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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jo Anne Anderson

October 7, 2002

TO: Members, Education Oversight Committee

FROM: Jo Anne Anderson

RE: Executive Director's Report: Reflections on Proficiency

We continue to celebrate the gains in student performance evident on the 2002 Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT). As the SDE press release reminds us, gains in mathematics and among African-American and low-income students are encouraging. There is a 10 percent gain in the percentage of fourth grade students scoring proficient or above in mathematics. Recent media coverage of schools like Merriwether Elementary School in Edgefield County School District and Whitlock Junior High School in Spartanburg School District Seven demonstrate that, with focus and effort, all students can achieve.

The tables below present summary data on the 2001 and 2002 performance.

Table One
PACT English/Language Arts Performance

Year	Grade	Number Tested	% Not Tested	% Below Basic	% Basic	% Proficient	% Advanced	% Proficient and Advanced
2001	Grade 3	48303	2.5	21.3	37	38.2	3.4	41.6
2001	Grade 4	49007	2.5	20	42.7	35.2	2.1	37.3
2001	Grade 5	45395	2.9	26.8	45.8	25.4	2	27.4
2001	Grade 6	50204	2.9	31.9	36	26.4	5.7	32
2001	Grade 7	48650	2.9	31.4	40.6	24.9	3.1	28
2001	Grade 8	46173	3.7	30.7	45.7	21.1	2.5	23.6
2002	Grade 3	47799	1	20.1	38.1	37.8	4	41.8
2002	Grade 4	49037	0.8	20.4	46.1	31.3	2.2	33.5
2002	Grade 5	49463	1.1	25.8	49.3	23.6	1.4	24.9
2002	Grade 6	46810	1.2	28.3	38.2	26.3	7.2	33.5
2002	Grade 7	50711	1.2	26.8	46.3	23.3	3.6	26.9
2002	Grade 8	47560	1.5	30.5	42.8	22.2	4.5	26.8

SOURCE: SC State Dept. of Education, 2002

Table Two
PACT Mathematics Performance

Year	Grade	Number Tested	% Not Tested	% Below Basic	% Basic	% Proficient	% Advanced	% Proficient and Advanced
2001	Grade 3	48474	2.1	27.9	38.8	17	16.4	33.3
2001	Grade 4	49155	2.3	32.9	41.1	16.4	9.6	26
2001	Grade 5	45531	2.6	37.9	35	16.2	10.9	27.1
2001	Grade 6	50375	2.5	37.2	36.4	16.8	9.6	26.4
2001	Grade 7	48758	2.7	43.1	31.7	14.7	10.5	25.2
2001	Grade 8	46281	3.4	37.6	43.9	13.1	5.3	18.4
2002	Grade 3	47903	0.8	26.4	42.1	19.6	12	31.5
2002	Grade 4	49089	0.7	25.7	38.3	20.7	15.3	36
2002	Grade 5	49533	1	30	41.3	17.7	11.1	28.7
2002	Grade 6	46830	1.2	30.3	40.6	18.6	10.5	29.1
2002	Grade 7	50765	1.1	39.9	33.1	14.7	12.3	27
2002	Grade 8	47595	1.4	38.3	42.5	12.5	6.6	19.1

SOURCE: SC State Dept. of Education, 2002

The No Child Left Behind legislation holds schools, districts and states accountable against the standard of *all students* scoring proficient by the end of the 2013-14 school year. We must elevate the performance of 70 percent of our students.

Proficiency is defined as "well-prepared for the next grade." SC teachers set the performance standard and educators examined the content standards and the items related to those standards prior to establishing expectations. The educator recommendations were affirmed by the State Board of Education. The percentage of SC students scoring proficient and above on PACT is very similar to the performance of SC students on the National Assessment of Education Progress.

A view of the grade level cohorts, that is, comparing the performance of a group of students at a particular grade level to the subsequent group of students at the same grade level is shown in the charts below emphasizing performance at the proficient and advanced levels. The display suggests small declines in English language arts except at grades 6 and 8 and small gains in mathematics except at grade 4 where a dramatic gain is evident and at grade 3 with a small decline.

Chart One
PACT English Language Arts Performance
Comparison of 2001 and 2002 Performance at Proficient and Advanced Levels

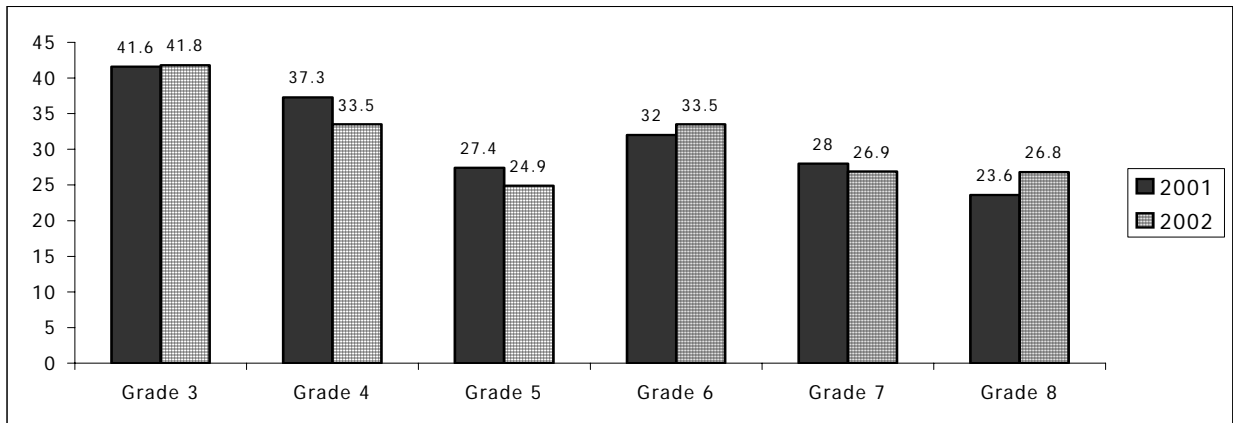
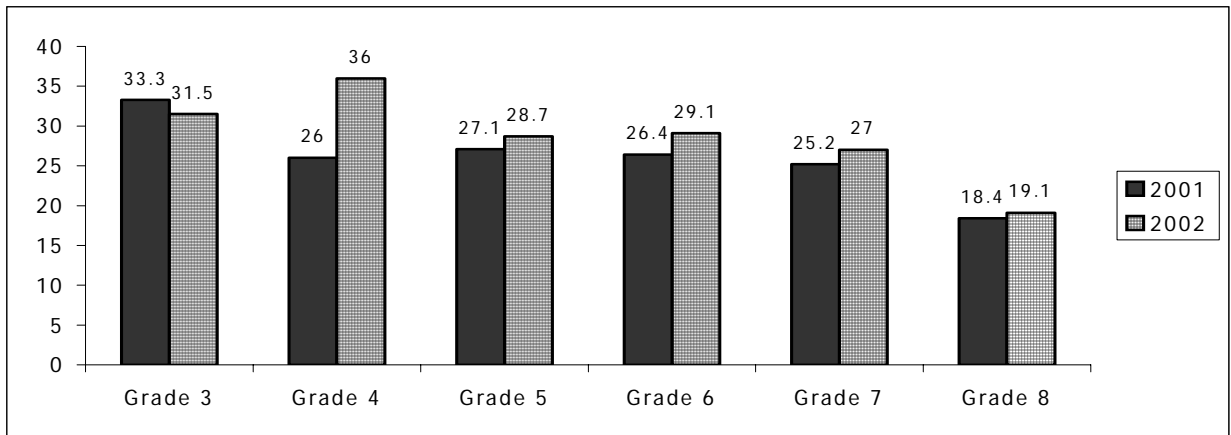


Chart Two
PACT Mathematics Performance
Comparison of 2001 and 2002 Performance at Proficient and Advanced Levels



Looking at the performance of cohorts of students as they progress through school give us another view of the data. In Table 3, student grade level groups are followed through the system; that is the 3rd grade cohort of students in 2001 is matched with the 4th grade cohort of students in 2002. In Table 3, gains or losses of less than 1 percent are shown in yellow; gains of 1 percent or greater within a performance category are shown in green; losses of 1 percent or more within a performance category are shown in red. In 60 percent of the pairings, there was improvement or relatively flat performance.

What becomes quickly apparent are (a) the progress SC has made in moving students from below basic to basic; and (b) the difficulty SC has in moving students into or maintaining students in the upper performance categories.

Table Three
PACT 2001 and 2002 Reports
Cohorts Across Time

PACT 2001 & 2002 reported October 1, 2002
45 -day & tested students only

Year	Grade	# Tested	% Not Test	ELA					# Tested	% Not Test	MATH				
				%BB	%B	%P	%A	%P&A			%BB	%B	%P	%A	%P&A
2001	3	48303	2.5	21.3	37	38.2	3.4	41.6	48474	2.1	27.9	38.8	17	16.4	33.3
2002	4	49037	0.8	20.4	46.1	31.3	2.2	33.5	49089	0.7	25.7	38.3	20.7	15.3	36
2002-2001		734		-0.9	9.1	-6.9	-1.2	-8.1	615		-2.2	-0.5	3.7	-1.1	2.7
2001	4	49007	2.5	20	42.7	35.2	2.1	37.3	49155	2.3	32.9	41.1	16.4	9.6	26
2002	5	49463	1.1	25.8	49.3	23.6	1.4	24.9	49533	1	30	41.3	17.7	11.1	28.7
2002-2001		456		5.8	6.6	-11.6	-0.7	-12.4	378		-2.9	0.2	1.3	1.5	2.7
2001	5	45395	2.9	26.8	45.8	25.4	2	27.4	45531	2.6	37.9	35	16.2	10.9	27.1
2002	6	46810	1.2	28.3	38.2	26.3	7.2	33.5	46830	1.2	30.3	40.6	18.6	10.5	29.1
2002-2001		1415		1.5	-7.6	0.9	5.2	6.1	1299		-7.6	5.6	2.4	-0.4	2
2001	6	50204	2.9	31.9	36	26.4	5.7	32	50375	2.5	37.2	36.4	16.8	9.6	26.4
2002	7	50711	1.2	26.8	46.3	23.3	3.6	26.9	50765	1.1	39.9	33.1	14.7	12.3	27
2002-2001		507		-5.1	10.3	-3.1	-2.1	-5.1	390		2.7	-3.3	-2.1	2.7	0.6
2001	7	48650	2.9	31.4	40.6	24.9	3.1	28	48758	2.7	43.1	31.7	14.7	10.5	25.2
2002	8	47650	1.5	30.5	42.8	22.2	4.5	26.8	47595	1.4	38.3	42.5	12.5	6.6	19.1
2002-2001		-1000		-0.9	2.2	-2.7	1.4	-1.2	-1163		-4.8	10.8	-2.2	-3.9	-6.1

Is performance at the proficient level a teaching or an assessment issue? A second look at Table Three indicates that teachers are teaching more consistently to the proficient and advanced levels in mathematics than in English language arts. Informal discussions among educators suggest that teachers do not have concrete understanding of the differences among basic, proficient and advanced levels of student performance on the various content standards. Performance at the proficient and advanced level is not simply answering more items correctly, but performing at a higher cognitive level. For example, identifying the main idea in a reading passage is a lower level task than analyzing an extended passage. Some teachers suggest that richer and more comprehensive examples of student work at these levels would help; others expect the assessments to provide that information.

This is an area ripe for both research and professional development. As studies are available they will be provided to you. Please contact the EOC staff if you've particular concerns to be explored.