

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Interim Report

Alternative Technical Assistance

May 2008

Introduction

Through the 2005-2006 General Appropriations Act, South Carolina's General Assembly authorized exceptions to the state-defined technical assistance to underperforming schools. In lieu of the assignment of teacher specialists and other state identified personnel, schools were able to apply to become Alternative Technical Assistance (ATA) schools and receive between \$100,000 and \$300,000 "for a minimum of three years in order to implement fully systemic reform and to provide opportunity for building local education capacity." The provision also directs the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) to "monitor the effectiveness of the alternative technical assistance program." Schools participating in the alternative program are expected to make progress as any other school.

Eleven schools applied for ATA funding. Seven applications were approved by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), however only five of the seven schools accepted funding under ATA instead of the state-defined model of technical assistance. Of the five, four schools modeled their reform efforts based on the Milken Family Foundation's Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) while the remaining school chose a ninth grade academy reform. The following are the five 2005-2006 ATA schools with their approved, research-based, reform models:

District	School	Model/Program
Beaufort	Whale Branch Middle	TAP
Darlington	Spaulding Elementary	TAP
Darlington	West Hartsville Elementary	TAP
Laurens 56	M.S. Bailey Elementary	TAP
Orangeburg 3	Lake Marion High	Ninth Grade Academy

A descriptive report on the schools was provided in June 2006 to the EOC and SCDE, with subsequent reports planned following two and three years of operation to determine academic progress and impact on school and student performance.

Technical Assistance Funding

Over the past three years, the schools have been allocated technical assistance funding as detailed below:

School	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Whale Branch Middle	\$125,400	\$125,400	\$125,400
Spaulding Elementary	100,000	100,000	100,000
West Hartsville Elementary	109,200	109,200	109,200
M.S. Bailey Elementary ¹		100,000	100,000
Lake Marion High	300,000	300,000	300,000

Teacher Advancement Program Schools

¹ MS Bailey closed at the beginning of the 2007-2008 fiscal year as an elementary school. The students were transferred to Clinton Elementary, a school rated Below Average, \$51,985 was added to the technical assistance funds for Clinton Elementary.

The Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) was developed by the Milken Family Foundation to promote changes in the structure of the teaching profession through incorporation of four critical elements: (1) multiple career paths which allow teacher to pursue a variety of positions throughout their careers; (2) on-going applied professional growth focusing on the identified needs drawn from the instructional issues in the setting; (3) instructionally focused accountability for adherence to standards of practice and student academic growth and (4) performance-based compensation.

At the time the four ATA schools entered the TAP program, approximately twenty schools in South Carolina were using the TAP system to improve the schools. Today there are 40 TAP schools. The TAP program is administered through a \$34 million federal grant to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) focusing on teacher incentives.

The overall performance history of the ATA-TAP schools is displayed below:

Table 1
Absolute Performance Measures for ATA-TAP Schools
2005-2007

School	2005 Absolute Rating		2006 Absolute Rating		2007 Absolute Rating	
	Index	Rating	Index	Rating	Index	Rating
Whale Branch Middle	2.5	Below Average	2.3	Unsatisfactory	2.3	Unsatisfactory
Spaulding	2.3	Unsatisfactory	2.5	Below Average	2.7	Below Average
West Hartsville	2.6	Below Average	2.6	Below Average	2.8	Below Average
MS Bailey	2.6	Below Average	2.6	Below Average	2.3	Unsatisfactory

Source: Annual School Report Cards, 2005, 2006, 2007. South Carolina Department of Education.

The performance of students on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests is examined across the three years to deepen understanding beyond the indices and ratings designations shown above.

Table 2
ATA-TAP Schools Performance on Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests
2005-2007

School/year	English Language Arts		Mathematics		Science		Social Studies	
	% Below Basic	% Proficient & Above	% Below Basic	% Proficient & Above	% Below Basic	% Proficient & Above	% Below Basic	% Proficient & Above
Whale Branch 05	44.2	15.8	49.9	18.2	60.1	10.2	44.9	14.9
Whale Branch 06	46.7	14.8	47.1	14.4	67.8	3.9	53.7	7.9
Whale Branch 07	50.6	13.8	54.8	11.9	60.6	12.9	50.7	10

School/year	English Language Arts		Mathematics		Science		Social Studies	
	% Below Basic	% Proficient & Above	% Below Basic	% Proficient & Above	% Below Basic	% Proficient & Above	% Below Basic	% Proficient & Above
Spaulding 05	61	10.8	47.5	11.6	78.5	5.3	50.2	6.2
Spaulding 06	35.8	14.7	43.2	13.7	73.8	6.6	45.6	11.3
Spaulding 07	36.8	22.4	35.1	17.4	49.6	15.8	37.4	19.4
West Hartsville 05	46.7	16.4	38.9	18.5	63.1	12.4	59.1	9.3
West Hartsville 06	37.1	18.3	34.2	26.1	60.3	15	51.5	15.6
West Hartsville 07	35.5	20.5	28.5	18.3	43.8	30.8	39.3	17.3
MS Bailey 05	45.5	18.8	29.5	14.3	52.7	11.6	46.4	3.6
MS Bailey 06	46.2	2.7	32.1	17	56.6	11.3	45.3	10.4
MS Bailey 07	38.1	15.5	40.8	14.3	67.2	6.5	44.4	7.9

Note: Scores percentages are taken from No Child Left Behind performance reports published on the annual school report cards.

The data displayed in Table 2 are shaded in color to represent improvements in performance over the prior academic year; that is, a reduction in the percentage of students scoring below basic and an increase in the percentage of students scoring proficient and advanced are deemed improvements and shaded green. In contrast, increases in the percentage of students scoring below basic and decreases in the percentage of students scoring proficient and advanced are deemed declines and shaded red.

The two elementary schools in the Darlington County School District are outperforming the two other ATA-TAP schools, as measured by student performance generally (percentages of students by category) and as determined by improvements over the prior academic year. In 2007 Whale Branch Middle performed lower than the school had performed in 2005. M. S. Bailey Elementary closed as an elementary school at the end of the 2007 school year; the school is now a special center for four-year-olds.

The annual school and district report card system incorporate information on programs, resources, teacher qualifications to enable examination of the elements that may contribute to or detract from performance, including teacher, student and parent satisfactions levels with the learning environment, the social and physical environment and home-school relations. The 2007 school profile information for each of the schools is provided in Appendix A. Changes over the previous year and comparisons to the

median elementary or middle school contribute to our knowledge of the context in which the programs are operating.

Whale Branch Middle School profile data indicate relative stability in many aspects of the program compared to the previous year, with the exception of a new principal. Data on those factors associated with higher achievement indicate challenges greater than the typical middle school, despite significantly more funds expended per pupil. Teacher satisfaction declined in 2007 on each of the three dimensions as did parent satisfaction with the learning environment.

When compared either to 2006 or to median elementary schools, M. S. Bailey Elementary School data point to several organizational challenges. The school had a new principal. Teacher attendance rates, the three-year average proportion of teachers returning from the previous year, and days dedicated to professional development all declined. The school expended 24 percent more dollars than it had in the previous year yet spent a much smaller proportion on teacher salaries and instruction. Teachers and students reported higher satisfaction levels with learning and social-physical environments in 2007 than they did in 2006; parents and teachers also expressed greater satisfaction with home school relations.

The two elementary schools in Darlington County School District exhibit similar traits when the profile information is examined. While each has a relatively new teacher corps (evident in advanced degrees, continuing contract status, salaries and returning from the previous year), each is led by a principal who has been at the school for four years. These two schools spend far less per pupil than Whale Branch Middle School and M. S. Bailey Elementary School; however, substantially larger proportion of those dollars is spent on teacher salaries and instruction. Teachers, students and parents at West Hartsville Elementary expressed higher levels of satisfaction on almost every factor; at Spaulding Elementary teachers and parents expressed higher satisfaction although there were slight declines in student satisfaction. Spaulding Elementary School received a Palmetto Silver Award in 2006; West Hartsville Elementary School received a Palmetto Silver Award in 2007.

Ninth Grade Academy

Lake Marion High School (LMHS) in Orangeburg School District Three serves students living in the attendance areas previously served by Holly Hill-Roberts High School and Elloree High School. LMHS was constituted as a new school during the 2004-2005 school year and moved into a new campus in August 2005. The first report card was issued in November 2005. Because the high school ratings data accumulate over a longer period of time, LMHS did not receive a rating until 2007.

LMHS is using a ninth grade academy model. The program is designed to ensure a successful transition from middle school to high school through the use of smaller learning communities, supplementary experiences and greater student-parent-school interaction. Using the freshman class of 2005-2006 as the first "freshman academy class", we anticipate the students graduating in spring 2009.

In 2005, 2006 and 2007 high schools were rated on four factors: passage rate for first-attempt takers of the High School Assessment Program (HSAP); longitudinal HSAP passage rates; eligibility for LIFE scholarships and the four-year on-time graduation rate.

Beginning in 2008 student performance on the end-of-course assessments replaced the LIFE scholarship criterion. While no rating has been calculated LMHS performance on these factors is show below:

Factor	2005	2006	2007
1 st attempt HSAP	55.10 %	60.3 %	62.8 %
HSAP longitudinal	na	na	80.9
LIFE Scholarship	1.8 %	0	na
End-of-course passage		43.9 %	54.6 %
On-time Graduation Rate	na	na	56.8 %

These data suggest that the school is progressively more successful over time. Examinations of the performance of schools similar in student population (i.e., with similar levels of student poverty) indicates that LMHS is outperforming her peers on the end-of-course assessments but slightly underperforming on the other factors.

The school profile data often provide a context to understand the outcome data. The school has been led by the same principal for 3.5 years; the percentage of teachers on provisional or emergency contracts has declined as has the percentage of students older than usual for grade. In contrast to the four elementary schools, LMHS spent fewer dollars per student in 2006-2007 than it did in previous years. Over half of these dollars (52 percent) were spent on teacher salaries within an overall instructional expenditure percentage of 61 percent which is similar to the Darlington County School District TAP-ATA schools. The report card information demonstrates dramatic gains in satisfaction between 2005 and 2006 with increases in teacher satisfaction continuing into 2007.

Summary

Of the five schools participating in the Alternative Technical Assistance three are demonstrating strong progress, either evident in overall performance measures or in the factors represented on the school profile. One school, M. S. Bailey Elementary School, has been restructured as an early childhood center. Whale Branch Middle School continues in the technical assistance program. The schools utilizing TAP-ATA as the technical assistance model must begin to plan for continuation of the system when state funds are no longer available.

Appendix A

School Profile Pages from 2007 Annual School and District Report Cards