

a matter of facts about the 2008 state of south carolina annual school and district report cards

South Carolina's Performance Goal:

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

education accountability act (EAA): five components

- **Academic Standards** – the required knowledge and skills for students in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.
- **Assessments** – Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT) in grades 3-8, high school exit exam, and end-of-course tests for selected high school courses.
- **Professional Development/Technical Assistance** – teacher training and assistance to low-performing schools.
- **Public Reporting** – the school and district report cards, data to use in decision-making, and program evaluation.
- **Rewards and Intervention** – recognition for schools performing at high levels or with high rates of improvement and intervention for schools that do not improve.

the school and district report cards

- Issued to all public schools and school districts by November 1 of each year.
- Distributed to parents by November 15.
- Results advertised in newspaper within 45 days of release.
- Printed in black and white.

purposes of the report card

- Inform parents and the public about the school's or school district's performance.
- Assist in addressing the strengths and weaknesses within a particular school.
- Recognize schools with high performance and improvement.
- Evaluate and focus resources on schools with low performance.

report card rating terms

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Below Average
- At Risk (Unsatisfactory)

application of ratings

- **Absolute Rating** – the academic achievement of students in the school year upon which the report card is based measured against the target level of performance.

- **Growth (Improvement) Rating** – the progress of individually-matched student achievement scores from one year to the next.
- **Ratings System Increases in Rigor over Time** – The score, or index ranges, that determines a school's Absolute performance level rating increases one-tenth of a point each year through 2010.
- **Adequate Yearly Progress** – As required by the United States Department of Education through passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, adequate yearly progress (AYP) specifies that the statewide target is met for all students and for each student subgroup: racial/ethnic, economic, disability, limited English proficiency, and migrant status. (Visit the State Department of Education website, www.ed.sc.gov, for more information on AYP.)

report card (executive summary) contents

- **General information** – the name, location, enrollment, and leadership school or district, the state's 2010 education goal, and Web site resources are provided.
- **School/District Ratings** – the Absolute and Growth Ratings, the performance trends over the past three years and a comparison to Schools/Districts With Students Like Ours are provided. Notice of the school's or district's status of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and NCLB Improvement status also is provided.
- **Standardized Test Results** – PACT, HSAP, end-of-course, graduation rate, and NAEP scores for district summaries; PACT and NAEP performance for elementary and middle summaries; and HSAP, NAEP, end-of-course, and graduation rate information for high school summaries. Details of the school's or district's student achievement data by content area and by grade level or disaggregated by student gender, ethnicity, disability status, socioeconomic status, migrant status, and English proficiency status are provided on comprehensive, web card.
- **School/District Profile** – information about the school or district is provided in three categories: students, teachers, and school/district and compared to Schools/Districts With Students Like Ours and the State Median.
- **Report of Principal/School Improvement Council and Evaluation Results** – a narrative about the school's or district's accomplishments and its plans to address any barriers to increasing student achievement is provided by the school principal and School Improvement Council or superintendent. Results of surveys of teachers,

students and parents evaluating the school/district learning environment, social and physical environment and home-school relations also are provided.

criteria used to calculate school ratings

- **K-2 Only Schools** – Criteria includes prime instructional time, pupil-teacher ration, parent involvement, external accreditation, professional development on educational needs of children under 8 years of age, the percentage of teachers with advanced degrees, and the percentage of teachers returning from previous years are included in the calculation of ratings.
- **Elementary and Middle Schools with Grades 3-8** – Percentage of students achieving at different levels on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT). This is the fourth year Social Studies and Science PACT test results have been included in the calculation of the ratings. The results were phased in over a three-year period and the weighting increased each year (5 percentage points per year) until the target weightings were achieved in school year 2006-2007. This year, Science absolute rating weights are set at 20% for elementary schools and 25% for middle schools. Social Studies absolute rating weights are set at 20% for elementary schools and 25% for middle schools.
- **High Schools with Grades 9-12** – Criteria include longitudinal exit exam passage, first-attempt HSAP passage rate, percent passage of end-of-course tests, and on-time high school graduation rate.
- **Career and Technology Centers** – Percentage of students who earn a 2.0 or above on the final course grade, the on-time high school graduation rate, and the percentage of graduates who enroll in either post-secondary instruction, military services, or employment.
- **School Districts** – Weighted summary of the criteria for elementary, middle and high schools within the school district.

frequently asked questions and answers

Q. What is the difference between school/district ratings and Adequate Yearly Progress?

A. School/district ratings were established in 1998 by the Education Accountability Act (EAA) to communicate a school's overall level of student performance and the progress of individual students over time.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AP) was added in 2001 as required by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation to communicate if a school/district met or did not meet the annual targets for student performance and testing participation rates. The NCLB goal is that all students reach "Proficient" in reading/language arts and mathematics by the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

Q. Why is the rigor of the ratings increasing? Is it reasonable and fair?

A. Beginning with the 2004 report card, the rigor of the Absolute performance ratings increased by one-tenth of a point. Each year, the rigor increases an additional one-tenth of a point on a five point scale. The system is designed to encourage and reward continuous improvement in South Carolina's public schools. The ratings system and the increased expectations place value on every child and use the results of the system to leverage change in policies, programs, and practices.

Q. What happens if my child's school gets a low rating?

A. Schools with a *Below Average* or *At Risk* Absolute rating are eligible to receive technical assistance and resources provided through the State Department of Education.

Q. How should parents respond if their child's school receives a low rating?

A. Parents should observe how their child's school and community respond to areas of concern and how their child is achieving. Parents are integral to the school improvement process. Parents can encourage the school to address concerns, encourage student learning, and make student attendance a priority.

Q. Are ratings considered the same thing as labels? Won't they do more harm than good?

A. Unlike labels, ratings aren't perceived as being permanent. Ratings are simplified statements to help the public better understand the overall level of academic performance of a school or district and can be powerful motivators for change. Positive ratings bring recognition and pride. Lower ratings bring support and technical assistance. South Carolina focuses on continuous improvement.

Q. Why are test scores used to rate schools?

A. Test scores are a uniformly collected result of schooling. Test scores are used in decisions schools make about students' promotion, selection into special programs, admission to post-secondary education and eligibility for scholarships. Emphasis on test scores reflects the primary mission of schools to provide academic competencies.