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REPORT

to the

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

from

**The Division of Accountability
South Carolina Education Oversight Committee**

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STATE DOCUMENTS

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Introduction

The Education Accountability Act of 1998 establishes a Division of Accountability within the Education Oversight Committee (EOC). The Division has been interpreted to be the staff of the EOC and, consistent with the outline of reporting provided in the Act, the Division of Accountability submits this report. The report frames progress toward the 2010 goal with data on student performance and results of several studies examining SC's progress toward the 2010 goal.

While SC schools, districts and state entities have maintained their commitment to high standards, we are experiencing both the success and frustrations of early implementation. The data presented in this report indicate that while we have made incremental improvements, the gains must be accelerated to be "one of the five fastest improving states in the country."

Each year Education Week publishes *Quality Counts*. This publication rates each of the states on a number of measures and identifies policies linked to gains. South Carolina rated very well in comparisons with other states earning the grades shown below. South Carolina's ratings ranked first among Southern states.

Standards and Accountability	B+
Improving Teacher Quality	B
School Climate	not graded
Resources: Adequacy	B-
Resources: Equity	C

The Division of Accountability offers evidence and recommendations based upon our work over the last year. We hope you find it useful as you deliberate and fulfill the responsibilities of the EOC.

The 2010 Goal and Academic Performance

The 2010 Goal

The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) established, with the concurrence of statewide education and community leaders, the following goal for the school improvement efforts in South Carolina:

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

Historically, South Carolina's school achievement has been ranked at or near the bottom in comparisons with other states. But the current ranking does not deter South Carolinians from their aspirations for the system. In a series of focus groups across South Carolina, the EOC learned that South Carolinians believe their schools should be held to national standards and, despite disparate achievement patterns, that all of South Carolina's students should be held to the same standards (Brown, 1999). This was reaffirmed in a survey administered in 2001 before the annual school and district report cards were published.

During the fall of 2000 the EOC organized a long-range planning team to identify the major elements of the educational system that should be addressed to meet the 2010 goal. The group, composed of twenty-two individuals representing the education, business and legislative communities, developed recommendations that were accepted as a working document by the EOC in July 2001. The long-range planning team also asked for greater detail on the measures to evaluate the 2010 goal. Those measures are discussed below:

1. South Carolina will rank in the top half of states on NAEP examinations and other international and national measures.

(a) Performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress: The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a federal project established in 1969. NAEP reports performance of American elementary and secondary students in several subject areas. Representative samples of students are tested every two years in the nation's public and private schools at grades four, eight and twelve. NAEP content area tests vary according to the year and include reading, mathematics, science, writing, history, geography and the arts. The South Carolina curriculum content standards, which form the foundation for the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT), incorporate the content assessed by the NAEP tests.

The sampling process ensures reliable state-level data. Approximately 2,500 students are tested per grade in each state. More than 120,000 students participate nationally.

NAEP scores are reported in two ways: scale scores and achievement levels (performance categories). The NAEP achievement levels are defined below:

Basic This level denotes partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade

Proficient This level represents solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter

Advanced This level signifies superior performance

NAEP results for South Carolina for 1996, 1998 and 2000 are shown in Table One below.

Table One
National Assessment of Educational Progress
Comparison of SC and Other Jurisdictions Performance

NAEP Grade/Subject	Average Scale Score		National Ranking
	South Carolina	National	
4/Reading 1998	210	215	33 of 42
8/Reading 1998	255	261	33 of 39
4/Math 1996	213	222	41 of 47
4/Math 2000	220	226	30 of 46*
8/Math 1996	261	271	39 of 44
8/Math 2000	266	274	29 of 46**
4/Science 2000	141	148	35 of 38
8/Science 1996	139	148	30 of 45
8/Science 2000	142	149	34 of 38
8/Writing 1998	140	148	32 of 39

- TN, GA and NC scored the same as SC. ** GA scored the same as SC
- Source: National Assessment Governing Board 2001

A review of the performance suggests two findings: South Carolina is ranked low among states, but not at the very bottom and the distance between South Carolina's average scale scores and the national average is not insurmountable. Further analysis of the NAEP performance indicates little growth (since 1992) in the percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient designation. Only 22 percent of SC fourth graders scored proficient or above on reading. In mathematics, SC also showed no gains from 1992. Only 12 and 14 percent of fourth and eighth graders respectively scored proficient or above. The national range extended from 3 to 31 percent for grade four and 5 to 34 percent for grade eight. SC's performance on the science assessment is also static.

(b) Performance on TIMSS & TIMSS-R: A sample of South Carolina students also participated in the Third International Math and Science Study (1995) and the Repeat Study (1999). SC scores are not available for 1995. Only thirteen states participated in TIMSS-R; South Carolina scored ninth among the thirteen as detailed on the next page.

Table Two
Third International Math and Science Study
And

Third International Math and Science Study-Repeat

TIMSS-R 8 th Grade, 1999	SC	US	International
Mathematics	502	502	487
Science	515	515	488

Source: SC State Department of Education, 2000.

(c) The Terra Nova: As a verification of South Carolina student performance relative to national performance, the General Assembly required that a sample of students be assessed using a nationally normed test. The sampling plan identifies students in three grades each year. The Terra Nova, a CTBS-McGraw Hill Test, is used for the national performance relationship. The test was administered in grades 3, 6, and 9 in 1999; in grades 5, 8 and 11 in 2000; and in grades 4, 7, and 10 in 2001 to a representative sample of approximately 7500 students per grade level.

The Terra Nova is not aligned completely with the South Carolina curriculum content standards. Terra Nova is designed to measure concepts, processes, and skills taught throughout the nation. Test items are classified according to content categories that reflect educational objectives commonly found in state and district curriculum guides; in major textbooks, basal series, and instructional programs; and in national standards publications.

As a norm-referenced test, Terra Nova is used to gauge the performance of South Carolina students with respect to national performance levels. A student's score is interpreted in the framework of comparison to the scores of other students. For example, if a student scored at the 50th percentile, one would interpret that student's score as the same as or higher than 50 percent of the norm-group that took the same test. The items on Terra Nova are not tailored to fully assess South Carolina standards. An EOC study concluded that neither the match nor the coverage of the tests would provide sufficient evidence, across the board, to support decisions at the student, school, district, or state level relative to the South Carolina Content Standards (South Carolina Education Oversight Committee, 2001).

Table Three
Terra Nova Survey Testing Program
Percentage Scoring Above 50th National Percentile
1999, 2000 and 2001

Grade	Reading			Language			Math			Total		
	1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
3	44.7			48.5			49.8			49.1		
4			47.8			43.1			58.4			50.5
5		48.2			51.1			51.4			50	
6	43.1			41.4			42.1			41.6		
7			45.8			59.4			54.7			53.9
8		52.3			49.5			52.0			51.5	
9	45			44.3			43.7			42.2		
10			59.6			59.5			62.4			59.1
11		57.1			56.7			52.9			55.9	

Source: SC State Department of Education, 2001

- Nine out of ten SC students will score at or above grade level on PACT, SC's standards-based criterion-referenced tests.

Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests: In 2000 the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT) are administered to students in grades three through eight in two content areas. Testing in science is to be added in Spring 2002. Statewide performance indicates gains as displayed below:

Table Four
PACT English Language Arts Performance
Percentage of Students Scoring Basic and above

Year	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
1999	65	65	65	63	63	62
2000	74	72	71	65	68	65
2001	79	81	74	68	69	69

Source: SC State Department of Education, 2001

Table Five
PACT Mathematics Performance
Percentage of Students Scoring Basic and above

Year	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
1999	56	55	53	53	52	51
2000	69	62	59	59	59	62
2001	72	67	63	64	57	63

Source: SC State Department of Education, 2001

3. SC will rank in the top half of states on the SAT and ACT.

(a) The SAT is one of the most widely recognized and publicized student assessments. Historically used for admissions information in private, selective colleges the SAT is used now by a majority of private and public colleges and universities. The test measures students' verbal and mathematical abilities and provides information on the students' preparation for college. The SAT is not administered to all students and the College Board (1988) advises that "using these scores in aggregate form as a single measure to rank or rate teachers, educational institutions, districts, or states is invalid because it does not include all students. . . in being incomplete, this use is inherently unfair." Trend data are published and disaggregated in a variety of ways.¹ The SAT is scored on a cumulative 1600 point scale (800 is the highest possible score for each component).

Table Six
South Carolina and National Average SAT Scores
1996-2000

Year	South Carolina			Nation		
	Verbal	Math	Composite Score	Verbal	Math	Composite Score
1996	480	474	954	505	508	1013
1997	479	474	953	505	511	1016
1998	478	473	951	505	512	1017
1999	479	475	954	505	511	1016
2000	484	482	966	505	514	1019
2001	486	489	975	506	514	1020
1996-2001	+6	+15	+21	+1	+8	+7

Source: SC State Department of Education, 2000.

¹ Further information on the Scholastic Assessment Test can be obtained from the web site: <http://www.collegeboard.org/>.

South Carolina's state ranking is last among the fifty states. Performance among the twenty-four states with 40 percent or more of their students participating in SAT exams does not offer a more optimistic view of SC performance. In both verbal and mathematics performance SC has ranked last among the twenty-four states through 2001.

(b) The American College Test (ACT): The ACT is an achievement test used by many colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. The ACT includes four tests: English, Mathematics, Reading and Science Reasoning. Much like the cautions about interpretation of SAT performance, the reader is reminded that the ACT is a voluntary test administered to students paying a fee and is an inappropriate measure for the evaluation of teachers, programs, school and districts. The scale score for each subtest, as well as the composite, ranges from 1 to 36.

A comparison of SC student performance and student performance nationally is detailed in the table below.

Table Seven
ACT Average Scores for Subject Area and Composite
South Carolina and the Nation
1995-96 to 1999-2000

South Carolina

Year	# of students	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
1995-96	6,648	18.5	18.8	19.4	19.2	19.1
1996-97	4,994	18.1	18.9	19.1	19.0	18.9
1997-98	5,385	18.4	18.8	19.4	19.0	19.0
1998-99	6,766	18.6	19.0	19.3	19.2	19.1
1999-00	9,051	18.7	19.2	19.5	19.2	19.3
2000-01	NA	18.8	19.3	19.2	19.2	19.3

Nation

Year	# of students	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
1995-96	924,663	20.3	20.2	21.3	21.1	20.9
1996-97	959,301	20.3	20.6	21.3	21.1	21.0
1997-98	995,039	20.4	20.6	21.3	21.1	21.0
1998-99	1,019,053	20.5	20.7	21.4	21.0	21.0
1999-00	1,065,138	20.5	20.7	21.4	21.0	21.0
2000-01	NA	20.5	20.7	21.3	21.0	21.0

Source: SC State Department of Education, 2001.

South Carolina increased both its mean composite score and the number of students taking the ACT between 1999 and 2001. The state's scores continue to indicate inadequate preparation for college-level work. ACT advises that the cut-off scores indicating preparation for college level work are 22 for English; 24 for biology and 25 for chemistry; 23 for mathematics; and 22 for reading. ACT indicates that scores of 16-19 indicate "only minimal readiness" for college. South Carolina's students perform less well on the ACT than do students in all other states, except Mississippi.²

² More information on the ACT can be obtained from the web site: <http://www.act.org/>.

4. Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) passage rates will be at or above the national average.

Advanced Placement Passage Rate: The College Board administers the Advanced Placement (AP) Program. The program was introduced in the 1960s to permit qualified high school students to earn college credit while in high school. The curriculum, teacher training and assessments are aligned to ensure that the rigor and quality of the program is uniform across the nation. Beginning with the 1984 Education Improvement Act, South Carolina's General Assembly has appropriated funds to pay exam fees for South Carolina students, to support the teacher institutes and to provide supplementary materials for the program. Approximately 90 percent of the nation's colleges and universities accept AP credits in some manner.³

Exams are scored on a one to five grading scale. Generally, higher education institutions accept scores of three or higher, although the more selective institutions require a four or a five score. The grading scale is shown below:

- 5= Extremely well qualified
- 4= Well qualified
- 3= Qualified
- 2= Possible qualified
- 1= No recommendations

Successful student performance on advanced placement tests rose dramatically between 1991 and 1999. According to the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP), in 1991 only 69 students per 1000 scored three or above on Advanced Placement tests; by 1999 that rate had grown to 100 per 1000 eleventh and twelfth graders. The SC State Department of Education reports the data somewhat differently from the NEGP. According to the SC State Department of Education, 14,894 exams were administered in 1999 with 55 percent of exams scored 3 or higher. The percentage of exams meeting the qualifying score has continued to rise, nearing the national average. South Carolina also has increased participation rates at the same time performance has improved. The table below displays current participation and passage rates.

Table Eight
Advanced Placement Exam Rates: Percentage of Exams Scored 3 or Above

Year		1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Number of Tests Taken in SC		13,139	13,896	14,177	14,994	14,894	14,560	15,703
Qualifying Percentage	SC	51	52	53	54	55	55	56
	Nation	61	62	63	63	62	62	60

The International Baccalaureate (IB) program also employs external exams to measure student performance. IB programs are offered in only a few SC high schools as the data on the next page detail.

³ For additional information on the Advanced Placement Program, contact the web site: <http://www.collegeboard.org/>.

Table Nine
Performance on International Baccalaureate Examinations
SC and the Nation

Year	South Carolina				Nation		
	# Schools Participating	# Candidates	# Exams Taken	% Qualifying	# Exams Taken	% Qualifying	
1998	7	212	498	62	36,1089	79	
1999	12	303	809	76	43,017	81	
2000	9	290	750	77	50,745	81	
2001	11	397	1012	79	57,740	83	

5. SC's high school completion rate will be at or above the national average.

The NEGP reports South Carolina's high school completion rate as the percentage of the non-high-school enrolled population ages 18-24 that hold high school credentials. According to the 1997 data, reported in the 1999 Goals Panel Report, South Carolina has an 89 percent completion rate. The SC State Department of Education reports the completion rate as a measure of students who were in a class in grade 8 and completed grade 12 (Rankings, 2001) That rate is 70.8 percent (or a loss of 29.2 percent of the class) The range across the state is quite wide, from 96.9 percent in York District Four to 41.4 percent in Hampton District Two. The difference between the SC measure and the NEGP measure points to the impact of alternative and adult education routes to the high school credential and suggests that these programs are significant contributors to South Carolina's move forward. When GED completers are added, the SC statistic jumps to 73.5 percent. The NEGP reports that the rate has increased from 83 percent in 1990. Interestingly, the range of high school completion rate nationally is between 75 and 95 percent. This range is much narrower than the range within South Carolina.

Other measures of completion include the ninth to twelfth grade completion rate of 55.1 percent in contrast with the same measure nationally reporting 67.5 percent. SC's ranking is forty-fifth.

The completion rate and the inter-district variations suggest an unanswered challenge for South Carolina. Over the past several years the passage rate of the high school exit examination document improved performance, but the large numbers of students who do not graduate when eighth to twelfth grade progress is measured belie that success.

6. SC's dropout rate will be in the lower half of states.

Dropout data are collected differently across the states making comparisons difficult. SC's State Department of Education uses a formula of dividing the number of dropouts for grades 9-12 by the total enrollment for grades 9-12. Using this methodology the annual dropout rates for the last several years follow:

1994-95	3.1
1995-96	2.9
1996-97	2.7
1997-98	2.7
1998-99	2.7

7. SC will be in the top half of states in percentage of student with disabilities earning a high school diploma.

These data are collected inconsistently across the states. Although a national comparison is not available, SC is working to establish consistent in-state collections.

Table Ten
Comparison of Percentage of Students with Disabilities Receiving High School Diplomas or Certificates in SC and the Nation

Students with Disabilities in SC Ages 17-21				Percentage of students with disabilities receiving a diploma or certificate	
Year	Total Number of Students	Number Receiving Diploma	Number Receiving Certificates	South Carolina	Nation
1998	9,322	703	978	18.0	25.6
1999	7,045	1,083	1,094	31.0	NA
2000	7,380	1,033	986	27.4	NA

Source: SC State Department of Education 2001 (estimates only)

8. SC will be in the top half of states in freedom from drugs, weapons, violence and teacher victimization by students.

States collect data on different aspects of student behavior. Some data are reported through Federal Bureau of Investigation reports; others through the youth surveys and a variety of national agencies. The data shown below are taken from the SC School Crime Reports.

Table Eleven
Number of School Crime Incidents, 1991-92 to 2000-01

CRIME	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	2000-01
Aggravated assault	300	251	410	538	655	598	596	724	412	369
Arson	29	25	25	21	34	31	32	40	39	22
Bribery	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Burglary	447	327	377	338	363	405	363	320	225	215
Counterfeiting	9	18	4	4	5	10	7	1	9	12
*Disturbing schools	*NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	2,051	2,649
*Drug possession	*NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	751	906
*Drug distribution	*NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	111	120
Embezzlement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Extortion	4	9	6	4	8	19	8	5	3	6
Fraud	1	1	1	6	0	2	1	3	1	13
Gambling	2	2	3	1	4	14	9	12	13	10
Homicide	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
*Intimidation	*NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1,017	1,005
Kidnapping	1	4	3	4	4	6	2	1	1	1
Larceny/theft	298	199	203	253	515	592	655	718	725	969
Liquor	142	129	150	125	143	149	265	202	233	194
Motor vehicle theft	5	8	12	10	16	22	30	12	18	19
Other	13	16	40	47	1	12	29	33	70	87
Pornography	6	5	5	7	13	16	14	18	23	22
Prostitution	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Robbery	15	20	21	36	19	15	11	13	22	8
Sex offense, forcible	27	19	28	29	27	31	44	38	41	60
Sex offense, nonforcible	27	25	24	35	90	90	91	142	159	185
*Simple assault	*NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3,489	3,972

CRIME	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	2000-01
Stolen property	81	61	55	99	63	4	7	23	65	60
*Trespassing	*NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	197	171
Vandalism	512	464	469	496	483	503	618	646	616	619
Weapons	540	626	917	786	743	786	970	996	860	875
TOTAL	2,991	2,923	3,781	4,623	6,566	7,442	9,024	9,779	11,152	12,569

*The definition for this category was created or revised for the 1999-2000 school year. No information for this definition exists for years prior to 1999-2000. Source: SC State Department of Education, 2001

9. The gap among achievements of students of different racial/ethnic groups and different economic status will be eliminated.

(a) Differences among the SAT performance of White, African-American and Hispanic students persist. There has been a slight increase in the achievement of African-American students in the last decade, while the improvement in achievement for white students has been more significant. The achievement gap between white and African-American students has not been narrowed and the gap between white and Hispanic students has fluctuated.

Table Twelve
SAT Verbal Performance by Ethnicity 1992-2001

Group	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
AA	410	410	409	415	419	415	414	415	415	420
Hispanic	--	--	--	--	--	482	483	473	490	485
White	498	501	501	506	508	508	508	509	512	514

Source: SC State Department of Education, 2001

Table Thirteen
SAT Math Performance by Ethnicity 1992-2001

Group	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
AA	411	415	409	412	412	407	407	407	414	421
Hispanic	--	--	--	--	--	477	479	468	489	480
White	491	497	501	499	500	502	502	504	510	515

Note: Data by lunch status are not available.

Source: SC State Department of Education, 2001

(b) The ACT includes four tests: English, mathematics, reading and science reasoning. Results are reported for all four tests and as a composite score. The range of scores for each ACT subtest, as well as the composite score, is from one to 36.

Table Fourteen
ACT Performance by Ethnicity 1995-2001

Group	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
AA	17.3	17.13	16.8	17.1	17.2	17.2	16.5
Hispanic	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
White	21.4	21.7	21.3	21.3	21.4	21.3	20.9

Note: Data by lunch status are not available.

Source: SC State Department of Education, 2001

(c) Differences persist in both participation and performance on advanced placement tests.

Table Fifteen
Percentage of Students Earning an Advanced Placement Score Qualifying for College Credit

Group	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
AA	26	26	28	21	24	24	17	25	23	
Hispanic	64	55	69	60	69	55	55	60	58	
White	59	57	59	55	55	58	60	60	60	

Source: College Board, 2001

(d) And finally, performance on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests.

Table Sixteen
Percentage of Students Scoring Basic and Above on Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests

Percent Group	ELA Basic and Above Percentage			Math Basic and Above Percentage		
	1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
African-American	46.7	53.3	58.6	32.8	42.5	47.2
Hispanic	46.7	53.3	68.8	51.5	58.2	60.7
White	76.4	81	84.0	68.1	75.4	76.9
Free/Reduced Lunch	48.5	55.2	60.7	36.2	45.9	50.4
Pay Lunch	78.4	82.7	84.2	69.3	76.5	76.9

Can we achieve these goals? In a November 2001 survey administered to South Carolina educators and community leaders, South Carolina expressed confidence that the goals could be achieved. When asked specifically about the achievability and a time frame, the response pattern demonstrated high levels of confidence except for the elimination of achievement gaps among racial and socio-economic groups.⁴ Despite general confidence in SC's ability to achieve the goals, many respondents cited inadequate funding, legislative commitment, student motivation and parental involvement as major challenges.

Table Seventeen
Achievability of Specific Accountability Goals

Goal	Percentage of respondents indicating "Already Achieved"	Percentage of respondents indicating "Achievable in 1-5 years"	Percentage of respondents indicating "Achievable in 5-10 years"
High school completion rates at or above the national average	1	26	53
AP and IB passage rates at or above the national average	2	26	51
Rank in top half of states freed from drugs, weapons, violence and teacher victimization by students	6	32	40
Dropout rate in lower half of states	2	22	50
Rank in top half of states in % of students with disabilities earning a high school diploma	2	26	46
Rank in top half of states on NAEP exams	1	18	52
90 % of students will score at or above grade level on PACT	<1	16	49
Rank in top half of states on SAT/ACT	1	13	48
Eliminate achievement gaps among racial and socio-economic segments	1	8	30

The National Education Goals Panel established eight goals to guide the nation's efforts to improve educational achievements. These goals, with the critical objectives for each, outline aspects of a child's life and schooling that must be addressed. The goals and objectives are stated on the next page. Following the goal is the progress summary for South Carolina.

⁴ (Brown, 2001.)

Table Eighteen
Performance of SC on National Education Goals Panel Measures

SOUTH CAROLINA

Indicator	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Change*
Goal 1: Ready to Learn												
Children's Health Index (%)	43	43	40	40	39	39	38	38	38	--	--	Improvement
Immunizations (%)	--	--	--	--	84	80	86	80	88	81	--	No Change
Low Birthweight (%)	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	10	10	--	Decline
Early Prenatal Care (%)	69	69	71	74	76	79	79	80	81	81	--	Improvement
Preschool programs for children with disabilities (per 1000)	--	52	55	55	56	60	63	65	69	71	--	Improvement
Goal 2: School Completion												
High School Completion (%)	83	85	86	87	88	88	89	88	87	--	--	No Change
High School Dropouts (%)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Goal 3: Student Achievement and Citizenship												
Reading Achievement - 4th Grade (%)	--	--	22	--	20	--	--	--	22	--	--	No Change
Reading Achievement - 8th Grade (%)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	22	--	--	--
Writing Achievement - 8th Grade (%)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	15	--	--	--
Mathematics Achievement - 4th Grade (%)	--	--	13	--	--	--	12	--	--	--	18	Improvement
Mathematics Achievement - 8th Grade (%)	--	--	15	--	--	--	14	--	--	--	18	No Change
Science Achievement - 8th Grade (%)	--	--	--	--	--	--	17	--	--	--	--	--
Advanced Placement Examinations (per 1000)	--	126	--	--	--	--	--	176	--	--	172	Improvement
Advanced Placement Performance (per 1000)	--	69	77	76	87	85	90	96	100	100	99	Improvement
Goal 4: Teacher Education and Professional Development												
Teacher Preparation - Academic Degrees (%)												
Teacher Professional Development (%)												
Preparation to Teach Limited English Proficient Students (%)												
Teacher Support (%)												
Goal 5: Mathematics and Science												
International Mathematics Achievement - 8th Grade (#)	--	--	--	--	--	--	27 of 40	--	--	--	--	--
International Science Achievement - 8th Grade (#)	--	--	--	--	--	--	20 of 40	--	--	--	--	--
Mathematics Instructional Practices - Small Groups (%)	--	--	--	--	--	--	67	--	--	--	--	--
Mathematics Instructional Practices - Algebra & Functions (%)	--	--	--	--	--	--	52	--	--	--	--	--
Mathematics Instructional Practices - Reasoning and Analytical Ability (%)	--	--	--	--	--	--	50	--	--	--	--	--
Mathematics Resources - Computers (%)	--	--	--	--	--	--	31	--	--	--	--	--
Mathematics and Science Degrees - All Students (%)	25	25	25	26	29	29	31	31	--	--	--	Improvement
Mathematics and Science Degrees - Minority Students (%)	23	23	21	24	26	26	26	29	--	--	--	Improvement
Mathematics and Science Degrees - Female Students (%)	25	24	24	26	27	29	30	31	--	--	--	Improvement
Goal 6: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning												
Adult Literacy (%)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Voter Registration (%)	--	--	68	--	62	--	68	--	68	--	--	Improvement
Voting (%)	--	--	59	--	46	--	55	--	48	--	--	No Change
Participation in Higher Education (%)	--	--	43	--	58	--	59	--	61	--	--	Improvement
Goal 7: Safe, Disciplined, and Alcohol- and Drug-free Schools												
Student Marijuana Use (%)	--	12	--	13	--	21	--	27	--	25	--	Decline

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Indicator	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Change*
Student Alcohol Use (%)	--	27	--	25	--	27	--	25	--	25	--	No Change
Availability of Drugs on School Property (%)	--	--	--	25	--	--	--	--	--	29	--	No Change
Student Victimization (%)	--	--	--	10	--	11	--	9	--	9	--	No Change
Physical Fights (%)	--	--	--	13	--	15	--	13	--	12	--	No Change
Carrying a Weapon (%)	--	--	--	14	--	12	--	10	--	7	--	Improvement
Student Safety (%)	--	--	--	6	--	6	--	6	--	6	--	No Change
Teacher Victimization (%)	--	--	--	--	17	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Disruptions in Class by Students (%)	--	37	--	--	49	--	--	--	--	--	--	Decline
Goal 8: Parental Participation												
Parental Involvement in Schools - Teachers' Perspective (%)	--	32	--	--	36	--	--	--	--	--	--	No Change
Parental Involvement in Schools - Principals' Perspective (%)	--	22	--	--	27	--	--	--	--	--	--	No Change
Influence of Parent Associations (%)	--	16	--	--	24	--	--	--	--	--	--	No Change

* Improvement: statistically significant improvement; Decline: statistically significant decline; No Change: no statistically significant change.

-- Data not collected or not available.

Implementation of State Standards and Assessments

South Carolina's improvement effort is designed to ensure that South Carolina students achieve at competitive levels nationally and internationally. Throughout the 1990s South Carolina educators developed curriculum content standards which incorporate the recommendations of international and national organizations in the academic disciplines. A standards-based assessment system has been initiated to accompany the standards.

Utilization of the Standards in Instruction

The State Board of Education has published curriculum content standards in four disciplines for use in SC classrooms. The disciplines are mathematics, reading/English language arts, science, and in Fall 2000, social studies. These standards reflect what students should know and be able to do in grades kindergarten through twelve. Each set of standards has been reviewed by panels of national and state leaders in the content area to determine that SC students are taught a curriculum that enables them to compete successfully with students from around the world. In 2000 the Fordham Foundation reviewed content standards from the fifty states and rated SC's standards third in the nation, a rise from twenty-eighth in 1998.

To support implementation of the standards, the General Assembly appropriated additional monies for professional development: \$7 million for professional development on the standards, \$3 million for the Governor's Institute on Reading, \$3.2 million for Reading Recovery and either maintenance or increased funding for a number of other professional development programs (e.g., Geographic Alliance, Science and Math Hubs, Roper Mountain Science Center).

Review of the Content Standards

A review of the 1998 English/Language Arts Standards was conducted in accordance with §59-18-360 of the Education Accountability Act of 1998. Three review teams representing national experts in English/language arts, South Carolina special education teachers, and South Carolina parents, community leaders, and business leaders conducted the review in the spring of 2001. While the 1998 standards were found to be sound in many ways, the review resulted in several recommendations to the State Department of Education to strengthen the document. Among the recommendations were: a reduction in the number of content areas from five to four by combining Speaking and Listening into one area; the addition of three sections in the document – a glossary, suggested literature, and philosophy; a strengthening of the research content area; giving greater attention to handwriting; and, incorporating the use of technology throughout the standards. The SDE has responded to the recommendations and the revised standards are scheduled for approval by the SBE in April 2002.

§59-18-300 of the Education Accountability Act requires the development of benchmark courses at the high school level. The State Department of Education identified Physical Science and Biology as benchmark courses in science. A review of the standards for those two courses by national experts, South Carolina special education teachers, and South Carolina parents, community leaders, and business leaders is underway.

Support for Student Mastery of the Standards

1. Summer School: An important provision of the SC Education Accountability Act of 1998 requires academic plans to be developed "for each student in grades three through eight who lacks the skills to perform at his current grade level based on assessments results, school work, or teacher judgment" (§59-18-500). School districts are given flexibility to select instructional strategies and materials that best match the academic needs of their students. In a follow-up to the 1999-2000 study of summer school, the USC Education Policy Center interviewed principals and instructional leaders to understand local program evaluation approaches and instrumentation used in designing and evaluating summer school programs. The interviews revealed the following:

- Districts were relying on group instruction approaches;
- Commercial instructional materials were used more often than materials developed by the school district or tailored to the SC standards;
- Pre- and post-assessments were used, particularly if those tests accompanied the commercial materials;
- Targeted students tended to be those who were in danger of failure; although districts may use different criteria for "danger of failure" for students at different grade levels. Some districts indicated that summer programs concentrated on those students who were just below basic on PACT because the district felt students with more dramatic needs require comprehensive year-long programs;
- Pupil-teacher ratios were low, most below 15:1; and
- Teacher availability for summer work is limited by teacher needs for personal and professional renewal, district or school professional development programs and the 190-day contract cycle.

The Policy Center currently is examining the post-summer school academic performance of participating students.

2. School Facilities: Dr. Kenneth Stevenson, University of South Carolina, explored the relationship between school academic outcomes and school facilities characteristics. Major findings presented in the Executive Summary are provided below:

- The better a principal rates the physical condition and adequacy of his or her school, the greater the likelihood that students score well on standardized achievement tests, though the socio-economic make-up of the student body as measured by the portion of pupils on free or reduced lunch is heavily intertwined with this finding.
- The newer a school, the greater the likelihood that students score well on standardized achievement tests, though the socio-economic make-up of the student body as measured by the portion of pupils on free or reduced lunch is heavily intertwined with this finding.
- The larger a school, the greater the likelihood that students score well on standardized achievement tests, though the socio-economic makeup of the student body as measured by the portion of pupils on free or reduced lunch is heavily intertwined with this finding.
- The higher the teacher and student attendance rate, and especially student attendance, the greater the likelihood that students score well on standardized achievement tests, though the socio-economic make up of the student body as measured by the portion of pupils on free or reduced lunch is heavily intertwined with this finding.
- Most principals believe that the condition and adequacy of a school facility has a significant impact on school academic outcomes. They view the relationship as very complex, indicating that facilities affect teacher attitudes, which in turn affect classroom productivity.
- One out of every five schools in this state is rated by the principal as having a direct negative impact on school productivity.
- Among facilities factors adversely affecting the educational process are overcrowding, poor physical condition of the structure, portables, lack of storage, inadequate laboratory space.
- Because (a) this study affirms previous research indicating that school facilities affect student outcomes, (b) one of every five schools in this state is rated as making a negative impact on the educational process, and (c) the average school facilities is 70 % through its

expected life cycle, it is recommended that a comprehensive and adequate system of funding school construction in South Carolina be developed and implemented.

3. **Teacher Support:** The SC State Department of Education has launched a new website, the SC Teaching Learning Connection, that enables teachers to quickly access the content standards, model lessons, released assessment items from other states, and other instructional linkages quickly.

The SC State Department of Education has made a computer software program, MENTOR, available to assist teachers in understanding and teaching the writing content standards. The program provides teachers with sample student composition scored at different levels and indications of strengths and weaknesses. After reviewing the scored compositions, teachers score ten compositions and compare their scoring with those of the scoring firm.

Support for Parental Understanding of the Standards

Materials summarizing the mathematics, English language arts, science and social studies standards for parents were distributed to every district superintendent and school principal. The Accountability Division is working with representatives of the Hispanic community to translate the parent documents.

The EOC's Public Awareness campaign has issued a series of announcements and materials to encourage parents to be involved with their children's education. Printed materials have been distributed. A pamphlet, "Tips to Help Your Children Succeed in School" has been distributed to parents directly and through schools, the Department of Social Services and pediatricians.

Through passage of the Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education Act in 2000, the General Assembly established a framework for actions to increase and sustain parental involvement. The Act calls upon state, district and school leaders to heighten awareness of the importance of parents' involvement in the education of their children throughout their schooling; encourage the establishment and maintenance of parent-friendly school settings; and emphasize that when parents and schools work as partners, a child's academic success can best be assured.

Among the requirements of the 2000 Parental Involvement Act are that the Governor require state agencies that serve families and children to collaborate and establish networks with schools to heighten awareness of the importance of parental influence on the academic success of their children and to encourage and assist parents to become more involved in their children's educational. The EOC is collaborating with the SC Chamber and the Office of First Steps on the Family Friendly Workplace Award, to be given initially in January 2002. Goals, objectives and an evaluation component for parental involvement are to be included in district and school long-range improvement plans. The State Superintendent of Education is charged with promotion and training to ensure that best practices, partnerships, and parent-friendly school settings are implemented. In November 2001, the State Department of Education launched the Red Carpet Schools program to provide recognition for schools with outstanding family-friendly environments. Schools must complete a four-page application outlining their customer services programs and how the programs are evaluated. The first Red Carpet schools are to be selected and announced this spring. Parental involvement expectations are to be a component of the superintendent and principals evaluations. The EOC is charged with surveying parents to determine if efforts are successful and to publish jointly with the State Superintendent informational materials for parents and teachers.

The EOC has contracted with the Institute for Families and Society to develop and pilot a survey to be used on the annual school report card. That survey is to be administered statewide in Spring 2002.

Implementation of Standards-Based Assessments

The State Department of Education has initiated the development of assessments to measure student learning of the content standards. According to the schedule published by the State Department of Education in April 2000, the implementation of the new assessments should be accomplished in the years noted below:

Table Nineteen
SDE Timeline for Implementation of New Assessments
August 2001

Test	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07
Readiness 1, 2				X					
PACT 1, 2	Deleted from EAA in 2001								
PACT 3-8 Math, ELA	x								
PACT 3-8 Science			x						
PACT 3-8 Social Studies					X				
PACT Exit Exam Math, ELA						x			
PACT Exit Exam Science						Not scheduled			
PACT Exit Exam Social Studies						x			
End-of-Course Math					X				
End-of-Course, ELA						x			
End-of-Course Science						x			
End-of-Course, Social Studies									X
Alternate Assess.			x						

Source: State Department of Education, 2001.

Reviews of Standards-Based Assessments

Three assessments have come under review during this year—the SC Readiness Assessment, the PACT-Alternate and PACT-Science for Grades 3-8. Each of these assessments was field-tested in 2000-2001. Each of the assessments is very different in form and purpose. The SC Readiness Assessment is built upon multiple observations of individual students during the kindergarten and first grade year. The PACT-Alternate is a portfolio driven assessment used with students having profound disabilities. PACT-Science is a more traditionally constructed test combining selected and constructed response items. Each assessment is reviewed by panels of SC and national educators with experience in the chosen fields.

The process for review provides for EOC review and recommendations following the first field test, a response from the State Department of Education, and eventual consent from the EOC prior to administration.

Continuing Assessment Issues

The assessment program continues to be the source of discussion. Three issues dominant those discussions: should the PACT assessments be diagnostic in nature; that is, structured to provide more information for use in designing instruction; should testing proceed in science and social studies; and are both the high school exit examination and end-of-course assessments necessary?

The Accountability Division supports increases in the level of instructional information provided by the PACT tests. To report at the standard level and avoid measurement errors, the assessments must include more items per standard. SDE staff indicates that adding items would make the tests too cumbersome and lengthy to administer. The SDE assessment team is exploring ways in which strand level information can be aggregated reliably at the school and/or district level. This information would provide curriculum drivers that can be used to shape instruction. Curriculum drivers consist of strand level information that can be used to focus time, re-teaching activities and resources. Teachers, working with students on a daily basis, should provide individual student diagnostic information from their analysis of student work and classroom assessments. The SDE indicates that curriculum driver information would be available subsequent to the 2003 PACT administration.

The science assessment is the next PACT test to be implemented. SDE and EOC staff have identified a number of factors related to the administration of PACT-science: (a) the purchase of science instructional materials has been spread over two years rather than one; (b) the student performance standards for science likely are not to be set until late fall 2002 or 2003; and (c) the EOC staff would like sufficient time to analyze performance on the science and social studies assessments, including year to year improvement, in relation to English language arts and mathematics performance before recommending the impact of science and social studies on the school rating. Recommendations on the science assessment are pending before the SDE.

The PACT Exit Examination is scheduled to be administered to tenth graders in Spring 2004 and included in the high school report rating in 2006. This testing is limited to English language arts, mathematics and social studies. Exit Exam testing in science has not been scheduled. The EOC staff has raised about the schedule for inclusion of social studies and science. This group of tenth graders would not have taken the PACT Grade 8 Social Studies test and therefore, would not have received any formal notification of their knowledge in that content area. Without that knowledge there is no opportunity to remediate in order to be successful on the tenth grade exam. The EOC staff urged that the science component be developed and administered on the same schedule as the social studies component.

Including assessments in science and social studies requires that the SDE define clearly the content expected of ninth and/or tenth graders in these areas. In practical terms, that content must be contained within a course or courses that are available to all students during the ninth or tenth grade. The SDE proposes that this be accomplished by requiring to earn a unit of credit in each content area by the conclusion of the tenth grade. The State Board of Education (SBE) could pass regulations that define specific required courses and is to consider a requirement for the physical science course in January 2002. A social studies requirement has not been specified.

A number of educators have questioned the need for both an exit examination and end-of-course tests. Do they serve the same or different purposes? Are both needed?

The PACT Exit Examination is to replace the BSAP Exit Examination and is to be administered first in Spring 2004, with inclusion on the 2006 report card. The Exit Examination is a minimum competency examination; that is, the exam is to define *the very least* a student must know or be able to do to earn the high school diploma. The Exit Exam is administered to *all tenth graders* and is a requirement for the diploma.

End-of-course assessments are to be developed for gateway or benchmark courses, as cited in the EAA. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, a gateway is "something that serves as an entrance or a means of access," and a benchmark is "a standard by which something can be measured or judged." The SDE, acting through proposed SBE regulations, has chosen five courses for end-of-course assessments in five courses: English I, Algebra I, Biology, Physical

Science and US History. Four of the five courses generally are taken in the ninth or tenth grade. US History most often is taken in the eleventh grade. Using the definitions above, these courses serve as a gateway to the more advanced college prep or tech prep curriculum. Because several neighboring states also test in English, Algebra, Biology and US History student performance could be benchmarked against other states (only in the broadest sense because students in other states do not take the same examinations). To some degree, end-of-course tests administered in the Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs and external certification exams in the career and technology curriculum also could serve benchmarking purposes. Some EOC members have advocated strongly for end-of-course assessments in a greater number of courses, particularly those taught at the eleventh and twelfth grades or required for high school graduation.

Because the end-of-course assessments serve the gateway and benchmark purposes, these assessments are to be used to ensure rigor and consistency as the courses are delivered across the state. Essentially, the expectation is that the end-of-course measures should define the core knowledge for those courses and push SC students to a *higher, more competitive level*. The exams are administered *only to students enrolled in the particular courses*.

Accepting that the exit examination is a minimum competency test and the end-of-course exams are more rigorous, the natural question arises that if students pass the end-of-course exams, why should they be required to take the exit examination? At the time of this writing, EOC and SDE staff have initiated discussions among educators about these issues.

The EOC and others are committed to the 2010 goal; therefore, options that focus high schools on improving the high school completion rate, SAT and ACT performance, and Advanced Placement and IB performance are appropriate. A cursory examination of technical reports for the SAT and ACT indicates that SC would be served well by ensuring increased and uniform rigor in algebra, geometry, biology and social studies courses. Linkages between the goal and the use of the assessment program to increase the level of student performance should be a key consideration in the selection of an option. Educators and other leaders should be aware that some assessment options might alter the populations of students included in a school's rating. Whatever changes to the assessment program are chosen, these changes should take effect almost immediately to ensure that students are well prepared for and taught the more rigorous curriculum by 2007.

Development, Establishment, Implementation and Maintenance of the Accountability System

The Education Accountability Act of 1998 calls for "the acceptance of the responsibility for improving student performance and taking actions to improve classroom practice and school performance by the Governor, the General Assembly, the State Department of Education, colleges and universities, local school boards, administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the community" (§59-18-900).

With respect to those actions required by the Education Accountability Act, the State has made progress by establishing the policies and guidelines for the program. The State Department of used 2000 PACT data to predict schools ratings. Seventy-three schools were identified and services began in August 2001.

Table Twenty
Implementation Status of Education Accountability Act Provisions for State Agencies

Statutory Citation	Provision	Status
59-18-300	Content Standards	Math, English, Science and Social Studies adopted
59-18-360	Cyclical Review of Standards	Mathematics completed in Sept. 2000, ELA completed in September 2001
59-18-310-370	Assessments	Math, English implemented in grades 3-8; science scheduled for implementation in Spring 2002
59-18-910	Levels of difficulty reports	Ongoing, with assessments as developed
59-18-340	Norm-referenced test	Terra Nova administered in 1999,2000, and 2001; alignment study conducted in 2000
59-18-370	Longitudinal matched data	SDE developed for use in school ratings 2001
59-18-350	PSAT/PLAN offered to grade 10	Implemented in 1998
59-18-500	Academic Plans	Implemented in 1998
59-18-700	Instructional materials alignment	Incorporated into SDE adoption cycle
59-18-710	Revise accreditation criteria	Adopted by SBE in Fall 2000, returned to SDE from General Assembly for amendments
59-18-900	Annual report card	Initial report cards published in December 2001
59-18-900	Criteria for performance ratings	Adopted by EOC in December 2000
59-18-1100	Gold and Silver Awards criteria	Adopted for elementary, middle and career centers in 2001; high school criteria under public review in 2002
59-18-1110	Flexibility Guidelines	Adopted by SBE in Fall 2000
59-18-1300	District Accountability Systems	Implemented in 1999
59-18-1500-1510	Intervention and Assistance	SDE began services to 73 schools in August 2001
59-18-1510	Criteria for review team	Established in Spring 1999
59-18-1520	Teacher specialists	Criteria set in 1998; implemented in 1999 in 73 schools or tiered assistance program implemented
59-18-1530	Principal specialists	Criteria set in 1999; implemented in 1999 in one school; evaluation underway
59-18-1540	Principal Mentoring program	Established and implemented in 1998
59-18-1550	Recertification credit	SDE establishes criteria
59-18-1560	Retraining Grants	Implemented in 1998, evaluated in 1999, 2000 and 2001
59-18-1560	Public School Assistance Fund (SBE)	Not established
59-18-1700	Public Awareness Campaign	Initiated in 1999
59-18-1900	Alternative Schools Grants	Implemented in 1998
59-18-1910	Homework Center Grants	Implemented in 1998 in 7 districts
59-18-1920	Modified School Year Grant	Implemented in 1998 in 5 districts; discontinued because of lack of applicants
59-18-1930	Professional Development Review	Completed in December 2000
59-24-10	New Principal Assessment	Incorporated in SDE actions
59-24-30	Professional Development Plans for administrators	Under SDE development
59-24-50	Training with School Councils	Currently SICA provides training
59-24-80	Principal Induction Program	Implemented in 1998
59-6-100	EOC established	Implemented in 1998

Statutory Citation	Provision	Status
59-6-110	Accountability Division established	Implemented in 1998
Section 10	Parent Involvement Task Force	Recommendations formed basis for Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education Act of 2000
Section 12	Class Size Study	SDE Study initiated in 11 districts; report completed in 2001

The 2001 School Ratings

The school ratings for elementary, middle, and high schools are based on measures of student achievement at each school. The academic achievement results for each school are converted to numeric indices based on formulas listed in the 2001-2002 Accountability Manual. The test data used in the calculations come only from students who attended the school for most of the school year (e. g., only from students who were enrolled in the school on the 45th day of instruction). The PACT data are used to calculate the indices in the elementary and middle schools; current and longitudinal Exit Exam results and percentages eligible for the LIFE scholarships provide the basis for the high school indices. The ratings based on those indices are Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average, and Unsatisfactory. The rating terms are specified in the EAA.

Three types of ratings were reported for each school. The Absolute performance rating describes the academic performance of students for the current school year. It is a descriptor of the level of the average academic achievement of students in the schools compared to the performance standards on the tests (e. g., Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, Advanced). In 2001, an Absolute rating of Excellent indicates that the average student performance on the PACT tests is between Basic and Proficient. An Unsatisfactory rating indicates that the average performance of students in the school is Below Basic. There is a penalty in the Absolute rating for exceeding a specified percentage of students scoring below Basic. Schools receiving Absolute ratings of Unsatisfactory must review and revise their strategic plans and undergo review by an external review team. Extra resources such as teacher specialists are made available to Unsatisfactory schools. Below Average schools must also review and revise their strategic plans, and may request external review teams.

The Improvement rating reflects the average change in academic achievement for the students in the school for the current year compared to the previous year. The Improvement indices in the elementary and middle schools are based on longitudinally matched student test data. An Excellent Improvement rating indicates that the school is making major progress toward the 2010 Goal. A school receiving an Unsatisfactory Improvement rating lost ground (experienced an achievement decline) over the school year. Absolute ratings and Improvement ratings are largely independent of each other. For example, a school receiving an Unsatisfactory absolute rating could be awarded an Excellent improvement rating if students made exceptional progress, but didn't achieve an average score above Basic.

Schools having absolute ratings of Excellent for two consecutive years receive special consideration when assigning the Improvement rating, since such schools may have such high achievement levels that it is difficult to maintain the high levels, let alone increase them; such schools automatically receive a Good Improvement rating, and may receive an Excellent rating if the students increased their achievement compared to the previous year. A school's Improvement rating can be raised one level if the improvement index calculated for students belonging to historically underachieving groups (the target groups include students with non-speech disabilities, African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and students eligible for free-or reduced-price lunch) exceed the level of improvement for all students by one standard deviation. The Improvement rating schedule is approved for three years only to allow for analysis of patterns of improvement.

A third rating, the School Grade, is a composite of the Absolute and Improvement ratings. The School Grade is an adjustment of the Absolute rating upward or downward, depending on the Improvement rating. The adjustment of the Absolute rating to create the School Grade is intended to recognize and award academic improvement.

Ratings were awarded to each school organizational unit: elementary, middle, or high. A school which had grades Kindergarten through 8 received two sets of ratings (and two sets of report cards). One set of ratings pertained to the elementary grades in the school (PACT test results in grades 3 through 5), and the other set of ratings were based on the middle school grades (PACT results from grades 6 through 8). Primary level schools which did not contain PACT-tested grades (such as a school having Kindergarten through grade 2) and career and vocational centers also received ratings based on different sets of criteria. Some schools, such as new schools, did not receive ratings.

The frequencies of ratings reported for all primary, elementary, middle, and high schools in South Carolina are listed in Table Twenty-One.

Table Twenty-One
ALL SCHOOLS (K-2 PRIMARY, ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE, AND HIGH SCHOOLS)
2000-2001 School Report Card Ratings
Number and Percentage of School Report Cards

Rating	Absolute Performance Rating Number (%)	Improvement Rating Number (%)	School Grade Number (%)
Excellent	168 (15.2)	135 (12.2)	217 (19.6)
Good	326 (29.4)	168 (15.2)	264 (23.8)
Average	321 (29.0)	215 (19.4)	274 (24.7)
Below Average	200 (18.1)	299 (27.0)	210 (19.0)
Unsatisfactory	71 (6.4)	267 (24.1)	119 (10.7)
New/Special - No Rating	22 (2.0)	24 (2.2)	24 (2.2)
Total	1108 (100)	1108 (100)	1108 (100)

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding. Some schools may have received more than one report card if the school contained more than one organizational grade level (Elementary, Middle, High).

*Based on data from the SC Department of Education, November 30, 2001.

Somewhat less than half (494, or 44.6%) of the schools received Absolute ratings of Good or Excellent, while approximately one-fourth (271 schools, or 24.5%) were rated Below Average or Unsatisfactory. None of the schools received a penalty (lowering their Absolute ratings one level) because their percentage of students scoring below Basic exceeded the criteria. The results for the Improvement ratings were less positive, however. Slightly more than one-fourth (27.3%, or 303 schools) had Good or Excellent Improvement ratings, and slightly more than half (51.1%, or 566 schools) either did not improve or had declining achievement (e. g., Improvement ratings of Below Average or Unsatisfactory). In order to reach the 2010 goal, the expectations for school achievement increase annually beginning in 2004, so that by 2009 the average achievement needed to attain an Excellent Absolute rating is Proficient. For most schools, achievement must increase each year to reach the 2010 goal.

Many schools having high proportions of historically underachieving students exhibited achievement improvements over the two year period. For example, of 130 schools with 90 percent or more students identified as living in poverty, 38 earned a Good or Excellent Improvement rating. The preliminary analyses indicate that at least 111 schools were awarded a higher Improvement rating because of exceptional improvement by their historically underachieving students.

Since the Absolute rating was lowered one level when calculating the School Grade when a school had an Unsatisfactory Improvement rating, the distribution of School Grades resulted in somewhat more Unsatisfactory and Below Average School Grade ratings than Absolute ratings. On the other hand, the percentage of Excellent School Grades was higher than the percentage of Excellent Absolute ratings because an Excellent Improvement rating increased the Absolute rating for a school by two levels, and a Good Improvement rating increased the Absolute rating by one level.

One measure of the validity of the rating system is to compare its results to ratings from other groups. The national Blue Ribbon Schools Award system identifies schools of quality based on several measures in addition to student achievement. The South Carolina accountability ratings are based solely on student achievement, so the two awards systems are not directly comparable. However, one would expect that schools of high quality would have a similar pattern of ratings from both systems. The school ratings for schools which have received Blue Ribbon awards during the time period the South Carolina ratings were calculated are listed in Table Twenty-Two. All eleven schools received Absolute ratings of Good or Excellent, and all but one received Excellent or Good School Grades. Four of the schools were unable to increase their achievement during the 2000-2001 school year, however.

Table Twenty-Two

BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL	Year of Award	2001 Absolute Performance Rating	2001 Improvement Rating	2001 Composite Grade
Reidville Elem	2000-01	Excellent	Good	Excellent
Rice Creek Elem	2000-01	Excellent	Good	Excellent
Satchel Ford Elem	2000-01	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Forestbrook Elem	2000-01	Excellent	Good	Excellent
Mitchell Road Elem	2000-01	Good	Unsatisfactory	Average
Oakview Elem	2000-01	Excellent	Good	Excellent
Woodland Heights Elem	2000-01	Good	Below Average	Good
RP Dawkins Middle	1999-2000	Good	Below Average	Good
Hand Middle	1999-2000	Good	Average	Good
Pickens Middle	1999-2000	Good	Below Average	Good
TL Hanna High	1999-2000	Excellent	Good	Excellent

The ratings results for each school organizational level are presented in Tables Twenty-Three - Twenty-Seven.

Table Twenty-Three
K-2 PRIMARY SCHOOLS ONLY (GRADE 2 IS HIGHEST GRADE LEVEL)
2000-2001 School Report Card Ratings
Number and Percentage of School Report Cards

Rating	Absolute Rating Number (%)	Performance Improvement Rating Number (%)	School Grade Number (%)
Excellent	22 (95.7)	8 (34.8)	21 (91.3)
Good	0 (0.0)	13 (56.5)	0 (0.0)
Average	1 (4.4)	1 (4.4)	1 (4.4)
Below Average	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Unsatisfactory	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
New/Special - No Rating	0 (0.0)	1 (4.4)	1 (4.4)
Total	23 (100)	23 (100)	23 (100)

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

*Based on data from the SC Department of Education, November 30, 2001.

Table Twenty-Four
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS ONLY
2000-2001 School Report Card Ratings
Number and Percentage of School Report Cards

Rating	Absolute Rating Number (%)	Performance Improvement Rating Number (%)	School Grade Number (%)
Excellent	96 (15.7)	54 (8.9)	117 (19.2)
Good	191 (31.3)	98 (16.1)	155 (25.4)
Average	208 (34.1)	146 (23.9)	184 (30.2)
Below Average	100 (16.4)	162 (26.6)	110 (18.0)
Unsatisfactory	10 (1.6)	144 (23.6)	38 (6.2)
New/Special - No Rating	5 (0.8)	6 (1.0)	6 (1.0)
Total	610 (100)	610 (100)	610 (100)

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding. Some schools may have received more than one report card if the school contained more than one organizational grade level (Elementary, Middle, High).

*Based on data from the SC Department of Education, November 30, 2001.

- Elementary schools earning an Excellent Absolute rating had an average of 11.5 percent of students scoring Below Basic; schools earning an Unsatisfactory Absolute rating had an average of 62.4 percent of students scoring Below Basic.
- Elementary schools earning an Excellent Absolute rating had an average poverty index of 32.8 percent; schools earning an Unsatisfactory Absolute rating had an average poverty index of 91.1 percent.
- Elementary schools earning an Excellent Improvement rating had an average of 21.7 percent of students scoring Below Basic; schools earning an Unsatisfactory Improvement rating had an average of 32.8 percent of students scoring Below Basic.
- Elementary schools earning an Excellent Improvement rating had an average poverty index of 59.3 percent; schools earning a Good Improvement rating had an average poverty index of 52.7 percent; schools earning an Average Improvement rating had an average poverty index of 71.3 percent; schools earning an Improvement rating of Below Average had an average poverty index of 64.4 percent; schools earning an Unsatisfactory Improvement rating had an average poverty index of 67.4 percent.

Table Twenty-Five
MIDDLE SCHOOLS ONLY
2000-2001 School Report Card Ratings
Number and Percentage of School Report Cards

Rating	Absolute Rating Number (%)	Performance Improvement Rating Number (%)	School Grade Number (%)
Excellent	11 (4.0)	7 (2.5)	13 (4.7)
Good	58 (21.0)	22 (8.0)	54 (19.6)
Average	91 (33.0)	63 (22.8)	61 (22.1)
Below Average	83 (30.1)	89 (32.3)	88 (31.9)
Unsatisfactory	29 (10.5)	91 (33.0)	56 (20.3)
New/Special - No Rating	4 (1.5)	4 (1.5)	4 (1.5)
Total	276 (100)	276 (100)	276 (100)

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding. Some schools may have received more than one report card if the school contained more than one organizational grade level (Elementary, Middle, High).

*Based on data from the SC Department of Education, November 30, 2001.

- Middle schools earning an Excellent Absolute rating had an average of 11.9 percent of students scoring Below Basic; schools earning an Unsatisfactory Absolute rating had an average of 61.9 percent of students scoring Below Basic.

- Middle schools earning an Excellent Absolute rating had an average poverty index of 17.2 percent; schools earning an Unsatisfactory Absolute rating had an average poverty index of 86.5 percent.
- Middle schools earning an Excellent Improvement rating had an average of 39.7 percent of students scoring Below Basic; schools earning an Unsatisfactory Improvement rating had an average of 41.2 percent of students scoring Below Basic.
- Middle schools earning an Excellent Improvement rating had an average poverty index of 76.7 percent; schools earning a Good Improvement rating had an average poverty index of 49.0 percent; schools earning an Average Improvement rating had an average poverty index of 60.8 percent; schools earning an Improvement rating of Below Average had an average poverty index of 59.5 percent; schools earning an Unsatisfactory Improvement rating had an average poverty index of 57.6 percent.

Table Twenty-Six
HIGH SCHOOLS ONLY
2000-2001 School Report Card Ratings
Number and Percentage of School Report Cards

Rating	Absolute Performance Rating Number (%)	Improvement Rating Number (%)	School Grade Number (%)
Excellent	39 (19.6)	66 (33.2)	66 (33.2)
Good	77 (38.7)	35 (17.6)	55 (27.6)
Average	21 (10.6)	5 (2.5)	28 (14.1)
Below Average	17 (8.5)	48 (24.1)	12 (6.0)
Unsatisfactory	32 (16.1)	32 (16.1)	25 (12.6)
New/Special - No Rating	13 (6.5)	13 (6.5)	13 (6.5)
Total	199 (100)	199 (100)	199 (100)

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding. Some schools may have received more than one report card if the school contained more than one organizational grade level (Elementary, Middle, High).

*Based on data from the SC Department of Education, November 30, 2001.

- High schools earning an Excellent Absolute rating had an average poverty index of 11.9 percent; schools earning an Unsatisfactory Absolute rating had an average poverty index of 78.2 percent.
- High schools earning an Excellent Improvement rating had an average of poverty index of 51.9 percent; schools earning a Good Improvement rating had an average poverty index of 35.0 percent; schools earning an Average Improvement rating had an average poverty index of 52.7 percent; schools earning an Improvement rating of Below Average had an average poverty index of 47.5 percent; schools earning an Unsatisfactory Improvement rating had an average poverty index of 56.5 percent.

Table Twenty-Seven
DISTRICTS ONLY
2000-2001 District Report Card Ratings
Number and Percentage of District Report Cards

Rating	Absolute Performance Rating Number (%)	Improvement Rating Number (%)
Excellent	2 (2.3)	0 (0.0)
Good	26 (30.2)	10 (11.6)
Average	34 (39.5)	37 (43.0)
Below Average	20 (23.3)	35 (40.7)
Unsatisfactory	4 (4.7)	4 (4.7)
Total	86 (100)	86 (100)

Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

*Based on data from the SC Department of Education, November 30, 2001.

- Two districts were rated Excellent (Lexington Five and York Four).

- Four districts were rated Unsatisfactory (Florence Four, Hampton Two, Jasper and Lee).

Initial analyses of report card ratings results for 2000-2001 were performed by merging currently available school and district ratings data with poverty indices and per pupil expenditures. These preliminary analyses are based on measures of association between variables (correlations); it is important to keep in mind that just because two measures are strongly associated, it does not necessarily mean that one causes the other.

- Initial findings for school districts:
 - ✓ Absolute and improvement ratings are not significantly related to each other;
 - ✓ Absolute ratings have a significant but moderate ($r=-0.385$) negative correlation with per pupil expenditures; there is thus some tendency for districts having higher per pupil expenditures to have lower absolute ratings, which may reflect additional resources such as Title 1 which are targeted toward high poverty and low achieving schools;
 - ✓ Improvement ratings are not significantly related to per pupil expenditures;
 - ✓ Absolute ratings are significantly negatively correlated with the poverty index ($r=-0.855$);
 - ✓ Improvement ratings are not significantly related to district poverty indices;
 - ✓ Per pupil expenditures are significantly related to district poverty ($r=0.494$); higher expenditures are associated with higher poverty levels.
- Initial analyses of school data reveal similar patterns as in district data, but specific relationships vary by school level (elementary, middle, or high).

Technical Assistance to Underperforming Schools

§59-18-1500 of the Education Accountability Act of 1998 outlines the technical assistance programs that will be provided to unsatisfactory and below average schools. Each unsatisfactory school will receive, and each below average school can request these programs. The specific programs include external review teams, retraining grants, homework centers, teacher specialists on site, and principal specialists.

During the 2000-2001 school year, the state served 28 schools in seven school districts. These 28 schools were chosen on the basis of being part of the seven impaired school districts identified by the State Department of Education in 1998.

During the spring of 2001, the State Department of Education developed a plan to implement technical assistance at the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year in anticipation of the release of the first school report cards. In the process of developing the plan, it became apparent that budget constraints would prevent full implementation of the technical assistance components in EAA. The SDE developed a system to provide technical assistance to 73 schools they expected to rate unsatisfactory on the first report card. The plan established a tier system, with schools whose absolute score was less than 1.9 classified as Tier 1 schools, schools scoring 1.9 and 2.0 were listed as Tier 2 schools, and schools scoring 2.1 as Tier 3 schools. The SDE system also established two new technical assistance positions – curriculum specialists and lead principals. Tier 1 schools would receive curriculum specialists and lead principals in addition to the other technical assistance programs. Tier 2 and Tier 3 schools would be served by curriculum specialists operating out of the hubs. In Spring 2001, the General Assembly passed a proviso implementing the SDE plan.

Implementation of the plan began with the new school year. All 73 schools expected to be unsatisfactory received homework centers, funded by grants of \$25,000 per school. The grants are provided through the Office of School Safety and pay for transportation of students, teacher salaries and other operating expenses. The goal of the program is to provide students in need of additional time at school with after-school instruction.

During the fall semester, each of the 73 schools received a visit by an external review. The review teams for Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools were conducted by teams of three educators, business leaders, and community leaders. Tier three schools received review teams staffed by SDE personnel. The review teams met with school personnel, community leaders, parents and school district leaders and reviewed all aspects of the school and submitted a report to the State Board of Education outlining the needs of the schools. The report is then used to revise the school's School Renewal Plan to address the deficiencies noted at the school.

As a direct result of the report provided by the review team, the school develops a plan for professional development for school personnel. The plan is submitted to the SDE for approval, and the activities approved by the SDE are funded through retraining grants. Schools receive \$638 for each certified person on staff. The average cost of the retraining grant per school is \$36,000. The retraining grants are to be expended on activities that should lead to long term changes at the school in a number of areas, including school climate, instruction, curriculum development, and strategic planning. The Accountability Division each year carries out a review of the effectiveness of each school's retraining grant program.

Teacher specialists on site (TSOS) are provided as part of the technical assistance program. The teacher specialists help teachers with instruction and offer professional development on an as need basis. Teacher specialists conduct model lessons, assist with planning, and give assistance with development of classroom activities. Each elementary school is eligible for one teacher specialist per grade at the school. Middle and high schools are eligible for a teacher specialist in each of the four core subject areas. For the 2001-2002 school year, the SDE anticipated hiring up to 425 teacher specialists. The number of qualifying applications did not reach that figure, and for the 2001-2002 school year, the SDE placed 145 teacher specialists in 73 schools. However, over 100 teacher specialist on site positions went unfilled. In an effort to fill these positions in the future, the SDE has begun a recruitment program statewide. Teacher specialists on site cost an average of \$679,946 per elementary school and \$492,964 per middle and high school. The primary expense for the teacher specialists on site is salary. A formal evaluation of the TSOS program has not been completed but the evaluation system is under development.

The principal specialist program is the least used of the assistance programs. The average cost of a principal specialist is \$124,790. For 2001-2002, there are two principal specialists. Those two principal specialists are at Tier 1 schools. At the other eight Tier 1 schools, the SDE placed lead principals. Lead principals provide guidance to the principal.

Curriculum specialists have been assigned to each of the ten Tier 1 schools and are available to the Tier 2 and Tier 3 schools through the hubs. Curriculum specialists work to focus the curriculum at the school on the state curriculum standards. The status of the curriculum specialist program is in limbo for the 2002-2003 school year pending a SDE decision on available funding.

Upon the release of the first school report cards in December, the number of unsatisfactory schools dropped from 73 to 67. More than half of the 73 expected unsatisfactory schools rated higher, but 29 middle and high schools were added to the unsatisfactory list. The schools added to the list will receive review teams in the spring of 2002, and TSOS will be assigned to each for next year.

The challenge of the technical assistance program is to find the available funding for both below average and unsatisfactory schools. The TSOS program is also a challenge, as many school districts do not like losing their best teachers to other school districts. In addition, the evaluation of each component of the technical assistance will take time, at least three years. Another

challenge facing the program is keeping schools that move out of the program from slipping back in.

Each year the EOC evaluates the retraining grants given to schools is districts identified as in greatest need of technical assistance, and when the rating system is fully implemented, to schools identified as Below Average or Unsatisfactory. Generally, the schools have had insufficient time to institutionalize the new learning; however, few of the schools provided teachers with time for feedback and practice (a finding similar to that found in the statewide professional development study). Confounding success of the retraining grants and the consistent implementation of new knowledge and skills are the principal and teacher turnover rates. Over half of the schools had different principals in 1999-2000 from 1998-1999. Teacher turnover rates hovered near 30 percent in many of the schools. Instability negatively impacts the long-range plans of the school and progress in student achievement. Teacher turnover also lessens the effectiveness of the Retraining Grant program because teachers are not able to apply the knowledge they gain through the professional development activities before they go to another district to teach.

Gaps in Technical Assistance

There are gaps in the technical assistance model defined under the EAA. If the improvement strategies are limited to those specifically provided in the EAA, then there are no strategies to address the full structure of decision-making at the district level. Improving the quality of board and central administrative decision making is omitted from the statutory menu of improvement strategies. Systemic change requires that the entire system be addressed. The technical assistance model also relies heavily on teacher specialists assigned to each school. In a period of teacher shortages statewide, the State Department of Education may have difficulty placing significant number of teacher specialists without creating problems in other SC schools. Alternative, but equally effective, strategies may be necessary in selected settings.

The Functioning of the Public Education System

In April 1999 the South Carolina Supreme Court declared that the SC Constitution included an affirmative duty to provide adequate schooling. The opinion of the Court provides that "The South Carolina Constitution's education clause required the General Assembly to provide the opportunity for each child to receive a minimally adequate education." The Court continued by defining a minimally adequate education required by the Constitution "to include providing students adequate and safe facilities in which they have the opportunity to acquire:

1. the ability to read, write and speak the English language, and knowledge of mathematics and physical science;
2. a fundamental knowledge of economic, social and political systems, and of history and governmental processes; and
3. academic and vocational skills."

Source: SC School Boards Association, 1999

Communication Strategies

The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee continued its charge under the EAA to apprise the public of the status of public schools and the importance of high standards for academic performance for public school students. The public awareness campaign in 2001 focused on communication strategies to help South Carolinians effectively prepare for the release of the first South Carolina school and district report cards. This focus responded to the apprehension among education and business leaders about how the general public and the media would react to school ratings and other report card information. In order for communities to use the report cards as tools for change, people must understand the information presented and how to use the information to create positive and sustainable change. The EOC embarked on a school and district report card education tour around the state, which included the following:

- Information workshops in each of the state's 46 counties with a cross-section of leaders identified by school districts, chambers of commerce, and educational organizations;
- Twelve regional train-the-trainer workshops during the summer with more than 250 business leaders from across the state identified by partnering organizations including the State Chamber of Commerce, the S.C. Manufacturer's Association, and the Urban Chambers;
- Seventeen regional workshops during the summer with more than 900 educators on how to communicate their school and district report cards before and after their release;
- An information briefing in August for members and staff of the South Carolina General Assembly;
- Four regional information workshops in October workshops with reporters and editors from print and broadcast media invited by the S.C. Press Association and the S.C. Broadcaster's Association; and
- Informational meetings in November with the editorial boards from five of the state's largest daily newspapers.

Other activities included:

- The development of support and informational materials: A Don't Fail Your Children: School and District Report Cards Communications Tool Kit was written and produced for educators and business leaders to help them effectively promote and use the results of school and district report cards;

- A Partnership with SCETV to produce and air two statewide programs: The first program aired in August and featured the five components of the EAA. The second program was a live, one-hour broadcast in October and featured information on the purposes and content of the school and district report cards.;
- The redesign of the EOC website to make it more user friendly;
- Publication of two booklets: "Tips For Businesses To Help Schools Succeed" and "Tips For Communities To Help Schools Succeed"; and
- Publication of a "Learning Matters" newsletter to summarize findings of EOC research projects and studies.

The EOC committee's work in the area of public awareness for 2002-2003 will be focused on supporting and sustaining the state's progress made towards higher student achievement through effective accountability efforts. A long-range communications plan will be developed using the results provided in the statewide public opinion survey referenced earlier in this report. The survey, conducted by MarketSearch Corporation, assesses the awareness and impact of EOC communications efforts among school, business, community, and religious leaders throughout the state. In addition, the study provides general insight on their perceptions of education in South Carolina, awareness of and support for the EAA, the EOC and its direction; the state's ability to achieve the 2010 goal, their level of involvement in schools and willingness to become involved. Respondents were asked about their level of current and past involvement in schools. They expressed strongly that accountability cannot be limited to the schools. Community leaders overwhelmingly believe that improvements will be made only if everyone is involved. This includes elected officials, teachers and administrators, parents and students, local businesses, and other community leaders. Respondents state that many leaders, parents, and businesses are willing to become more involved, they just need to be asked.

Survey results highlight several directives to incorporate into the EOC's public awareness plan:

- Expand knowledge and involvement of opinion leaders at the local level and state levels;
- Continue to provide tools to education and community leaders focusing on building support, involvement and engagement in building successful schools;
- Increase visibility and focus on progress and methods for improving student achievement; and
- Create and lead coalitions of student achievement advocates.

Other Studies and Reviews Required by Law

Proviso 1.47 of the General Appropriations Act The proviso requires the Education Oversight Committee and the State Board of Education to review the accountability reports for special schools. The proviso provides:

(SDE: Special Schools Oversight) Special schools and school districts receiving appropriations in Part IA, Section 1 or 1A, to include the Governor's School for Science and Math, Governor's School for Arts and Humanities, Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School, John de la Howe School, School for the Deaf and Blind, Felton Lab, Department of Juvenile Justice, and Palmetto Unified School District 1 shall submit their prior year annual accountability report to the State Board of Education and the Education Oversight Committee by October 1 of the current year. The State Board of Education and the Education Oversight Committee shall jointly review each report.

An ad hoc committee including three representatives of each body has been organized to review the 2000 and 2001 accountability reports. Reports of the reviews are shared with the EOC and SBE and provided to members of the General Assembly through its leadership. Each of these schools receives a report card under the provisions of the Education Accountability Act.

Class Size Reduction The Education Accountability Act incorporates funding for reductions in class size. As provided in §59-63-65, "The Department of Education, working with the Accountability Division, will develop a plan for evaluating the impact of this initiative and report to the Education Oversight Committee no later than December 1, 2001." The plan for evaluation was outlined and initiated in 1999. The evaluation was limited in that data specific to the evaluation were not collected; rather historical records from a limited number of school districts were examined. The SDE review concluded the following:

- The funding has supported reductions in class size. While students participating in their free and reduced price lunch program are to be given priority, statewide data also show an increase in reduced size classes for students not participating in the lunch program;
- First grade students from small classes (in the limited sample) performed better on the MAT-7 tests than did those in medium or larger classes;
- Students who had been in small classes in the first grade performed better on the second grade MAT-7 in reading and math than did their counterparts who had been in medium or larger classes;
- Students enrolled in the smallest sized classes for both first and second grades exhibited larger test score gains than students enrolled in the largest sized classes for first and second grade;
- In the limited sample, the performance on MAT-7 by students in small classes only during the second grade suggests that they derived no benefit from being in small classes. In fact, student from medium-sized classes had the highest mean scores on the second grade MAT-7;
- Statewide PACT performance for third grade favored students from larger classes. These results may be impacted by factors other than class size; and
- Reduced class size has a positive impact by reducing the performance gaps between white and nonwhite students and between those participating in free or reduced price lunches and those not.

The SDE has recommended the following:

- [Based upon reviews of the literature and studies conducted in other states] Funding for class size reduction be continued;

- A comprehensive evaluation of class size with attention to behavior, teacher qualifications, instructional strategies, curriculum, etc.;
- Class size reduction efforts should be focused in the primary grades (kindergarten through grade two); and
- Clear and comprehensive guidelines must be developed to assist schools with class size reduction implementation.

Teacher Loan Program

The Teacher Quality Act of 2000 requires the EOC to "review the [SC Teacher] loan program annually and report to the General Assembly" (§59-26-20 (j), SC Code of Laws of 1976, as amended.) The Teacher Loan Program is established within the Education Improvement Act of 1984. The program is intended to provide loans enabling qualified state residents to attend South Carolina public or private colleges and universities for the purpose of becoming certified teachers employed in areas of critical need. Critical need is defined as a critical geographic or certification area. A percentage of the loan is cancelled by fulfillment of the teaching requirement. The Teacher Loan Program is exemplary of programs offered in almost every state and is linked to similar efforts at the federal level. The SC Student Loan Corporation administers the Program.

The initial EOC review of the Teacher Loan Program is focusing on four aspects of the program: (1) a description of the program; (2) a description of the applicant and recipient populations; (3) the utilization of repayment and cancellation options; and (4) the degree to which program participants are represented among current public school teachers.

The report of the initial review is expected in June 2002.

Review and monitor the implementation and evaluation of the Education Accountability Act and Education Improvement Act programs

The Education Oversight Committee, acting through the Subcommittee on the EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee, identifies EIA programs for evaluation. Reports on the Teaching of African American History and the Advanced Placement Program have been published.

1. Report on the Advanced Placement Program: At the request of the EIA Subcommittee of the Education Oversight Committee, a study on the Advanced Placement Program established by the Education Improvement Act of 1984 was conducted in accordance with §59-19-110. The study found that the Advanced Placement Program implemented by South Carolina in 1984 is a vital part of South Carolina's total educational program. The number of students participating in the Advanced Placement Program has increased by 380 percent since 1984, the number of examinations taken has increased by 478 percent, and the percentage of students scoring 3 or higher on the examinations has increased since 1984. Furthermore, South Carolina has the highest percentage of high schools participating in the Advanced Placement Program in the Southeast, and the fourth highest rate in the nation. In recent years, however, participation and examination rates have stagnated, and African American students make up less than 15 per cent of the student enrollment. Recommendations resulting from the study to the State Department of Education included: establish specific goals for the program, increase the number of African American students taking the courses through an incentive program, increase professional development for teachers, and school districts should strengthen instruction and vertical alignment to better prepare students in grades 7-10 to take Advanced Placement courses. As a result of this study, the South Carolina Council for the Social Studies developed professional development opportunities for social studies teachers of Advanced Placement courses in an effort to improve instruction and achievement in Advanced Placement social studies courses.

2. Report on the Black History Program: At the request of the EIA Subcommittee of the Education Oversight Committee, a study on the Black History Program established by the Education Improvement Act of 1984 was conducted in accordance with §59-19-110. The study found that most teachers are aware of the requirement in EIA to teach Black History, and that most schools are teaching some Black History. However, the study also found that most teachers lacked adequate training and preparation for teaching Black History and that often the teaching of Black History was confined to the month of February, Black History Month. Recommendations to the State Department of Education from the study included: provide more professional development and materials for teachers; provide an annual conference on the teaching of African-American History; ensure that Black History is included in the curriculum standards and ensure that the assessments based on those standards include questions relating to Black History.
3. The Child Development Program for Four-Year-Olds is a two-year study of the child development program established in 1984 as a component of the Education Improvement Act. The study, conducted under contract by the University of South Carolina College of Education, is structured to describe the program's critical components and the effectiveness of each component; examine professional preparation and development and, through intensive observation, determine the degree of program effectiveness. The study began in Fall 2001; results are to be published in Summer 2003.
4. The Teacher Specialist on Site Program is a core technical assistance strategy outlined in the Education Accountability Act. The EOC has initiated a three-year study of the program examining the following questions:

Does student achievement improve in schools assigned teacher specialists?

- How have school ratings changed over time?
- How has the performance of cohorts of students changed over time?
- Have students performed at higher levels, as determined through performance categories and/or scale scores?
- What are the changes in achievement patterns among different demographic groups of students, sorted by economic status, racial/ethnic group, disability status, and gender?
- If there are variations in improvement among schools with teacher specialists, what factors have contributed to those variations?
- Have schools with teacher specialists improved at similar or different rates than schools without teacher specialists?
- Are there differences among the tiers of technical assistance; that is, are there differences among schools staffed with principal specialists, principal leaders and curriculum specialists or combinations? How do responsibilities and decision-making differ among the tiers?
- Are there differences in improvement associated with the professional characteristics of the assigned teachers (e.g., certification, degrees, and/or years of experience)?

Are there changes in the school community and /or culture during the years with teacher specialists?

- What are the changes in teacher stability?
- Are there changes in other information on the school profile that can be linked to the work of teacher specialists?
- How are teacher specialists received by faculty, administrative staff and how has the nature of the reception changed over time?
- How has the work of the teacher specialists supported the school improvement plan and the professional development program in the school?

- Is the capacity of the school to address individual student achievement increased?

How has the teacher specialist program impacted upon the instructional skills and professional growth of the teachers involved?

- Have there been improvements in classroom practices to include instructional planning, classroom management, differentiation of instruction, and other behaviors that impact learning?

How has the program functioned over time?

- How have the intended responsibilities been fulfilled over time?
- What is the relationship among teacher specialists, school administration and the school faculty?
- How are school personnel prepared for the technical assistance?
- How have teacher specialists been supported by the SDE and with what effect?
- Have teacher specialists changed roles in their original district, worked in geographically close settings or moved to new areas? Why or why not?
- What is the turnover rate among teacher specialists and why is there turnover?
- What is the quality of professional development given to teacher specialists?

What are the unintended consequences of the teacher specialist program?

- What career goals are teacher specialists realizing by joining the program; what goals do they have after the program?
- Has the program offered an incentive to remain in teaching?
- What is the impact on student achievement at the schools from which the teacher specialists transfer?

Local Capacity to Reach National Levels of Achievement

1. Many of the efforts to reach national levels of achievement are affected by local conditions in school districts. One area of interest in the state is local funding. To better understand the effects of local funding on student achievement, the Education Oversight Committee commissioned a study on fiscal autonomy, or the authority a local school district has on establishing the tax rates for the district. The study, conducted by Harry Miley and Associates, focused on whether fiscal autonomy of a school district impacted student achievement and/or the rate at which local taxes increased. The study found that South Carolina is one of two states nationally with a wide range of taxing authority by school districts. Twenty-three school districts in South Carolina have total fiscal autonomy, 31 districts have limited authority, five districts have a statutory cap, and 27 districts have no authority. There is great variation among those districts with limited authority as well. The study found that there was no direct relation between fiscal authority and either student achievement or increased taxation. Despite these findings, the report recommended fiscal autonomy should be given to all South Carolina school districts to provide uniformity in the ability to respond to changing state requirements, to match funding with the growing accountability facing school boards, and to be consistent with "home rule." The report also suggested that the fiscal decisions need to be given to the school boards because they are the governmental entity closest to the schools and that they should know best the fiscal needs of the schools.
2. Another local issue affecting efforts to reach national levels of achievement is district organization. In an effort to understand how school district organization can and does affect student achievement and fiscal economies, the Education Oversight Committee commissioned a study on district organization by Harry Miley and Associates. The study, done in collaboration with EOC staff, will focus on six tasks: a historical overview of school districts in South Carolina and the nation, a GIS (Geographical Information System) study of South Carolina school districts, an educational effectiveness evaluation,

an organizational scale and fiscal efficiencies review, a community of interest issue survey, and other organizational scale issues. The study has begun and is due for completion in early 2003.

3. Also affecting local efforts to reach national levels of achievement is the budget situation in South Carolina. The economy in South Carolina has entered a recession resulting in reduced income. Faced with declining revenues, the Budget and Control Board ordered an immediate budget cut in November of 4 percent in the general fund budget. The State Department of Education passed the cut on to the school districts. In addition, the decline in sales tax revenue affected the EIA fund, resulting in additional cuts in programs funded through EIA dollars. School districts also were faced with the reduction in these funds. The budget cuts affect the hiring and retention of teachers, the purchase of textbooks and other instructional materials and travel. Several school districts are facing a mid-year reduction in force of teachers and several are even facing bankruptcy. The budget cuts threaten the funding of intervention measures required by EAA and the advancements in achievement in recent years.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to heighten the success of South Carolina's educational improvement efforts:

1. Improving the level of achievement through full implementation of standards-based instruction must drive the use of time, personnel and funds. Full implementation includes fostering an academic culture that promotes high levels of achievement for all students, limiting the use of state funds to those instructional materials that are aligned with the standards, development and institutionalization of professional development programs focusing on teaching the standards, work with teachers to design effective classroom assessments aligned to the standards, and assignment of homework that reinforces and extends what has been taught in schools.
2. Assistance and remediation for students must be aligned with the academic content standards and offered in a manner so as to realize the positive impact of state investments in assistance programs including Act 135 allocations, summer school, academic plans, teacher specialists on site and retraining grants.
3. Particular efforts must be made to address the gap in the achievements of students of different racial/ethnic or socio-economic groups and the drastic decline in student performance that begins in the middle grades.
4. The expectations of high schools must be clarified to ensure that students are guaranteed the broadest opportunities. South Carolina cannot prosper with a system that leaves graduates less than 95 percent of its students. Curriculum, instruction and assessments must be consistent with the highest expectations.
5. Communication must be fostered and improved among parents, teachers and communities so that the potential of individual children and the state can be realized.
6. An interactive, multi-agency data system should be implemented to ensure that factors impacting on student achievement could be explored fully at all system levels.

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