagree	26.5
Don't know	10.0
Total	100.0

**Demographics:**

**Which of these age groups do you belong to?**

	Valid Percent
18 - 24 years old	3.2
25 - 34 years old	19.1
35 - 44 years old	28.1
45 - 54 years old	27.9
55 - 64 years old	19.4
65 years old or older	2.4
Total	100.0

**What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

	Valid Percent
Less than a high school degree	.1
High school degree or GED	2.5
Some college or technical school (no degree)	7.5
Associates degree or technical degree	6.3
Bachelor's degree	28.0
Master's degree /professional degree (law, MBA)	50.6
Doctoral degree (including MD)	4.9
Total	100.0

**What is your gender?**

Male	14.5
Female	73.6

**Which grades students do you directly work with?  
[Educator only]**

	Percent
None, do not work directly with students	6.1
Pre-kindergarten	8.0
Kindergarten	14.5
1st - 3rd grade	24.5
4th - 5th grade	19.6
6th - 8th grade	18.9
9th - 12th grade	17.5

Note: Does not sum to 100% due to multiple-option responses.

**With which instructional subject(s) are you engaged? [Educator only]**

	Percent
Math	31.4
Science	26.4
Social studies	26.5
English/language arts	35.1
Other academic subject (e.g., foreign languages)	7.8
Other non-academic subject (e.g., P.E.)	17.4

Note: Does not sum to 100% due to multiple-option responses.

**What type of school do you primarily work in?  
[Educator only]**

	Valid Percent
Public school	98.1
Private school	1.1
Charter school	.8

Business Web Survey

**Discussions of skill requirements often focus on skills employees lack...**

**Inadequate reading and writing skills.**

	Valid Percent
Critical issue	58.4
Fairly serious issue	31.9
Minor issue	6.2
Not an issue	3.1
Don't know	.4
Total	100.0

**Insufficient computer skills.**

	Valid Percent
Critical issue	33.8
Fairly serious issue	43.0
Minor issue	18.9
Not an issue	3.9
Don't know	.4
Total	100.0

**Poor communication skills.**

	Valid Percent
Critical issue	63.2
Fairly serious issue	29.8
Minor issue	5.3
Not an issue	1.3
Don't know	.4
Total	100.0

**Poor math skills.**

	Valid Percent
Critical issue	45.0
Fairly serious issue	39.3
Minor issue	11.4
Not an issue	3.5
Don't know	.9
Total	100.0

**Lack of industry specific technical skills.**

	Valid Percent
Critical issue	28.5
Fairly serious issue	38.6
Minor issue	26.3
Not an issue	4.8
Don't know	1.8
Total	100.0

**Low level of motivation/commitment**

	Valid Percent
Critical issue	66.4
Fairly serious issue	24.9
Minor issue	4.8
Not an issue	3.9
Total	100.0

**Lack of initiative/entrepreneurship**

	Valid Percent
Critical issue	49.1
Fairly serious issue	37.3
Minor issue	10.5
Not an issue	2.6
Don't know	.4
Total	100.0

**Organizational demographics:**

Total 100.0

**Which of the following best describes your organization's primary area of activity?**

	Valid Percent
Construction	3.4
Manufacturing	12.7
Wholesale Trade	1.0
Retail Trade	.5
Utilities	1.5
Transportation and Warehousing	1.5
Information Services and Technology	4.9
Banking, Finance and Insurance	5.4
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	8.3
Professional and Technical Services	27.3
Healthcare and Social Assistance	12.7
Hotel, Entertainment and Food Services	4.4
Other Manufacturing, Trade or Service	16.6
Total	100.0

**What is the approximate, average number of employees in your organization during the last fiscal year?**

	Valid Percent
0 - 20 employees	39.0
21 - 50 employees	15.5
51 - 100 employees	12.5
101 - 500 employees	16.0
501 - 1000 employees	4.0
1001 - 10,000 employees	5.5
Over 10,000 employees	3.0
Don't know	4.5
Total	100.0

**Is your firm a subsidiary or division of another firm?**

	Valid Percent
Yes	25.5
No	74.5

**If so, where does your parent firm have its headquarters?**

	Valid Percent
USA	94.2
Other country	5.8
Total	100.0

**Please indicate your approximate total revenue in the most recent fiscal year.**

	Valid Percent
\$0 - \$10 million	55.0
\$10 million - \$50 million	15.9
\$50 million - \$250 million	5.8
\$250 million - \$1 billion	1.1
Over \$1 billion	4.8
Don't know	17.5
Total	100.0

**In your opinion, on a scale from 1 to 7 where 1 is expansion, 4 is no effect, and 7 means reduction in employment, which of the following would affect your business ...**

**Availability of semi-skilled production employees**

	Valid Percent
Expand employment 1	8.2
2	12.8
3	14.2
No effect 4	55.7
5	4.6
6	2.3
Reduce employment 7	2.3
Total	100.0

**Availability of skilled production workers**

	Valid Percent
Expand employment 1	13.7
2	16.9
3	11.4
No effect 4	51.1
5	4.1
6	1.8
Reduce employment 7	.9
Total	100.0

**Availability of training and education for your employees**

	Valid Percent
Expand employment 1	32.6
2	32.6
3	15.2
No effect 4	15.6
5	1.8
6	2.2
Reduce employment 7	0
Total	100.0

**Availability of highly skilled science/engineering employees**

	Valid Percent
Expand employment 1	15.2
2	13.9
3	13.5
No effect 4	52.0
5	3.6
6	1.3
Reduce employment 7	.4
Total	100.0

**Ability to retain existing workforce**

	Valid Percent
Expand employment 1	32.9
2	28.3
3	13.2
No effect 4	19.2
5	3.7
6	2.3
Reduce employment 7	.5
Total	100.0

**Availability of highly skilled management employees**

	Valid Percent
Expand employment 1	24.2
2	33.2
3	16.6
No effect 4	19.7
5	4.0
6	1.8
Reduce employment 7	.4
Total	100.0

**Anticipated retirement/attrition of existing workforce**

	Valid Percent
Expand employment 1	15.8
2	19.5
3	15.8
No effect 4	35.7
5	5.4
6	3.6
Reduce employment 7	4.1
Total	100.0

**Think about your organization's workforce needs.**

**On a Elementary schools in the area**

	Valid Percent
A	9.1
B	31.0
C	28.5
D	10.7
F	3.3
Don't know	17.4
Total	100.0

**Middle schools**

	Valid Percent
A	4.6
B	21.3
C	38.9
D	13.8
F	5.4
Don't know	15.9
Total	100.0

**High schools**

	Valid Percent
A	3.7
B	23.1
C	36.8
D	22.3
F	6.6
Don't know	7.4
Total	100.0

**Technical schools**

	Valid Percent
A	21.3
B	44.2
C	17.5
D	5.4
F	.8
Don't know	10.8
Total	100.0

**Undergraduate schools**

	Valid Percent
A	14.6
B	49.0
C	18.0
D	5.4
F	.8
Don't know	12.1
Total	100.0

**Graduate schools**

	Valid Percent
A	20.8
B	41.3
C	11.3
D	3.3
F	.8
Don't know	22.5
Total	100.0

**Continuing education**

	Valid Percent
A	15.1
B	40.2
C	18.0
D	5.4
F	1.7
Don't know	19.7
Total	100.0

**Consider the following set of skills for students  
leaving school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century ...**

**How important are Math skills**

	Valid Percent
Critical	59.8
Very important	29.5
Important	10.7
Total	100.0

**Reading skills**

	Valid Percent
Critical	78.0
Very important	19.1
Important	3.0
Total	100.0

**Writing skills**

	Valid Percent
Critical	61.5
Very important	29.1
Important	9.0
Not very important	.4
Total	100.0

**Skills to succeed in the workplace**

	Valid Percent
Critical	59.1
Very important	32.3
Important	7.7
Not at all important	.9
Total	100.0

**Science skills**

	Valid Percent
Critical	25.6
Very important	34.6
Important	33.3
Not very important	6.0
Don't know	.4
Total	100.0

**Music and art skills**

	Valid Percent
Critical	3.8
Very important	26.0
Important	43.8
Not very important	23.0
Not at all important	3.4
Total	100.0

**Creative skills**

	Valid Percent
Critical	30.6
Very important	43.8
Important	21.3
Not very important	3.0
Not at all important	1.3
Total	100.0

**Ability to use technology**

	Valid Percent
Critical	71.3
Very important	23.6
Important	4.6
Not at all important	.4
Total	100.0

**Ability to do well on tests**

	Valid Percent
Critical	10.2
Very important	24.3
Important	46.0
Not very important	17.4
Not at all important	2.1
Total	100.0

**Ability to participate in the community**

	Valid Percent
Critical	30.5
Very important	44.1
Important	23.3
Not very important	1.7
Not at all important	.4
Total	100.0

**Ability to find information**

	Valid Percent
Critical	49.6
Very important	41.9
Important	7.6
Not very important	.4
Not at all important	.4
Total	100.0

**Ability to be a knowledgeable citizen**

	Valid Percent
Critical	36.7
Very important	45.1
Important	16.5
Not very important	1.3
Not at all important	.4
Total	100.0

**All in all, do you think the public schools in South Carolina are providing young people with the key knowledge they need?**

	Valid Percent
Yes	21.2
No	67.4
Don't know	11.4
Total	100.0

**Individual demographics. Which of these age groups do you belong to?**

	Valid Percent
25 - 34 years old	12.0
35 - 44 years old	24.0
45 - 54 years old	33.7
55 - 64 years old	26.4
65 years old or older	3.8
Total	100.0

**What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

	Valid Percent
High school degree or GED	3.4
Some college or technical school (no degree)	11.3
Associate's degree or technical degree	12.3
Bachelor's degree	34.8
Master's degree / professional degree (law, MBA)	34.3
Doctoral degree (including MD)	3.9
Total	100.0

**Are there school age children living in your household?**

	Valid Percent
Yes	42.4
No, but previously have	41.0
No, as an adult have never lived with school age children	16.7
Total	100.0

**For students graduating in 2020, what would be acceptable High school graduation rates**

	Valid Percent
70% or below	5.5
75%	4.6
80%	8.4
85%	17.7
90%	32.5
95%	22.4
100%	8.9
Total	100.0

**Now think about the type of position where you have hired someone recently. What level of education was typical for those hired to fill these typical positions?**

	Valid Percent
Less than a high school degree	.5
A high school degree or GED	30.6
Some college or technical training	25.6
An Associate's degree	8.2
A Bachelor's degree	28.8
A graduate or professional degree	6.4
Total	100.0

**Are you familiar with the WorkKeys Skill Framework?**

	Valid Percent
Very familiar	24.1
Somewhat familiar	32.7
Have heard of it, but not familiar	20.0
Never heard of it before	23.2
Total	100.0

**How important are the nine WorkKeys skills: 1)**

**Applied Mathematics**

	Valid Percent
Critical	24.2
Very important	35.3
Important	29.3
Not very important	9.3
Not at all important	1.4
Don't know	.5
Total	100.0

**How important are the nine WorkKeys skills: 2)**

**Applied Technology**

	Valid Percent
Critical	24.1
Very important	37.5
Important	25.0
Not very important	10.2
Not at all important	2.3
Don't know	.9
Total	100.0

**How important are the nine WorkKeys skills: 3)**

**Business Writing**

	Valid Percent
Critical	25.0
Very important	34.7
Important	24.5
Not very important	12.5
Not at all important	2.8
Don't know	.5
Total	100.0

**How important are the nine WorkKeys skills: 4)**

**Listening**

	Valid Percent
Critical	65.4
Very important	28.6
Important	5.1
Not very important	.5
Not at all important	0
Don't know	.5
Total	100.0

**How important are the nine WorkKeys skills: 5)**

**Locating Information**

	Valid Percent
Critical	47.7
Very important	34.3
Important	13.9
Not very important	2.8
Not at all important	.9
Don't know	.5
Total	100.0

**How important are the nine WorkKeys skills: 6)**

**Observation**

	Valid Percent
Critical	53.2
Very important	31.5
Important	13.9
Not very important	.9
Not at all important	0
Don't know	.5
Total	100.0

**How important are the nine WorkKeys skills: 7)**

**Reading for Information**

	Valid Percent
Critical	51.9
Very important	32.9
Important	13.9
Not very important	.9
Not at all important	0
Don't know	.5
Total	100.0

**How important are the nine WorkKeys skills: 8)**

**Teamwork**

	Valid Percent
Critical	65.9
Very important	24.9
Important	7.8
Not very important	.5
Not at all important	.5
Don't know	.5
Total	100.0

**How important are the nine WorkKeys skills: 9)**

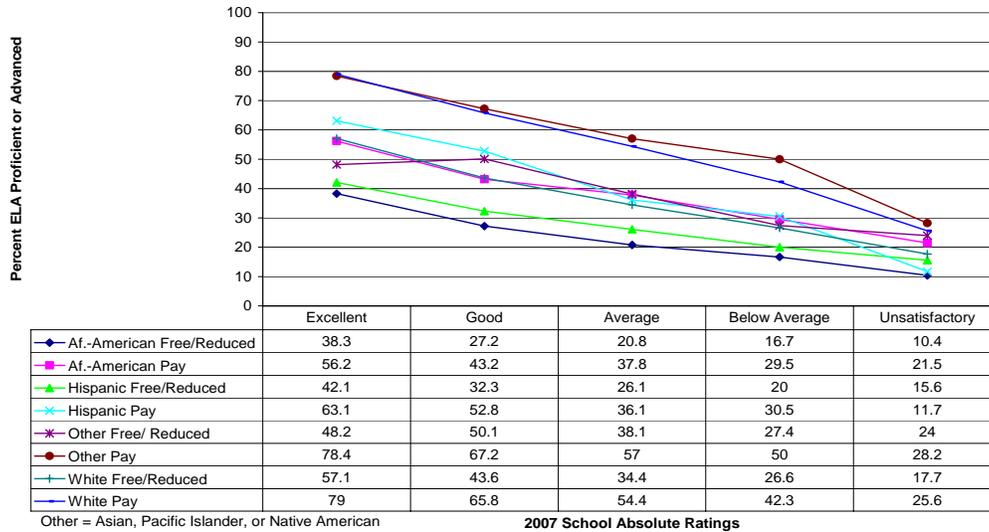
**Writing**

	Valid Percent
Critical	40.1
Very important	32.7
Important	22.6
Not very important	3.7
Not at all important	.5
Don't know	.5
Total	100.0

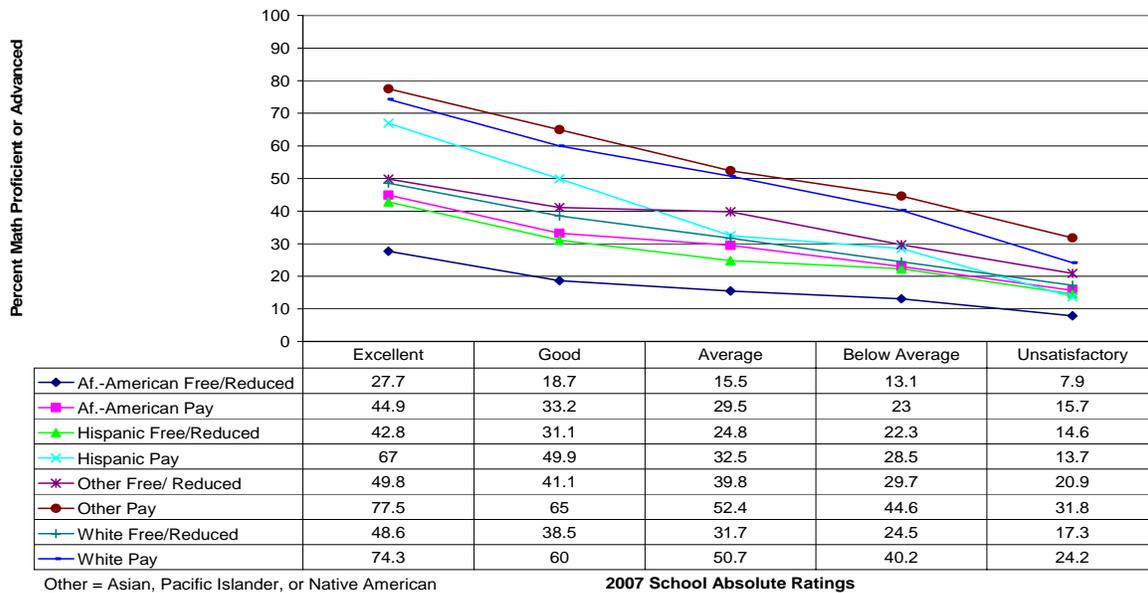
Appendix: Achievement Gaps

Excerpted from: *The PACT Performance of Historically Underachieving Groups of Children in South Carolina Elementary and Middle Schools: Technical Report*, April 2008, (pp. 18, 20). Columbia, SC: Education Oversight Committee.

**Figure 6**  
**2007 PACT ELA % Proficient or Advanced By Demographic Group and School Absolute Ratings - By Student Ethnicity and Federal Lunch Program Status**



**Figure 8**  
**2007 PACT Math % Proficient or Advanced By Demographic Group and School Absolute Ratings - By Student Ethnicity and Federal Lunch Program Status**



## References

- Cronin, J., Dahlin, M., Adkins, D., & Kingsbury, G.G. (2007). *The proficiency illusion*. Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Institute.
- Education Oversight Committee (2008, April). *The PACT performance of historically underachieving groups of children in South Carolina elementary and middle schools*. [Technical report], (pp. 18, 20). Columbia, SC: Author.
- US Department of Education. (2007). *Mapping 2005 state proficiency standards onto the NAEP scales*. NCES Report NCES 2007-482. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

---

<sup>1</sup> Predictive Analytics Software, formerly known as SPSS, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences [Retrieved May 29, 2009 from *Product Naming Guide FAQ*, <http://www.spss.com/software/product-name-guide/>].

<sup>2</sup> Note that response frequencies from all surveys (1-web for public and educators, 2-web for business, and 3-phone interviews) appear in the appendix to this document. The analyses in this report represent selected subsets of the reported frequencies in the appendix. The selection of subsets for the report was based on four themes identified as dominant in the data concerning South Carolinians' expectations for schools and students.

<sup>3</sup> Work Keys Skills<sup>®</sup> assessment is product of ACT, a company primarily known for the ACT admissions assessment. The Work Keys framework<sup>®</sup> is a system for assessing work readiness for employers and students. [Retrieved May 29, 2009 from: <http://www.act.org/workkeys/>]