



# **Understanding ERT Processes and Outcomes**

**A final report prepared for the  
South Carolina Education Oversight  
Committee**

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**Report**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South Carolina's commitment to continuously improving student achievement underscores each of the State's educational programs. Guided by the Education Accountability Act of 1998, South Carolina has developed and implemented a series of technical assistance programs -- including the External Review Team (ERT) Program -- that are designed to improve student achievement in unsatisfactory schools. Comprised of three to four professionals that are experienced in the field of education, ERTs examine educational programs in South Carolina's "unsatisfactory" schools to suggest ways to improve student achievement.

The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) contracted with Hezel Associates to evaluate the effectiveness of the ERT Program's processes. The evaluation follows a goals-based strategy, in which the EOC's priorities have informed our evaluation approach and questions. The EOC's primary goal, with associated specific objectives is:

**Goal:** Determine the effectiveness of the ERT Program's intervention strategy in implementing school reform plans and in improving student performance in schools rated as Unsatisfactory.

**Objectives:**

- To examine the educational programs, actions, and activities of schools that received an external review team evaluation.
- To determine the degree to which the recommendations of the external review teams were implemented; and
- To document the degree to which student academic performance improved in schools that received an external review team evaluation.

Utilizing an integrated approach to collecting and analyzing an array of primary and secondary source data, Hezel Associates provides in this report to South Carolina's EOC a comprehensive, longitudinal understanding of the changes in school and student performance seen in schools that participated in the ERT process. At the outset, it is important to note that it is difficult, if not impossible, to attribute outcomes in a causal fashion to the ERT Program because of its structure. Since all unsatisfactory schools in the state received a review, there is not a valid comparison group available. Moreover, schools, teachers, and principals from unsatisfactory schools received varying arrays of technical assistance subsequent to their review, which makes it challenging to isolate specific contributors to improvement. Rather than describing the impact of the ERT Program in a causal manner, we instead present findings in terms of practices and elements that appear to be effective and the distribution of improvement across schools participating in reviews.

Our work is supported through several, complementary analyses. First, to provide points of contrast and consistency in the strategy of the ERT Program, we undertook a

**review of other states' strategies** for external reviews. We conducted a **yearly analysis** of student performance in all schools that participated in each year of the ERT Program. Next, we tracked the **longitudinal performance** of schools that participated in the Program's first year (2001-02) to determine what changes in student performance took place subsequent to ERT reviews. Finally, using a **subset** of schools that participated in the first year of the Program, we gathered and analyzed data from primary sources such as surveys and interviews of ERT participants, and secondary sources such as school report cards and ERT summary reports to paint a more comprehensive picture of student performance.

What emerges from the comparison of states' strategies for external reviews is a clear understanding that no two states design or utilize school improvement teams in exactly the same way. Across different states, schools needs' are greater than states' capacity to review them and support their improvement. The variety of states' school improvement team strategies appears to be necessary, as one recent report suggests, since no single format for school improvement has been shown to work most of the time or in most places. As South Carolina's counterparts in other states can attest, time limitations, lack of personnel, constant requests for more help, and federal requirements consistently challenge the school improvement process, no matter the locale.

The series of commendations and recommendations that follows emphasizes the elements of the ERT Program and are based on our analyses.

**Commendation:** The ERT Program's strategy is consistent with federal guidelines and with approaches other states have tested and, based on their own, independent experiences, adopted. Moreover, the ERT Program has shown an openness to change in its processes (instrumentation, training), which indicates bottom-up receptivity to feedback from schools and ERT members.

**Commendation:** Principals and teachers at all levels of schools that participate in the ERT Program suggest that the review process and, especially, subsequent technical assistance combine to support their school improvement efforts.

**Commendation:** The composition and professionalism of the ERT panels reflects well on structure of the Program, on the recruitment and training of team members, and on the overall review process.

**Commendation:** The different elements of the ERT process provide important information to participants. In a related manner, no component of the ERT process was identified as irrelevant to school improvement or a waste of time.

**Commendation:** Schools receive the technical assistance they need to implement recommendations stemming from the ERT reviews. The South Carolina Department of Education has proactively communicated with underperforming schools throughout the ERT process, and has ensured that schools receive the resources they need subsequent to the reviews.

**Recommendations:** Consider placing a greater emphasis on the ERT Program's attention to classroom instruction. As it is currently structured, the ERT process includes a focus on the curriculum, but not on the delivery of the curriculum.

**Recommendation:** Consistent with what takes place in other states, consider allowing the ERT members to conduct unannounced visits and classroom observations as part of their review, which may result in a clearer understanding of the quality of instruction that takes place in unsatisfactory schools.

**Recommendation:** Consider including in the ERT Review process highly performing schools or underperforming schools that have steadily improved their ratings, to draw attention to schools that have demonstrated large-scale improvement. That is, the ERT Program can be used to identify successes in schools that have faced significant challenges in improving achievement.

**Recommendation:** Consider restructuring the ERT Program to emphasize the involvement of the ERT members throughout a school's subsequent implementation of recommendations and deployment of technical assistance.

**Recommendation:** Consider restructuring the ERT Program to allow for more tailored reviews, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

**Recommendation:** Consider changing the ERT reporting process in three ways. First, ERT members could be allowed to provide school leaders with a preliminary report with initial recommendations, which would allow them to begin implementing changes the same year that the visit takes place. Second, put into place a mechanism for schools to provide ERT members with feedback about the value and relevance of the review process and recommendations. Third, establish a procedure by which ERT members can inform the state Department of Education directly about problems caused by school leadership turnover and/or weaknesses.

**Recommendation:** Consistent with approaches seen in other states, the State Department of Education should strive to communicate more openly to education stakeholders (including school and district staff, parents and students, and community members) information about the ERT process, schools involved, and external reviewers, which will promote transparency about the Program and increase its credibility.

**Recommendation:** To better understand the impact of the ERT Program and support the State Department of Education’s institutional knowledge of the Program, the State Department of Education should endeavor to improve its data collection and management.

**Recommendation:** To better understand how the ERT Program impacts student achievement, a rigorous research design should be put into place that would allow researchers to track longitudinal school and student performance.



## SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

South Carolina's commitment to improving the school conditions that support student achievement underscores each of the State's educational programs and can be discerned in the language of the Education Accountability Act of 1998 (EAA). The EAA, a comprehensive piece of legislation that contains a number of provisions outlining the steps that low performing schools and districts must undertake to improve academic performance, provides the state's framework to guide the improvement of student achievement. The External Review Team (ERT) Program represents one element in the statewide school improvement efforts.

A consistent decline in the number of unsatisfactory schools in South Carolina since the ERT Program began in 2001 provides some initial evidence that the Program may support subsequent efforts to improve school performance.<sup>1</sup> Gaps in direct evidence regarding how the ERT Program contributes to school improvement prompted the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) to ask Hezel Associates to analyze the interplay between the ERT process and school improvement. In this final report, Hezel Associates describes:

- How the ERT process in South Carolina compares with other states' efforts to improve school performance through review teams
- Patterns in school and student improvement data across schools participating in the ERT Program
- Results from a series of follow up surveys of ERT members and school participants
- Findings from site visits of schools that participated in the ERT process
- Recommendations for improving the ERT Program

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<sup>1</sup> There are five absolute rating categories for school performance in South Carolina, with "unsatisfactory" the lowest level. Schools can, and have, moved up from the unsatisfactory level to "below average," the fourth lowest category. This upward movement, however, should not be interpreted as a school's meeting expectations for performance, a situation that occurs only when a school's absolute ratings are at least "average." The later analyses we present describe school improvement in terms of movement out of the unsatisfactory category, with the caveat that many schools moving into the below average category still require additional support.

## SECTION II: AN OVERVIEW OF STATES' STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE THROUGH REVIEW TEAMS

The challenges associated with efforts to create and support school improvement teams in South Carolina and elsewhere stem from the complex interplay between federal and state legislation. The 1983 publication, *A Nation at Risk*, and the subsequent establishment of national education goals in 1990, catalyzed states to establish curriculum standards and testing and accountability systems to ensure that schools teach to these standards. This process was further encouraged in 1994 with the passage of the Improving America's School Act, which required states to develop standards-based accountability systems for their Title I programs. Under IASA, states had to establish challenging standards, implement assessments that measure students' performance against those standards, and hold schools and school systems accountable for the achievement of students attending Title I schools and districts. IASA also introduced new criteria (and terminology) for measuring "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) in school performance for Title I schools and districts.

The more recent No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) built on IASA's foundation, with particular attention to remedying variations in how states were implementing accountability systems under Title I. Like IASA, NCLB emphasizes high standards, the establishment of clear performance goals, and accountability for results. NCLB, however, broadened IASA by encompassing non-Title I schools and districts. In addition, NCLB called for end dates for students to reach proficiency under strict AYP definitions. NCLB also placed a spotlight on the academic performance of all students by requiring states to hold schools accountable for reaching AYP targets among students in major racial and ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students. Schools failing to meet NCLB's requirements receive a series of interventions that increase in scope and severity as time passes.

As these national education reform policies were being debated, states and school districts were putting into place their own solutions. Over the course of the past decade, states have proactively adopted standards, created assessment systems aligned with these standards, and implemented accountability measures for school performance. In South Carolina, the state's Education Accountability Act of 1998 (EAA) brought together provisions ranging from the development of detailed, grade level, specific academic standards in core content areas, the administration of annual standards-based assessments in grades 3 through 8, and steps to be taken for intervention in low-performing schools. An important outcome of the EAA was the shift in the direction of interventions: rather than focusing on districts (as the state had under the 1984 Education Improvement Act), EAA called for schools to be the target of technical assistance. This shift required that the state develop appropriate school-level technical assistance and the capacity to serve a greater number of entities. One

component in South Carolina’s arsenal of intervention strategies is the participation of external review teams (ERTs). In place since 2000, ERTs are small groups of skilled and experienced individuals who work closely with identified schools’ staff, central offices, and local boards of trustees in the design of the school's plan, implementation strategies, and professional development training to improve student performance and increase the rate of student progress.

South Carolina is not alone in strategically deploying review teams. At this time, the majority of states have some form of state-supported school improvement team in place. Many states have based their school improvement teams on the U.S. Department of Education’s non-regulatory guidelines (2004) which provide a well-articulated structure.<sup>2</sup> But still other states (including South Carolina), with pre-NCLB school improvement teams based on state legislation, have had a number of years to refine their teams’ processes and approaches. What results on a national level is dynamic variety in how states have fashioned and directed their school improvement teams.

To provide a context for understanding how South Carolina’s ERT processes and activities relate to and contrast with what takes place elsewhere, we review how seven states have designed their school improvement teams. We begin with an overview of South Carolina’s approach, then present a comparative study of six other states: Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Massachusetts, North Carolina (Appendix B presents a summary across the seven states).

## **A. SOUTH CAROLINA’S EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM PROGRAM**

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South Carolina’s system of using external review teams to support low-performing schools stems from the state’s Education Accountability Act of 1998 (EAA). Under SC Code Ann. § 59-18-1510, external review teams (ERTs) are assigned to all schools that receive an “unsatisfactory” academic performance rating, the lowest of the five categories on the EAA’s school performance classification system. Additionally, schools that receive a “below average” performance rating (the next to the lowest category) may request an ERT visit. The ERT review is one in a series of related school improvement activities coordinated between the school and the South Carolina Department of Education, which is responsible for providing continuous follow-up and support activities to the underperforming school, including professional development, financial support, and on-site assistance.

The ERT review process is designed to diagnose areas of strength and weaknesses. A chairperson and a coordinator (a local contact person who is often the principal of the school under review) guide each ERT. Prior to conducting the on-site visit, all ERT

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<sup>2</sup> US Department of Education (2004). *LEA and school improvement: Non-regulatory guidance*. Available online at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/schoolimprovementguid.doc>.

members participate in a comprehensive training session: a one-day refresher session for veteran ERT members, with an additional follow-up training session for new ERT members. ERT members receive a stipend for their service.

ERT members spend a minimum of four consecutive days visiting the school, reviewing documents of student performance, attendance rates, and other pertinent data both before and during the on-site review, conducting interviews of parents, teachers, students, and principals, and observing every teacher. The Office of School Quality provides documents that guide the on-site data collection and analysis. Reviews are conducted in the fall and are concluded before the school's winter break.

At the conclusion of each review, the ERT compiles evidence-based recommendations, which are shared with the principal and are then assembled into a final report that is due to the Office of School Quality within 10 days of completing the on-site review. The principal has an opportunity to provide feedback to the Office of School Quality about the ERT process and the team's effectiveness. Within thirty days, the Department of Education must notify the principal, the superintendent, and the district board of trustees of the recommendations approved by the State Board of Education. After the approval of the recommendations, the Department delineates the activities, support, services, and technical assistance it will provide to the school. With the approval of the state board, this assistance continues for at least three years, or as deemed necessary by the review committee to sustain improvement.

The budget associated with the ERT Program reflects the number of schools identified in a single year as "unsatisfactory." Because of consistent declines in the number of unsatisfactory schools in South Carolina between 2001 and 2004, there has been a corresponding decline in the amount of technical assistance provided during more recent years: funds appropriated for the ERT Program decreased by \$880,072 for FY 2005-06.<sup>3</sup> The annual budgeted cost of conducting an external review declined by about 5 percent over the past several years, from \$9,893 per audit in FY 2003-04 to \$9,424 per audit in FY 2005-06. Annual budgetary requests for conducting ERT reviews have correspondingly decreased from \$598,980 to fund 60 ERTs in FY 2003-04 to \$586,800 to fund the same number of teams during FY 2005-06.

## **B. CONTRASTING STRATEGIES: REVIEW TEAMS IN SIX OTHER STATES**

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### **1. Arizona's Solutions Teams**

AZ LEARNS (A.R.S. § 15-241), the state's accountability system, guides the activities and processes of **solutions teams**. Active since 2003, solutions teams are overseen by the School Improvement Unit within the Effectiveness Division of the Arizona Department of Education (ADE). A solutions team review is an evidence-based inquiry

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<sup>3</sup> Retrieved online from [http://www.sceoc.com/PDF/EIAEAA\\_FY2005\\_06\\_BudgetRecommendations.pdf](http://www.sceoc.com/PDF/EIAEAA_FY2005_06_BudgetRecommendations.pdf) on October 12, 2005.

conducted to determine a school's capacity for sustained academic improvement. The ADE assigns a solutions team to all schools classified as "underperforming" under the five-category AZ LEARNS system. During the 2004-05 school year, 118 schools were classified as being in either Year 1 or Year 2 of school improvement, and were eligible to receive a solutions team review.

The three-member solutions teams are comprised of active practitioners, typically master teachers, principals, and school district employees who are selected through a rolling application process. Each solutions team conducts a three-day visit to the school to which it is assigned, and uses the *Standards & Rubrics for School Improvement*<sup>4</sup> to answer three questions:

1. Does the school's Arizona School Improvement Plan (ASIP) appear to be a sound plan for improving student performance?
2. Do the structures and conditions appear to be in place for successful implementation of the school's ASIP?
3. What recommendations can be provided that will assist the school with the implementation of their ASIP?

While visiting the school, solutions team members use the rubric to conduct interviews, classroom observations, and focus group discussions and review the school's improvement plan, achievement data, and related documentation of student performance. After visiting each school, the solutions team produces a Statement of Findings that serves to validate or to redirect the school's improvement efforts, as well as offer specific, evidence-based recommendations to help the school and district focus their combined efforts. The School Effectiveness Division of the ADE uses the solutions team's Statement of Findings to provide ongoing, follow-up support to schools. After the solutions team visits a school and prepares a Statement of Findings, one of the six members of the ADE's Arizona School Site Improvement Support Team (ASSIST) is assigned to the school. The ASSIST coach offers support for school improvement efforts by promoting effective planning that incorporates the solutions team's Statement of Findings with the (ASIP), guiding the school's improvement/leadership team in coordinating internal and external educational resources, and documenting school progress and implementation of the ASIP.

## **2. Colorado's School Support Teams**

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) established a system of support in 2002 for schools and districts in need of improvement or corrective action, called the Colorado System of School Support (CS<sup>3</sup>). One component of the CS<sup>3</sup> process is **School Support Team Reviews**. Piloted with 6 schools during the 2003-04 school year, the SST process was conceptualized as a way to deliver technical assistance to Title I schools.

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<sup>4</sup> This manual is available online at <http://www.ade.state.az.us/schooleffectiveness/STDSRUBRIC.pdf>.

Colorado's SST review process begins with eligible schools that are in Year 1 or 2 of school improvement or corrective action, using NCLB criteria. During 2004-05, 22 schools received a review, and more schools will likely volunteer for a SST review as AYP data become available during the 2005-06 school year.

School support teams include 5 members and one team leader, each of whom apply and are interviewed before being selected. During 2004-05, 30 applicants sought 15 SST openings. The strongest candidates are typically retired superintendents, directors of curriculum and instruction, principals, and central office staff. SST members are compensated \$300 per day, in addition to expenses. SST members participate in a three-day training session that simulates all facets of the review process, including reviewing the school portfolio, conducting observations and interviews, and writing the report.

The SST first reviews the school's portfolio, assembled by each school before the SST arrives. The SST then spends one full week at the school interviewing every teacher, conducting a long and a short classroom observation of each teacher, and interviewing parents, students, and other staff. At the end of the week, the SST makes a 30-minute presentation of their preliminary findings to the school, highlighting strengths and areas of needed improvement.

Each SST completes approximately 5 school reviews, scheduled any time between September and May. After completing the on-site visit, the SST prepares and submits a written report to CDE and a Title I representative. The SST conducts an exit interview with the school's principal and superintendent and other central office staff when the SST's report is completed. After the CDE approves a school's Colorado School Improvement Plan (CSIP), the school immediately receives \$30,000 from a Title I School Improvement grant for their initial planning. The school later applies for up to \$100,000 in additional Title I School Improvement funds, to offset the cost of implementing the CSIP during the first year.

### **3. Florida's School Advisory Councils**

Florida's System of School Improvement and School Accountability was adopted in 1991 and serves as the state's current accountability system. The Office of School Improvement oversees four regional teams that assist schools and school districts with implementing Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability. The Sunshine State Standards, which took hold in 1996, provide instructional guidelines upon which student, school, and district performance is measured using the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

Many states use standardized performance measures that are comparable to Florida's FCAT to identify underperforming schools that then receive targeted support team assistance from the state. However, the 1999 Florida System for High-Quality Schools Act enables every public school – not just those designated as underperforming – to



receive comparable assistance in the form of a **school advisory council (SAC)**. Florida Statute 1001.452 closely governs the establishment and activities of each SAC while conveying the state's philosophy that every school can be improved most effectively using local stakeholders. The organization, deployment, and responsibilities of SAC's reflect Florida's underlying emphasis on local intervention and the state's three guiding principles for its Assistance Plus (A+) school improvement system, namely that:

- the District shall be held accountable for providing necessary resources to have all students performing at acceptable levels.
- the State shall provide expectations and necessary resources to enable districts to have all students performing at acceptable levels.
- the State Board of Education shall be prepared to take action in the event that districts are unsuccessful at having all students performing at acceptable levels.

Regardless of whether a school receives "school improvement" or another "underperforming" designation, the mission of each school advisory council is to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses, which then guide the development and revision of the school's improvement plan.

Each school's local board of education establishes SACs, whose members serve without compensation. Florida Statute 1001.452 requires that at least 50 percent of the SAC's members are local businesspeople and community members not employed by the school on whose SAC they serve.

During the fall, SAC members attend approximately 10 hours of training provided by the school improvement contact person at the school's district office. SACs work in various formats including work groups, subcommittees and task forces to accomplish their primary tasks:

- Assess the need for the school's improvement by using district, state and federal goals as a guide and by reviewing student performance data.
- Put the school's needs in priority order.
- Identify problems and barriers that underlie the needed improvements and their causes.
- Identify and evaluate possible solutions and develop strategies---specific "how-to" steps---to accomplish the needed improvement.
- Specify what will be done, when it will be done, by whom, and what resources are needed.
- Specify precisely what results (outcomes) expected to be achieved and how they will be measured.
- Decide how success will be measured.

When conducting their needs assessment, SAC members gather data from existing demographic and performance data, focus groups, interviews and surveys. SAC members use Florida's eight education goals to guide the data collection process. These education goals also shape the recommendations that SAC members make for improving student performance in the school.

#### **4. Kentucky's Scholastic Audit Teams**

Kentucky's comprehensive education accountability system stems from legislation enacted in 1998 (HB 53) to redesign the existing assessment and accountability system. What emerged was the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS), a high-stakes system that focuses primarily on the school level. CATS uses composite index scores from a medley of norm- and criterion-referenced tests in seven content areas administered at selected grades for school accountability. Biennial accountability targets for the composite index scores are set for schools relative to the school's starting position. Schools that, at the end of an accountability cycle, do not achieve their performance growth goals are subject to sanctions intended to improve performance. Every two years, all schools falling into the "assistance" classification are rank-ordered from highest to lowest and the list is divided into thirds. The top performing third is designated Level 1 schools, the middle third Level 2, and the bottom third Level 3, and all are subject to review as follows:

- **Level 1** schools are required to undergo a *scholastic self-review* by a team set up by the local school district and facilitated by the district's professional development coordinator with assistance provided by KDE staff.
- **Level 2** schools are required to receive a *scholastic review* by a team of local district members established by KDE. Assistance Level 2 schools may be eligible to receive Commonwealth School Improvement Funds.
- **Level 3** schools receive *scholastic audits* by an external team coordinated by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). In addition to a scholastic audit, Level 3 schools receive education assistance from a Highly Skilled Educator under KRS 158.782 and may be eligible to receive Commonwealth School Improvement Funds.

The **scholastic audits** conducted by external teams involve Level 3 schools most in need of assistance. During the 2003-04 review year, 14 Level 3 schools received a scholastic audit.

Scholastic audit teams review schools' learning environment, efficiency, and academic performance of students. Additionally, scholastic audit teams make recommendations to the Kentucky Board of Education about the appropriateness of a school's classification and the assistance required to improve teaching and learning. Prior to the



scholastic audit, the school principal prepares a school portfolio reflecting the strengths and limitations of the school's instructional and organizational effectiveness. Scholastic audit team members review this portfolio before conducting the on-site school visit.

After the KDE reviews applications and selects candidates, scholastic audit team members and coordinators become contract employees who work approximately 20 days per year. Team members receive \$350 per day and team coordinators receive \$400 per day for their service, in addition to reimbursement for mileage and meals. Before conducting the on-site audit, team members and coordinators receive training that lasts 4 to 5 days, during which they receive \$150 per day.

The scholastic audit team uses the *Standards and Indicators for School Improvement* as the measure of a school's preparedness for improvement while conducting classroom observations, interviews, and focus groups during one-week visits to each Level 3 school. Within three weeks of conducting the site visit, the scholastic audit team submits a final written exit report to the KDE, local school board members, superintendent, principal, and the school council members, regarding:

1. The appropriateness of the school's classification based upon findings;
2. Specific recommendations to improve teaching and learning that can be included in the existing comprehensive school improvement plan;
3. The evaluation of school-based decision-making council decisions in critical instructional areas;
4. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the principal as the instructional leader, in the areas of efficiency, learning environment, and academic performance;
5. The identification of certified staff, including administrators, needing further performance evaluations to the primary evaluator;
6. The assistance and resources required to revise the consolidated school improvement plan; and
7. The identification of priorities and strategies, which the school or district may adopt to support the improvement effort.

Kentucky's Highly Skilled Educators Program provides direct, long-term assistance to schools in the form of highly skilled educators placed in Level 3 schools. A member of the Kentucky Highly Skilled Educators cadre assists a school in strengthening its curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices by modeling lessons, mentoring, and assisting educational leaders with reducing barriers to learning. Highly skilled educators include recognized leaders such as classroom teachers and administrators, who have shown high levels of professional competence and represent Kentucky's diverse workforce. Participants remain employees of their respective districts with the guarantee of employment upon leaving the program.

## 5. Massachusetts' School Panel Reviews and Fact Finding Teams

The backbone of the Commonwealth's performance system is the standards-based Massachusetts Comprehensive Accountability System (MCAS) examination. The Commonwealth adopted a School and District Accountability System in 1999, which focuses on using student achievement to evaluate school and district performance. The school performance evaluation process consists of three stages:

- **School Performance Ratings** – Every two years, each public school receives a performance rating based on MCAS data and other criteria. These ratings are used to categorize schools, with particular emphasis on schools with low performance and low improvement, and schools that are potential exemplars.
- **School Panel Reviews** – Panel reviews have been conducted annually since 2000 at those schools identified for very low performance and little or no improvement on MCAS data. They are also undertaken at “compass” schools.
- **Diagnostic Fact-Finding Reviews** – Those schools found to be “underperforming” by the Commissioner, following the completion of the school panel review, receive a diagnostic fact-finding review.

**School review panels** are assembled by and report to the Commissioner of Education and the MA DOE, and serve two distinct purposes. First, the panel review investigates the practices of exemplary “compass” schools. The second purpose is to assist the Commissioner of Education in determining whether a school meets the criteria of “underperforming.” In this capacity, panel reviews gather additional information that helps determine whether State intervention is necessary to guide improvement efforts in schools where students' MCAS performance is critically low and no trend toward improved student performance is evident. Not all identified schools receive a panel review. Most recently, in 2004, sixteen schools received a panel review.

The three- to five-member review panels include consultants hired by MA DOE, MA DOE employees, district employees such as teachers, administrators, curriculum coordinators, and/or program evaluators released from their routine duties. Supporting the panelists is one of six MA DOE staff members who serve as coordinators. In addition to appointing a Panel Review Coordinator, MA DOE also designates an external consultant to serve as the Panel Review Chairperson.

MA DOE staff and consultants who serve on review panels receive compensation that is consistent with the terms of their respective contracts. Per Diem compensation for contractors does not exceed \$500. When paid by their regular employer, school district employees and privately employed volunteers receive a \$100/day honorarium.

Review panelists meet as a full team for two days, during which they examine in detail the MCAS results for all students in the school, as well as additional trends such as attendance, dropout, and graduation rates. The review panel then makes a one-day

visit to the school undergoing review. Here, panel members gather information from, pose questions to, and engage in discussion with school and district stakeholders. Each panelist also observes at least two class lessons, after which the panelist interviews the teachers (s)he observed.

If the review panel concludes that a school referred for review is on course for the successful implementation of a sound improvement and has the requisite conditions to support that implementation, the school enters “not underperforming” status. If the panel concludes that a school is not on course, the Commissioner may declare the school to be “underperforming” and can assign a **fact-finding team**. The fact-finding team's charge is to advise the Commissioner and Board of Education of its judgment on two key questions:

Key Question 1: What are the reasons for the low levels of student performance in ELA and mathematics at this school?

Key Question 2: What are the prospects for improved student performance at this school?

The fact-finding team uses a set of school performance standards that address curriculum and instruction; school climate; organizational structures and management; and leadership and planning to gather primary and secondary data. During the one week on-site visit, the fact-finding team conducts observations of teaching and learning, and interviews faculty, students, administrators, district personnel, and other stakeholders. The fact-finding team also reviews documents, including the school improvement plan, student assessment information, curriculum documents, and student work.

Simultaneously, the school assembles a leadership team who can help guide the school improvement process through an intensive Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) process. The PIM process calls for a series of retreats during which the leadership team goes through 10 sets of activities over a 6-month period.

Underperforming schools have to demonstrate “significant improvement” as indicated by their own improvement plans within twenty-four months after State approval of the plan. If such evidence is not shown, the school can be determined to be chronically under-performing and subject to removal of the principal, dismissal of teachers, remediation funding measures, and actions determined by the State Board of Education.

## **6. North Carolina’s Assistance Team Reviews**

North Carolina’s state accountability system--the ABCs program--was established in 1996. In response to NCLB, the State Board of Education changed the ABCs categories to include AYP and now assigns mandatory state assistance teams to a subset of low-

performing schools. Other low-performing schools are eligible for voluntary assistance to help improve the school's performance.

State law §115C-105.38 directs assistance teams' activities, which are overseen by the Division of School Improvement within the State Department of Public Instruction. During the 2002-03 school year, the cost of operating full-time assistance teams was \$6.4 million. Despite the high price tag, only 3 of the 60 schools that received assistance team support between 1997 and 2003 returned to low-performing status.

Assistance teams work full time in underperforming schools to evaluate the teaching and learning environment and provide services that will improve the education of all children. Comprised of 5 members, including one leader, North Carolina's assistance teams feature current educational practitioners that receive 4 weeks of targeted, intensive training. In addition to paying team members' salaries, the State also covers the cost of replacing school personnel in their home districts for the up to three years of a team member's service.

Because assistance teams work full-time in underperforming schools, the review process is ongoing and collaborative. Assistance team members gather data through announced and unannounced classroom observations, surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, and documents in order to evaluate the underperforming school's programs and personnel. Monthly meetings enable the assistance team leader to review the principal's compliance with the school improvement plan and to discuss the principal's final summative evaluation by June 15<sup>th</sup>. In addition to evaluating the school's principal and teachers, the assistance team also evaluates school staff including administrators (assistant principal, curriculum staff, professional development staff) and instructional support staff (media specialist, counselors).

As the school develops and implements the school improvement plan, the assistance team makes recommendations that the school staff can either accept or reject, depending upon their desired focus areas. Finally, the assistance team reports the school's progress, as appropriate, to the local board of education, the community, and the State Board of Education.

If an assistance team determines that an accepted school improvement plan developed under G. S. 115C-105.22 is impeding student performance, the team may recommend appropriate revisions to the local board of education. If a school fails to improve student performance after receiving assistance, the team's recommendations have measurable and significant implications, ranging from the continuation of assistance team services to further action by the Board such as terminating the administration's contract, appointing an interim superintendent, and/or suspending the powers and duties of the local board of education.

## C. KEY FINDINGS OF STATES' EXTERNAL REVIEW STRATEGIES

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What emerges from this review is a clear understanding that no two states utilize school improvement teams in the same way. Even when states base their approach on other state's models (e.g., both South Carolina and Colorado turned to Kentucky), local variations take hold. Tempering the range in approaches to using school improvement teams is the consistency of the issues they face. The effectiveness of school leadership and the quality of instruction, for example, lie at the core of any school level improvement effort and focus these teams' work.

**Despite the widespread use of school improvement teams, the underlying philosophy that guides them, their composition, and their activities varies.** Similarly, the role of the state's centralized accountability office is positioned differently. As with South Carolina, states such as Kentucky, Massachusetts, and North Carolina view the role of support teams as diagnostic and regulatory. In this instance, the teams diagnose areas of needed improvement and state officials use their recommendations to enforce state and federal accountability criteria. Other states such as Arizona and Florida, by contrast, view the role of school improvement teams as preventive and emphasize teams composed of practitioners and/or local stakeholders.

**While support teams are composed of different types of members, the value of using a handful of individuals on the teams is consistently acknowledged.** Like South Carolina's practice of using three members, all states reviewed for this report rely on just small groups of individuals for school reviews.

**School improvement teams engage in similar processes and activities.** With the exception of Florida, in all states reviewed, each team member is selected and trained using a centralized set of procedures and specific criteria. Meanwhile, schools (with the leadership of the principal) do some type of internal fact-finding before the improvement team arrives. While conducting on-site reviews, teams use a protocol that includes interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups to gather and triangulate data that inform recommendations for a school improvement plan. Schools receive written reports that contain evidence-based recommendations in targeted areas.

**States have differently invested their time and personnel in school improvement teams.** States share a concerted interest in exerting control over the school improvement team process, but manifest this interest in different ways. In South Carolina, for example, the state invests its resources in organizing, training, selecting team members, and directing them. In Massachusetts, although external consultants play a lead role in directing the teams, a state employee is present on the team and contributes to the review. In other states like Arizona, no external consultants participate in the school improvement teams.

**There is widespread dissatisfaction with the amount of time involved in the school improvement process.** Since most locations base identification of schools on state assessment data and AYP progress, analyses of test data must take place before states can identify schools for improvement. This can take up to several months. The process of selecting and training school improvement team members adds additional time, as does the scrupulous attention paid to validating the information in written reports. By the time schools have actual recommendations in their hand, over a year may have passed since the administration of the state assessment that launched the whole process. States like Colorado and North Carolina have reacted to the inherent time lag by recruiting and training school improvement team members on a rolling basis.

**States are concerned about consistency across school improvement teams.** A variety of measures have been adopted to determine if there are consistent practices and to identify those team members whose actions detract from the improvement team process. As in South Carolina, states may administer a survey to schools that undergo an improvement team visit. In Arizona, in addition to the school-level survey, the state is developing a “360 degree” review process to determine if there are any underperforming review team members.

**State and federal accountability structures affect states’ use of school improvement teams.** All states rely on objective data from state assessments to identify schools in need of improvement. But the AYP determination can rely on either state or federal guidelines. In Florida and Colorado, NCLB AYP determinations act as the sole trigger for improvement identification. States like South Carolina and Massachusetts rely on a mix of state and federal criteria. States acknowledge that the lack of consistency in identifying schools for improvement under state and federal systems cause them to make compromises in the number of teams that are formed and where these teams will work.

**Schools’ needs for improvement are greater than states’ capacity.** In every state reviewed, there are more schools in need of support than there are state resources available to support them. State officials have to make hard decisions concerning where to direct school improvement resources and prioritize lowest-performing schools.

**States have taken a singular approach to providing technical assistance.** The process for launching school improvement teams is part of a prescribed pattern. School improvement teams visit schools targeted according to AYP scores, education leaders engage in school planning, coaches may be deployed as part of technical assistance, and leaders follow up with support. What is missing is any kind of “differentiated assistance,” where states put into place a menu of options and approaches to help schools that have different capacities and different needs.

**States have adopted different approaches to placing the educators who are responsible for providing technical assistance.** In states like South Carolina and Kentucky, educators responsible for technical assistance are located in the schools they will serve. In other instances, as in Massachusetts, such individuals are placed at the school district level. The location of these individuals may impact their reporting and loyalty. It may be that educators who report directly to the state, for example, might be more willing to discuss shortcomings in the improvement process than, say, educators who report directly to local principals and school boards.

To summarize, there is no royal road for school improvement teams. In fact, the variety of states' school improvement team strategies appears to be necessary, as one recent report suggests, since no single format for school improvement has been shown to work most of the time or in most places. All education leaders involved in school improvement in South Carolina know well that there is more work to be done and that their processes can be improved further. But as South Carolina's counterparts in other states can attest, time limitations, lack of personnel, constant requests for more help, and federal requirements consistently challenge the school improvement process, no matter the locale.

## SECTION III: METHODS USED AND DATA COLLECTED

Hezel Associates' three-tier examination of the relationship between ERT processes and school improvement included an analysis of data from across all years of the program's existence, as well as a focused examination of particular subgroups of schools (Table 1). First, and most broadly, we looked at data from the approximately 80 schools that participated in reviews between 2001 and the 2004-05 school year. Second, since we were interested in seeing whether schools have implemented recommendations and realized improvement, we considered the original cohort of schools that participated in reviews in 2001. Third, we identified those schools from 2001 that have experienced the most and least improvement, with the goal of isolating those ERT-related activities that have contributed to the present status of these schools.

**Table 1. Schools that contributed to the research**

Schools Involved	Research Activity
All unsatisfactory schools and stakeholders participating in ERT reviews since 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Online surveys</li><li>• Analysis of school absolute performance ratings</li><li>• Analysis of ERT recommendations</li></ul>
Subset of schools that participated in ERT reviews in 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analysis of school absolute performance ratings</li><li>• One-on-one interviews</li></ul>
Subset of schools from 2001 that have shown the most and least improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analysis of school absolute performance ratings</li><li>• Site visits</li></ul>

### A. DATA COLLECTED

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To portray how the ERT process relates to student outcomes in schools that participated in the ERT Program, Hezel Associates gathered and analyzed data from primary and secondary sources.

#### 1. School Report Cards

Hezel Associates examined schools' absolute performance ratings, which utilize a multivariate formula involving weighted measures (accountability manuals for each school year describe in detail how absolute performance ratings are calculated). To establish a reasonable understanding of why a school received an unsatisfactory performance designation, Hezel Associates reviewed student performance on PACT and BSAP/HSAP assessments, percentages of students eligible for LIFE scholarships, and high school graduation rates. We examined the percentage of students scoring 'basic or above' on PACT and BSAP/HSAP assessments to compare trends in student ELA and math performance.



## **2. Online surveys**

To gather feedback about the ERT process, Hezel Associates asked ERT members, school principals, and ERT chairpersons to complete online surveys about their preparation for and participation in the ERT program. Using a database provided by the State Education Department, Hezel Associates distributed to all ERT members, school principals, and ERT chairpersons email messages and postcards that listed URL web addresses for the online surveys. To increase the response rate, we sent reminders to people for whom we had contact information and used the Internet to locate contact information for additional respondents. Finally, EOC staff contacted principals and ERT chairpersons directly to generate further survey submissions. We used descriptive statistics, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Least Significant Difference Post Hoc tests to analyze survey findings.

## **3. Telephone interviews**

Hezel Associates validated and built upon findings from the online surveys by interviewing a subset of ERT members, school principals, and ERT chairpersons from two types of schools that participated in reviews in 2001. First, we interviewed ERT stakeholders from schools that received an initial unsatisfactory designation but later showed steady gains in school performance. Second, we interviewed ERT stakeholders from schools that received unsatisfactory absolute performance ratings every year after their initial ERT review. The telephone interview protocols included closed- and open-ended questions designed to elicit information on how the ERT process related to subsequent school performance. Each interview lasted no longer than 60 minutes.

## **4. School site visits**

In addition to school report card, survey, and interview data, Hezel Associates conducted nine, day-long site visits to elementary, middle, and high schools designated as unsatisfactory in 2001-02. During the site visit, the researcher used a standard protocol that consisted of touring school facilities, interviewing principals and teachers involved in the ERT review, examining the ERT recommendations issued in the wake of the ERT visit(s), and analyzing school improvement plans.

## **5. ERT summary reports**

Using summary reports provided by the State Education Department, Hezel Associates analyzed ERT findings, recommendations, and subsequent technical assistance. This analysis provided an important link between ERT processes, ERT findings, technical assistance aimed at improving student performance, and trends in actual student performance across unsatisfactory schools.

## SECTION IV: AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE DATA IN ERT SCHOOLS

Between the inception of the ERT Program in 2001 and the end of the 2004-05 school year, the ERT Program served about 80 different schools. During this time, an array of ERT members, school principals, and school staff coordinated their efforts to better understand areas of needed improvement and remedy problems. In this section, Hezel Associates couples analyses of student achievement data with insights from ERT stakeholders to paint a comprehensive portrait of ERT Program.

### A. STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN ALL SCHOOLS THAT PARTICIPATED IN ERT REVIEWS

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To describe changes in student performance in schools that received an ERT visit, Hezel Associates conducted a *yearly analysis* to depict broad trends and movements in student performance for each year of the ERT Program.<sup>5</sup> The analysis encompasses four groups of schools:

- Group I:** Schools that received an ERT visit in 2001-02
- Group II:** Schools that received an ERT visit in 2002-03
- Group III:** Schools that received an ERT visit in 2003-04
- Group IV:** Schools that received an ERT visit in 2004-05

School performance data for the school year immediately prior to the ERT visit determined a school's performance rating (Table 2).

**Table 2. Data sources of schools receiving an ERT visit, by group**

Group	Report Card Data Year	Year of ERT Visit	Number of Unsatisfactory Schools	Newly Identified Unsatisfactory Schools
I	2001	2001-02	62	62 (100%)
II	2002	2002-03	46	16 (35%)
III	2003	2003-04	40	4 (10%)
IV	2004	2004-05	22	0

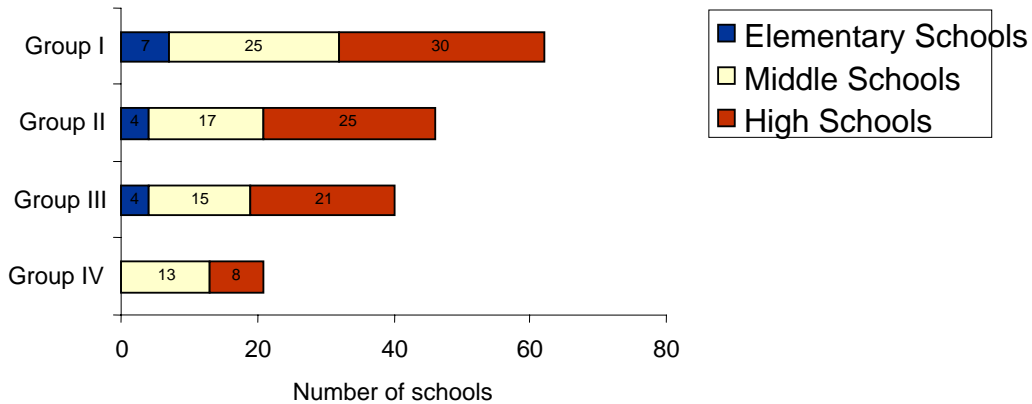
As depicted in Table 2, the number of schools that participated in the ERT Program decreased from 62 in 2001-02 to 22 in 2004-05. Concurrently, the proportion of newly identified unsatisfactory schools decreased annually. In other words, as the ERT

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<sup>5</sup> Every school in South Carolina receives an absolute performance index rating based on student performance and other data. Each index rating falls within a range of indices that correspond to the qualitative school-level performance designations: Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average, and Unsatisfactory. The qualitative designation of unsatisfactory, rather than the quantitative absolute index rating, is used to determine which schools receive an ERT visit.

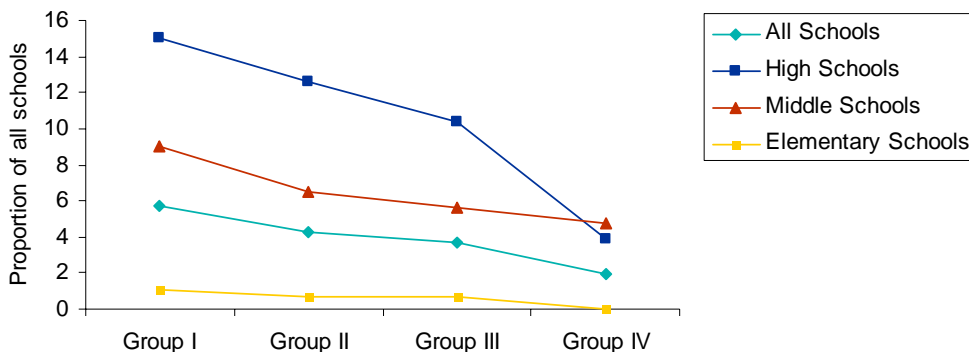
Program progressed, ERTs increasingly revisited schools that demonstrated unsatisfactory performance, rather than reviewing newly identified schools. With the exception of Group IV (2004-05), each group of schools that participated in the ERT Program contained elementary, middle, and high schools<sup>6</sup> (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Elementary, middle, and high schools reviewed, by year**



As the total number of schools that received an ERT visit declined, the proportion of all elementary, middle, and high schools in South Carolina that were designated unsatisfactory also declined. The proportion of unsatisfactory high schools declined most precipitously, from 15 percent of schools reviewed in 2001-02 to just about 4 percent in 2004-05 (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. ERT participation as a proportion of all schools in South Carolina**



<sup>6</sup> The range of indices that correspond to the unsatisfactory rating increased in 2004 from 0.0 - 2.1 to 0.0 - 2.2. Increasing the upper threshold of unsatisfactory ratings in 2004 illustrates the EOC's commitment to school improvement by requiring schools to more closely attend to improving student performance on PACT and HSAP assessments.

**ELA and mathematics proficiency**

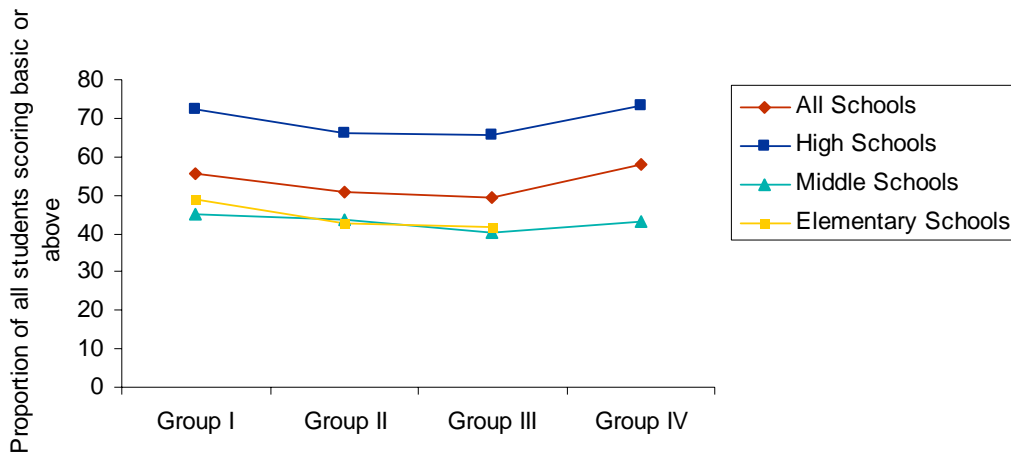
Schools in Groups I, II, and IV demonstrated higher proficiency on the ELA component of PACT and BSAP/HSAP assessments than on the math component (Table 3).

**Table 3. Percentage of students scoring basic or above on PACT and BSAP/HSAP assessments, by year**

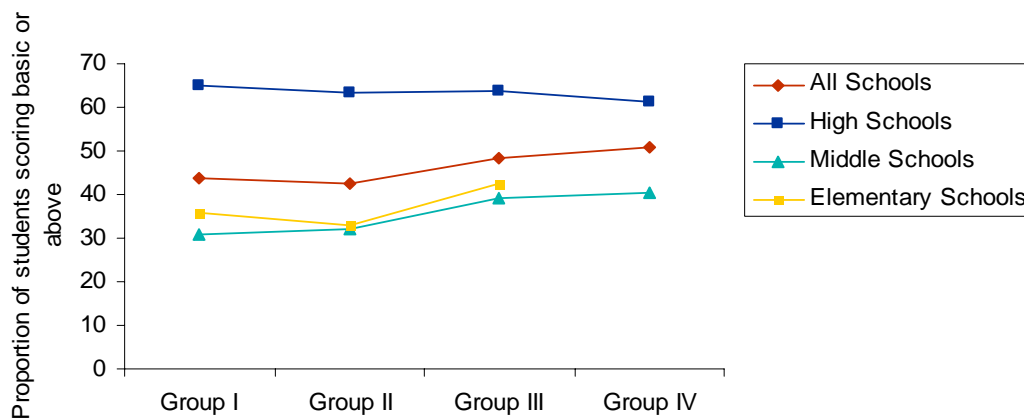
	Group I	Group II	Group III	Group IV
All schools: ELA	55%	51%	49%	58%
All schools: Math	44%	43%	49%	51%

Math proficiency appeared to improve more quickly following an ERT visit than ELA proficiency. More marked improvements in math proficiency occurred between Groups II and III of the ERT Program, whereas the largest improvements in ELA proficiency took place between Groups III and IV (Figures 3 and 4).

**Figure 3. ELA proficiency in Group I, II, III, and IV schools**



**Figure 4. Math proficiency in Group I, II, III, and IV schools**



## B. LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOLS THAT PARTICIPATED IN ERT REVIEWS IN 2001

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Our initial analysis of school performance data revealed that there are two types of schools participating in the ERT Program: schools that received an ERT review and then subsequently improved, and schools that showed continued unsatisfactory performance each year of the ERT Program. Each cohort of schools reviewed by external review teams included a core group of the same unsatisfactory schools from year to year, plus a selection of additional schools that generally demonstrated satisfactory performance but that received an unsatisfactory rating only during that year. Also, it appeared the greatest changes in students' math and ELA performance took place between the second and third years following their review, suggesting that improvements in student performance may not be visible for some time following the ERT visit.

To follow up on both of these early findings, Hezel Associates conducted a longitudinal analysis of a subset of unsatisfactory schools: 62 schools from the 2001-02 cohort (Group I), those with the longest period of time to implement improvement strategies based on ERT recommendations. Using student performance data gathered from these schools' 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004 school report cards, we characterized these schools in one of two ways: as having *Improved* to satisfactory status and remained satisfactory, or as showing *Continued Unsatisfactory* status. Using this classification system, we were able to categorize 43 of the 62 schools that received an ERT visit in 2001-02 (Table 4).<sup>7</sup>

**Table 4. Schools included in the longitudinal analysis**

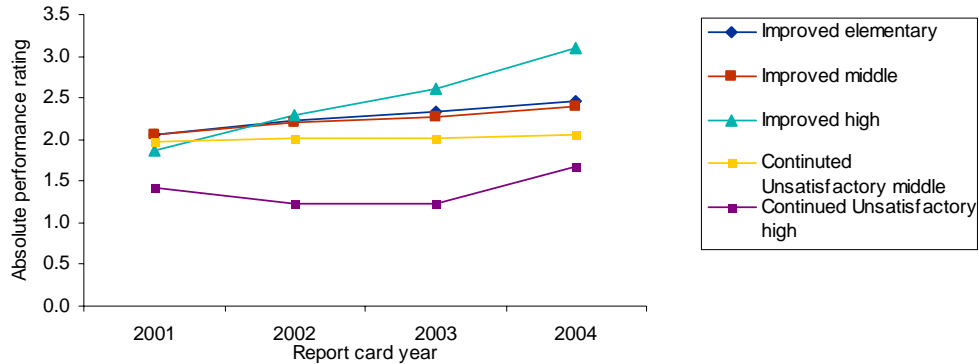
	Improved	Continued Unsatisfactory	Total
Elementary Schools	6	0	6
Middle Schools	9	11	20
High Schools	12	5	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>43</b>

Beginning with data gathered during 2001, we examined the performance of 27 Improved and 16 Continued Unsatisfactory schools in the 3 years subsequent to their initial ERT review. We found that the greatest gains in absolute performance ratings among all these schools took place between 2003 and 2004, two years following their initial review (Figure 5).

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<sup>7</sup> The remaining 19 schools showed no pattern in subsequent school performance, or there was insufficient longitudinal data available to determine whether a pattern existed.

**Figure 5. Absolute performance ratings in schools following ERT visits**

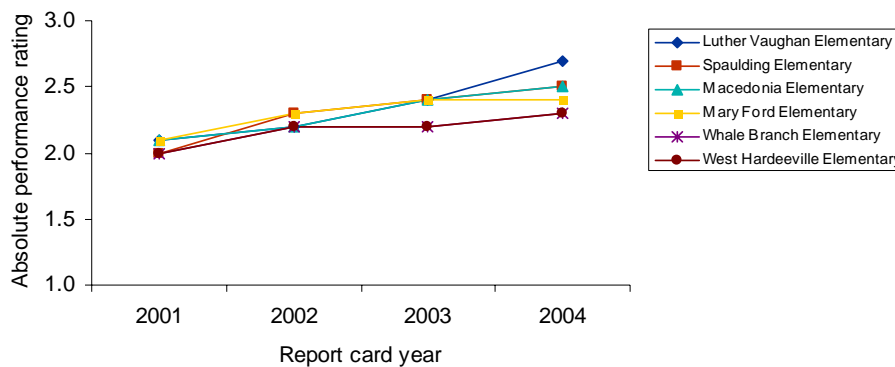


Some Continued Unsatisfactory schools showed greater improvements in their absolute performance ratings between 2001 and 2004 than some of the Improved schools, though they were unable to meet the threshold for satisfactory school performance. Since different methods are used to determine absolute performance ratings by school level, we break out this comparison by elementary, middle, and high schools.

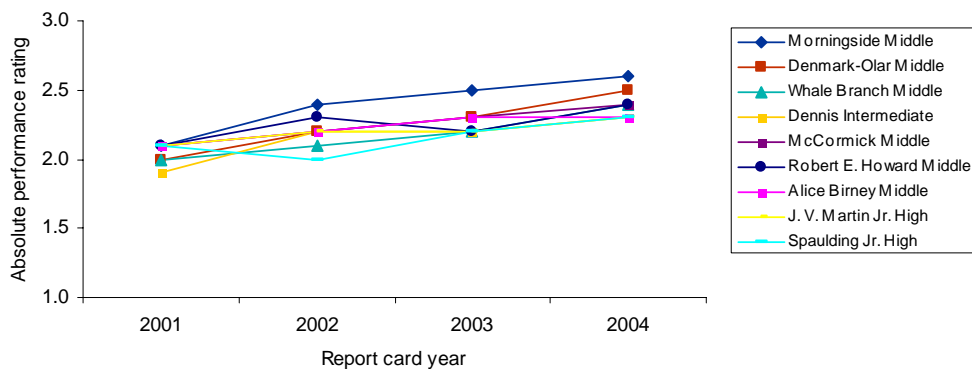
### **1. Improved elementary and middle schools**

All 6 Improved elementary and middle schools entered the ERT program with absolute performance ratings that closely bordered the threshold for a satisfactory designation (Appendix 4). With only one- or two-tenths of a point away from a satisfactory designation in most cases, all Improved elementary schools achieved a satisfactory absolute performance rating in the year immediately following the initial ERT visit. One of these elementary schools improved beyond the level of “below average” to “average.” By contrast, none of the 9 Improved middle schools achieved beyond the rating of “below average,” despite sizeable gains in performance. The greatest gains in elementary and middle schools’ absolute performance ratings took place between the 2003 and 2004 report card years (Figures 6 and 7).

**Figure 6. Absolute performance ratings in Improved elementary schools**



**Figure 7. Absolute performance ratings in Improved middle schools**

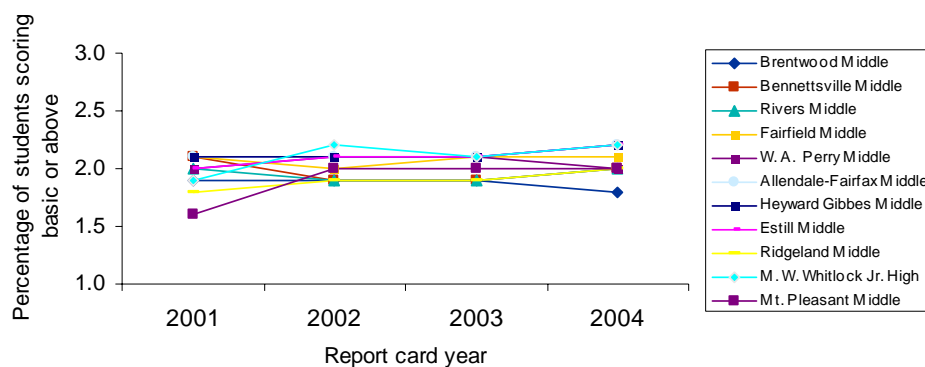


ELA performance among Improved elementary and middle schools showed the greatest gains in student performance between 2003 and 2004, whereas sizeable gains in math performance were made every year except for 2004 (Appendix 5).

## 2. Continued Unsatisfactory elementary and middle schools

No elementary school reviewed in 2001-02 fell into the Continued Unsatisfactory category. Eleven middle schools, however, demonstrated Continued Unsatisfactory performance following the 2001-02 ERT visit. These 11 middle schools demonstrated inconsistent patterns in student performance (Appendix 3). For example, the greatest number and gains in absolute performance ratings took place in the year immediately following their ERT visit, when ERT recommendations had yet to be implemented. Absolute performance ratings either remained the same or showed only slight changes during subsequent years, when these middle schools had more time to implement recommendations and deploy technical assistance (Figure 8).

**Figure 8. Absolute performance ratings in Continued Unsatisfactory middle schools**



### 3. Improved and Continued Unsatisfactory high schools

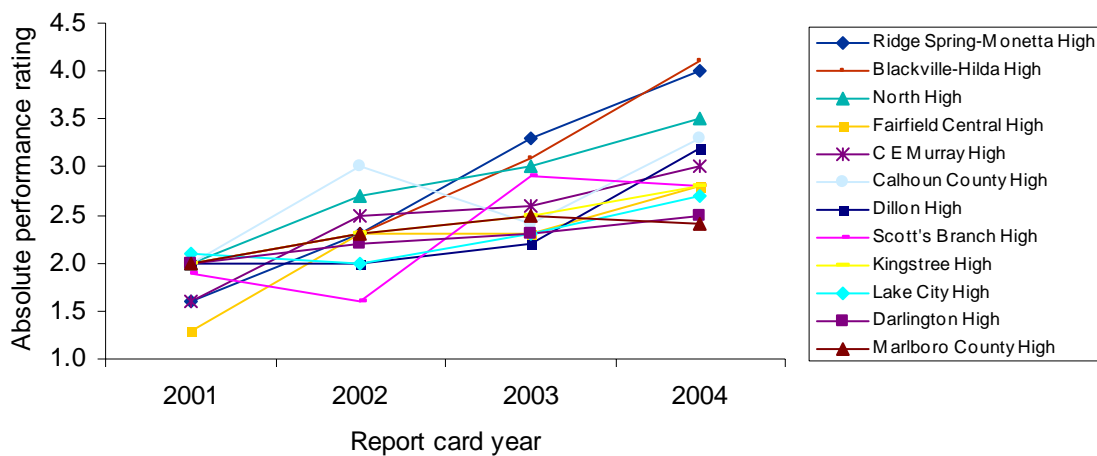
Longitudinal changes in high school performance are more difficult to map than changes in elementary and middle schools. Whereas elementary and middle school performance is determined using student achievement on PACT scores, several performance measures determine a high school’s performance rating, including student proficiency on the BSAP/HSAP exit exams, eligibility for LIFE scholarships, exit exam passage rates, and, after 2003, graduation rates. Sizeable improvements in any one of these areas, or cumulative smaller improvements, can result in considerably larger high school performance gains.

#### *Improved high schools*

More of the high schools from the 2001 cohort improved their performance ratings during the course of the ERT Program than elementary or middle schools (Figure 6 above). Further, despite earning the lowest absolute performance ratings of any school type during the first year of the ERT Program, Improved high schools showed the highest absolute performance ratings (Appendix 4) and the most improvement between 2001 and 2004. Improved high schools gained an average of 1.2 index points, from an average absolute performance rating of 1.9 (“unsatisfactory”) in 2001 to 3.1 (“good”) in 2004 (Figure 9).



**Figure 9. Absolute performance ratings in Improved high schools**



A word of caution should be inserted here. Sizeable gains in high school performance may in fact be attributable to ERT processes and recommendations, or to comprehensive efforts to modify curricula, leadership and governance, and/or professional development. However, changes in the BSAP/HSAP exit exam administration and scoring, as well as the 2003 addition of graduation rate as a performance measure, suggest that this trend may also reflect modifications in the calculation of high school performance. Our analyses suggest that student proficiency on the ELA and math components of the BSAP/HSAP exit exams among Improved high schools showed no coherent pattern (Appendix 6). Similarly, Improved high schools showed only marginal aggregate gains in tenth grade BSAP/HSAP passage rates, eligibility for LIFE scholarships, and graduation rates between 2001 and 2004.

***Continued Unsatisfactory high schools***

Unlike Improved high schools, Continued Unsatisfactory high schools showed no coherent pattern in absolute performance ratings (Appendix 6). Longitudinal ELA and math proficiency among Continued Unsatisfactory high schools showed inconsistent patterns between 2001 and 2004. However, the greatest gains in ELA proficiency and the most consistent gains in both ELA and math proficiency tenth grade passage rates on the BSAP/HSAP exit exam, and graduation rates (Table 5) took place between 2003 and 2004. These trends are consistent with the notion that there is a time lag between the implementation of ERT recommendations and measurable outcomes.

**Table 5. Graduation rates in Improved and Continued Unsatisfactory high schools**

	Improved	Continued Unsatisfactory
2003	74%	51%
2004	75%	55%

## SECTION V: INSIGHTS FROM ERT MEMBERS, SCHOOL PRINCIPALS, AND ERT CHAIRPERSONS

Student performance data illustrate *how* South Carolina’s schools have responded in the wake of an unsatisfactory performance designation, but such analyses do not describe *why* changes in school performance occur. To build on the student performance data, Hezel Associates contacted ERT members and individuals at the schools that had participated in reviews between 2001 and 2004. We surveyed these stakeholders, and then followed up in one-on-one interviews.<sup>8,9</sup> A complete array of descriptive statistics for the responses provided by ERT members, school principals, and chairpersons are located in Appendices 1 and 2, respectively.

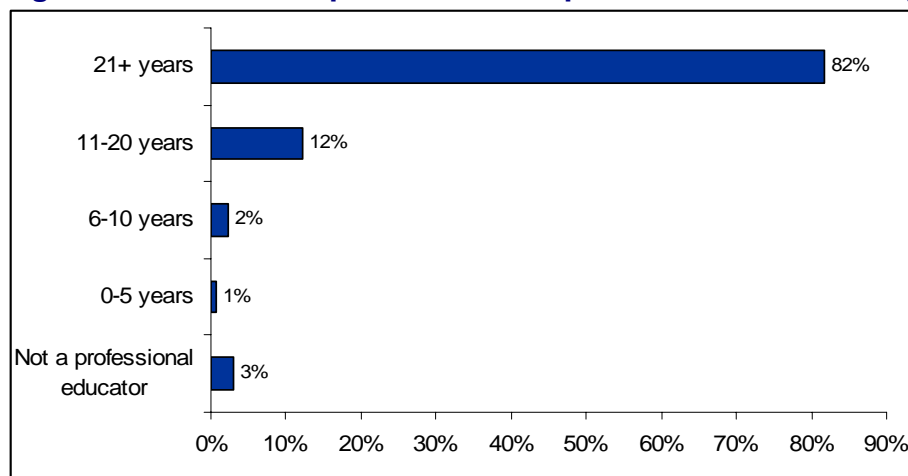
### A. FEEDBACK FROM SURVEYS OF ERT MEMBERS, PRINCIPALS, AND CHAIRPERSONS

#### 1. Responses of ERT panel members

##### *Professional experience and selection prior to ERT service*

The 137 ERT members who responded to the online survey (about 35% of those contacted) include active educators who are affiliated with the State Department of Education, with school districts, and with primary and secondary schools. External review team members have extensive professional experience, with 82 percent of respondents reporting 21 or more years in the education field (Figure 10).

**Figure 10. Years of professional experience in education (n=132)**



<sup>8</sup> External Review Team Member Survey

[http://www.hezel.com/cgi-bin/rws3.pl?FORM=Survey\\_of\\_ERT\\_Members](http://www.hezel.com/cgi-bin/rws3.pl?FORM=Survey_of_ERT_Members)

<sup>9</sup> Principal and Chairperson Survey

[http://www.hezel.com/cgi-bin/rws3.pl?FORM=ERT\\_Survey\\_of\\_Principals\\_and\\_Coordinators](http://www.hezel.com/cgi-bin/rws3.pl?FORM=ERT_Survey_of_Principals_and_Coordinators)

ERT members either applied to or were recruited to the ERT Program based on their administrative or teaching experience (Table 6).

**Table 6. Please tell us why you initially applied to the ERT Program and what were your qualifications. If you were recruited, please describe how and why you were initially contacted (n=137).**

Response	n	Percent
I applied/was recruited because of my administrative experience in schools	46	33.6%
I applied/was recruited because of my teaching experience	27	19.7%
I applied/was recruited because of my other professional experience (such as a math or science specialist)	23	16.8%
I was interested in serving on the ERT	17	12.4%
I applied/was recruited because of my previous evaluation experience	15	10.9%
I worked for SDE (as either an SDE employee or a member of programs affiliated with SDE), and I was recruited within the department	13	9.5%
I was assigned to the ERT	11	8.0%
I applied/was recruited because I wanted to help schools, districts, or make a contribution to education in general	10	7.3%
I applied/was recruited because of my education level and background	10	7.3%
I was recruited because of my experience in education (non-specific)	9	6.6%
I was recruited by an acquaintance	6	4.4%
I applied/was recruited because I had worked for SDE before	4	2.9%
I applied/was recruited because of my ERT experience	3	2.2%

*Ratings of external review team members' first-year experiences*

ERT members were asked to rate their agreement with a series of statements regarding their first year experience as an ERT member, using a Likert-type scale (with “1” representing Strongly Disagree and “4” representing Strongly Agree). In general, ERT members rated their first year experiences highly, with the lowest average rating of 3.2 assigned for the adequacy of data provided by schools. An average rating of 3.6 showed that ERT members felt positively about the team’s awareness of the criteria used to evaluate school programs, schools’ compliance in giving full access to areas that needed to be visited, helpfulness of ERT members’ observations in completing the final report, and the clarity of communication. Overall, ERT members strongly agreed that their teams assisted schools with understanding how they needed to improve.

Hezel Associates used the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Least Significant Difference Post Hoc tests to determine whether differences in the mean scores of ERT member responses varied by selected demographic variables.<sup>10</sup> Of the variables selected, we found that ERT members who primarily worked in a school district office consistently gave lower (p<.05) ratings of their first-year experiences than members who were active educators, retired educators, worked in an education-related organization, or were not educators. Also, ERT members who first visited an

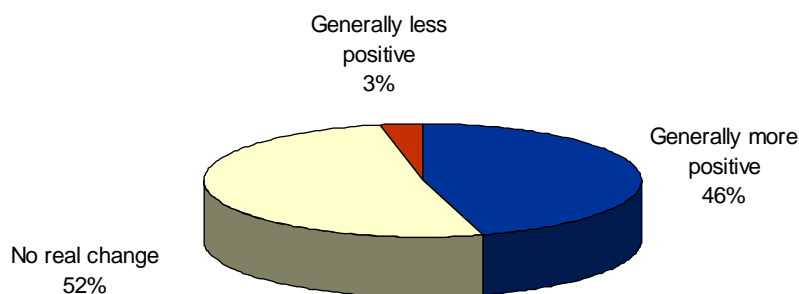
<sup>10</sup> The demographic variables that were tested include: ERT members’ current job status, most recent position, number of years of professional experience in education, most recent level of responsibility, year of first ERT visit, and school level of first ERT visit.

elementary school gave lower ratings than respondents whose first visit was to a middle school ( $p < .05$ ) (Appendix 1).

***ERT members' experiences and additional comments about subsequent participation in the ERT Program***

Almost half (48%) of ERT respondents served on an ERT for more than one year. When asked to describe how they would rate their subsequent experience, 98 percent of the respondents suggested it showed “no real change” or was “generally more positive” than the first (Figure 11). Roughly one quarter of ERT members revisited the school they initially reviewed.

**Figure 11. How would your answers for this subsequent experience compare with those provided in the survey above? (n=66)\***



\*Percentages add up to 101 due to rounding.

When asked to describe what contributed to any improvements in the ERT process, many respondents cited better preparedness and cooperation among schools and teachers. Other reasons for a more positive second ERT experience included experienced ERT members, updated and revised forms and documentation, and a better understanding of the overall, more streamlined process (Table 7).

**Table 7. If the ERT process improved, to what do you attribute the improvement? (n=30)**

Response	n	Percent
The participating schools/teachers were more prepared or cooperative	14	46.7%
The ERT members became more experienced.	9	30.0%
The forms used were updated/revised	5	16.7%
The process was improved, more streamlined or better understood	5	16.7%
The training was improved	3	10.0%
More information/guidelines were supplied by SDE	2	6.7%
SDE was supportive or responsive.	2	6.7%
Other	5	16.7%

ERT members also offered comments that they felt would help to improve the ERT Program. As Table 8 shows, 26 percent of all comments were positive reflections on the ERT process or the team member’s experience. Increasing preparation for and

awareness of ERT reviews at the school level (15%) and updating and improving the evaluation and observation instrument (14%) were among the more frequently mentioned responses.

**Table 8. Additional comments for improving the ERT Program. (n=73)**

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Positive comments regarding the ERT process or a team member's experience	19	<b>26.0%</b>
Increase preparation for and awareness of ERT reviews at the school level/improve climate surrounding the review	11	<b>15.1%</b>
Update/improve evaluation and observation instrument/ allow space for reviewers to add in their own comments	10	<b>13.7%</b>
The ERT process/model can be improved	6	<b>8.2%</b>
Give reviewers additional time for the review/access to school-specific information so they can better assess the school	6	<b>8.2%</b>
Improve training/provide additional training for ERT members	6	<b>8.2%</b>
Difficulties often occurred when scheduling ERT visits during the holiday months (i.e. December)/conduct observations earlier	5	<b>6.8%</b>
The same ERT members that participated in the first review should revisit the school in subsequent visits/years	5	<b>6.8%</b>
Make sure team leaders have leadership experience	3	<b>4.1%</b>
Schools selected for each reviewer should be geographically located near their home and should match their experience (i.e. a high school principal should be matched to a high school)	3	<b>4.1%</b>
ERT members should revisit the school after their recommendations have been submitted to check on the school's improvement progress	3	<b>4.1%</b>
Make sure team members have appropriate experience	2	<b>2.7%</b>
Other	4	<b>5.5%</b>

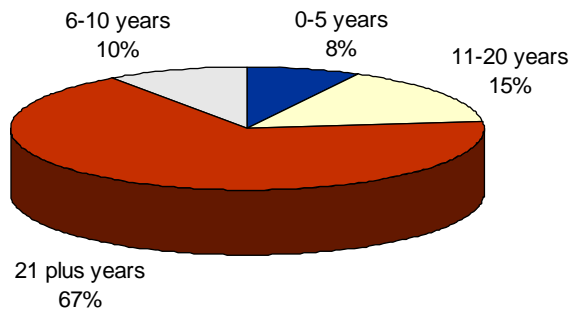
## **2. Responses of school principals and ERT chairpersons**

Fifty two school principals and ERT chairpersons, or about 41 percent of those contacted, responded to the online survey.

### *Professional experience prior to ERT service*

Nearly three-fourths of school principals and ERT chairpersons (73 percent) were employed as building-level principals. Respondents work at all school levels, with 44 percent working primarily in high schools, 27 percent in elementary schools, and 21 percent in middle schools. Most principals and chairpersons reported considerable experience in the public schools (Figure 12).

**Figure 12. Years of experience in education (n=52)**



***Principals' and chairpersons' ratings***

Principals and ERT chairpersons were asked to rate their agreement with a series of statements regarding their first year with the ERT Program using a Likert-type scale (with “1” representing Strongly Disagree and “4” representing Strongly Agree). (See Appendix 2 for descriptive statistics of responses to these questions.) Principals and ERT chairpersons rated their experiences with ERTs highly, with the lowest mean rating of 2.8 assigned to the time schools were given to prepare for the ERT visit, and the highest mean rating of 3.8 corresponding to the high level of cooperation between local administrators and the ERT. A mean rating of 3.3 indicates that, overall, principals and ERT chairpersons agreed that the ERT process helped their school understand specific ways to improve. No differences in the mean scores of school principal and ERT chairpersons were detected across selected variables.<sup>11</sup> Table 9 presents suggestions for improving the ERT Program made by principals and ERT chairpersons.

**Table 9. Principals' and chairpersons' suggestions for improving the ERT Program. (n=22)**

Response	n	Percent
Problems exist with the documentation/review instrument	5	<b>22.7%</b>
Positive comments	4	<b>18.2%</b>
Need for more advanced notice of team visit/need for additional time to gather information	4	<b>18.2%</b>
The specialists need to be in place for a longer period of time/extend length of visits	3	<b>13.6%</b>
Need for clearer actions for school improvement/provide more detailed information	3	<b>13.6%</b>
The ERT process doesn't work/expressions of dissatisfaction	3	<b>13.6%</b>
Team members should revisit/follow-up with schools	2	<b>9.1%</b>
Other	4	<b>18.2%</b>

<sup>11</sup> The variables that were tested include: job title, current primary assignment (school level), years of experience in education, first year that the school in which they worked was visited and observed, and school level corresponding to the first ERT visit.

## B. INTERVIEWS WITH ERT MEMBERS, PRINCIPALS, AND CHAIRPERSONS

Hezel Associates built on survey findings through a series of interviews with stakeholders – including ERT members, principals, and ERT chairpersons – representing 17 schools that originally participated in reviews in 2001 (Table 10).<sup>12</sup> The purpose of interviews was to probe in depth the challenges of implementing ERT recommendations, and to compare the experiences of schools that demonstrated subsequent gains in student achievement with schools that had not experienced change.

**Table 10. Interviewees and their 2001-02 school affiliations**

School Name	ERT Member	Principal/ ERT Chairperson
<b><i>Improved Schools</i></b>		
Ridge Spring-Monetta High	X	X
C E Murray High	X	
Lake City High School		X
Luther Vaughan Elementary	X	
Marlboro County High	X	
Macedonia Elementary School		X
Mary Ford Elem.		X
West Hardeeville Elementary	X	
J. V. Martin Jr. High	X	
<b><i>Continued Unsatisfactory Schools</i></b>		
Baptist Hill High	X	X
Whitlock Junior High School		X
Heyward Gibbes Middle	X	X
Allendale-Fairfax Middle	X	
Fairfield Middle	X	
Eau Claire High School		X
C A Johnson High	X	
Bennettsville Middle School		X

The ERT members interviewed included two elementary school principals, two active and one retired associate from the South Carolina Department of Education, a retired teacher, four district level administrators, and one professor of education. The principals and ERT chairpersons interviewed included two elementary school principals, two middle/junior high school principals, one middle school program director, and five high school principals.

Each of the 11 ERT members and 10 principals/chairpersons contacted for an interview agreed to participate. Though some ERT members did not answer every question asked and others gave responses such as “nothing” or “I can’t think of anything,” this group of interviewees provided thoughtful insights into the ERT Program’s earliest processes.

<sup>12</sup> The highlighted schools indicate those for whom the researchers were able to interview both an ERT member and the principal.



(See Appendices 8 and 9 for the responses to each question provided during interviews with ERT members and principals and ERT chairpersons, respectively.)

## **1. Findings from interviews with ERT members**

### ***Experiences as an ERT member.***

Respondents indicated that reviewing an unsatisfactory school's performance, policies, and practices was a large task for the brief period of time allotted. One ERT member said his team was met by resistance during the first two years of the Program, and the school's principal and district's superintendent "...were glad to see us go." Many mentioned that their presence was suspect at first until the school's administration and staff realized the ERT team was there to help and resources were going to be provided to assist with implementing the recommendations. After the first year of the Program, all ERT members agreed that the schools they visited were cooperative, prepared, and serious about the process. A few mentioned that having the team leader visit the school a week or so before the ERT team was very helpful. They appreciated serving on teams that worked well together and had a well-organized leader.

There were occasional problems that appeared in the early years of the ERT Program, most of which revolved around the amount of documentation and the receptiveness of superintendents, principals, and teachers. Another issue mentioned was scheduling. Some respondents opined that the ERT process might be more effective if a schedule of two, two-day site visits during consecutive weeks replaced the one, four-day site visit. According to some ERT members, scheduling the site visits in November, issuing recommendations in January, and then revisiting schools to look for results the following November provided a too brief time frame for results. As a suggestion, ERT members noted that a three year time frame – with the review taking place during Year 1, technical assistance offered during Year 2, and compliance monitoring taking place during Year 3 – might be more effective.

### ***School staff preparation for the review***

ERT members distinguished between the first and subsequent years of the ERT Program, noting that the majority of problems with the lack of preparation by schools and staff lessened as time progressed. Overall, ERT members found school staff to be cooperative and prepared. One respondent remarked that the staff might have been "too prepared" at times. That is to say the teachers' behaviors during the observations, while exemplary, were not necessarily typical of their day-to-day teaching styles.

### ***Suggestions for improving student learning via the ERT process***

All ERT members agreed and frequently repeated that the ERT documentation was very comprehensive, and that completing interviews with teachers was helpful for yielding important information about curriculum and materials. Not all feedback about on-site data collection was positive. Some ERT members suggested that the site visits may be more valuable if, on occasion, they are unannounced. One respondent noted



that there was too much data, using the phrase, “you can’t see the forest for the trees.” This respondent hoped to see the ERT process streamlined by finding a way to prioritize the sometimes large numbers of recommendations, to allow schools to focus on the two or three areas most related to improving student achievement. Similarly, ERT members felt as though the process of interviewing and observing teachers and the corresponding documentation were repetitious.

### *Suggestions for improving ERT team training*

There was general agreement among the ERT members interviewed that the ERT training was well done. The areas that could use improvement included:

- Reliance on large lecture type presentations – especially for experienced ERT participants. More small discussions held for the experienced participants might be more helpful.
- Use of similar materials year after year, with repetitive information for the experienced ERT participants. Experienced ERT members wondered whether they could be exempt from the sessions that do not change annually.
- Special workshop(s) for ERT participants who have never worked in a school to avoid some of the basic questions that have come up during the visits.

### *Suggestions for improving the evaluation instrument*

ERT participants described the evaluation instrument as well-constructed and comprehensive, though some ERT members found the amount of paperwork required to demonstrate compliance with the standards and the repetition in the various items to be major concerns.

### *What mattered most in carrying out a good ERT review*

Responses to this question include:

- Reviewing curriculum to insure all students experience the same rigorous programs.
- Providing good technical assistance in the form of teacher and/or curriculum specials.
- Preparing well for the review on the part of the school staff.
- Having well organized team leaders who are not threatening to the school’s staff and set a good tone from the beginning.
- Having teams that function well together and are ready to do a thorough review.

### *What mattered least in carrying out an ERT review*

Each of the ERT members interviewed felt as though there was nothing in the ERT process that “mattered least.” While ERT members expressed some concern about the repetition of some issues and items, and about the inefficient length of the site visits, they did not feel as though any features of the ERT Program warranted elimination.

### *Additional comments*

ERT members provided additional information that centered on 4 topics:

- The ERT teams. ERT team leaders should not return to the same schools, but one member of the team should always return to provide continuity.
- Resources. Many schools are having a difficult time meeting achievement goals because they lack basic resources (books, teaching materials, facilities).
- Staffing. Teacher turnover, uncertified teachers, and principal turnover put many schools at a distinct disadvantage.
- Human Relations: Problems within certain districts, between superintendents and principals, at times interfered with the effectiveness of the ERT process. Also, some settings underutilized their teacher specialists and principal leaders, with some principals and/or teachers reportedly rejecting their help.

## **2. Findings from interviews with school principals and ERT chairpersons**

### *Experiences as an ERT school*

The principals and chairpersons work under the day-to-day pressures associated with running the schools. They noted that it was good to have the ERT review to provide them with another set of eyes. For them, it was important that the ERT teams were knowledgeable, unbiased, well organized, and “nice.” There were also a number of problems noted with the reviews, including the frequently mentioned difficulty of walking into a review in the first year as principal. Principals and chairpersons described the review’s effects on staff using words such as “confusion,” “pressure,” and “apprehension.” Despite the initial discomforts that accompany a review, principals and chairpersons noted that the benefits of the review become clear after the first year. The limited amount of time that ERTs could spend in the school and the time of year the teams needed to be there were problematic for some principals and chairpersons who would have liked to see the ERTs stay longer and arrive later in the school year.

### *Sufficiency of time and resources*

Only one principal indicated that, during his first year at a school that received a review, his staff was unprepared. Some principals and chairpersons felt that they were being held responsible for situations that preceded them.

### *ERT team preparation*

One principal felt as though the ERT visiting his school was unprepared. The main problem rested with his predecessor who did not leave the required documentation. Despite this one exception, all principals and chairpersons commended the preparedness, organization, and professionalism of the ERTs.

### *Suggestions for improving student learning via the ERT process*

Principals and ERT chairpersons suggested that increasing the amount of school assistance (funding, curriculum and materials, specialists, and professional development) would improve student learning. One interviewee indicated that a

greater emphasis on what is going on in the classrooms would be helpful, while another requested more professional development on data driven decision-making and a third suggested that the schools do a self-assessment on the same variable before the ERT review in order to discuss the agreement or disagreement in the ratings.

### *Suggestions for improving the evaluation instrument*

Principals and ERT chairpersons made three suggestions to improve the evaluation instrument. First, modify the instrument so that it allows schools to deal with high priority action items. Second, reduce redundancy between interviews, observations, and secondary data analysis. Finally, use a common language for discussing recommendations and provide schools with a copy of the recommendations (before they are official), so that schools can begin implementing them immediately.

### *What mattered most in carrying out a good ERT review*

The most important aspects of carrying out ERT reviews were the demeanor and professionalism of the ERT members and the feedback they provided. When handled in a professional and unthreatening manner, with the promise of help, the school's faculty tended to be motivated to change in order to improve student outcomes.

### *What mattered least in carrying out a good ERT review*

Principals and ERT chairpersons mentioned three items that were least important to the success of the ERT review. First, fixed parameters such as room size that are contained in the compliance review do not move Unsatisfactory schools toward improved student achievement. Second, inconsistencies between ERT members who rated various unchanging items differently year after year was a source of frustration for principals and ERT chairpersons. Third, principals and ERT chairpersons found that asking parents questions about curriculum was not a beneficial use of ERT members' time, whereas asking them about parental involvement was much more helpful.

### *Additional comments*

Despite some resentment and confusion at first, principals and ERT chairpersons offered universal praise for the teacher specialists, using descriptors such as "the best thing" and "excellent" to describe their role in Unsatisfactory schools. One principal said if anything continues it should be the teacher specialists.

Staff turnover was a consistent problem for principals in some schools, particularly those with 50 percent of staff leaving annually. Other principals that located in areas in which the residents were economically disadvantaged noted the significant role that poverty plays in their schools' operation -- parents and schools both lack the necessary resources to retain qualified teachers that provide quality education. Finally, one principal suggested expanding the data and rating system contained in the School Report Cards to also focus on a school's improvement over time.

## SECTION VI: SITE VISITS TO SCHOOLS UNDERGOING ERT REVIEWS

Hezel Associates' analyses of primary and secondary data from ERT Program stakeholders yields important insights concerning how the Program's processes contribute to student and school level improvement. Based on the analyses, we generated a series of hypotheses about how ERT processes and recommendations contribute to school improvement, and tested these hypotheses in site visits to 9 schools from the 2001-02 cohort of schools that received an ERT visit. The schools were selected on the following criteria:

- They were involved in 2001-02 in an ERT team visit due to an absolute rating of "unsatisfactory" on their 2001 report card.
- They have a high percentage of students eligible for free and reduced priced lunch.
- They have a high percentage of minority students.

The following schools were visited over the course of a one-month period from November to December, 2005:

- Baptist Hill High School in Hollywood, SC (9-12)
- C E Murray High School in Greeleyville, SC (7-12)
- C A Johnson High School in Columbia, SC (9-12)
- Ridge Spring Monetta High School in Monetta, SC (9-12)
- Gibbes Middle School in Columbia, SC (6-8)
- J V. Martin Junior High School in Dillon, SC (7-8)
- Luther Vaughan Elementary School in Dillon, SC (K-5)
- Marlboro County High School in Bennettsville, SC (9-12)
- West Hardeeville Elementary School in Hardeeville, SC (K-8)

The site visit interviews were conducted in small groups that usually included the principal and others involved in the ERT process (e.g., curriculum specialists). We asked questions aimed at determining how they perceived the value of the ERT Program in improving instruction and student achievement. By visiting, we were also able to make observations of the facilities and settings, instructional materials, overall climate in the building, and the technology and equipment available to students and staff. We were also able to ask more in-depth questions about issues at the core of ERT reviews: leadership (principal stability), staff turnover and quality (certification), student mobility, and the activities of teacher specialists provided by the State.

The interview process captured two types of information: 1) school demographic and background information, and 2) ERT Program-specific information. To collect the school background information, we used the 2004 school report cards and asked interviewees about principal stability, teacher turnover, teacher certification status,

student transience (or turnover), facilities and equipment, climate in the building, instructional materials, and the expectations for students. To collect the ERT Program information, we posed seven questions to the interviewees:

1. In this building, what changes in curriculum, pedagogy, and building climate, do you think occurred as a direct result of the ERT review process started in 2001-2002?
2. To what extent do you think the teacher specialists and other technical assistance help from the State have contributed to the improvements in student achievement?
3. What factors within the school contributed to the improvement in student achievement as a result of the ERT recommendations?
4. Did the ERT recommendations help teachers improve their instruction?
5. Do schools need more help with improving instruction?
6. Would the ERT process be improved with the addition of a monitoring of instruction component – which would involve more visits?
7. Over the years how well has the SCDE followed through in terms of support for improvement efforts?

## **A. DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOLS THAT WERE VISITED**

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The nine site visit schools represented all grade levels and every part of the state. The schools were selected from schools with high percentages of minority enrollment, high percentages of students eligible for free and reduced priced lunch (poverty) <sup>13</sup> as shown in Table 11. Although we include the percentages with disabilities and limited English proficient (LEP), we did not use these as selection criteria. The far right column lists the report card absolute ratings for 2002, 2003, and 2004, in order from top to bottom. Note that since these schools were not a random or representative sample, any generalization of the findings to a wider array of unsatisfactory schools is not possible.

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<sup>13</sup> All data are from the 2004 South Carolina School Report Card.

**Table 11. Selected characteristics of schools participating in site visits**

School	% Tested Minority <sup>14</sup>	% Disabled other than Speech	% Tested Limited English Proficiency	% Tested Eligible Subsidized Meals	2002 - 2004 Absolute Ratings
Baptist Hill High School	97%	12.6%	0%	100%	Unsatisfactory Unsatisfactory Unsatisfactory
C E Murray High School	98%	17.4%	0%	100%	Below Ave. Average Average
C A Johnson High School	100%	17.4%	0%	100%	Unsatisfactory Unsatisfactory Unsatisfactory
Ridge Spring Monetta High School	61%	11.6%	0%	98%	Below Avg. Good Excellent
Gibbes Middle School	99.8%	14.5%	0%	100%	Unsatisfactory Unsatisfactory Unsatisfactory
J V. Martin Junior High School	73%	10.2%	2%	100%	Below Avg. Below Avg. Below Avg.
Luther Vaughan Elementary School	73%	4.1%	12%	100%	Below Avg. Below Avg. Average
Marlboro County High School	68%	13%	0%	100%	Below Avg. Below Avg. Below Avg.
West Hardeeville Elementary School	86%	4.8%	15%	100%	Below Avg. Below Avg. Below Avg.

We asked interviewees questions regarding facilities, the climate in the building, the adequacy of instructional materials and their expectations for students. With regard to facilities, although there was considerable variation, none of the schools had exemplary or completely new facilities. Of the persistently unsatisfactory schools the facilities were as good as or better than the others visited. The climate in all buildings was at least fair and in most cases good. The persistently unsatisfactory schools had fair, good and very good climates and all seemed well-organized and safe environments. Every school reported adequate or better instructional supplies, materials, and equipment. We also

<sup>14</sup> Other than White.

asked the site visit schools about some other, less concrete features: principal stability, teacher turnover, teacher qualifications, and student turnover (Table 12).

**Table 12. Selected characteristics of schools participating in site visits**

School	Principal Stability	Teacher Turnover	Teacher Qualifications	Student Turnover	2002 - 2004 Absolute Ratings
Baptist Hill High School	5 principals in past 5 years	30 to 50%	90% Highly Qualified	Not Significant	Unsatisfactory Unsatisfactory Unsatisfactory
C E Murray High School	4 in the past 5 years	12%	90% Highly Qualified	Not significant	Below Avg. Average Average
C A Johnson High School	2 years	30% or more per year	78% Highly Qualified	15-20%	Unsatisfactory Unsatisfactory Unsatisfactory
Ridge Spring Monetta High School	8 years	17% (Only 25 teachers on staff)	82% Highly Qualified	5-10%	Below Avg. Good Excellent
Gibbes Middle School	7 years	17% - 20% each year	88% Highly Qualified	Not significant	Unsatisfactory Unsatisfactory Unsatisfactory
J V. Martin Junior High School	New Principal (prior 6 years)	Low	96%	Not significant	Below Avg. Below Avg. Below Avg.
Luther Vaughan Elementary School	4 years	Low	100 % Highly Qualified	Up to 20% depending on the year, most turnover among Hispanic students	Below Avg. Below Avg. Average
Marlboro County High School	6 years	20% each year	86% Highly Qualified	Not significant	Below Avg. Below Avg. Below Avg.
West Hardeeville Elementary School	3 in 4 years	20-25%	76% Highly Qualified	10% most turnover among Hispanic students	Below Avg. Below Avg. Below Avg.

As Table 12 illustrates, there is variation across site visit schools in the length of service (stability) of the principal, which ranged from three weeks to eight years. In terms of principal tenure, the three persistently unsatisfactory schools had one principal with 7 years of service, one principal with two years, and one with a series of principals who each served year-long contracts. All those interviewed agreed that long term instructional leadership was important in raising student achievement.

Teacher turnover also varied, with some schools reporting large turnover (up to 50%) and others modest turnover (5% to 10%). The persistently unsatisfactory schools reported the highest teacher turnover among the nine schools (from 20% to 50%).

Teacher quality as measured by the highly qualified (HQ) criteria of the No Child Left Behind regulations, was not as varied as other factors (with a range of 76% to 100%).<sup>15</sup> The persistently unsatisfactory schools were in the middle of the pack, with 78 percent, 88 percent, and 90 percent HQ teachers.

Finally, the student turnover (the students who leave and, in some cases, are replaced by other students new to the school) varied from very small numbers to up to 20 percent. Of the persistently unsatisfactory schools, two had very low turnover among students and one had turnover of 15 to 20 percent.

## **B. PERCEPTIONS OF THE ERT PROGRAM'S IMPACT ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

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### **1. ERT Program's contributions to changes in curriculum, pedagogy, and building climate**

The interviewees all reported that the ERT process caused school staff to focus on the standards aligned with the State testing program, which translated into curriculum alignment and professional development. The teachers were provided professional development in the content tested, teaching test taking skills, and effective teaching strategies. In schools where there had been annual ERT reviews since 2001-02, the respondents reported the process had become a part of the school culture. In schools that made sufficient progress to be taken off the list after the first year, respondents reported that the process was viewed as a challenge to overcome. The key word was "focus." ERTs focused energy and effort on the task of teaching students curriculum that is aligned with tests, thereby raising their achievement levels.

Another aspect of ERT that was highly valued by the staff we interviewed was efficacy. The ERT recommendations for improvement in facilities, equipment (computers), media, materials, and staffing in the form of teacher/curriculum specialists or principal leaders were quickly implemented. This brought much needed relief to the schools.

It should be noted that some interviewees were reluctant to give ERT credit for the improvements in instruction and student achievement. That is, these individuals felt their school would be doing what they are doing with or without the ERT. One interviewee in a school where students were not achieving as well as they would have liked put it in perspective when he said: "Without the ERT, I believe we would be even further behind than we are now."

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<sup>15</sup> South Carolina was recently ranked by *Education Week* as second in the nation in terms of teacher quality (see Quality Counts 2006, <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2006/17shr.sc.h25.pdf>).



## **2. Contributions of teacher specialists' and other technical assistance**

There was unanimous praise for the specialist component to the ERT program. For example, after one school was removed from the unsatisfactory list, the staff wanted to keep the specialists who were assigned. The descriptions of the specialists were: "tremendous help," "worth their weight in gold," "invaluable," and "a big help to the principal."

There were occasional issues related to getting good specialists, since poor rural schools had to compete with neighboring, more attractive districts. At times, specialists did not fit in well with teachers or left too frequently to keep up continuity. In general, the biggest problem with specialists was when they were removed as a result of the schools' making progress.

## **3. Factors within the schools that contributed to student improvement**

The ability to institute new programs and to extend instructional time were the most valuable aspects that were an outcome of the ERT Program. Resources to improve teacher evaluation, create homework centers, pull out centers, HSAP workshops (for students), and professional development were some of the initiatives mentioned.

## **4. ERT Program's contributions to instructional improvement**

The respondents all indicated that they felt the ERT process, as it is currently structured, does not focus enough on the teaching practices in the classroom. Although the ERT team members go into the classrooms and look for lesson plans and good classroom management, they do not spend sufficient time in any classrooms to get a true sense of how effective the instruction is. Nor do they return to see if any classroom recommendations they make are being implemented.

ERTs, through the specialists, helped to keep teachers focused on the state standards and the tests on which they will be rated. Interviewees considered the professional development very helpful in the overall improvement process. The ERT process itself, however, did not focus on the classroom as much as other procedural and compliance issues.

## **5. Schools' need for more help in improving instruction**

Almost everyone interviewed wanted more help in continuing to improve the results of instruction. In some schools, the largest need identified was the need for stability in staffing. They reported problems in attracting and retaining high quality teaching staff and with long-term substitutes, and too many foreign and/or PACE teachers (good programs but too many of them at one time created problems for supervisors). When they were able to hire new, highly qualified teachers, the turnover was high.

The idea of spending more ERT time on classroom instruction was supported by all interviewees. The idea of having return visits by some or all of the ERT team to do a midterm look at how the recommendations were being implemented was also widely supported.

There was less agreement on how to increase the focus on instruction. In schools where staffing was a serious problem, the staff we talked to liked the idea of ERT members spending more time in the classrooms. In other schools, this idea was viewed as too intrusive, treading on the supervision responsibilities of the school administration and sending the wrong message to the teachers.

Finally, a few respondents said that the number of recommendations made by the team could be overwhelming. They would like to see a prioritization of the recommendations to let them prioritize their activities.

## **6. South Carolina Department of Education's ongoing support for school improvement**

The State Department of Education was given high grades by all of the people we talked to. The interviewees credited the ERT process with making them aware of who to call at the state for information. They credited the State-run workshops with keeping them current on changes in the State testing and report cards. All felt comfortable calling the Department of Education and reported that they were responded to promptly and effectively.

## **C. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

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Although the findings in these case studies cannot be generalized, they shed light on the depth and breadth of the challenges facing unsatisfactory schools and their progress in realizing improvement. On the surface, there do not appear to be any demographic features that separate persistently unsatisfactory schools from schools in the sample that do improve. Although schools with 97 to 100 percent minority enrollments seemed to fair worse, and unsatisfactory schools tended to have more students with disabilities, none of these differences were dramatic. Nor were there marked differences in facilities, building climate, materials, and expectations for students. The other school variables were equally inconclusive. Principal stability, teacher qualifications, and student turnover varied as much in the persistently unsatisfactory schools as the schools that improved their status.

The ERT program fared well in the eyes of the interviewees and was generally perceived as a positive force in the efforts to meet and exceed the performance standards, ultimately for the benefit of the students. The most frequently stated value of the program was that it focused attention on what needed to be done. In the best possible way, it forced school staff to organize and align curriculum with the state standards and testing program.

The aspect of the program that clearly garnered the most praise was the specialist component. Schools in resource-starved areas were appreciative of the staff and resources that immediately were provided as the ERT team identified needs. These

resources allowed needy schools (in needy districts) to implement new programs by providing training, purchasing materials and equipment, and providing support from curriculum specialists for classroom teachers implementing the new instructional programs. Other programs important to closing the achievement gaps, such as homework centers, were also supported.

The South Carolina State Department of Education also received high grades. The interviewed staff unanimously agreed that following the ERT program process they knew who to call at the State with questions. They also gave the ERT program process credit for providing the resources to participate in the professional development workshops provided by the State Department of Education. These were essential to the success of instructional program implementation in the schools.

## SECTION VII: CONNECTING THE ERT PROCESS WITH SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

In our final set of analyses, Hezel Associates examined the outcomes associated with ERT reviews for a subset of schools that underwent visits in 2001 (the same subset of schools that participated in interviews) (Table 13). Our analysis focused on the deficiency indicators that ERTs used in their reporting and on the technical assistance that was identified to remedy performance gaps. We were interested in determining whether different types of deficiencies exist across schools that have improved relative to those that remain unsatisfactory, and whether there were different patterns in the technical assistance that was deployed to remedy the observed problems.

**Table 13. Schools included in the analysis of ERT recommendations**

Improved Schools	2001 Rating	Continued Unsatisfactory Schools	2001 Rating
Ridge Spring-Monetta High	1.6	Baptist Hill High	1.0
C E Murray High	1.6	Whitlock Junior High	1.9
Lake City High	2.1	Heyward Gibbes Middle	2.1
Luther Vaughan Elementary	2.1	Allendale-Fairfax Middle	2.1
Marlboro County High	2.0	Fairfield Middle	2.1
Macedonia Elementary	2.1	Eau Claire High	2.0
Mary Ford Elementary	2.1	C A Johnson High	1.4
West Hardeeville Elementary	2.0	Bennettsville Middle	2.1
J. V. Martin Jr. High	2.1		

### A. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN ERT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ERTs evaluate unsatisfactory schools using indicators clustered in four focus areas, categories that also organize ERTs' findings and recommendations:

- Leadership and Governance,
- Curriculum and Instruction,
- Professional Development, and
- Performance.

According to our analysis, ERTs consistently identified more schools with deficiencies in Curriculum and Instruction (Table 14).<sup>16,17</sup> Table 14 also shows that the relative proportions of ERT focus area findings differs somewhat between Improved schools and Continued Unsatisfactory schools. However, statistical tests (Chi square) indicate that these observed differences are due to random variation and are not systematic.

<sup>16</sup> The number of indicators in each focus area is: L&G = 39, C&I = 15, and PD = 8.

<sup>17</sup> Our comprehensive analysis of student performance, presented separately, precluded the need for analyzing the fourth focus area, Performance.

**Table 14. Average number of findings and recommendations, by indicator area and school improvement status**

	School Type	Leadership & Governance	Curriculum & Instruction	Professional Development
Findings	Improved n = 9	2.2	3.4	1.4
	Continued Unsatisfactory n = 8	1.7	4.3	1.7
Recommendations	Improved n = 9	1.9 <sup>18</sup>	3.4	1.9
	Continued Unsatisfactory n = 8	1.7	4.2	2.1

Table 15 lists the actual deficiency indicators most frequently cited by ERT’s in 2001-02. Comparing the two groups, Improved schools and Continued Unsatisfactory schools shared only one indicator of deficiency – C&I 3.1: *There is no documentation to indicate that the curriculum development process involves staff, parents/guardians, members of the community, and students.* Although the other indicators all differ, these two groups of schools appear to share a common deficiency: a lack of involvement from key stakeholders (parents, staff, members of the community and students) in curricular and other aspects of decision making.

Despite this similarity, ERT findings in Improved and Continued Unsatisfactory schools do show substantive differences. Schools that remained Unsatisfactory appear to have deeper or more systemic problems, as evidenced by lack of procedures to support alignment with state academic standards, not using student data to inform curricula, and not engaging in planning based on research-supported practices. Improved schools tended to be cited more frequently for poorly matching instructional activities and resources with individual student needs or with state standards--specific problems that may be more readily addressed.

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<sup>18</sup> Because ERTs base their recommendations on findings, ERTs also made more recommendations to Improved schools in the area of Leadership and Governance than in the areas of Curriculum and Instruction or Professional Development.

**Table 15. “Findings” indicators most frequently associated with Improved and Continued Unsatisfactory schools**

School Type	Findings Indicators	Frequency
Improved	L&G 12.3 – The local board of trustees does not take appropriate actions to assist in improving parental involvement	9
	L&G 11.2 – There is no evidence to confirm that instructional activities and assistance in the homework center are tailored to the specific needs of individual students	7
	C&I 5.1 – Instructional materials, resources, and learning activities do not evidence alignment with the curricula and local and state standards.	6
	L&G 5.1 – The school does not have an academic assistance initiative to support students with academic difficulties in all grades so that they are able to progress academically with their peers	5
	L&G 12.2 – The district superintendent does not take appropriate, specific actions to assist in improving parental involvement	5
	C&I 3.1 – There is no documentation to indicate that the curriculum development process involves staff, parents/guardians, members of the community, and students.	5
Continued Unsatisfactory	C&I 3.5 – The school leadership must direct the revision of curricula using data from student performance on state assessments.	10
	C&I 4.1 – There is no documentation to confirm that the district and school annually review longitudinal student performance data.	8
	C&I 3.1 – There is no documentation to indicate that the curriculum development process involves staff, parents/guardians, members of the community, and students.	7
	C&I 5.3 – There is no evidence to confirm that instructional apparatus and equipment in all laboratories, resource centers, and classrooms are maintained in good working condition.	7
	L&G 1.1 – School policies or procedures are not designed to support the use of academic achievement standards to assist the school and students in achieving higher levels of performance by aligning school standards and assessments with state standards and assessments.	6
	PD 1.1 – There is no evidence to confirm that school professional development is planned and designed by the faculty.	6
	L&G 7.5 – Proposals and plans in the district strategic plan and the school renewal plan are not derived from strategies found by education research to be effective.	5
	L&G 7.6 – The school renewal plan does not provide for an innovation initiative designed to encourage comprehensive approaches based on effective strategies identified in research literature.	5
L&G 12.1 - The school renewal plan does not include parental involvement goals and objectives and an evaluation component for improving these programs.	5	

Identifying areas of needed improvement and recommending ways to alleviate those deficiencies are just the initial steps to improve unsatisfactory school performance. As a result of ERTs’ findings and recommendations, all but one of the 17 schools included in this subset received targeted technical assistance aimed at addressing unsatisfactory schools’ areas of needed improvement.<sup>19</sup>

## **B. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GAINS**

Given the emphasis on curriculum and instruction in the ERTs’ findings and recommendations, it is not surprising that the majority of technical assistance provided

<sup>19</sup> Eau Claire High School was the single exception.

to Improved and Continued Unsatisfactory schools in the sample also focused on Curricular and Instructional issues (Table 16).

**Table 16. Technical assistance received, by indicator area and school improvement status**

	School Type	Leadership and Governance	Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development
Technical Assistance	Improved n = 9	3.1	4.9	2.4
	Continued Unsatisfactory n = 8	2.7	4.5	2.6

Schools that later demonstrated Improved performance received different types of targeted technical assistance than Continued Unsatisfactory schools. Further, the relationships between the findings/recommendations and the types of technical assistance provided to each group of schools is not clear. For instance, technical assistance is provided in a number of areas not specifically flagged in the deficiency findings. Improved schools most frequently received technical assistance in involving parents and the community, learning best practices for homework centers, and selecting appropriate instructional materials. Continued Unsatisfactory schools most frequently received technical assistance in understanding current educational research, planning and assessing professional development, and involving stakeholders in curriculum development.

### **C. RELATING FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

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Although the quantity and type of ERT findings, ERT recommendations, and technical assistance offered to schools subsequent to their initial year in the ERT Program appear to contribute to schools' longitudinal performance, it is difficult to identify consistent patterns. For example, while Ridge Spring-Monetta, C.E. Murray, and Baptist Hill High Schools showed the greatest net gains in absolute performance ratings, the number and types of ERT findings, ERT recommendations, and instances of technical assistance they received differ substantively. Similarly, the number and type of ERT findings, ERT recommendations, and technical assistance differed substantially between Fairfield Middle School, Eau Claire High School and C.A. Johnson High School, although all of these schools showed no net gain in absolute performance ratings between 2001 and 2004 (Table 17).

**Table 17. Findings, recommendations, and technical assistance, by indicator area and school improvement status**

		Improved Schools									Continued Unsatisfactory Schools							
		Ridge Spring-Monetta High	CE Murray High	Lake City High	Luther Vaughan Elementary	Marlboro County High	Macedonia Elementary	West Hardeeville Elementary	Mary Ford Elementary	J.V. Martin Junior High	Baptist Hill High	Whitlock Jr. High	Heyward Gibbes Middle	Allendale Fairfax Middle	Fairfield Middle	Eau Claire High	CA Johnson High	Bennettsville Middle
Net Change in Absolute Perf. Rating 2001-2004		2.4	1.4	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	1.0	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.1
Findings	L&G	4	21	11	3	11	9	10	4	6	13	11	7	6	17	0	6	10
	C&I	3	5	5	3	2	11	7	0	15	15	7	8	8	13	0	8	1
	PD	0	0	2	0	0	4	4	1	3	6	1	0	5	4	0	0	3
Recommendations	L&G	5	22	9	4	8	10	6	11	7	19	9	4	2	20	0	10	10
	C&I	4	6	5	5	2	10	1	7	13	17	6	10	2	8	0	10	2
	PD	0	0	2	0	0	3	3	4	3	6	1	0	1	2	0	0	3
Technical Assistance	L&G	8	38	13	7	15	6	5	19	8	22	1	6	14	39	0	12	13
	C&I	6	12	9	10	3	3	0	20	11	14	1	8	14	25	0	20	6
	PD	0	0	5	0	0	0	2	9	3	8	0	0	7	6	0	0	0

## D. SUMMARY

In the ERT Program’s initial year, ERTs consistently identified more schools with deficiencies in Curriculum and Instruction. Across all schools, ERT reports document a lack of involvement by parents, staff, the community, and students, in curricular and other decisions. ERT findings and the technical assistance provided to schools differed, however. Whereas Continued Unsatisfactory schools were less adept at using student performance data to modify instructional practices, these schools tended to receive technical assistance focusing on operations more removed from instruction, such as policy-level and planning support, whereas Improved schools received technical assistance that aligned with instruction. The data do not reveal consistent patterns between school improvement and a particular amount or type of technical assistance.



## SECTION VIII: COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING SOUTH CAROLINA'S EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM PROGRAM

As a strategic statewide intervention to assist underperforming schools, the External Review Team Program represents a significant investment in educators' time and resources, and the ERT's comprehensive visits signify the need for major change in underperforming schools. Over the course of its five-year lifespan, the ERT Program has seen the number of unsatisfactory schools decrease annually, but still must contend with a core group of schools whose performance remains unchanged even in the face of scrupulous inspection and long-term targeted assistance. While ERT participants' early perceptions of the review process indicated anxiety and disruption, as the Program has matured schools appear to be more receptive to the infusion of recommendations and assistance that ERT reviews offer. Despite the variation in the performance of schools that participated in the ERT Program, ERT members, principals, and ERT chairpeople agree that the ERT Program has been an essential component in the process of school improvement. According to many ERT stakeholders who have participated in multiple years of reviews, the ERT process is sound, and can be further strengthened. In this section, we present commendations for the ERT Program and its processes that stem from our analyses, and present recommendations to support the ERT Program's continued improvement.

### A. COMMENDATIONS

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**Commendation:** The ERT Program's strategy is consistent with federal guidelines and with approaches other states have tested and, based on their own, independent experiences, adopted. Moreover, the ERT Program has shown an openness to change in its processes (instrumentation, training), which indicates bottom-up receptivity to feedback from schools and ERT members.

**Commendation:** Principals and teachers at all levels of schools that participate in the ERT Program suggest that the review process and, especially, subsequent technical assistance combine to support their school improvement efforts. The review process, although time intensive, helps focus energy and attention on issues that undercut the schools' ability to support student learning.

**Commendation:** The composition and professionalism of the ERT panels reflects well on structure of the Program, on the recruitment and training of team members, and on the overall review process. The majority of ERTs are comprised of experienced educators who want to use their extensive administrative experience to help unsatisfactory schools diagnose areas of needed improvement and receive the necessary technical assistance to help them meet their improvement goals. The diversity of experiences represented by ERT members enables them to be professional, unbiased,

and efficient in carrying out their activities, and to treat administrators and teachers with due consideration and understanding.

**Commendation:** The different elements of the ERT process provide important information to participants. In a related manner, no component of the ERT process was identified as irrelevant to school improvement or a waste of time. ERT members, school principals, and ERT chairpersons agreed that the ERT process and instrumentation were good and getting even better. ERT members positively rated communication among team members, school compliance with the team's requests, and the data sources used to evaluate programs in unsatisfactory schools. The varied ERT stakeholders were plainly satisfied with, and believed in, the ERT process.

**Commendation:** Schools receive the technical assistance they need to implement recommendations stemming from the ERT reviews. The work of the ERTs is the first, important step in a series of targeted activities that are meant to support gaps in school performance. To realize change, schools must be provided the human and material resources that will help nurture and sustain new practices. According to the information collected by Hezel Associates, the South Carolina Department of Education has proactively communicated with underperforming schools throughout the ERT process, and has ensured that schools receive the resources they need subsequent to the reviews.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**Recommendations:** Consider placing a greater emphasis on the ERT Program's attention to classroom instruction. As it is currently structured, the ERT process includes a focus on the curriculum, but not on the *delivery* of the curriculum. Especially in chronically unsatisfactory schools that have documented difficulties in instruction, ERT members can expand the amount of time looking at classroom practice. Admittedly, this is a sensitive area, as it would require direct classroom observations over time, which may be threatening to teachers and could undermine already low levels of morale. It may be that ERTs could align their work more closely with principals on issues of instructional leadership, which may allow the principal to conduct classroom observations with increased effectiveness.

**Recommendation:** Consistent with what takes place in other states, consider allowing the ERT members to conduct unannounced visits and classroom observations as part of their review, which may result in a clearer understanding of the quality of instruction that takes place in unsatisfactory schools.

**Recommendation:** Consider including in the ERT Review process highly performing schools or underperforming schools that have steadily improved their ratings, to draw attention to schools that have demonstrated large-scale improvement. That is, the ERT

Program can be used to identify successes in schools that have faced significant challenges in improving achievement. This (new) orientation can remedy a flaw in the current system under NCLB, in which schools that start at different baselines are not recognized for equal achievements in improvement.<sup>20</sup> This approach is in place in Massachusetts, where panels of reviewers visit so-called “compass” schools whose efforts might be replicated in other schools with similar profiles. That is, rather than just serving as a means to point out deficiencies in poorly performing schools, the ERT process may be able to contribute to a broader understanding of the conditions that support school improvement.

**Recommendation:** Consider restructuring the ERT Program to emphasize the involvement of the ERT members throughout a school’s subsequent implementation of recommendations and deployment of technical assistance. That is, put into place formal, regular, and sustained opportunities for at least one ERT member to revisit the school and objectively report to the State Department of Education on the progress of implementation and on the quality of ongoing technical assistance that schools receive. For example, the ERT member can revisit the school at three month intervals to monitor progress for the first year following the review, and then once a semester until the school has achieved at least “average” status for two years in a row.

**Recommendation:** Consider restructuring the ERT Program to allow for more tailored reviews, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Schools that teeter between unsatisfactory and below average status from year to year, for example, may require a different kind of review (and set of reviewers) than schools that are listed as unsatisfactory or chronically unsatisfactory for the first time. Additional support in the form of pre-visits can be provided to those schools participating in the first year of the ERT process. Extra support can be offered to those principals who are in their first year of leadership at the time of review. Schools experiencing high staff turnover could receive additional state-level support during monitoring to buffer the effects of the lack of local institutional knowledge.

**Recommendation:** Consider changing the ERT reporting process in three ways. First, ERT members could be allowed to provide school leaders with a preliminary report with initial recommendations, which would allow them to begin implementing changes the same year that the visit takes place. Second, put into place a mechanism for schools to provide ERT members with feedback about the value and relevance of the review process and recommendations. Third, establish a procedure by which ERT members can inform the state Department of Education directly about problems caused by school leadership turnover and/or weaknesses.

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<sup>20</sup> Kim, K. S. and Sunderman, G.L.(2005). Measuring academic proficiency under the No Child Left Behind Act: Implications for educational equity. *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 34, no.8, pp. 3-13.

**Recommendation:** Consistent with approaches seen in other states, the State Department of Education should strive to communicate more openly to education stakeholders (including school and district staff, parents and students, and community members) information about the ERT process, schools involved, and external reviewers, which will promote transparency about the Program and increase its credibility.

**Recommendation:** To better understand the impact of the ERT Program and support the State Department of Education's institutional knowledge of the Program, the State Department of Education should endeavor to improve its data collection and management. Review team instruments that are now only available in hard copy could be maintained and updated electronically, for example, which would allow for easier analysis and comparisons across ERTs, school levels, and school years. Centralized databases can be created that consolidate information about ERT members, school performance, and technical assistance. Electronic formats would better enable schools and the Department to incorporate data into their continuous improvement strategies, as well as address schools' concerns for the time lag associated with translating ERT feedback into programmatic changes.

**Recommendation:** To better understand how the ERT Program impacts student achievement, a rigorous research design should be put into place that would allow researchers to track longitudinal school and student performance. Particular benchmarks or expectations for Program impact and subsequent school improvement should be articulated. Unsatisfactory schools could be matched based on relevant characteristics and assigned to receive different ERT services or implementation assistance, and their outcomes later compared. Alternatively, the composition of ERTs can be manipulated to determine whether particular arrays of expertise are associated with different outcomes.

\* \* \*

To summarize, South Carolina's dedication to carrying out the provisions of the state's Education Accountability Act of 1998 (EAA) has resulted in an External Review Team Program that, since 2001, has been received well in many of the schools that are impacted by the legislation. But has, or how has, the ERT Program in fact contributed to school improvement? On the one hand, ERT members, school principals, school faculty, and other stakeholders comment positively about multiple dimensions of the ERT Program and its support of school performance. On the other hand, analyses of school performance data and ERT reports suggest that there is not a clear relationship between the work of ERTs and subsequent improvements. Certainly, the majority of unsatisfactory schools undergoing review improve, but some do so before the actual implementation of ERT-provided recommendations, which indicate that factors other than or in addition to the ERT Program may be at work. Schools that receive similar recommendations and technical assistance demonstrate different levels of subsequent success.

The most consistent finding to emerge from the analyses is that there are different types of underperforming schools that participate in the ERT Program. For most schools, the kind of scrutiny that the ERTs provide and the technical assistance that is put into place appear to be sufficient to make much-needed changes. There is a smaller subset of schools, however, that have not responded to the resources associated with the ERT Program. This may be the key challenge for the ERT Program's continued work: identifying improvement strategies that can work in the most hard-hit schools and putting into place the resources these schools will require to succeed, rather than striving to meet the needs of a broader array of underperforming schools.



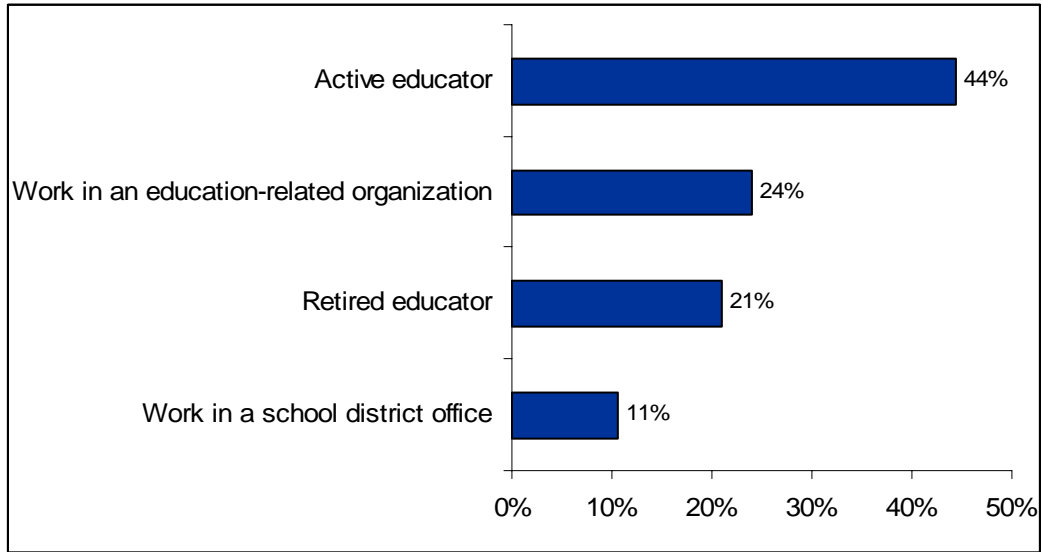
# Appendices



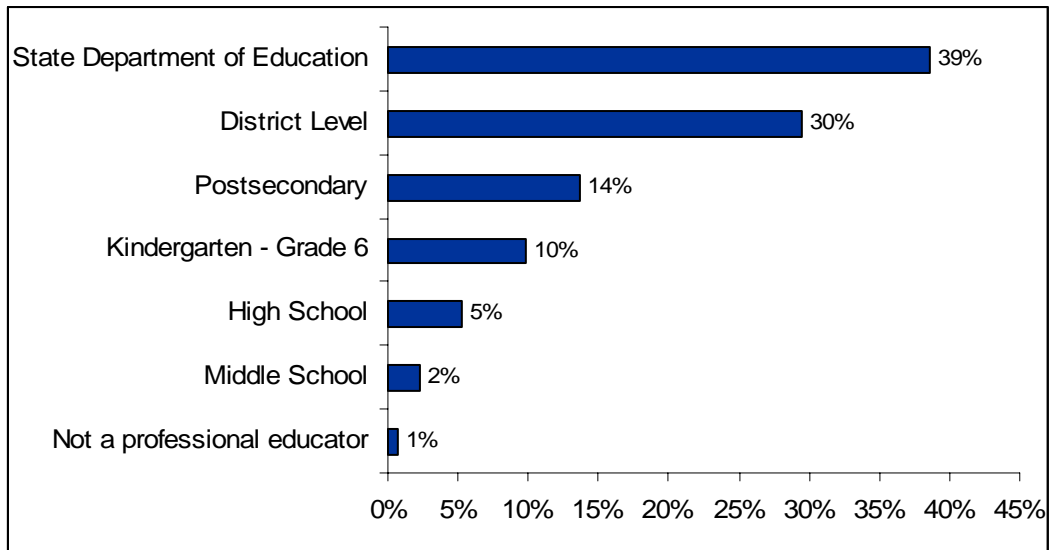


**Appendix 1:  
Findings From the Survey of External  
Review Team Members**

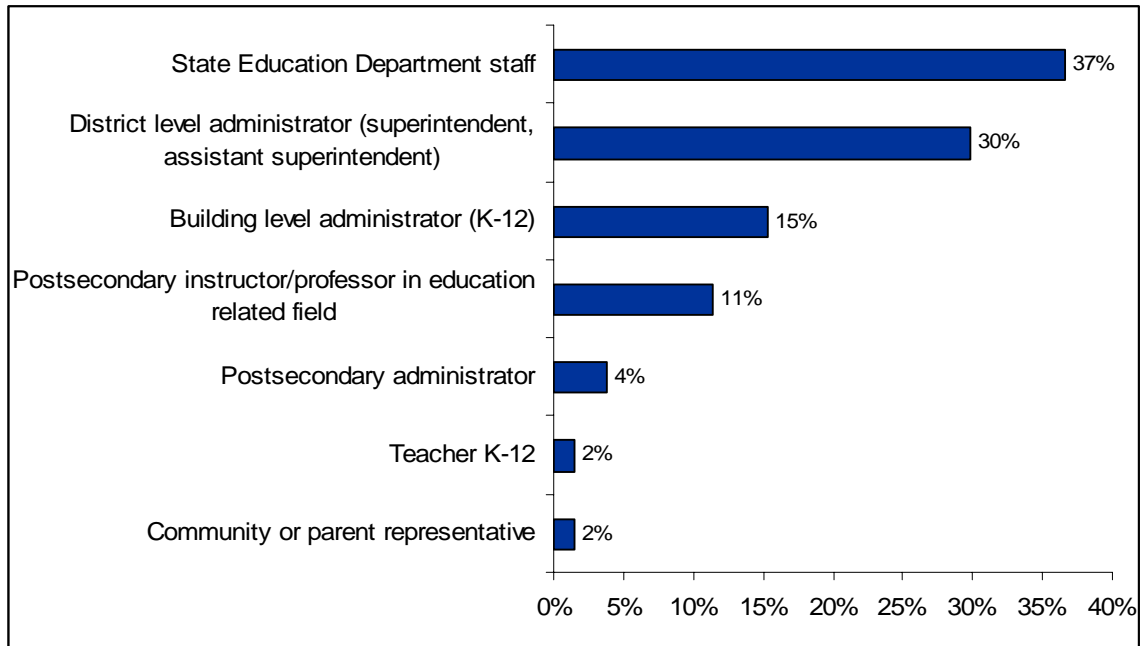
**Figure 13. Current job status (n=133)**



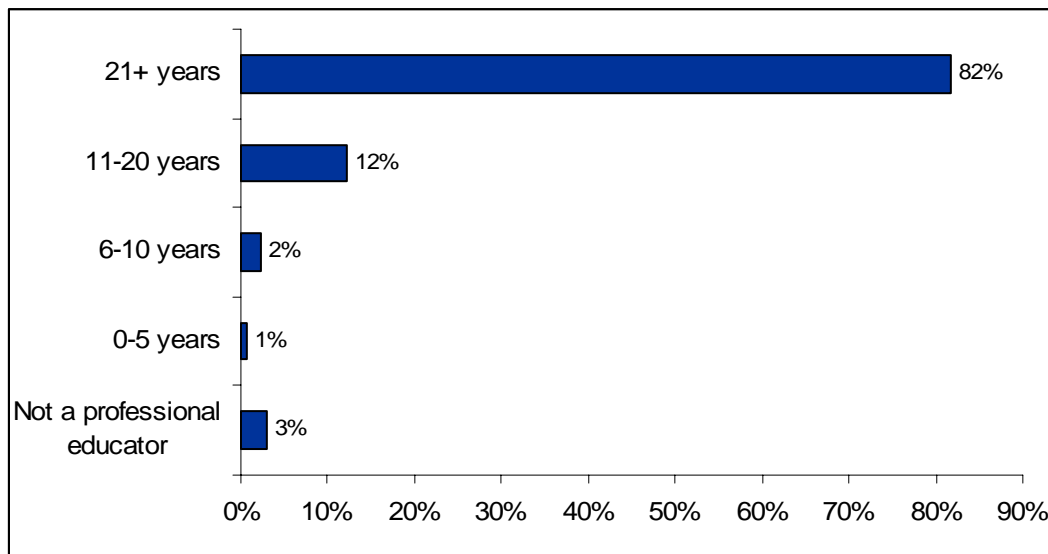
**Figure 14. Most recent level of responsibility (n=132)**



**Figure 15. Most recent position (n=131)**



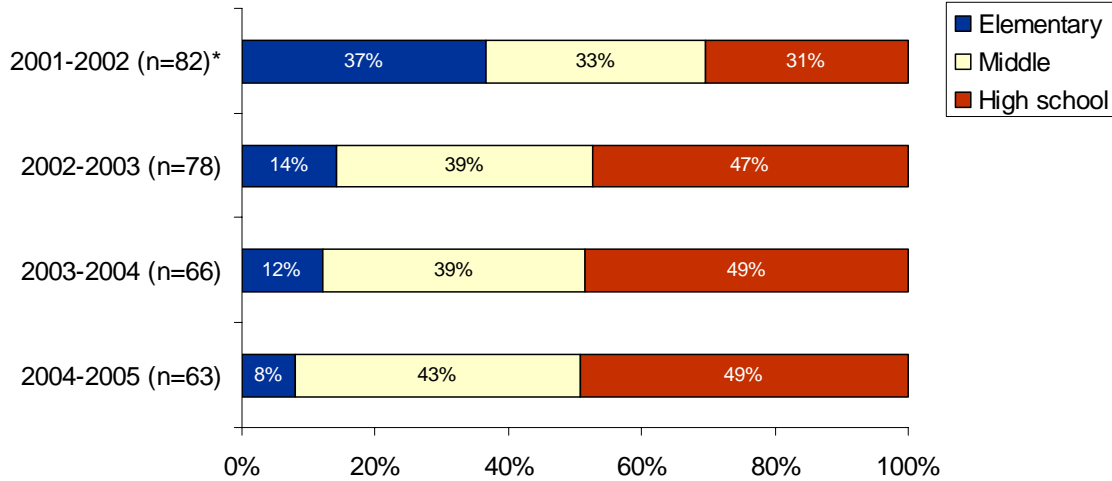
**Figure 16. Total number of years of professional experience in education (n=132)**



**Table 18. Please tell us why you initially applied to the ERT Program and what were your qualifications. If you were recruited, please describe how and why you were initially contacted (n=137).**

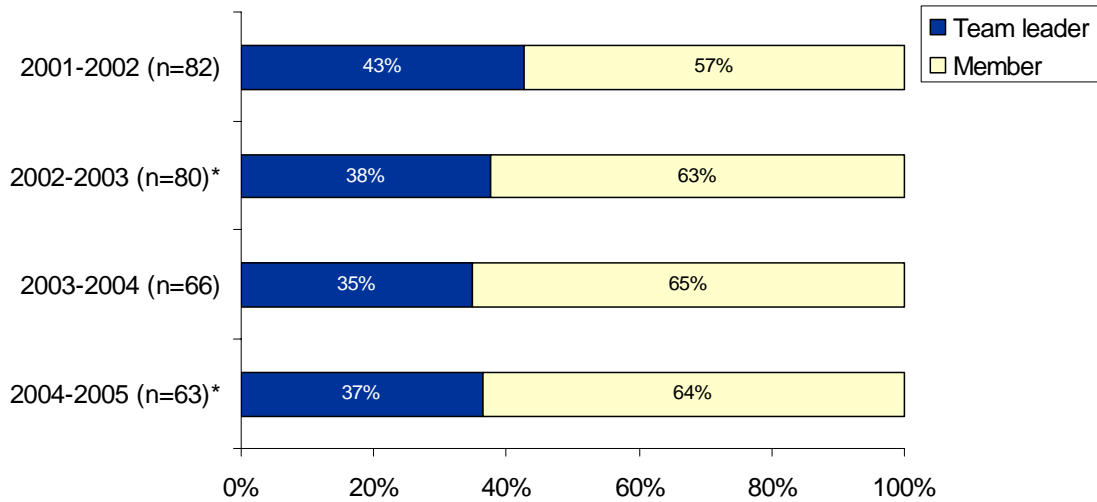
Response	n	Percent
I applied/was recruited because of my administrative experience in schools	46	33.6%
I applied/was recruited because of my teaching experience	27	19.7%
I applied/was recruited because of my other professional experience (such as a math or science specialist)	23	16.8%
I was interested in serving on the ERT	17	12.4%
I applied/was recruited because of my previous evaluation experience	15	10.9%
I worked for SDE (as either an SDE employee or a member of programs affiliated with SDE), and I was recruited within the department	13	9.5%
I was assigned to the ERT	11	8.0%
I applied/was recruited because I wanted to help schools, districts, or make a contribution to education in general	10	7.3%
I applied/was recruited because of my education level and background	10	7.3%
I was recruited because of my experience in education (non-specific)	9	6.6%
I was recruited by an acquaintance	6	4.4%
I applied/was recruited because I had worked for SDE before	4	2.9%
I applied/was recruited because of my ERT experience	3	2.2%

**Figure 17. External Review Team Service: School Level**



\*Percentages add up to 101% due to rounding.

**Figure 18. External Review Team Service: Team Role**



\*Percentages add up to 101% due to rounding.

**Table 19. First-year experiences as an ERT team member\***

Statement	n	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. The External Review Team on which I served received training with appropriate <b>content</b> for the tasks they were asked to carry out.	137	1	4	3.4	0.8
2. The External Review Team on which I served received training of <b>sufficient length</b> to prepare for the tasks they were asked to carry out.	137	1	4	3.4	0.8
3. The External Review Team on which I served was aware of the criteria used in the evaluation of school programs.	134	1	4	3.6	0.7
4. The External Review Team on which I served was aware of the technical assistance available to schools.	134	1	4	3.5	0.8
5. The External Review Team on which I served was provided full access to areas of the school that needed to be visited.	134	1	4	3.6	0.7
6. The External Review Team on which I served was provided sufficient logistical support from the South Carolina SDE to complete their mission.	136	1	4	3.5	0.8
7. All members of the External Review Team on which I served were equally <b>qualified</b> to participate in the school review.	134	1	4	3.4	0.9
8. All members of the External Review Team on which I served were equally <b>prepared</b> to participate in the school review.	134	1	4	3.5	0.8

9. All members of the External Review Team on which I served equally <b>contributed</b> to the school review.	137	1	4	<b>3.5</b>	0.8
10. All members of the External Review Team on which I served had areas of expertise that directly related to the school's improvement needs.	134	1	4	<b>3.4</b>	0.8

\*Note: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree. Don't Know responses were omitted from this analysis.

**Table 20. First-year experience as an ERT team member (continued)\***

<b>Statement</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
11. The External Review Team on which I served was given complete cooperation from the principal in the school that was visited.	137	1	4	<b>3.4</b>	0.8
12. The External Review Team on which I served was given complete cooperation from the teachers and other staff in the school that was visited.	136	1	4	<b>3.5</b>	0.7
13. The observations made by the External Review Team on which I served were helpful in completing the written report that was submitted to the school and SDE.	132	1	4	<b>3.6</b>	0.7
14. The External Review Team on which I served was given sufficient time to complete the required tasks.	136	1	4	<b>3.5</b>	0.7
15. The External Review Team on which I served spent sufficient time observing teachers' work in the classroom.	134	1	4	<b>3.5</b>	0.8
16. The External Review Team on which I served had adequate data <b>provided by schools</b> to diagnose problems and make appropriate recommendations.	136	1	4	<b>3.2</b>	0.9
17. The External Review Team on which I served had adequate data resulting <b>from the school visit</b> to diagnose problems and make appropriate recommendations.	135	1	4	<b>3.4</b>	0.8
18. The communication <b>among members</b> of the External Review Team on which I served was clear.	136	1	4	<b>3.6</b>	0.7
19. The communication between the External Review Team on which I served and the <b>school</b> was clear.	136	1	4	<b>3.4</b>	0.8
20. The communication between the External Review Team on which I served and the <b>SC SDE</b> was clear.	136	1	4	<b>3.5</b>	0.8
21. Overall, the External Review Team on which I served assisted the school in understanding how they needed to improve.	135	1	4	<b>3.5</b>	0.8

\*Note: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree. Don't Know responses were omitted from this analysis.

**Table 21. First-year experience as an ERT team member by job status\***

Statement	Job Status	n	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. The External Review Team on which I served received training with appropriate <b>content</b> for the tasks they were asked to carry out.	Active educator	59	1	4	3.5	0.8
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.5	0.7
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	2.9	1.3
	Work in an education-related organization	32	3	4	3.4	0.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
2. The External Review Team on which I served received training of <b>sufficient length</b> to prepare for the tasks they were asked to carry out.	Active educator	59	1	4	3.5	0.7
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.5	0.7
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	2.9	1.4
	Work in an education-related organization	32	3	4	3.3	0.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
3. The External Review Team on which I served was aware of the criteria used in the evaluation of school programs.**	Active educator	57	1	4	3.7	0.6
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.6	0.7
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.0	1.4
	Work in an education-related organization	31	3	4	3.5	0.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>0.7</b>
4. The External Review Team on which I served was aware of the technical assistance available to schools.**	Active educator	57	1	4	3.7	0.6
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.5	0.7
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.0	1.4
	Work in an education-related organization	31	2	4	3.3	0.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>0.8</b>
5. The External Review Team on which I served was provided full access to areas of the school that needed to be visited.**	Active educator	56	1	4	3.8	0.6
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.6	0.7
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.0	1.4
	Work in an education-related organization	32	3	4	3.6	0.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>0.8</b>
6. The External Review Team on which I served was provided sufficient logistical support from the South Carolina SDE to complete their mission.**	Active educator	58	1	4	3.7	0.7
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.6	0.7
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	2.9	1.3
	Work in an education-related organization	32	2	4	3.4	0.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>0.8</b>
7. All members of the External Review Team on which I served were equally <b>qualified</b> to participate in the school	Active educator	57	1	4	3.6	0.8
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.4	0.9
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.0	1.3

review.**	Work in an education-related organization	31	2	4	3.2	0.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.9</b>
8. All members of the External Review Team on which I served were equally <b>prepared</b> to participate in the school review.**	Active educator	57	1	4	3.6	0.7
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.4	0.7
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.0	1.2
	Work in an education-related organization	31	2	4	3.3	0.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
9. All members of the External Review Team on which I served equally <b>contributed</b> to the school review.**	Active educator	59	1	4	3.7	0.7
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.4	0.8
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	2.9	1.4
	Work in an education-related organization	32	1	4	3.3	0.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
10. All members of the External Review Team on which I served had areas of expertise that directly related to the school's improvement needs.**	Active educator	57	1	4	3.6	0.7
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.4	0.9
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.1	1.3
	Work in an education-related organization	31	2	4	3.2	0.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
11. The External Review Team on which I served was given complete cooperation from the principal in the school that was visited.**	Active educator	59	1	4	3.5	0.8
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.3	0.9
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	2.9	1.1
	Work in an education-related organization	32	3	4	3.7	0.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
12. The External Review Team on which I served was given complete cooperation from the teachers and other staff in the school that was visited.	Active educator	58	1	4	3.5	0.7
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.4	0.7
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.0	1.2
	Work in an education-related organization	32	2	4	3.5	0.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.7</b>
13. The observations made by the External Review Team on which I served were helpful in completing the written report that was submitted to the school and SDE.**	Active educator	54	1	4	3.7	0.6
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.6	0.7
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.1	1.2
	Work in an education-related organization	32	2	4	3.5	0.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>0.7</b>
14. The External Review Team on which I served was given sufficient time to complete the required tasks.**	Active educator	58	1	4	3.7	0.6
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.4	0.7
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	2.9	1.2
	Work in an education-related organization	32	2	4	3.3	0.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>0.7</b>
15. The External Review Team on which I served spent	Active educator	57	1	4	3.7	0.7
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.4	0.7



sufficient time observing teachers' work in the classroom.**	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.1	1.3
	Work in an education-related organization	31	2	4	3.2	0.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>0.8</b>
16. The External Review Team on which I served had adequate data <b>provided by schools</b> to diagnose problems and make appropriate recommendations.	Active educator	58	1	4	3.2	0.8
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.1	0.9
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.0	1.2
	Work in an education-related organization	32	2	4	3.3	0.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>
17. The External Review Team on which I served had adequate data resulting <b>from the school visit</b> to diagnose problems and make appropriate recommendations.	Active educator	57	1	4	3.6	0.7
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.4	0.9
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.1	1.3
	Work in an education-related organization	32	2	4	3.3	0.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
18. The communication <b>among members</b> of the External Review Team on which I served was clear.**	Active educator	58	1	4	3.7	0.6
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.5	0.7
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.2	1.3
	Work in an education-related organization	32	2	4	3.4	0.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>0.7</b>
19. The communication between the External Review Team on which I served and the <b>school</b> was clear.	Active educator	58	1	4	3.6	0.7
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.4	0.7
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.0	1.2
	Work in an education-related organization	32	2	4	3.3	0.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
20. The communication between the External Review Team on which I served and the <b>SC SDE</b> was clear.	Active educator	58	1	4	3.6	0.7
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.4	0.7
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.1	1.2
	Work in an education-related organization	32	2	4	3.3	0.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
21. Overall, the External Review Team on which I served assisted the school in understanding how they needed to improve.	Active educator	57	1	4	3.6	0.7
	Retired educator	28	1	4	3.4	0.8
	Work in a school district office	14	1	4	3.2	1.3
	Work in an education-related organization	32	2	4	3.4	0.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>0.8</b>

\*Note: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree. Don't Know responses were omitted from this analysis.

\*\*Note: These statements were statistically significant at p = .05 using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

**Table 22. First-year experience as an ERT team member by level of visited school\***

Statement	School Level	n	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. The External Review Team on which I served received training with appropriate <b>content</b> for the tasks they were asked to carry out.	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.3	0.9
	Middle School	43	2	4	3.4	0.6
	High School	46	1	4	3.4	1.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
2. The External Review Team on which I served received training of <b>sufficient length</b> to prepare for the tasks they were asked to carry out.	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.2	0.9
	Middle School	43	2	4	3.5	0.6
	High School	46	1	4	3.4	0.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
3. The External Review Team on which I served was aware of the criteria used in the evaluation of school programs.**	Elementary School	36	1	4	3.4	0.8
	Middle School	42	3	4	3.8	0.4
	High School	45	1	4	3.5	0.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>0.7</b>
4. The External Review Team on which I served was aware of the technical assistance available to schools.	Elementary School	35	1	4	3.3	0.9
	Middle School	42	2	4	3.6	0.5
	High School	46	1	4	3.5	0.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>0.8</b>
5. The External Review Team on which I served was provided full access to areas of the school that needed to be visited.	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.5	0.8
	Middle School	40	3	4	3.8	0.4
	High School	46	1	4	3.5	1.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>0.8</b>
6. The External Review Team on which I served was provided sufficient logistical support from the South Carolina SDE to complete their mission.	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.3	0.8
	Middle School	42	2	4	3.6	0.6
	High School	46	1	4	3.5	1.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>0.8</b>
7. All members of the External Review Team on which I served were equally <b>qualified</b> to participate in the school review.**	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.1	1.0
	Middle School	42	2	4	3.7	0.6
	High School	44	1	4	3.3	1.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.9</b>
8. All members of the External Review Team on which I served were equally <b>prepared</b> to participate in the school review.**	Elementary School	36	1	4	3.2	0.9
	Middle School	42	2	4	3.7	0.5
	High School	45	1	4	3.4	0.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
9. All members of the External Review Team on which I served equally <b>contributed</b> to the school review.	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.3	0.8
	Middle School	43	1	4	3.6	0.6
	High School	46	1	4	3.4	1.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.9</b>
10. All members of the External Review Team on which I served had areas of expertise that directly related to the school's improvement needs.	Elementary School	36	1	4	3.3	0.8
	Middle School	41	2	4	3.6	0.7
	High School	46	1	4	3.3	1.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
11. The External Review Team on which I served was given complete cooperation from the principal in the school that was visited.	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.5	0.8
	Middle School	43	1	4	3.4	0.7
	High School	46	1	4	3.3	1.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
12. The External Review Team	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.4	0.8

on which I served was given complete cooperation from the teachers and other staff in the school that was visited.	Middle School	42	2	4	3.5	0.6
	High School	46	1	4	3.4	0.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.7</b>
13. The observations made by the External Review Team on which I served were helpful in completing the written report that was submitted to the school and SDE.	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.4	0.8
	Middle School	40	3	4	3.8	0.4
	High School	44	1	4	3.5	0.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>0.7</b>
14. The External Review Team on which I served was given sufficient time to complete the required tasks.**	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.2	0.8
	Middle School	42	2	4	3.7	0.5
	High School	46	1	4	3.5	0.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>0.8</b>
15. The External Review Team on which I served spent sufficient time observing teachers' work in the classroom.	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.2	1.0
	Middle School	42	1	4	3.6	0.7
	High School	44	1	4	3.5	0.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
16. The External Review Team on which I served had adequate data <b>provided by schools</b> to diagnose problems and make appropriate recommendations.	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.1	0.9
	Middle School	42	1	4	3.2	0.8
	High School	46	1	4	3.1	0.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>0.9</b>
17. The External Review Team on which I served had adequate data <b>resulting from the school visit</b> to diagnose problems and make appropriate recommendations.	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.2	0.9
	Middle School	42	2	4	3.6	0.6
	High School	45	1	4	3.4	0.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
18. The communication <b>among members</b> of the External Review Team on which I served was clear.**	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.3	0.8
	Middle School	42	3	4	3.8	0.4
	High School	46	1	4	3.5	0.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>0.7</b>
19. The communication between the External Review Team on which I served and the <b>school</b> was clear.	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.2	0.9
	Middle School	42	2	4	3.5	0.6
	High School	46	1	4	3.4	0.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
20. The communication between the External Review Team on which I served and the <b>SC SDE</b> was clear.**	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.2	0.9
	Middle School	42	2	4	3.6	0.5
	High School	46	1	4	3.5	0.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>
21. Overall, the External Review Team on which I served assisted the school in understanding how they needed to improve.**	Elementary School	37	1	4	3.2	0.9
	Middle School	41	2	4	3.7	0.5
	High School	46	1	4	3.4	0.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>

\*Note: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree. Don't Know responses were omitted from this analysis.

\*\*Note: These statements were statistically significant at  $p = .05$  using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

**Table 23. Mean differences between “Work in a school district office” category and other job status categories**

Statement	Job Status	n	Mean Diff	p-value
3. The External Review Team on which I served was aware of the	Active educator	57	-.72*	.001
	Retired educator	28	-.57*	.014

criteria used in the evaluation of school programs.**	Work in a school district office	14	---	---
	Work in an education-related organization	31	-.48*	.034
4. The External Review Team on which I served was aware of the technical assistance available to schools.**	Active educator	57	-.68*	.003
	Retired educator	28	-.54*	.030
	Work in a school district office	14	---	---
	Work in an education-related organization	31	-.32	.182
5. The External Review Team on which I served was provided full access to areas of the school that needed to be visited.**	Active educator	56	-.75*	.001
	Retired educator	28	-.61*	.012
	Work in a school district office	14	---	---
	Work in an education-related organization	32	-.59*	.012
6. The External Review Team on which I served was provided sufficient logistical support from the South Carolina SDE to complete their mission.**	Active educator	58	-.73*	.002
	Retired educator	28	-.68*	.007
	Work in a school district office	14	---	---
	Work in an education-related organization	32	-.48	.053
7. All members of the External Review Team on which I served were equally <b>qualified</b> to participate in the school review.**	Active educator	57	-.61*	.019
	Retired educator	28	-.39	.168
	Work in a school district office	14	---	---
	Work in an education-related organization	31	-.16	.564
8. All members of the External Review Team on which I served were equally <b>prepared</b> to participate in the school review.**	Active educator	57	-.63*	.008
	Retired educator	28	-.43	.096
	Work in a school district office	14	---	---
	Work in an education-related organization	31	-.32	.202
9. All members of the External Review Team on which I served equally <b>contributed</b> to the school review.**	Active educator	59	-.73*	.003
	Retired educator	28	-.46	.088
	Work in a school district office	14	---	---
	Work in an education-related organization	32	-.38	.149
10. All members of the External Review Team on which I served had areas of expertise that directly related to the school's improvement needs.**	Active educator	57	-.58*	.019
	Retired educator	28	-.29	.286
	Work in a school district office	14	---	---
	Work in an education-related organization	31	-.15	.558
11. The External Review Team on which I served was given complete cooperation from the principal in the school that was visited.**	Active educator	59	-.53*	.030
	Retired educator	28	-.39	.141
	Work in a school district office	14	---	---
	Work in an education-related organization	32	-.73*	.006
13. The observations made by the External Review Team on which I served were helpful in completing the written report that was submitted to the school and SDE.**	Active educator	54	-.67*	.001
	Retired educator	28	-.54*	.018
	Work in a school district office	14	---	---
	Work in an education-related organization	32	-.43	.053
14. The External Review Team on which I served was given sufficient time to complete the required tasks.**	Active educator	58	-.76*	.000
	Retired educator	28	-.46*	.049
	Work in a school district office	14	---	---
	Work in an education-related organization	32	-.42	.072
15. The External Review Team on which I served spent sufficient time observing teachers' work in the classroom.**	Active educator	57	-.61*	.012
	Retired educator	28	-.36	.177
	Work in a school district office	14	---	---
	Work in an education-related organization	31	-.15	.552
18. The communication <b>among members</b> of the External Review Team on which I served was clear.**	Active educator	58	-.53*	.015
	Retired educator	28	-.29	.226
	Work in a school district office	14	---	---
	Work in an education-related organization	32	-.16	.486

\*Note: These statements were significantly significant at  $p = .05$  using Least Significant Difference Post Hoc to test for differences between “Work in a school district office” and “Active educator,” “Retired educator,” “and “Work in an education-related organization” categories.

\*\*Note: These statements were statistically significant at  $p = .05$  using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

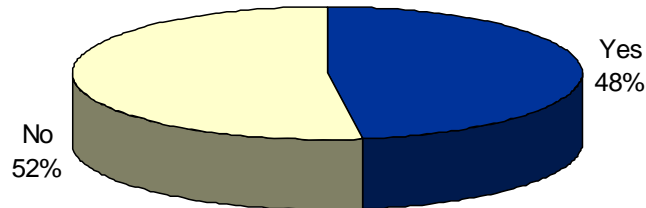
**Table 24. Mean differences between “Elementary School” category and other school level categories (for the first ERT visit)**

Statement	School Level	n	Mean Diff	p-value
3. The External Review Team on which I served was aware of the criteria used in the evaluation of school programs.**	Elementary School	36	---	---
	Middle School	42	-.42*	.011
	High School	45	-.11	.515
7. All members of the External Review Team on which I served were equally <b>qualified</b> to participate in the school review.**	Elementary School	37	---	---
	Middle School	42	-.59*	.004
	High School	44	-.26	.186
8. All members of the External Review Team on which I served were equally <b>prepared</b> to participate in the school review.**	Elementary School	36	---	---
	Middle School	42	-.44*	.015
	High School	45	-.16	.384
14. The External Review Team on which I served was given sufficient time to complete the required tasks.**	Elementary School	37	---	---
	Middle School	42	-.48*	.005
	High School	46	-.27	.103
18. The communication <b>among members</b> of the External Review Team on which I served was clear.**	Elementary School	37	---	---
	Middle School	42	-.52*	.002
	High School	46	-.23	.153
20. The communication between the External Review Team on which I served and the <b>SC SDE</b> was clear.**	Elementary School	37	---	---
	Middle School	42	-.43*	.013
	High School	46	-.32	.062
21. Overall, the External Review Team on which I served assisted the school in understanding how they needed to improve.**	Elementary School	37	---	---
	Middle School	41	-.44*	.013
	High School	46	-.22	.204

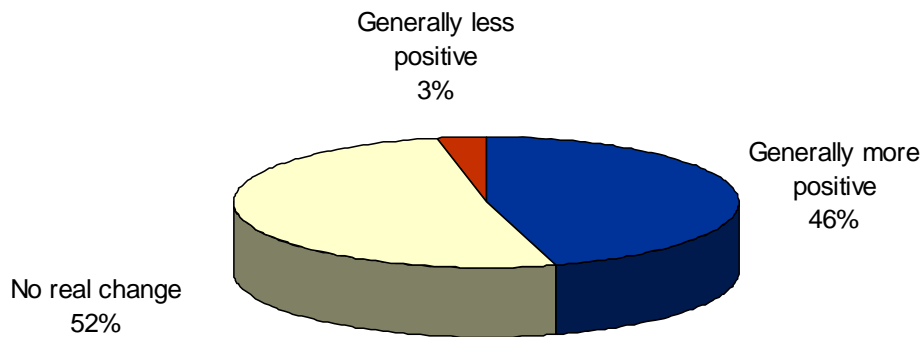
\*Note: These statements were significantly significant at  $p = .05$  using Least Significant Difference Post Hoc to test for differences between “Elementary School” and “Middle school” and “High school” categories.

\*\*Note: These statements were statistically significant at  $p = .05$  using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

**Figure 19. Did you serve on another team in a year subsequent to the one rated above? (n=137)**

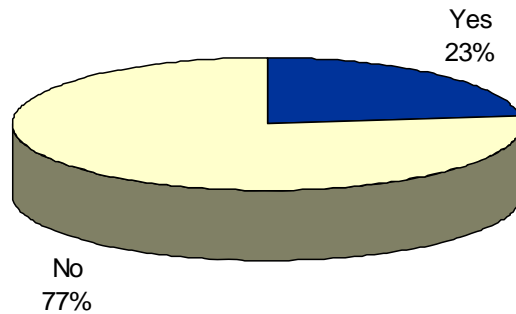


**Figure 20. How would your answers for this subsequent experience compare with those provided in the survey above? (n=66)\***



\*Percentages add up to 101 due to rounding.

**Figure 21. Did you revisit the school you initially reviewed? (n=134)**



**Table 25. If the process improved in the survey above, to what do you attribute the improvement? (n=30)**

Response	n	Percent
The participating schools/teachers were more prepared or cooperative	14	46.7%
The ERT members became more experienced.	9	30.0%
The forms used were updated/revised	5	16.7%
The process was improved, more streamlined or better understood	5	16.7%
The training was improved	3	10.0%
More information/guidelines were supplied by SDE	2	6.7%
SDE was supportive or responsive.	2	6.7%
Other	5	16.7%

**Table 26. Please use the space below to enter any additional comments you feel will be helpful in improving the ERT Program. (n=73)**

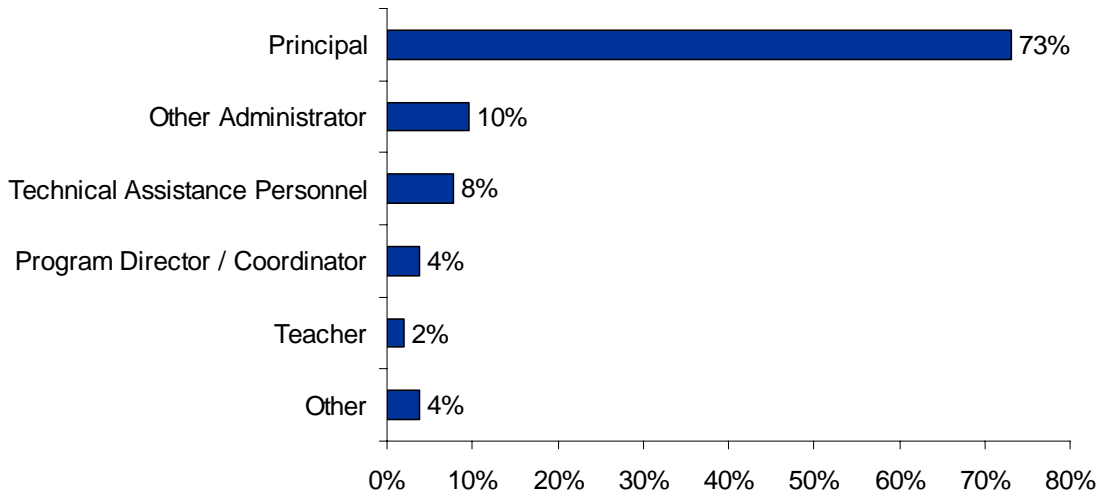
<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Positive comments regarding the ERT process or a team member's experience	19	<b>26.0%</b>
Increase preparation for and awareness of ERT reviews at the school level/improve climate surrounding the review	11	<b>15.1%</b>
Update/improve evaluation and observation instrument/ allow space for reviewers to add in their own comments	10	<b>13.7%</b>
The ERT process/model can be improved	6	<b>8.2%</b>
Give reviewers additional time for the review/access to school-specific information so they can better assess the school	6	<b>8.2%</b>
Improve training/provide additional training for ERT members	6	<b>8.2%</b>
Difficulties often occurred when scheduling ERT visits during the holiday months (i.e. December)/conduct observations earlier	5	<b>6.8%</b>
The same ERT members that participated in the first review should revisit the school in subsequent visits/years	5	<b>6.8%</b>
Make sure team leaders have leadership experience	3	<b>4.1%</b>
Schools selected for each reviewer should be geographically located near their home and should match their experience (i.e. a high school principal should be matched to a high school)	3	<b>4.1%</b>
ERT members should revisit the school after their recommendations have been submitted to check on the school's improvement progress	3	<b>4.1%</b>
Make sure team members have appropriate experience	2	<b>2.7%</b>
Other	4	<b>5.5%</b>





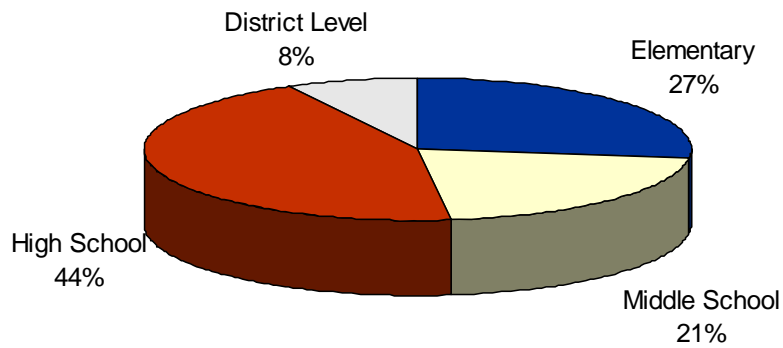
**Appendix 2:  
Findings From the Survey of Principals  
and Chairpersons**

**Figure 22. Current position (n=52)\***

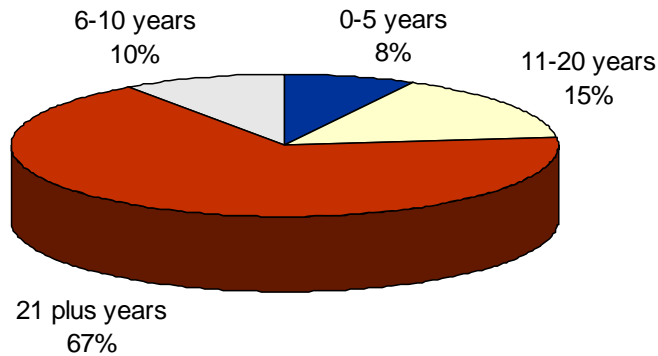


\*Percentages add up to 101% due to rounding.

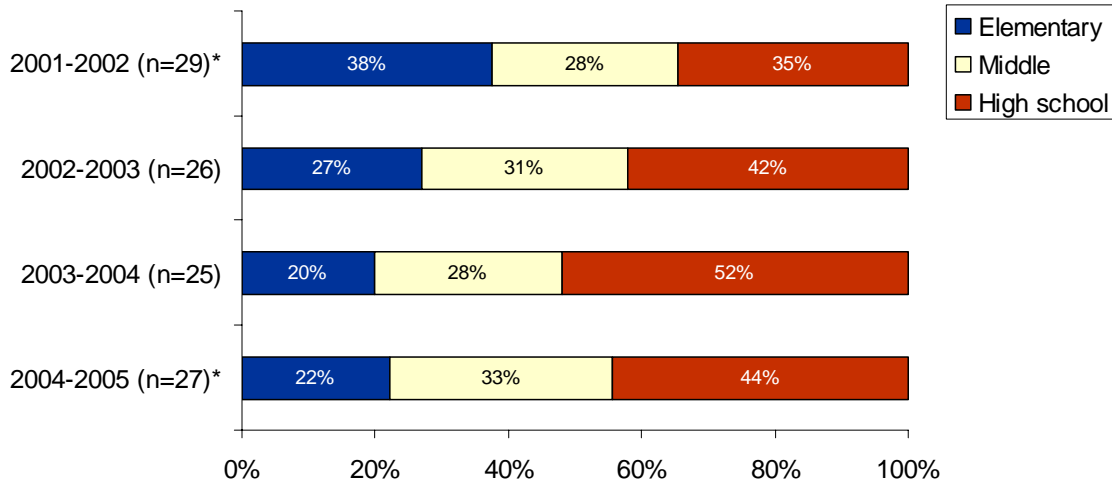
**Figure 23. Primary assignment (n=52)**



**Figure 24. Years of experience in education (n=52)**



**Figure 25. School level of chairpersons and principals involved in external school reviews.**



\*Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

**Table 27. Ratings of the first-year External Review Team observation and visit\***

Statement	n	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. The school in which I worked had enough time to prepare for the External Review Team visit.	52	1	4	2.8	1.0
2. The communication between the External Review Team and the school in which I worked was clear.	52	1	4	3.2	0.6
3. The External Review Team that visited the school in which I worked had received appropriate training for the tasks they were asked to carry out.	46	2	4	3.2	0.6
4. The External Review Team that visited the school in which I worked was aware of the criteria used in the evaluation of school programs.	52	1	4	3.3	0.6
5. The External Review Team that visited the school in which I worked was aware of the technical assistance available to schools.	50	2	4	3.3	0.6
6. The External Review Team that visited the school in which I worked was provided easy and full access to areas of the school that needed to be visited.	51	3	4	3.7	0.4
7. The External Review Team that visited the school in which I worked was given complete cooperation from the school administration.	49	3	4	3.8	0.4

8. The External Review Team that visited the school in which I worked was given complete cooperation from teachers and other staff.	50	3	4	3.7	0.5
9. The External Review Team that visited the school in which I worked was given sufficient time to complete the required tasks.	49	1	4	3.4	0.7

\*Responses were coded as: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3= agree, 4=strongly agree.

**Table 28. Ratings of the first-year External Review Team observation and visit (continued).\***

Statement	n	Min	Max	Mean	SD
10. The External Review Team that visited the school in which I worked spent sufficient time observing teachers' work in the classroom.	51	1	4	3.2	0.7
11. The <b>content</b> of the instrument used to guide the ERT's reporting was useful.	52	1	4	3.2	0.7
12. The <b>format</b> of the instrument used to guide the ERT's reporting was useful.	48	1	4	3.1	0.8
13. The written report submitted by the External Review Team was easy to understand.	52	1	4	3.3	0.6
14. My school integrated all of the ERT recommendations into its improvement plan.	48	3	4	3.4	0.5
15. My school received appropriate follow up from the South Carolina Department of Education to implement the ERT recommendations.	49	1	4	3.0	0.8
16. My school has implemented the ERT recommendations as part of its school improvement activities.	49	3	4	3.4	0.5
17. The recommendations made by the External Review Team that visited the school in which I worked were helpful in improving teaching and learning.	52	1	4	3.3	0.8
18. Overall, the External Review Team process assisted my school in understanding how it needed to improve.	52	1	4	3.3	0.7

\*Responses were coded as: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3= agree, 4=strongly agree.

**Table 29. Please use the space below to enter any additional comments you feel will be helpful in improving the ERT Program. (n=22)**

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Problems exist with the documentation/review instrument	5	22.7%
Positive comments	4	18.2%
Need for more advanced notice of team visit/need for additional time to gather information	4	18.2%
The specialists need to be in place for a longer period of time/extend length of visits	3	13.6%
Need for clearer actions for school improvement/provide more detailed information	3	13.6%
The ERT process doesn't work/expressions of dissatisfaction	3	13.6%
Team members should revisit/follow-up with schools	2	9.1%
Other	4	18.2%



## **Appendix 3: Descriptive Statistics of ELA and Math Performance in all Group I, II, III and IV Schools**

## DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

### A. GROUP I: SCHOOLS THAT WERE REVIEWED IN 2001-2002

**Table 30. Descriptive statistics for the percentage of all students scoring “basic or above” on the ELA component of PACT and BSAP/HSAP assessments**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum value</b>	<b>Maximum value</b>	<b>Mean value</b>	<b>Median value</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Elementary Schools	7	43%	60%	49%	46%	6.1
Middle Schools	25	31%	52%	45%	45%	5.8
High Schools	30	56%	86%	72%	73%	7.8
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>14.9</b>

**Table 31. Descriptive statistics for the percentage of all students scoring “basic or above” on the math component of PACT and BSAP/HSAP assessments**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum value</b>	<b>Maximum value</b>	<b>Mean value</b>	<b>Median value</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Elementary Schools	7	26%	66%	36%	36%	13.7
Middle Schools	25	19%	39%	31%	32%	5.1
High Schools	30	29%	85%	65%	65%	12.8
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>19.7</b>

### B. GROUP II: SCHOOLS THAT WERE REVIEWED IN 2002-2003

**Table 32. Descriptive statistics for the percentage of all students scoring “basic or above” on the ELA component of PACT and BSAP/HSAP assessments**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum value</b>	<b>Maximum value</b>	<b>Mean value</b>	<b>Median value</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Elementary Schools	4	34%	53%	43%	42%	7.8
Middle Schools	17	35%	51%	44%	44%	5.5
High Schools	25	41%	77%	66%	69%	8.6
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>13.5</b>

**Table 33. Descriptive statistics for the percentage of all students scoring “basic or above” on the math component of PACT and BSAP/HSAP assessments**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum value</b>	<b>Maximum value</b>	<b>Mean value</b>	<b>Median value</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Elementary Schools	4	26%	40%	33%	33%	6.4
Middle Schools	17	25%	49%	32%	31%	6.2
High Schools	25	39%	82%	63%	63%	9.9
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>17.8</b>



### C. GROUP III: SCHOOLS THAT WERE REVIEWED IN 2003-2004

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**Table 34. Descriptive statistics for the percentage of all students scoring “basic or above” on the ELA component of PACT and BSAP/HSAP assessments**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum value</b>	<b>Maximum value</b>	<b>Mean value</b>	<b>Median value</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Elementary Schools	4	34%	51%	42%	41%	7.1
Middle Schools	15	31%	50%	40%	40%	4.8
High Schools	21	34%	83%	66%	69%	10.6
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>15.3</b>

**Table 35. Descriptive statistics for the percentage of all students scoring “basic or above” on the math component of PACT and BSAP/HSAP assessments**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum value</b>	<b>Maximum value</b>	<b>Mean value</b>	<b>Median value</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Elementary Schools	4	36%	47%	43%	44%	5.1
Middle Schools	15	32%	48%	39%	38%	5.2
High Schools	21	45%	88%	64%	60%	11.8
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>15.2</b>

### D. GROUP IV: SCHOOLS THAT WERE REVIEWED IN 2004-2005

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**Table 36. Descriptive statistics for the percentage of all students scoring “basic or above” on the ELA component of PACT and BSAP/HSAP assessments**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum value</b>	<b>Maximum value</b>	<b>Mean value</b>	<b>Median value</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Elementary Schools	0					
Middle Schools	13	33%	50%	43%	44%	5.3
High Schools	8	58%	92%	73%	69%	11.5
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>16.9</b>

**Table 37. Descriptive statistics for the percentage of all students scoring “basic or above” on the math component of PACT and BSAP/HSAP assessments**

	<b>N</b>	<b>Minimum value</b>	<b>Maximum value</b>	<b>Mean value</b>	<b>Median value</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Elementary Schools	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Middle Schools	13	25%	50%	40%	41%	7.2
High Schools	8	45%	76%	61%	59%	10.1
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>13.1</b>



## **Appendix 4: Absolute Performance Ratings for Group I Schools**

## GROUP I SCHOOLS RANKED BY ABSOLUTE PERFORMANCE RATING

**Table 38. Most Improved Group I Schools**

School Name	2001	2002	Annual Δ	2003	Annual Δ	2004	Annual Δ	Cumulative Improvement
Ridge Spring-Monetta High	1.6	2.3	0.7	3.3	1.0	4.0	0.7	2.4
Blackville-Hilda High	2.0	2.3	0.3	3.1	0.8	4.1	1.0	2.1
North High	2.0	2.7	0.7	3.0	0.3	3.5	0.5	1.5
Fairfield Central High	1.3	2.3	1.0	2.3	0.0	2.8	0.5	1.5
C E Murray High	1.6	2.5	0.9	2.6	0.1	3.0	0.4	1.4
Calhoun County High	2	3	1.0	2.4	-0.6	3.3	0.9	1.3
Dillon High	2	2	0.0	2.2	0.2	3.2	1.0	1.2
Scott's Branch High	1.9	1.6	-0.3	2.9	1.3	2.8	-0.1	0.9
Kingstree High	2	2.3	0.3	2.5	0.2	2.8	0.3	0.8
Lake City High	2.1	2	-0.1	2.3	0.3	2.7	0.4	0.6
Luther Vaughan Elementary	2.1	2.2	0.1	2.4	0.2	2.7	0.3	0.6
Darlington High	2	2.2	0.2	2.3	0.1	2.5	0.2	0.5
Spaulding Elementary	2	2.3	0.3	2.4	0.1	2.5	0.1	0.5
Morningside Middle	2.1	2.4	0.3	2.5	0.1	2.6	0.1	0.5
Denmark-Olar Middle	2	2.2	0.2	2.3	0.1	2.5	0.2	0.5
Marlboro County High	2	2.3	0.3	2.5	0.2	2.4	-0.1	0.4
Macedonia Elementary	2.1	2.2	0.1	2.4	0.2	2.5	0.1	0.4
Whale Branch Middle	2	2.1	0.1	2.2	0.1	2.4	0.2	0.4
Dennis Intermediate - from Bishopville in 2002	1.9	2.2	0.3	2.2	0.0	2.3	0.1	0.4
Mary Ford Elementary	2.1	2.3	0.2	2.4	0.1	2.4	0.0	0.3
Whale Branch Elementary	2	2.2	0.2	2.2	0.0	2.3	0.1	0.3
West Hardeeville Elementary	2	2.2	0.2	2.2	0.0	2.3	0.1	0.3
McCormick Middle	2.1	2.2	0.1	2.3	0.1	2.4	0.1	0.3
Robert E. Howard Middle	2.1	2.3	0.2	2.2	-0.1	2.4	0.2	0.3
Alice Birney Middle	2.1	2.2	0.1	2.3	0.1	2.3	0.0	0.2

J. V. Martin Jr. High	2.1	2.2	0.1	2.2	0.0	2.3	0.1	0.2
Spaulding Jr. High	2.1	2	-0.1	2.2	0.2	2.3	0.1	0.2
	2.0	2.2		2.4		2.7		0.7

**Table 39. Least Improved Group I Schools**

School Name	2001	2002	Annual Δ	2003	Annual Δ	2004	Annual Δ	Cumulative Improvement
Baptist Hill High	1	1	0.0	1	0.0	2	1.0	1
Denmark-Olar High	1	1.4	0.4	1.2	-0.2	1.8	0.6	0.8
Mt. Pleasant Middle	1.6	2	0.4	2	0.0	2	0.0	0.4
M. W. Whitlock Jr. High	1.9	2.2	0.3	2.1	-0.1	2.2	0.1	0.3
Estill Middle	2	2.1	0.1	2.1	0.0	2.2	0.1	0.2
Ridgeland Middle	1.8	1.9	0.1	1.9	0.0	2	0.1	0.2
Heyward Gibbes Middle	2.1	2.1	0.0	2.1	0.0	2.2	0.1	0.1
Allendale-Fairfax Middle	2.1	2.1	0.0	2.1	0.0	2.2	0.1	0.1
W. A. Perry Middle	2.0	2.1	0.1	2.1	0.0	2.0	-0.1	0.0
Rivers Middle	2.0	1.9	-0.1	1.9	0.0	2.0	0.1	0.0
Fairfield Middle	2.1	2.0	-0.1	2.1	0.1	2.1	0.0	0.0
Eau Claire High	2.0	1.3	-0.7	1.2	-0.1	2.0	0.8	0.0
C A Johnson High	1.4	1.4	0.0	1.8	0.4	1.4	-0.4	0.0
Brentwood Middle	1.9	1.9	0.0	1.9	0.0	1.8	-0.1	-0.1
Bennettsville Middle	2.1	1.9	-0.2	1.9	0.0	2.0	0.1	-0.1
Burke High	1.7	1.0	-0.7	1.0	0.0	1.2	0.2	-0.5
	1.8	1.8		1.8		1.9		0.2

## IMPROVED GROUP I SCHOOLS RANKED BY ABSOLUTE PERFORMANCE RATING

**Table 40. Elementary Schools**

	2001	2002	Annual Change	2003	Annual Change	2004	Annual Change	Cumulative Improvement
Luther Vaughan Elementary	2.1	2.2	0.1	2.4	0.2	2.7	0.3	0.6
Spaulding Elementary	2.0	2.3	0.3	2.4	0.1	2.5	0.1	0.5
Macedonia Elementary	2.1	2.2	0.1	2.4	0.2	2.5	0.1	0.4
Mary Ford Elementary	2.1	2.3	0.2	2.4	0.1	2.4	0.0	0.3
Whale Branch Elementary	2.0	2.2	0.2	2.2	0.0	2.3	0.1	0.3
West Hardeeville Elementary	2.0	2.2	0.2	2.2	0.0	2.3	0.1	0.3
Average	2.1	2.2		2.3		2.5		0.4

**Table 41. Middle Schools**

	2001	2002	Annual Change	2003	Annual Change	2004	Annual Change	Cumulative Improvement
Morningside Middle	2.1	2.4	0.3	2.5	0.1	2.6	0.1	0.5
Denmark-Olar Middle	2.0	2.2	0.2	2.3	0.1	2.5	0.2	0.5
Whale Branch Middle	2.0	2.1	0.1	2.2	0.1	2.4	0.2	0.4
Dennis Intermediate - from Bishopville in 2002	1.9	2.2	0.3	2.2	0.0	2.3	0.1	0.4
McCormick Middle	2.1	2.2	0.1	2.3	0.1	2.4	0.1	0.3
Robert E. Howard Middle	2.1	2.3	0.2	2.2	-0.1	2.4	0.2	0.3
Alice Birney Middle	2.1	2.2	0.1	2.3	0.1	2.3	0.0	0.2
J. V. Martin Jr. High	2.1	2.2	0.1	2.2	0.0	2.3	0.1	0.2
Spaulding Jr. High	2.1	2.0	-0.1	2.2	0.2	2.3	0.1	0.2
Average	2.1	2.2		2.3		2.4		0.3

**Table 42. High Schools**

	2001	2002	Annual Change	2003	Annual Change	2004	Annual Change	Cumulative Improvement
Ridge Spring-Monetta High	1.6	2.3	0.7	3.3	1.0	4.0	0.7	2.4
Blackville-Hilda High	2.0	2.3	0.3	3.1	0.8	4.1	1.0	2.1
North High	2.0	2.7	0.7	3.0	0.3	3.5	0.5	1.5
Fairfield Central High	1.3	2.3	1.0	2.3	0.0	2.8	0.5	1.5
C E Murray High	1.6	2.5	0.9	2.6	0.1	3.0	0.4	1.4
Calhoun County High	2.0	3.0	1.0	2.4	-0.6	3.3	0.9	1.3
Dillon High	2.0	2.0	0.0	2.2	0.2	3.2	1.0	1.2
Scott's Branch High	1.9	1.6	-0.3	2.9	1.3	2.8	-0.1	0.9
Kingstree High	2.0	2.3	0.3	2.5	0.2	2.8	0.3	0.8
Lake City High	2.1	2.0	-0.1	2.3	0.3	2.7	0.4	0.6
Darlington High	2.0	2.2	0.2	2.3	0.1	2.5	0.2	0.5
Marlboro County High	2.0	2.3	0.3	2.5	0.2	2.4	-0.1	0.4
Average	1.9	2.3		2.6		3.1		1.2

Key	
Unsatisfactory	Average
Below	Good
Excellent	

**CONTINUED UNSATISFACTORY GROUP | SCHOOLS RANKED BY ABSOLUTE PERFORMANCE RATING**

**Table 43. Middle Schools**

	2001	2002	Annual Change	2003	Annual Change	2004	Annual Change	Cumulative Improvement
Mt. Pleasant Middle	1.6	2.0	0.4	2.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.4
M. W. Whitlock Jr. High	1.9	2.2	0.3	2.1	- 0.1	2.2	0.1	0.3
Ridgeland Middle	1.8	1.9	0.1	1.9	0.0	2.0	0.1	0.2
Estill Middle	2.0	2.1	0.1	2.1	0.0	2.2	0.1	0.2
Heyward Gibbes Middle	2.1	2.1	0.0	2.1	0.0	2.2	0.1	0.1
Allendale-Fairfax Middle	2.1	2.1	0.0	2.1	0.0	2.2	0.1	0.1
W. A. Perry Middle	2.0	2.1	0.1	2.1	0.0	2.0	- 0.1	0.0
Rivers Middle	2.0	1.9	- 0.1	1.9	0.0	2.0	0.1	0.0
Fairfield Middle	2.1	2.0	- 0.1	2.1	0.1	2.1	0.0	0.0
Brentwood Middle	1.9	1.9	0.0	1.9	0.0	1.8	- 0.1	- 0.1
Bennettsville Middle	2.1	1.9	- 0.2	1.9	0.0	2.0	0.1	- 0.1
Average	2.0	2.0		2.0		2.1		0.1

**Table 44. High Schools**

	2001	2002	Annual Δ	2003	Annual Δ	2004	Annual Δ	Cumulative Improvement
Baptist Hill High	1.0	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	2.0	1.0	1.0
Denmark-Olar High	1.0	1.4	0.4	1.2	-0.2	1.8	0.6	0.8
Eau Claire High	2.0	1.3	-0.7	1.2	-0.1	2.0	0.8	0.0
C A Johnson High	1.4	1.4	0.0	1.8	0.4	1.4	-0.4	0.0
Burke High	1.7	1.0	-0.7	1.0	0.0	1.2	0.2	-0.5
Average	1.4	1.2		1.2		1.7		0.3

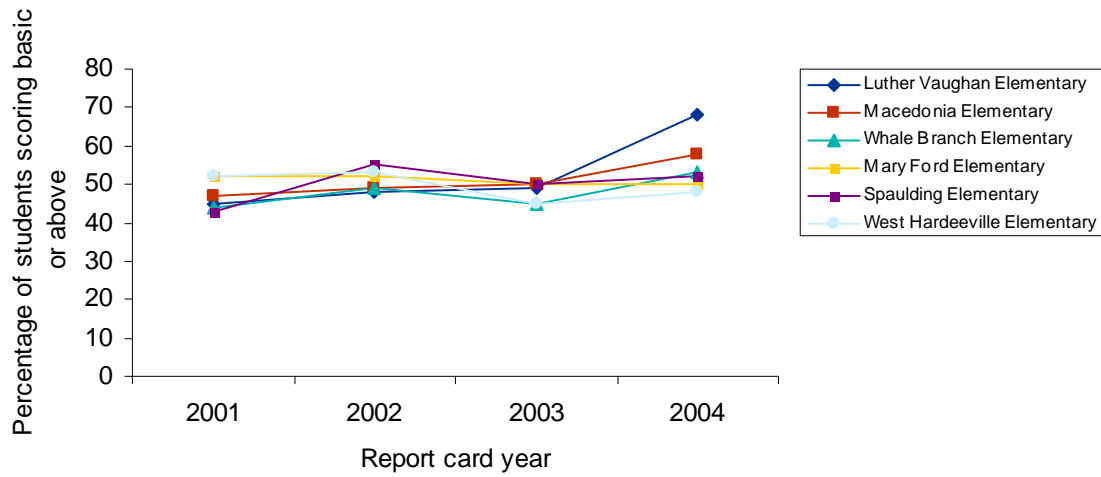


# **Appendix 5: ELA and Math Proficiency of Each Group I Elementary and Middle School**

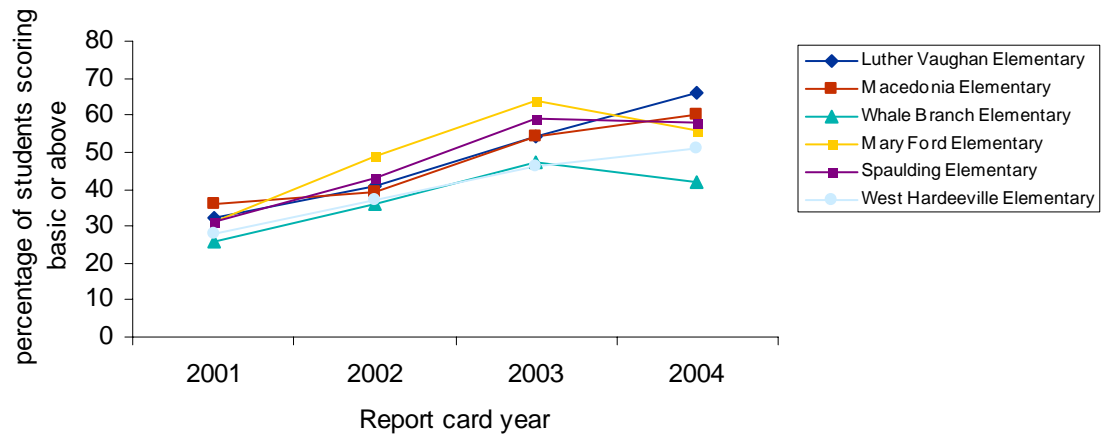
## ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

### A. IMPROVED SCHOOLS

**Figure 26. ELA proficiency among Improved Group I elementary schools**



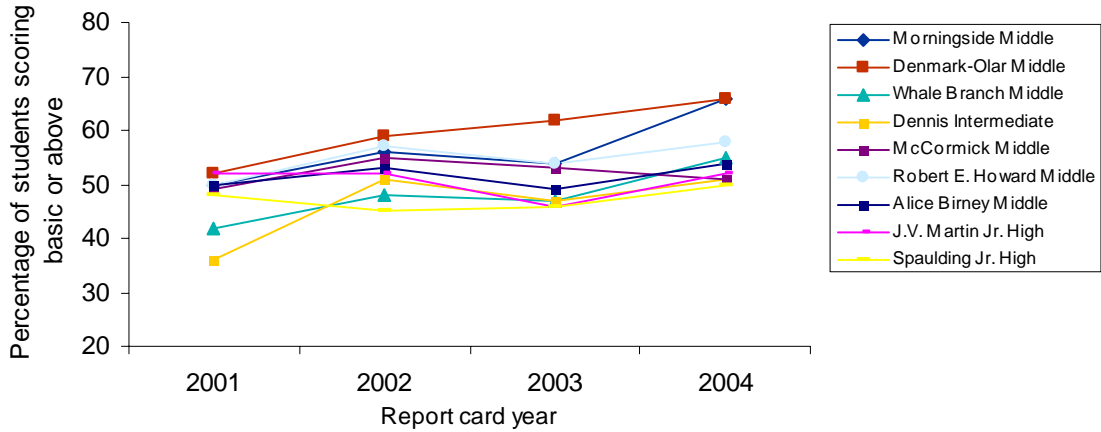
**Figure 27. Math proficiency among Improved Group I elementary schools**



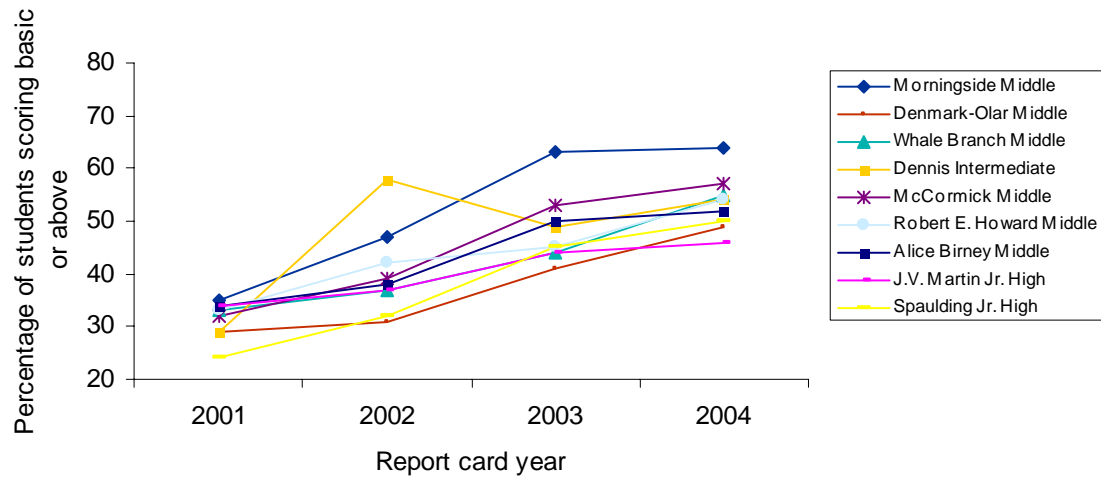
## MIDDLE SCHOOLS

### A. IMPROVED SCHOOLS

**Figure 28. ELA proficiency among Improved Group I middle schools**

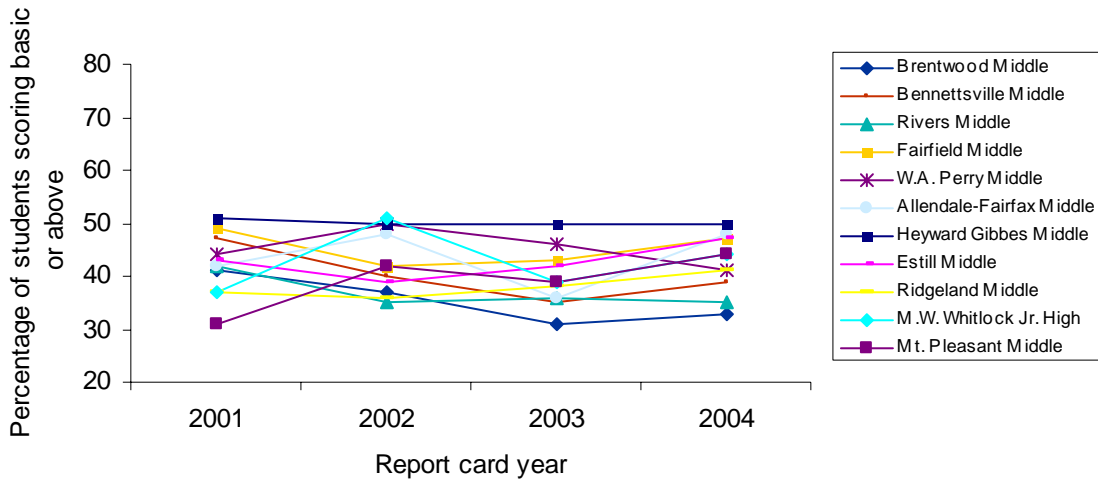


**Figure 29. Math proficiency among Improved Group I middle schools**

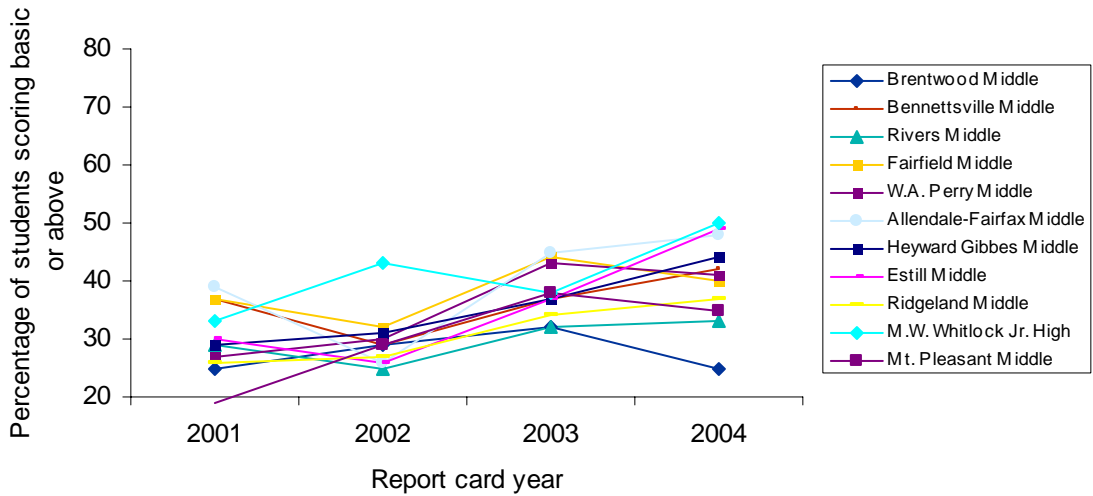


### B. CONTINUED UNSATISFACTORY SCHOOLS

**Figure 30. ELA proficiency among Continued Unsatisfactory Group I middle schools**



**Figure 31. Math proficiency among Continued Unsatisfactory Group I middle schools**

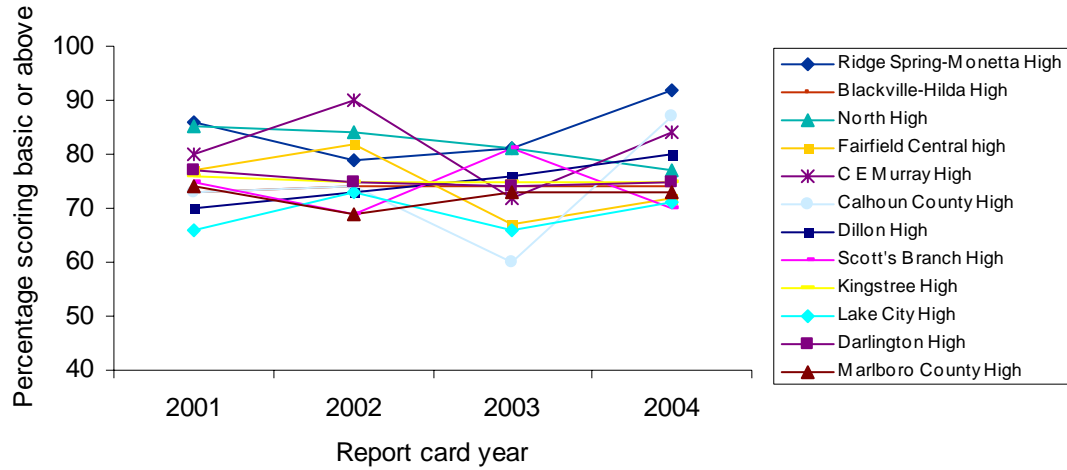


**Appendix 6: Exit Exam Proficiency and  
Passage Rates, LIFE Scholarship  
Eligibility and Graduation Rates of Each  
Group I High School**

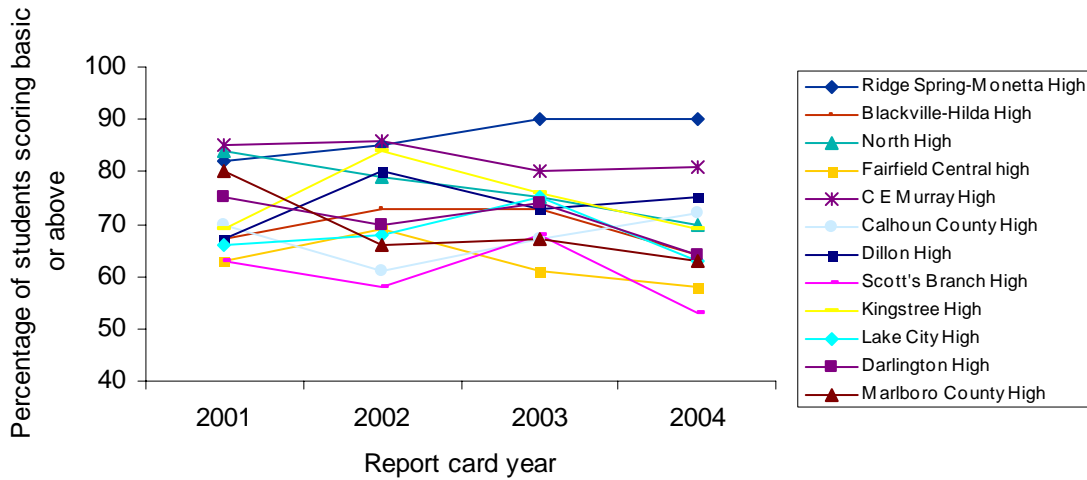
# HIGH SCHOOLS

## A. IMPROVED SCHOOLS

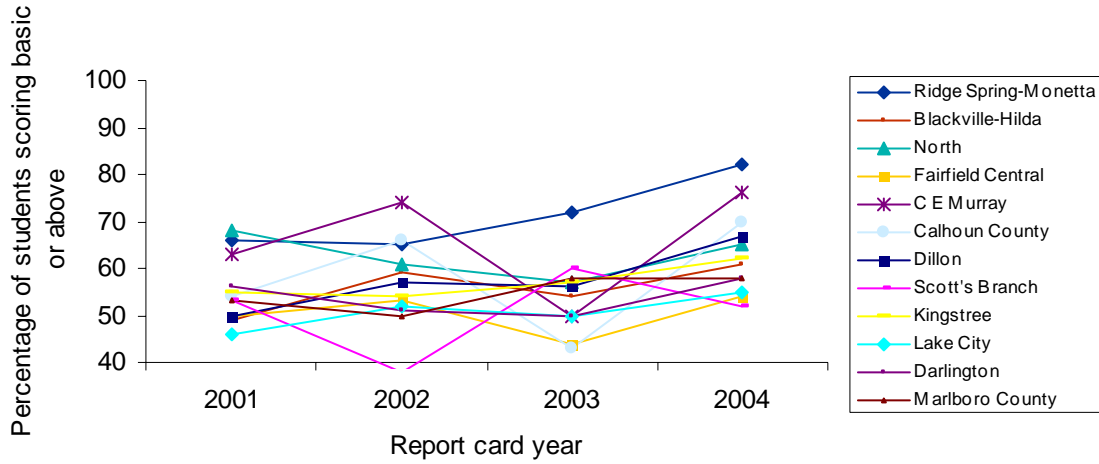
**Figure 32. ELA proficiency among Improved Group I high schools**



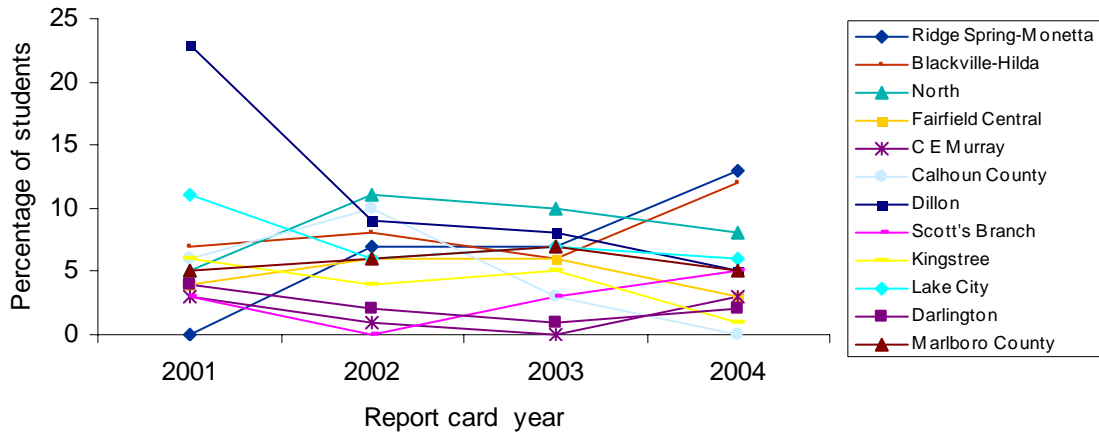
**Figure 33. Math proficiency among Improved Group I high schools**



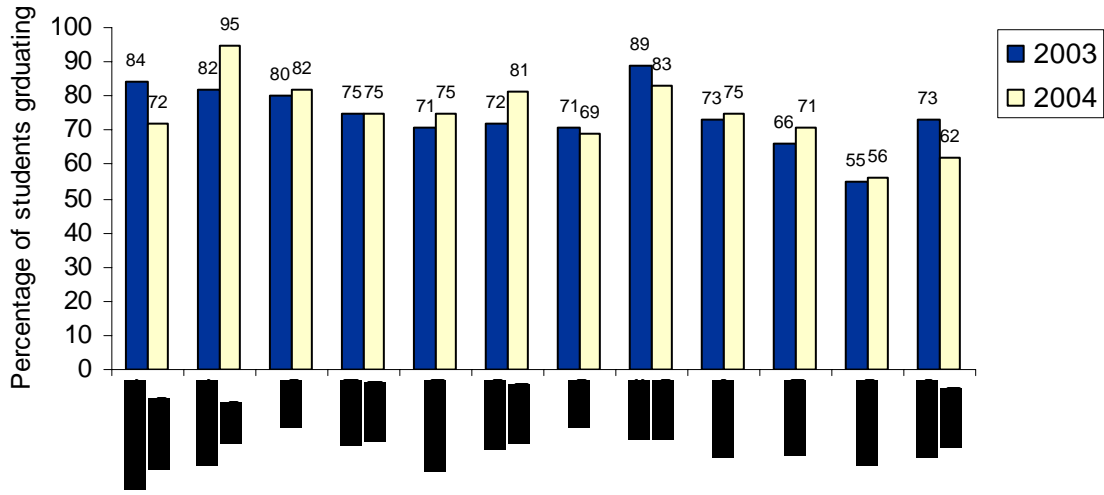
**Figure 34. First attempt exit exam passage rates among tenth grade students attending Improved Group I high schools**



**Figure 35. LIFE scholarship eligibility among students attending Improved Group I high schools**

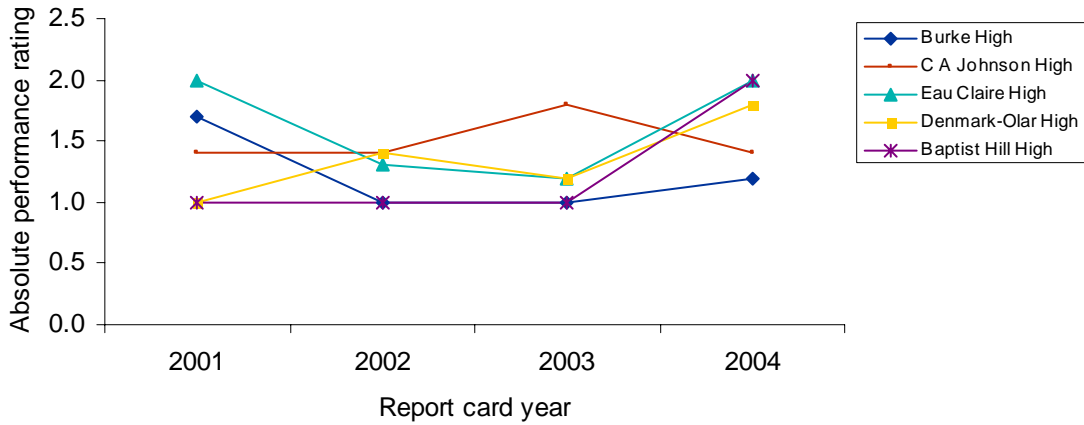


**Figure 36. Graduation rates among Improved Group I high schools**



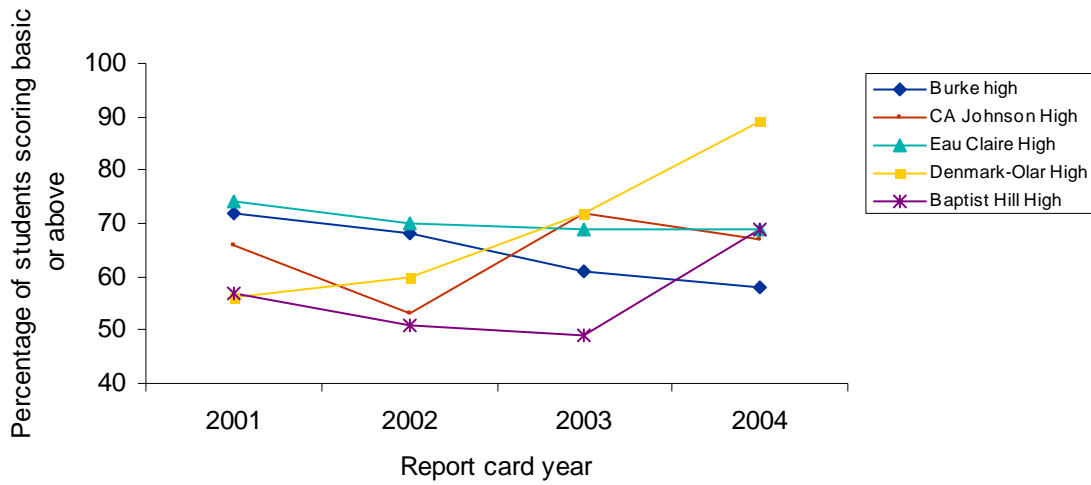
**B. CONTINUED UNSATISFACTORY SCHOOLS**

**Figure 37. Absolute performance ratings among Continued Unsatisfactory Group I high schools**

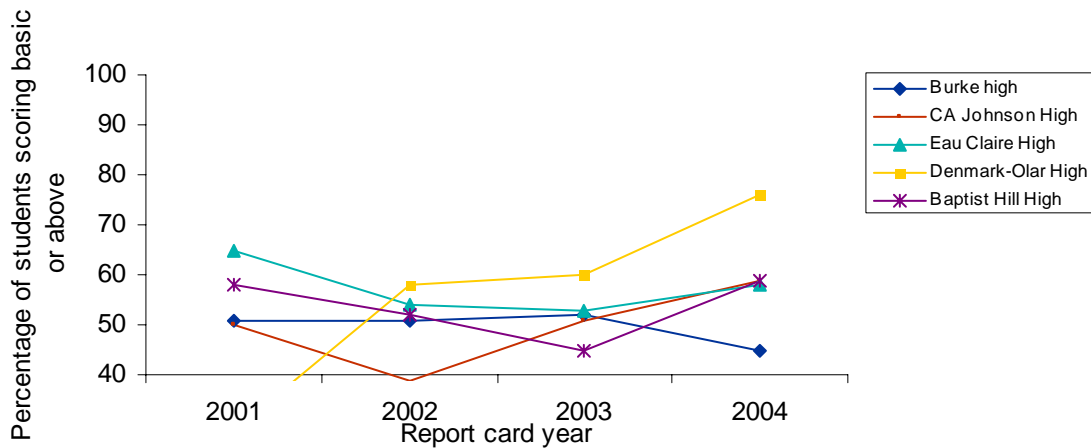




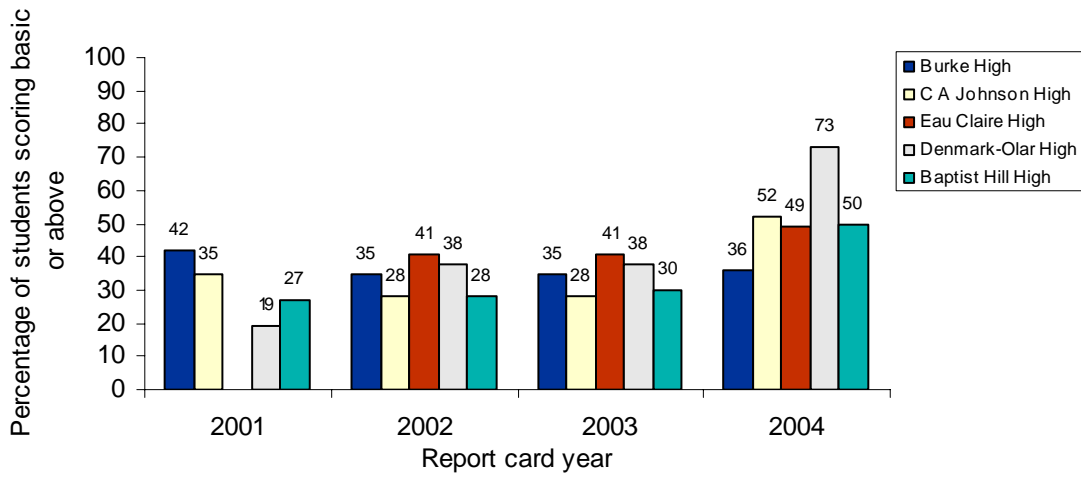
**Figure 38. ELA proficiency among Continued Unsatisfactory Group I high schools**



**Figure 39. Math proficiency among Continued Unsatisfactory Group I high schools**

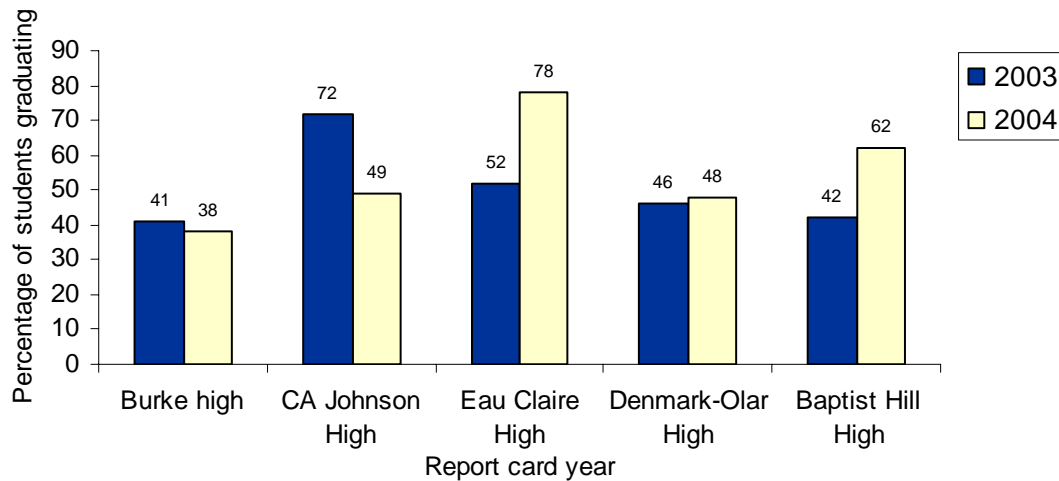


**Figure 40. First attempt exit exam passage rates among tenth grade students attending Improved Group I high schools**



\* There are insufficient LIFE scholarship eligibility data among Continued Unsatisfactory Group I high schools to represent here.

**Figure 41. Graduation rates among Improved Group I high schools**



## **Appendix 7: Interview Protocols for ERT Members, School Principals, and ERT Chairpersons**

## ERT TEAM MEMBER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

*Thank you for giving us your time today. I understand you were involved as an ERT member at the \_\_\_\_\_ school in \_\_\_\_\_. I will be asking you some questions about the ERT process and how we might improve it. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. Rest assured your comments will be combined with those of the other respondents and reported in the aggregate. Your individual responses will not be identified.*

### **Questions:**

1. Tell us about your experience as an ERT member.
  - a. What worked well?
  - b. What did not work well?
2. Did you feel that the school staff was prepared for the review?
3. What might occur during the ERT visit that would yield richer data to assist schools in improving student learning?
4. Is there anything else we should know?
5. Some other team members have said that the training could be improved. What are your thoughts on that?
6. In what ways do you think the evaluation instrument could be improved?
7. From your perspective, what mattered **most** in carrying out a good ERT review?
8. From your perspective, what mattered **least** in carrying out a good ERT review?

*Thank you very much for helping us to improve the process for future ERT members.*

## PRINCIPAL/ERT CHAIRPERSON INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

*Thank you for giving us your time today. I understand you were involved as an ERT school at the \_\_\_\_\_ school in the year(s) \_\_\_\_\_. I will be asking you some questions about the ERT process and how we might improve it. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. Rest assured your comments will be combined with those of the other respondents and reported in the aggregate. Your individual responses will not be identified.*

### **Questions:**

1. Tell us about your experience as an ERT school.
  - c. What worked well?
  - d. What did not work well?
2. Did you feel that your school staff had sufficient time and resources to be ready for the review?
3. Did you feel that the ERT team was prepared for the review?
4. What might occur during the ERT visit that would yield richer data to assist schools in improving student learning?
5. Is there anything else we should know?
6. In what ways do you think the evaluation instrument could be improved?
7. From your perspective, what mattered **most** in carrying out a good ERT review?
8. From your perspective, what mattered **least** in carrying out a good ERT review?

*Thank you very much for helping us to improve the process for future ERT members.*



## **Appendix 8: Findings From Telephone Interviews with ERT Members**

## ERT MEMBERS

Questions	Responses
1. Tell us about your experiences as an ERT member.	<p>It was important to have a team member contact the school prior to the visit to remind the principal and others of what is needed for the document review. In some early visits time was spent trying to collect much of the information at the last minute.</p> <p>It was quite a job- a great deal to do in a short period of time. But you couldn't really stay longer. It was good way to see what schools needed in order to improve. The first two years there was resistance to the process on the part of the schools' principal and superintendent. "They were glad to see us go."</p>
a. What worked well?	<p>The entire process worked well. It gave schools an opportunity to see where they can improve within the limits of their resources.</p> <p>The interviewing of the teachers was "wonderful". Individual interviews were the only way to do it. It provided insight into each teacher's idea of what was going on in the school without other teachers influencing the conversation.</p> <p>The selection of team members and team leaders was well done. Team leaders have been excellent and gotten the job done.</p> <p>Generally there was an understanding of the process. The school staff seemed receptive and accommodating and cooperative on scheduling. I have not observed any obstacles created by the school staff.</p> <p>One thing that worked well was the practice of the team leader contacting key school staff a week or two before the visit to do an orientation about the visit and what will be expected. Some go in and talk to the faculty as well. I thought the training was good. The team worked well together.</p> <p>We developed a good relationship with the principal in the school I worked in for three years. The more experience I have with the process the more growth I see in the staff at the schools we are working with. We make recommendations and I get to see the results of implementing them. For the most part, both the schools and the SDE followed our recommendations.</p> <p>Each team I worked with was excellent. There were differences in approach by different team leaders. But everything worked well.</p> <p>Having the literature provided helped insure a consistent view of the process and keep everyone focused.</p> <p>When the leader was organized and prepared and ready to assign tasks. When the leader had pre-visited the</p>



	<p>school and had everything organized. When all the team members worked well together. The schools were very positive and provided everything that was asked for. When you got to go back to the same building again. You had developed relationships with the staff and knew what to expect.</p> <p>It was good to be able to return to the same school. The SDE did an outstanding job of preparing the ERT teams for those visits. The time frame for the task was good, but the team had to work to get the tasks completed in the time allotted.</p>
<p>b. What did not work well?</p>	<p>During the first visits, in the beginning, the schools I visited were not ready with the documentation required. Someone should have gone in for a pre-ERT visit to make sure schools had their folders ready. This situation improved when the schools we visited were being visited for the second or third time.</p> <p>A weakness of the program from the ERT team member's point of view is the lack of feedback on the results of the review and recommendations. "You do the review and that's the last you hear."</p> <p>Also the documentation the teams needed to go through were voluminous. Many boxes full. Sometimes they didn't have the documentation ready and time was wasted waiting for them to find and collect data. Sometimes they put documentation in that was not what was requested or was incomplete.</p> <p>The visits were scheduled for 3 to 4 days straight. It might work better for the schools if the teams visited 2 days one week and 2 days the next to allow the school to make any adjustments necessary based on initial findings and to allow for a individual who was out for any reason to be rescheduled for an interview.</p> <p>Having said the above, the second year there was a principal who was not "with it". Didn't do a good job putting the paperwork together. While this delayed things the paper work was produced.</p> <p>The team goes in November to do the evaluation, recommendations for assistance and improvement then –when they get the final report - they don't have very long to implement the changes before the team returns the following year. I think the school should have a full year to implement the recommendations before they are judged on their progress.</p> <p>One district was resistant to our recommendations. The superintendent did not support the principal who was being waited out in terms of when he would leave the district. The recommendation for a "principal leader" was followed one year – then when sufficient progress was seen in student scores, the "principal leader" was</p>

	<p>removed. This prompted an angry response from the principal who wrote a letter complaining to SDE. Without a strong leader the process has less chance of succeeding.</p> <p>The first year was toughest, after that they seemed to get it.</p> <p>But-that said- it [the process] required looking at things that didn't have much merit in terms of helping the school staff to improve in ways that have been identified as effective ways to improve learning. The experience for the school staff was triggered by the poor performance of the students and the sense of collegiality was pro-forma. The review was so extraordinarily inclusive of everything it seemed to lack focus on the student performance piece.</p> <p>The first year we had a leader who was not prepared and organized. The leader wasn't able to give us our duties efficiently and we didn't make the most of our time there. We couldn't get everything done. In spite of that we did the best we could and made some good recommendations. But I didn't feel that I had provided the best I could.</p> <p>It was frustrating to operate in an environment where the process is the result of a mandate from the legislature. The schools often did not have the information required in the process and time was used to retrieve it. I would have preferred to spend more time watching the instructional process.</p> <p>Another problem occurred when specific specialists (such as a media specialist) were out when we happened to be in the school. It meant that part of the report was incomplete.</p> <p>In December the school breaks were problematic for getting the reports written. It would be better if we could revisit in March to revise the report and pick up pieces that were not done. In one case we didn't get the parent interviews done.</p>
<p>2. Did you feel the school staff was prepared for the review?</p>	<p>Again, problems were with the documentation the first two years. However, the next two years the schools visited were in their second and third years and were well prepared.</p> <p>The staff was usually prepared for the visits. Sometimes the teachers put on a "dog and pony show" for the ERT observation so the visit did not provide a true picture of what happens in the classroom.</p> <p>Yes – except for the first year, after that the schools had the documentation and the process was efficient even though there was a great deal of material to review and make judgments about. There was still sufficient time to observe classroom practices and interview teachers. They had all the documentation, provided the facilities</p>

	<p>and scheduled the activities.</p> <p>Yes – Most of the time the staff was well prepared. In my schools they had assistant principals who were able to pull together what was needed in a timely fashion. Each one of the schools was well prepared and when something was missing they were able to get it.</p> <p>In a sense yes and in a sense no. The first middle school was not well prepared and had to provide a lot of the material after we asked for it. However, the next schools were much more positive in terms of preparation and understanding what the process was about.</p> <p>Yes. In all three schools I worked in the staff was well prepared and were not threatened by the team and the process.</p> <p>The first couple of years were not good. Principals were not engaged. This improved especially when visiting the same schools more than one time.</p> <p>Yes. But, I was concerned about the principal leader and the principal working together. It seemed like the principal did not want to listen to the principal leader. Therefore the principal was not always prepared. It would have been more productive if they worked together better.. It was a well-planned experience..</p>
<p>3. What might occur during the ERT visit that would yield richer data to assist schools in improving student learning?</p>	<p>The documentation is comprehensive.</p> <p>Data was not the issue. I would have liked to have been able to go in unannounced and informally observed what was happening in the classroom. In the interviews the teachers talked about the materials (textbooks, etc.) that were lacking but in the observations they worked around those problems and did the best they could with what they had. The ERT process did not emphasize curriculum and materials.</p> <p>Actually there may be too much data. The reports and recommendations tend to be very comprehensive – too complex, “can’t see the forest for the trees”. The review should include a process for prioritizing the findings and focusing the school on two or three major items to work on.</p> <p>The process is very comprehensive.</p> <p>They could streamline some of it to get rid of redundancies.</p> <p>It was important to have at least one member of the ERT team return for the revisits.</p> <p>I can’t think of anything, however, we did come up with a list of “off the record” recommendations for the school that did not become a part of the formal recommendations. For example, in one school we recommended they focus on a few priority activities and try not to do too many different things in one year.</p> <p>It would have been helpful to see more examples actual instructional materials, lesson plans, etc. The return on</p>

	<p>investment of watching the number of classroom teachers observed was minimal as you got the sense of the school after a few observations. The teacher interviews were very helpful. It was good to have a consistent set of questions for all the interviews. The interviews of administrators always yielded different perspectives from the interviews of teachers. The teachers' interviews yielded a more accurate sense of the "personality of the school".</p> <p>I didn't feel the teacher interviews were the best use of our time in that there were so many of them to do. Why ask the same questions over and over? Once you see that the computers are broken or there are not enough of them, you don't need to hear it repeatedly.</p> <p>I would have liked to talk more to the principal and assistant principal to hear more of their feedback. I would have like to talk more to parents – none we talked to had anything negative to say. They seemed to be advocates for the school more than advocates for their children. We should have spent more time talking to the SDE teacher specialists. Their perceptions were important. The SDE needs to know more about how they (the specialists) are used in the schools. There is no clear understanding of how they are to be used and often they are underutilized.</p> <p>I can't think of a better way to schedule observations and interviews and get the information. Would like to have more opportunities to talk to the teachers about the standards and benchmarks. The information in the school's documentation didn't always agree with the interviews and observations.</p>
<p>4. Is there anything else we should know?</p>	<p>The team leaders should not revisit a school in order to keep them objective. However, there should be one member of the review team who was at that school in the prior year. This will speed the learning curve for the rest of the team.</p> <p>Poorly performing schools seem to be operating without sufficient resources – facilities are not good, books and materials are outdated, many teachers (half in some cases) are not certified.</p> <p>Teachers were complaining in one particular school about the constant disruptions in the classroom routine such as librarian coming into to sell books, students being taken out for pull out programs etc. The building principal said that was not true based on the schedules he had. The problem was an inconsistency between the perceptions of the principal and the teachers of what was happening in the classroom. They also were concerned about being pulled out of class for the individual interviews.</p> <p>Sometimes the teacher specialists provided by the State</p>

	<p>were “rejected” by the teachers and not allowed to be effective in providing technical assistance. This was a waste of money. Someone (SCSDE) should make sure the teacher specialists are being utilized and take action if they are not.</p> <p>One problem I’ve seen is the team getting caught between the superintendent and the principal. The principal will say one thing and the superintendent something different. The problem has been a poorly performing principal creates a delicate position for the ERT team. The team can recommend that the principal not come back – but then if the principal returns the process for the subsequent years has been compromised.</p> <p>One idea is pairing the poor performing school with a school that is similar but performing better. Then allowing visits and technical assistance from one school’s staff to the other.</p> <p>The staff in the poorly performing schools often said they had high expectations for the students, but when you observed the classrooms and interviewed the teachers you found they did not, especially when compared to the higher performing schools. They clearly are not expecting enough from the students.</p> <p>Finally, teacher turnover is a weakness of the process. After the team goes through all the effort to review data, interview staff and make recommendations there is frequently significant teacher turnover in the poorer districts. There needs to be some kind of follow-up for new staff each year.</p> <p>An interesting thing happened. When we recommended a teacher specialist to assist the school and the school’s scores changed during that year. They were no longer “qualified” for assistance and the person was not assigned.</p> <p>It is important to have at least one team member return to the same school. This saves a great deal of time the second year.</p> <p>One of the issues that needs addressing is the lack (in some schools) of basic materials such as textbooks, teacher materials.</p> <p>The notebooks that team leaders and team members have should be the same, at least as far the materials are concerned, so the team leaders do not have read material to the team.</p> <p>The poverty and isolation of many of the poor performing schools need to be dealt with. They have problems retaining good teachers for any length of time and administrators come and go frequently. Principal Specialists are a big help but they are not intended to be a permanent solution.</p>
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	<p>There is a problem in some of the schools with continuity in the building leadership. This is critical to success in making meaningful changes to instruction. In one building there had been three principals in three years. They did have had a number of technical assistance specials and a principal specialist. In these cases the SDE specialists provide the only continuity for the faculty. In my opinion the process seems to punish the smaller schools because they do not have the resources to collect the data and make the changes recommended. After serving for three years I began to wonder: “are we making any difference?” As schools are improving we are getting down to a smaller number of “hardcore” low achieving schools. With persistent problems. Should a different approach be considered for these schools? In this area of the State it is difficult to recruit and retain staff. People do not want to be this far away from the cities.</p> <p>The team makes the recommendation for help such as the teacher specialist or principal specialist but cannot insure that the help will be accepted.</p>
<p>5. What could be improved in the ERT team training?</p>	<p>Training prior to the visits was very comprehensive. The teams knew what to expect and what was expected. The ERT team training was not as good as could be. The many on ERT teams are very experienced now and some of the annual training is repetitive and a waste of everyone’s time. There was too much large group instruction – “lectures” on material we have gone over many times. It would help if the more experienced ERT team members could break into smaller groups and to discuss ways to improve techniques used in the visits. Training was important and thorough. I was comfortable with the visit and we had a good reception by the school staff.</p> <p>Avoid the generic training for experienced ERT members. I sat through the same thing four times.</p> <p>No, SDE training and paperwork were very well organized.</p> <p>The training could be improved. A problem I noticed was that too many ERT members were not working (or had not worked) in schools. This led to a learning curve in terms of what happened routinely in schools and what was possible to do in schools. If teams could stay together for more than one year it might help with this problem.</p> <p>The training for me was somewhat repetitive and cumbersome to complete.</p> <p>Also, the first training I was in had over 100 people in a room. I would prefer small group sessions where there was less being talked at and more opportunities for interaction.</p>

	<p>The SDE training was well prepared. After the first couple of years the two days (then one day) were tedious and repetitive. The experienced team members just need to know about the changes that will affect what we do.</p> <p>Some of the presentations were not as interesting as others. Topics could be very “dry” such as test scores. I e-mailed the two presenters last year because they forgot to do evaluations of the sessions. The trainers and the timeframes were accurate. The presenters were well prepared and the one-day refreshers were good.</p>
<p>6. In what ways do you think the evaluation instrument can be improved?</p>	<p>The documentation is very complete and comprehensive – have no suggestions for additions. Anything that can be done to reduce the paper work burden on both parties. And still get the needed information. Maybe a full review in year one – technical assistance in year two and a full review in year three. The evaluation instrument could be improved as well. It seemed very repetitive.</p> <p>It was laborious to score and complete. I would have liked to see more chance to discuss the implications of the scores in more depth.</p> <p>I was on a committee charged with answering this same question. We looked at the instrument and made recommendations on ways to condense the format and delete some of the repetition. We did not find any areas that should be eliminated from the review. We gave our report to the SDE.</p>
<p>7. From your perspective, what mattered <b>most</b> in carrying out a good ERT review?</p>	<p>The thing that mattered most was carrying out a thorough review of the curriculum to make sure that the students in the poorly performing schools were offered the same opportunities to learn as those in better performing schools.</p> <p>In spite of poor resources and uncertified teachers, some progress can be made if good curriculum and strong staff development are in place.</p> <p>A lot of schools –over the past few years – have come off of the list. One reason is the technical assistance specialists in the buildings and the professional development they provide.</p> <p>The school being well prepared and having all the information right at hand. Also, having a broad base of experience on the team, such as a higher education person, SDE person and school administrator.</p> <p>The team leader sets the tone for the entire process. Each one I’ve worked with has met with the school leaders in advance and set a good tone.</p> <p>The most important things in the process were how well informed the team was and how well they got along as a team. If the leader and members knew what to do and how to do it worked well.</p>

	<p>The team preparation and willingness to work hard and meet deadlines. Also the school's openness to the record weaknesses.</p> <p>It is vital that everybody in the team have experience working in schools. The first couple of years we had two members who had no school experience.</p> <p>Schools needed to be prepared. They should make the principals come to the meetings and not allow them to send other staff. In addition, the faculty should be prepared before the ERT team gets there.</p> <p>Knowing what you are looking for before you go is very important.</p>
<p>8. From your perspective, what mattered least in carrying out a good ERT review?</p>	<p>Nothing was truly unimportant in a comprehensive review. It was important to get there at 6 in the morning and watch how the buses are greeted, to stay until the end of the day and observe how students are dismissed, what type of after school activities are there, what the community support.</p> <p>It was a well thought out process.</p> <p>Everything that was part of the process was important. The time spent on repetition. Teacher interviews and observations in particular were repetitive. Group discussions might yield better information than repeating the same questions to teacher after teacher.</p> <p>The length of time may be more than needed in the smaller schools, four days is a long time.</p>



## **Appendix 9: Findings From Telephone Interviews with Principals and ERT Chairpersons**

## PRINCIPALS AND ERT CHAIRPERSONS

Questions	Responses
1. Tell us about your experiences as an ERT school.	
a. What worked well?	<p>We appreciated the process. It is good to have someone come in and look at what you are doing and give you their take on it.</p> <p>The director or chairman was a former principal who had a lot of experience in schools (not a lay person). The team was nice and focused on finding facts in the process to help the school.</p> <p>The process was pretty organized. If you followed up there were opportunities to respond.</p> <p>The process gives us another set of eyes – unbiased – that let us know what seemed to be working and what seemed to not be working.</p> <p>Teachers responded well once they realized the ERT program was designed to help them.</p> <p>It all worked well because we kept an open mind about the process and understood the situation. They were here to see that we made progress towards improving the students' scores. The quality of the people who came in was very good and our demeanor lead to a profitable program.</p> <p>The second year of the program was well organized and had good recommendations. They were extremely professional and put the faculty at ease.</p> <p>The review team made recommendations that have been implemented.</p> <p>The thing that worked well was the immediate feedback that we received by having team of educators who were sensitive to the needs of the school.</p>
b. What did not work well?	<p>I was in my first year as principal and the ERT reviews had been going on for some time before I got there. The ERT team came in and was asking about the School Improvement Council. The SIC had been a problem in the past and we were working on it. I did not think they knew enough about the history of [my school] to make informed judgments. They focused so much on issues that were in the past or had been fixed that we were not able to recognize some of the instructional progress that had been made. I didn't think some of their recommendations would help in improving student achievement on the standards.</p> <p>I don't think they had enough time to do a school of this size and complexity. Also, we were on the list the very</p>

	<p>first year and there was some question as to whether we should have been. We are now off the list. A reason for this is we are a small school (250 students 9-12) and one class having a problem can throw off all of the numbers for the school.</p> <p>I didn't like the way they selected the teachers to observe. They needed more balance. It seemed as though they observed the poorest teachers the first year. Maybe they had a reason for it – I don't know. This school has special problems and needs better direction. They try hard but are not being successful. The teacher specialist and curriculum specialist are good but some others not so good. Some professional development that was needed in order to develop a cadre of teachers who could train others was not done.</p> <p>I don't think there were enough people or time in the process to look into a school that was in distress. We were told where the school was not in compliance but not how to achieve compliance or given help in doing so. What made it difficult for me was I came in after three years of the ERT process with a mandate to make some changes. So the process for me was how to deal with the ERT process and put into place the priorities for the next year. (School Renewal Plan).</p> <p>The first year was difficult because no one knew what to expect. Going over the entire document every year may not be necessary.</p> <p>My first year I was new to all of it. I didn't know what they were doing and they didn't seem to know what they were doing. The second year things got much better. We have a principal leader and that can create some confusion as teachers will go to the principal who will give them the answer they want. The curriculum leaders in math, language arts, and science require a great deal of coordination.</p> <p>What did not work well was the mindset on the part of some ERT team members that they were looking to find fault and compare what we are doing to other schools that are not like ours. (Demographically)</p>
<p>2. Did you feel that your school staff had sufficient time and resources to be ready for the review?</p>	<p>I came in July and frankly we were not ready. We did not get the "stuff" in on time. They kept referring to issues that predated me such as the SIC. My second year we had a full SIC and it has been functioning well since. We were ready but I felt that it was unfair that in my first year as principal I hadn't time to do much about the problems from the past. Our documentation was okay but I felt extra pressure and teachers resented being under review. In the end it turned out well and student achievement is improving.</p> <p>I think they did [have time] – the ERT team notifies the school in advance and I like the way the team leader</p>

	<p>came in advance and talks to the faculty. I think they helped us and pushed us in positive ways. It wouldn't bother me to have a team come in every year. It helps to motivate the staff and remind them that they are accountable for the students' performance. The school had a number of principal changes in the preceding three years and a lot needed to be done to get ready for the ERT process. We are pretty much ready each year. The timeframe – a couple of weeks before the Christmas break - is always difficult but the committee for the state has to have it in January/February after we have had a chance to see it and respond. The first year staff was apprehensive because they had a new principal and the ERT team in the building. The first year the outgoing principal didn't leave good materials to use in the ERT review. We needed to start with a mission and had 19 recommendations. The second year we were down to 9. It is a tedious process. We had sufficient but no ample time to get it done. The principal must pay attention and get things ready well in advance.</p>
<p>3. Did you feel that the ERT team was prepared for the review?</p>	<p>They were not prepared and we were not prepared the first year I was there. My predecessor did not keep the required minutes of meetings, and other documentation necessary for the ERT review. Last year we had things much better organized and had a more successful experience. My first year was also the first year for the team in our school. There were rough spots but overall they were prepared and gave us some helpful things to work on. I didn't know everything they needed prior to the visit and we had to spend time looking for things. Again, it turned out well; they were nice and trying to help. The team included an active principal specialist and he was a great asset to the team. They were well organized and prepared. The team was well organized and prepared but lacked the time to do a more thorough job of helping with the implementation of the recommendations. They were excellent – all of the team brought specific expertise to the task for example one was a high school principal, one a superintendent and the other was a curriculum specialist. Fortunately, all the teams that visited us have been well organized and some of the same people have returned and have been very helpful. The ERT team was very well prepared, organized and professional. The ERT team was unbiased and did not come in with preconceived ideas.</p>

	<p>Our ERT teams have been well prepared - for the most part.</p>
<p>4 What might occur during the ERT visit that would yield richer data to assist schools in improving student learning?</p>	<p>I think the ERT team should visit after the first semester. The committee should have members who understand pedagogy. I take care of the health and safety issues. We need help with the curriculum and teaching issues. Before I got here the school graduated 90 out of a class of 400. In one year we had moved it up to 140 out of about 400. We continue to improve but must make that the focus of all of our efforts on increasing student success and graduation and the ERT review has many areas that are not focused on that. The areas we need to improve are getting enough books, using curriculum consultants for good professional development, and so on.</p> <p>The process would be more helpful if some of the standards were clearer in terms of what is needed by the team to judge success in meeting them. Some of the standards could have been more practical. But the only thing I really didn't like was some of the criticism could have been taken the wrong way. By that I mean the person hearing it might not think of it as constructive criticism, just criticism. Once the team reported out and resources started coming to the school the staff felt better. We were happy to receive money for the after school home work center and staff development. The staff development money was especially helpful in providing resources for teacher training in the new state tests, classroom management and other worthwhile sessions.</p> <p>They should talk more to the teachers. They really need to hear what they have to say. This year especially. A new principal is causing some issues in terms of making new rules.</p> <p>More time would benefit the process. It would be helpful if we could get more technical assistance with the process of achieving compliance.</p> <p>They gave us information and recommendations that we could use to move into action. They might think about spending a little more time in the classrooms and find ways to get more parents to contribute such as evening sessions to help working parents to contribute.</p> <p>It might be helpful to have a pre-visit discussion to refute some of the things to be looked at and save time if they are already taken care of.</p> <p>It would have been helpful if they could have talked with us about the what the findings were before the formal report, we would have given us more time to work on things.</p> <p>I would like to have seen more about how to make data driven decisions in instruction and teach the teachers to</p>

	<p>use grade distribution charts, and contracts. I would like to see a self-rating done by the school staff in advance of the ERT ratings to see where the areas of agreement and disagreement are.</p>
<p>5. Is there anything else we should know?</p>	<p>I guess my first year was a difficult one. It wasn't good for school pride with all the reports coming out. The district office was anxious, but in the long run it actually benefited us by providing motivation to the staff and help in the form of specialists and funding for professional development. Especially the teacher specialists who work with the teachers on math and English. The two specialists they sent in helped us by not only helping teachers but also being able to collect data and do research and provide feedback to the teachers. They had to overcome some resentment but have done so and now we are fighting to keep them. If anything continues it should be the teacher specialists.</p> <p>This school has a large turnover of teachers. This year we had 23 out of 54 leave and last year 30 out of 54. It is a big problem. We still have substitutes in some positions.</p> <p>We are near areas where people would prefer to live with higher pay and signing bonuses. We go to colleges to recruit and have had some success at getting new, certified teachers to replace those who leave. We also have some staff from India and Romania who are certified somehow by the State. There are some language difficulties but they are paired with mentors.</p> <p>This year 3 of 4 of our district's schools had their principals leave as well. This is a poor district with 89 percent eligible for free and reduced price lunch. One member of a review team came back and wrote a report about the cleanliness and he was instrumental in getting things cleaned and painted, and getting rid of rats and snakes in parts of the building.</p> <p>The teacher specialists are a great, fantastic benefit to the school. I can't express it in words. They have become a part of the school and made positive improvements. The school went from Unsatisfactory to Satisfactory because of the sustained efforts of the specialists and faculty.</p> <p>I thought there was a lot of redundancy in the summary report – statements that dealt with using data to improve student achievement.</p> <p>The process, overall, is a positive one. It really can help. The teacher specialists are the best things to come out of this. I have been able to maintain a group of people who are excellent. They help me with curriculum in math, science, language arts and social studies. They help me to be a good instructional leader.</p> <p>We are an inner city school with 85 percent free and</p>

	<p>reduced priced lunch. We appreciated that the State Department of Education takes the advice from the field seriously. We can see the changes that came from our suggestions.</p> <p>Our school was off of the list in 2003-2004. I came in 2001-2002 and we had one more year.</p> <p>The School Report Card can be one-dimensional in that it rates a school as “Unsatisfactory” without any qualifications about how that school might be improving and have a good climate for the students and staff.</p>
<p>6. In what ways do you think the evaluation instrument can be improved?</p>	<p>Instead of being so comprehensive is there anyway to decide what areas need the most attention in a given year? The areas are so broad now that the schools are stretched to be able to deal with them all and some of the more important instructional areas might not get as much attention as they should.</p> <p>They should leave a detailed list of recommendations etc. to use in writing the school renewal plan. The delay in getting the report delays the development of the school renewal plan. Leadership and Governance should address the textbook problem. The professional development money was needed in some areas not addressed, specifically: computers, electronic lesson plans, writing good lesson plans, and specialized in-service for the teachers who have some difficulty processing English delivered at too fast a rate.</p> <p>The evaluation instrument seemed to work well in our school. I wondered of some ERT team members might have a preconceived notion of what building leadership style is best and push that view. One style does not fit all and ERT team members should be flexible in that regard. The instrument is good one.</p> <p>I recommend that the instrument be “tightened up” to reduce redundancy. It has gotten a little better over the past few years – more streamlined.</p> <p>The instrument has been improved but one thing that could be done is to try to use a common language when sharing the recommendations.</p>
<p>7. From your perspective, what mattered <b>most</b> in carrying out a good ERT review?</p>	<p>The team was very complimentary about, and supportive of, what we were doing. They tried to put the problems we were having into the context we were working in and had empathy for our situation.</p> <p>It mattered that the process was very official and because our students were not performing well we were getting some negative attention. It put the staff on notice but “notice” that came with help and we realized we could do something about the problems.</p> <p>The best thing was the exit conference. I requested that they bring in our leadership team and we all went through the exit conference together. That way they all</p>

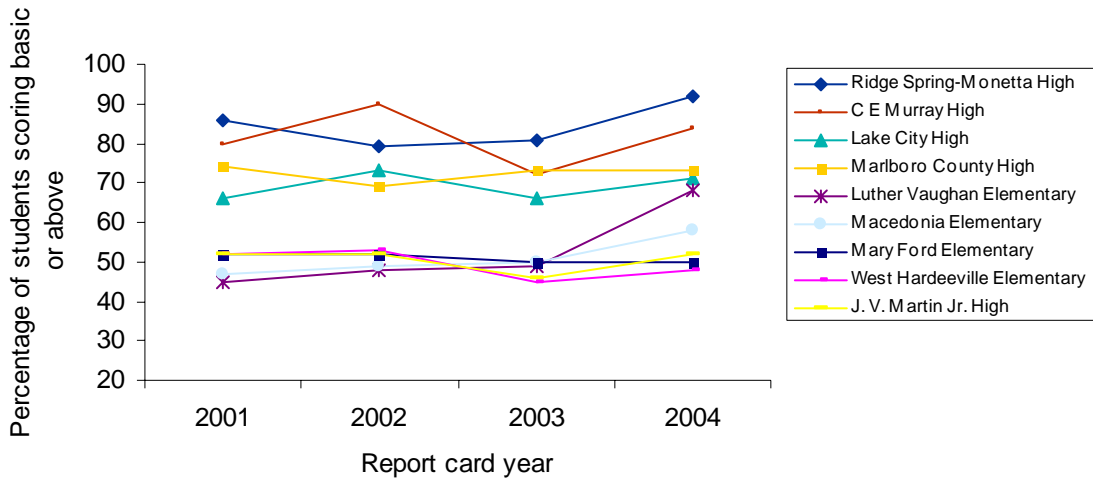
	<p>heard the same thing I heard. I find this helps when you move forward to implement the renewal plan.</p> <p>The most important aspect of the ERT program is the feedback it gives us about the processes occurring in the classrooms. The extra sets of eyes looking at what is happening helps us to make positive changes.</p> <p>I think an important thing is the genteel way the report was delivered – not condescending or patronizing. Having all your evidence collected and in the right place to retrieve it when needed. You must do the documentation (minutes of meetings, membership lists) as you go you can't wait.</p> <p>The program provided us with information from an unbiased "outsider's" view. This was helpful in making the changes needed to get off of the list as we did.</p> <p>The most important aspect was the attention the school received. It pointed out to students and staff that improvement was needed and attention was being paid to how well they were doing.</p>
<p>8. From your perspective, what mattered <b>least</b> in carrying out a good ERT review?</p>	<p>Little procedural things that we had to report on took up time and were not important. Procedural stuff, the size of science labs.</p> <p>The compliance-type check off, year after year. Many of those things could be sent in and the visits used to spend more time in the classrooms. Another area that is not as important as others is the interviewing of PTO members, they don't know enough about the curriculum to make informed comments. The ordinary parent doesn't know the information asked for by the ERT team.</p> <p>Interviewing parents. "Putting Parents in Charge" a new initiative has had some negative consequences involving parents who are taking their child's side against the school in discipline matters.</p> <p>At times some of the citations are not that important, because you may get a satisfactory rating one year, do the same thing the next and a new team cites a need to improve. In other words, the ratings of some of the items need to be made less subjective.</p>



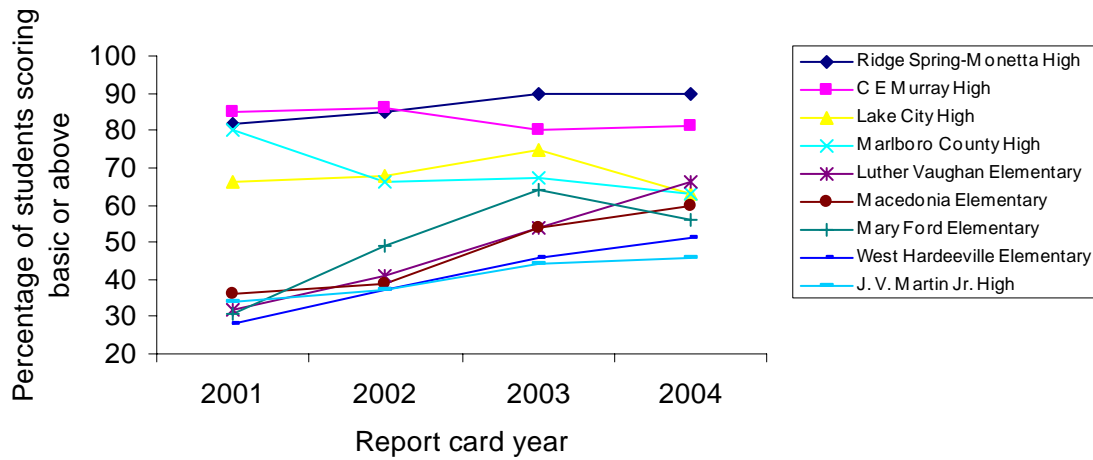
## **Appendix 10: ELA and Math Proficiency Among a Subsample of 17 Group I Schools**

## IMPROVED SCHOOLS

**Figure 42. ELA proficiency among a subsample of Improved Group I schools**

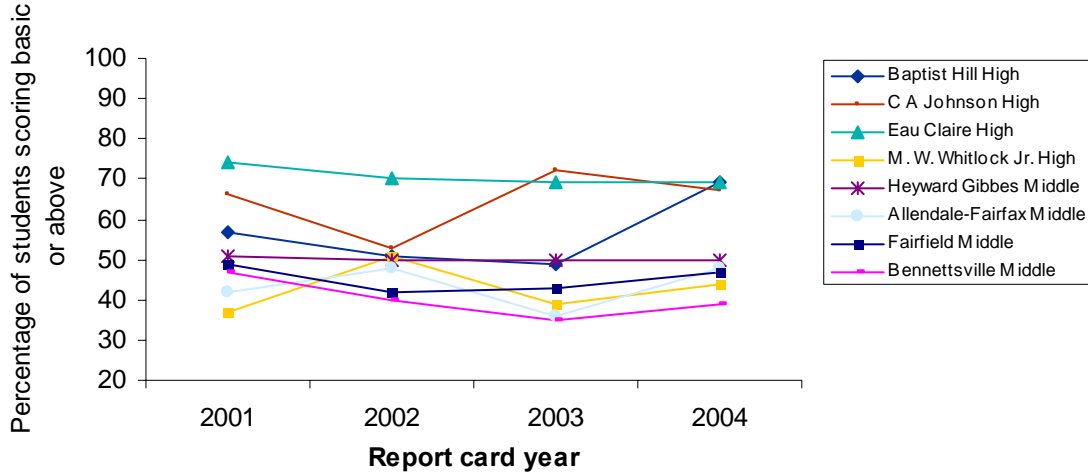


**Figure 43. Math proficiency among a subsample of Improved Group I schools**

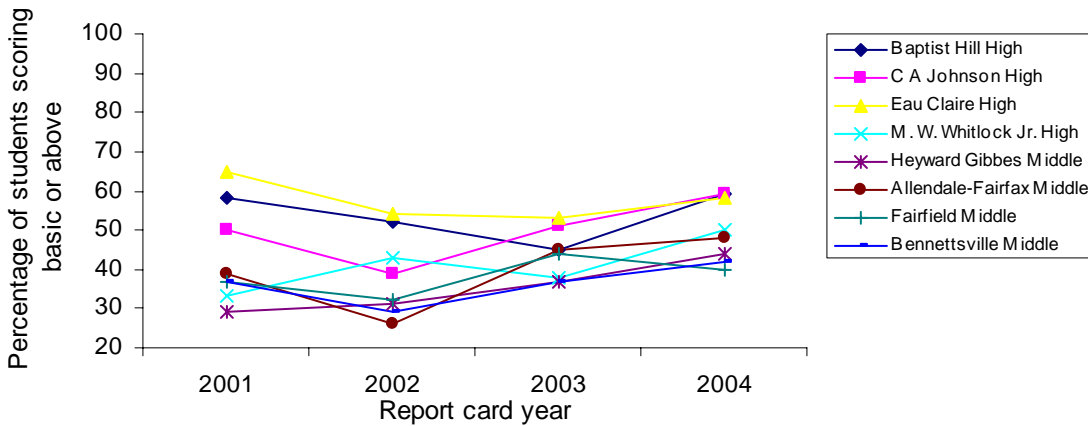


## CONTINUED UNSATISFACTORY SCHOOLS

**Figure 44. ELA proficiency among a subsample of Continued Unsatisfactory Group I schools**



**Figure 45. Math proficiency among a subsample of Continued Unsatisfactory Group I schools**





## **Appendix 11: Focus Areas Not Met by a Subsample of 17 Group I Schools**

**FREQUENCIES OF FOCUS AREAS NOT MET BY A SUBSAMPLE OF  
GROUP I SCHOOLS DURING 2001**

**Figure 46. Frequencies of focus areas not met by a subsample of Improved Group I schools during 2001**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>School Name</b>	<b>Leadership and Governance</b>	<b>Curriculum and Instruction</b>	<b>Professional Development</b>
1	Ridge Spring-Monetta High	4	3	0
5	C E Murray High	21	5	0
10	Lake City High School	11	5	2
11	Luther Vaughan Elementary	3	3	0
16	Marlboro County High	11	2	0
17	Macedonia Elementary School	9	11	4
20	Mary Ford Elem.	10	7	4
22	West Hardeeville Elementary	4	0	1
26	J. V. Martin Jr. High	6	15	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>79</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>14</b>

**Figure 47. Frequencies of performance indicators not met by a subsample of Continued Unsatisfactory Group I schools during 2001**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>School Name</b>	<b>Leadership and Governance</b>	<b>Curriculum and Instruction</b>	<b>Professional Development</b>
1u	Baptist Hill High	13	15	6
4u	Whitlock Junior High School	11	7	1
7u	Heyward Gibbes Middle	7	8	0
8u	Allendale-Fairfax Middle	6	8	5
11u	Fairfield Middle	17	13	4
12u	Eau Claire High School	0	0	0
13u	C A Johnson High	6	8	0
15u	Bennettsville Middle School	10	1	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>70</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>19</b>

