

“READ YOUR WAY TO THE BIG GAME” SC Students participate in a BIG way



**SC EDUCATION
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

2016 ANNUAL REPORT
(pursuant to § 59-6-10)

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

current February 1, 2016

Neil Robinson, Charleston (*Chair*)
Danny Merck, Easley (*Vice Chair*)
Anne Bull, Lexington
Bob Couch, Columbia
Mike Fair, Greenville
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John Matthews, Jr., St. Matthews
Joseph H. Neal, Hopkins
Molly Spearman, Columbia (*ex-officio*)
Patti Tate, Rock Hill
Ellen Weaver, Columbia

Individuals serving on the EOC during 2015:

Margaret Anne Gaffney, Lexington
Deb Marks, Columbia
David Whittemore, Easley (*Chair*)



Rep. Rita Allison, Chair of the House Education and Public Works Committee; EOC Executive Director Melanie Barton; EOC Chairman David Whittemore; and EOC Vice Chairman Dr. Danny Merck accept the 2015 Early Childhood Champions of Children Award. The EOC was honored for its work on behalf of young children.

“The committee recognizes that an investment in a child’s education early is critical to making an impact in the future. We are pleased to be recognized by the Institute for such a prestigious honor.” -- David Whittemore, EOC former Chairman

Reporting Facts

REPORT OF MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENTS IN SC

The EOC released its first report on military-connected children in March 2015. Federal-connected students are children “residing on Indian lands, military bases, low-rent housing properties, or other Federal properties and, to a lesser extent, concentrations of children who have parents in the uniformed services or employed on eligible Federal properties who do not live on Federal property.” Children who have at least one parent or guardian who is military connected represent a group within the broader category of federal-connected children.

The estimated number of school-age students in South Carolina with a parent in the military varies, with the highest recent count being 23,710 in 2012. However, school districts reported 7,853 in 2014.

School districts are eligible for additional Federal funding based on the number of Federally connected students (including military connected students) they educate, although the number of military-connected children is under-reported by S.C. school districts. In order to qualify for Federal Impact Aid monies, school districts must have at least 400 Federally-connected children, or such children must represent at least three percent of the district’s average daily attendance. By analyzing and reporting the number of military connected students, school districts can better understand their student population and develop services (such as counseling and support groups) that will address unique needs of military connected students. During FY 2012-13, twelve S.C. school districts received more than \$2.3 million in Federal Impact Aid dollars.

Although absentee rates on average are higher, military connected students achieve **higher** levels on state assessments than their non-military peers. For the SC Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS), given in grades 3-8, military connected students consistently have a higher percentage of students that score *Met* or *Exemplary*, in all grade levels and for all subjects. For Mathematics and Reading & Research the difference is typically near 15 percent, and for Science the difference is typically near 17 percent. On the end-of-course assessments, the average score for military connected students was typically six points **higher** than the average score for all South Carolina students, regardless of subject area or grade level.

Percent Met or Exemplary on SC PASS 2014 Reading and Research and Math -- Military-Connected Students in SC and All Students in SC (Grades 3-8)

Mathematics			Reading & Research		
# of Military Connected Students Tested -- Grades 3-8	% of Military Connected Students Scoring <i>Met</i> or <i>Exemplary</i>	% of ALL SC Students Scoring <i>Met</i> or <i>Exemplary</i>	# of Military Connected Students Tested -- Grades 3-8	% of Military Connected Students Scoring <i>Met</i> or <i>Exemplary</i>	% of ALL SC Students Scoring <i>Met</i> or <i>Exemplary</i>
3,083	82.3%	66.7%	3,081	86.4%	71.1%

Summary of Findings

1. Data about military connected students are insufficient at both the national and state levels.
2. When compared to Department of Defense data, military connected students are underreported in South Carolina. In 2012, the Department of Defense reported there were 23,710 military connected students (ages six through eighteen), in the state. School district data indicates there were 7,853 students enrolled in grades 1 through 12 in 2014 and 6,175 in 2013. This data only reflects military connected students enrolled in public schools. It does not include students enrolled in Department of Defense (DoD) schools, private schools or students who are homeschooled. Data for military connected, homeschooled, and private school students are not collected at the state level.
3. In South Carolina, military connected students in middle and high school have higher absence rates than military connected students in elementary school. There do not appear to be differences between the attendance rates of students with deployed parents compared to students whose parents are not deployed, and there do not appear to be any differences by the type of service the parent is affiliated with (Active Duty, Reserve, or National Guard).
4. Military connected students achieve higher levels on state assessments than their non-military peers. For the SCPASS assessment, military connected students consistently have a higher percentage of students that score *Met* or *Exemplary*, in all grade levels and for all subjects. For Mathematics and Reading & Research the difference is typically near 15 percent, and for Science the difference is typically near 17 percent. On the end-of-course assessments, the mean

score for military connected students was typically 6 points higher than the mean score for all South Carolina students, regardless of subject area or grade level.

5. The on-time graduation rate reports the percentage of students who earn standard high school diplomas and who graduate in four years or less from high school. The definition identifies a cohort of ninth graders who enroll for the first time in high school and determines what percentage of 9th grade cohort received a diploma four or less years later. Students are removed from the cohort when they transfer to other degree-granting institutions or programs, and students who transfer into a school are added to the cohort. For our military connected students, neither a specific ninth grade cohort for military connected children could be identified nor could the EOC determine transfers into or out of a specific cohort. However, the overall graduation rate for 546 students identified as military connected was 97% for school years 2013 and 2014.

Recommendations

1. Consider unique challenges of military students in an academic setting. With better data, schools and districts should establish flexible attendance policies that take into account student attendance immediately prior to or after a parent/caregiver deployment. Sumter County School District developed a district-wide attendance policy that considers particular attendance needs of military connected students. Similar policies should be considered by districts for implementation.
2. PowerSchool is a web-based, student information system used by all S.C. school districts. Current PowerSchool "Parent Military Status" field should be revised to: a. better reflect all criteria for qualification for federal impact aid as described in Section 8003(b). Districts could potentially receive federal money to meet the educational needs of students with at least one parent who is federally connected. For example, children whose parents work on federal property (such as the Veterans Administration Hospital) may be counted as part of the federal-connected student population at the school or district level. b. provide more information regarding students that may be helpful for school staff. PowerSchool's Option 07 reads "The student's Parent or Guardian died while on active duty within the last year" and Option 08 reads "The student's Parent or Guardian was wounded while on active duty within the last year." It would be helpful to guidance counselors and social workers to know if a student has a parent or guardian who died or was wounded even if it occurred more than one year ago.
3. Schools and school districts in South Carolina need to enter more information in PowerSchool for military connected students to: (1) better meet their educational needs, (2) better inform provision of support services such as counseling and peer support, and (3) potentially provide additional federal Impact Aid revenue if threshold requirements are met.



TEACHER LOAN PROGRAM REPORT

The EOC conducted its annual evaluation of SC Teacher Loan Program in June 2015. The program continues to fulfill the statutory mission to attract individuals into the teaching profession and into areas of critical need as measured by the annual increase in applications and in the number of Teacher Loan Program recipients teaching in public schools in South Carolina. New findings and recommendations in this year's report highlight the growing shortage of teachers:

Findings

1. In 2014-15, there were 2,219 individuals who graduated from a South Carolina teacher education program; however, there were nearly 5,300 teachers who left their classrooms. The gap between the number of teachers leaving the classroom and the number graduating from a South Carolina teacher education program is growing. This state trend is occurring nationally as well.
2. In 2013-14, state teacher education programs provided one-third of the new teacher hires. Another 30 percent of the hires came from another state, new graduates from teacher education programs in others, or through alternative certification programs.
3. In 2013-14 the number of applications to the Teacher Loan Program, 1,426, declined for the second consecutive fiscal year. Consequently, the number of loans approved also declined to 1,109.

- For the first time since 1986-87 no funds were used from the Revolving Loan Fund to supplement the EIA appropriation. At the end of Fiscal Year 2013-14, the balance in the Revolving Loan Fund was \$13,878,579. The Revolving Fund includes monies collected by the South Carolina Student Loan Corporation from individuals who do not qualify for cancellation. And, for the first time since 1986-87, the program had a balance in appropriated funds of \$241,926, at the end of the fiscal year. The total amount of monies loaned in 2013-14 was \$4,517,984, a decline of \$1.1 million from the prior fiscal year. All eligible loans were funded, with the average loan in Fiscal Year 2013-14 being \$4,070.
- Approximately 68 percent of all schools in 2013-14 met the definition of critical need geographic schools.



Recommendations

- To encourage students to choose teaching as a career and make college more affordable, a tiered loan forgiveness approach should be considered. Such a system would provide some form of loan forgiveness to all loan participants who teach in any public school in South Carolina, rather than just those students teaching in a critical need subject or geographic schools. And, if a student teaches in a critical need subject and/or in a critical need school the loan would be forgiven in a shorter period of time.
- The Teacher Loan Advisory Committee and the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) should continue their efforts to engage education partners in publicizing the Teacher Loan Program on their websites and in communication materials. In addition they should explore and implement new marketing and communication strategies to increase the applications to the Teacher Loan Program.

PARENT SURVEY REPORT

The EOC released its annual evaluation of the Parent Survey in May 2015, evaluating the survey distributed in 2014. In 2014 the number of parent surveys completed and returned totaled 59,293, a decline of 7,494 surveys (11.2 percent) from the prior year. SCDE staff note two changes in the period of administration of the parent survey that may have affected the response rate. First, the survey occurred later in the year in 2014 (April 11 through May 9) than in 2013 (February 28 through March 25), and second, because of the later administration, the window of administration included Spring break for some school districts. Despite this decline, the results of the 2014 parent survey demonstrate that parent satisfaction levels with the two characteristics measured - the learning environment and social and physical environment of their child's school—were generally consistent with the prior year's results. Significant changes are estimated as an annual increase or decrease of three or more percent. Satisfaction is defined as the percentage of parents who agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the learning environment, home and school relations, and social and physical environment of their child's school. Parent satisfaction with home and school relations appears to have declined dramatically from 2013 to 2014; however, the number of missing responses for this item increased from 3.4 percent in 2013 to 13.7 percent in 2014. The percentage of parents not satisfied in 2014 was 14.6 percent, a slight increase from 13.3 percent in 2013, which suggests a slight decrease in parental satisfaction with home and school relations.

Characteristic	2014	Mean % (2010-2013)	Difference between 2014 and Mean of three years
Learning Environment	86.7	86.2	0.5
Home and School Relations	71.7	82.1	(10.4)
Social and Physical Environment	84.4	83.6	0.8

SUMMER READING CAMP PARTNERSHIP REPORT

Pursuant to Proviso 1.79 of the 2014-15 General Appropriation Act, *Summer Reading Camps*, the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) was required for evaluate the impact of community partnerships on student reading academic success. To provide additional resources to support the S.C. Read to Succeed Act of 2014, the South Carolina Legislature allocated \$700,000 for the 2014-15 school year for developing and supporting community partnerships with school districts to provide after-school programs and summer reading camps that utilize volunteers, mentors, and tutors to support struggling readers in elementary schools across South Carolina.

Recognizing the effects of the summer slide as well as stagnant student performance in reading, in 2014 the South Carolina Legislature was committed to interventions designed to help high poverty, low achieving students. From the perspective of policymakers, grant funders, educators and parents, the primary goal of summer learning and after-school programs is to prevent learning losses that occur over the summer and to add additional time for students learning. With the Read to Succeed Act requiring summer reading camps and Proviso 1.79 providing funds for community partnerships for after-school and summer reading camps, there was a tremendous opportunity to more effectively and efficiently coordinate services among and between school districts and community partners for students in need of additional reading instruction.

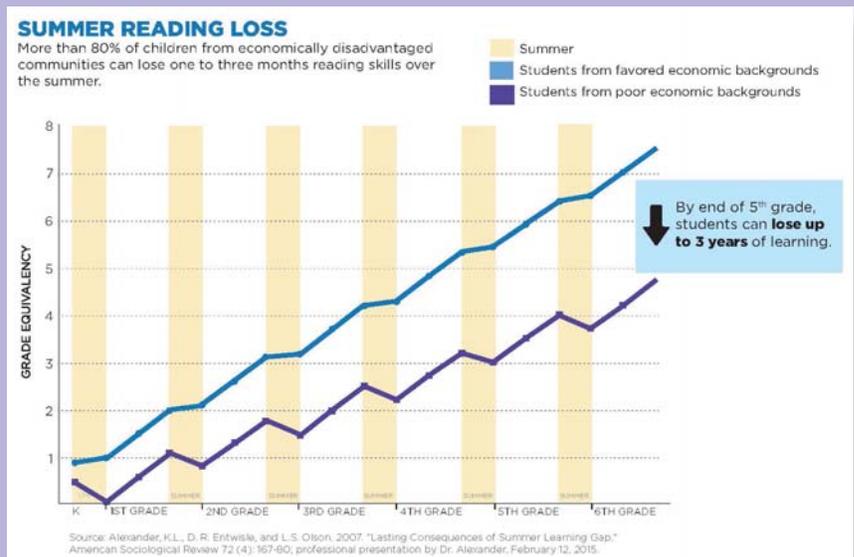
In cooperation with the South Carolina Department of Education, the South Carolina After School Alliance was charged with the responsibility of implementing the Summer

Reading Camp Community Partnerships. During the spring and summer of 2015, 15 partnership sites were allocated funds to implement after-school and/or summer programs to provide literacy instruction to improve student performance in reading. The reading partnerships program ended in August 2015. These sites were Boys and Girls Club of the Grand Strand, Boys and Girls Club of Southern Carolina, Boys and Girls Club of Low Country, Boys and Girls Club of Midlands, Boys and Girls Club of the Upstate, Boys and Girls Club of the Pee Dee, Boys and Girls Club of York County, Orangeburg Area Boys and Girls Club, Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club of Anderson, Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club Conway/Horry County, Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club of Greenville, Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club of Sumter, Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club (Nancy M. Thurmond), Fort Jackson Child Youth Services, and Lee County School District. A total of 658 students participated in the program.

The success of the community partnerships showed hundreds of students were provided opportunities to increase reading skills that would not have had the opportunity otherwise. Because each site used a different reading assessment, the collective reading gains could not be determined. Challenges to the implementation of the partnerships included: (1) additional planning time, (2) the need for additional support and guidance in the planning and implementation of the reading program, (3) poor student attendance, (4) using certified teachers in the teaching of reading, and (5) inability to determine reading gains.

Summer Reading Loss

Most students demonstrate a loss during the summer months, however, the “summer slide”, has a greater effect on low income students who lose substantial ground in reading during the summer whereas more affluent students gain reading skills during the same time period. In addition, after-school and summer programs can benefit struggling students of all backgrounds by providing additional time to learn material they did not master during the school year.



EDUCATIONAL CREDIT FOR EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS CHILDREN PROGRAM

Act 92 of 2015 authorized supplemental appropriations for Fiscal Year 2015-16 and provided for other related matters including the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children (ECENC) Program. The ECENC Program was first established in a proviso in Fiscal Year 2013-14. Pursuant to SECTION 9 of Act 92, tax credits totaling \$12 million may be claimed by making contributions to nonprofit scholarship funding organizations or refundable tax credits against income taxes for individuals paying for the tuition for their exceptional needs child to attend an eligible independent school. The cumulative maximum total for credits authorized for individuals who pay tuition for their exceptional needs children may not exceed \$4 million.

Act 92 expressly charges the Department of Revenue with oversight of the nonprofit scholarship funding organizations and the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) with determining if an independent school meets the eligibility requirements for which it may receive contributions from a nonprofit scholarship funding organization for which the tax credit allowed by this proviso is allowed. Specifically, for Fiscal Year 2015-16 the law required:

1. Schools apply to the EOC to participate in the program by August 1;
2. The EOC publish by September 1 on its website the list of independent schools meeting the eligibility requirements and the schools' contact information;
3. The EOC publish by September 1 on its website a list of and contact information for all qualifying nonprofit scholarship funding organizations as determined by the Department of Revenue. In addition, the audit for each nonprofit scholarship funding organization must be published with the list; and
4. The EOC must work with the nine-member advisory committee to make recommendations on the program's

implementation. Appendix B contains the names of the individuals serving on the advisory committee in Fiscal Year 2014-15 and in Fiscal Year 2015-16.

Approved, Eligible Schools

On September 1, 2015 the EOC posted on its website the name, address, telephone number and website address for 101 schools that met the criteria for participation in the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children (ECENC) Program in 2015-16. The advisory committee defined these support levels in the prior fiscal year as follows:

SUPPORT LEVEL I: Traditional school/classroom environment with no specific special education services provided but strives to make needed accommodations for exceptional needs students who struggle in academic areas. **Number of ECENC Schools Approved at Support Level I for 2015-16: 49**

SUPPORT LEVEL II: Traditional school/classroom environment with a specially designed program or learning resource center to provide needed accommodations based on the needs of exceptional needs students. **Number of ECENC Schools Approved at Support Level II for 2015-16: 42**

SUPPORT LEVEL III: A school specifically existing to meet the needs of only exceptional needs students with documented disabilities. **Number of ECENC Schools Approved at Support Level III for 2015-16: 10**

Approved Nonprofit Scholarship Funding Organizations

On August 10, 2015 the EOC posted on its website the name, contact information and audit for the following four nonprofit scholarship funding organizations that had been determined as qualifying by the Department of Revenue. The Department of Revenue directly communicated with the EOC staff the following list of approved nonprofit scholarship funding organizations:

- Advance Carolina SFO
- Donors Enriching Students' Knowledge
- Palmetto Kids FIRST Scholarship Program, Inc.
- St. Thomas Aquinas Scholarship Funding Organization



JOHN DE LA HOWE REPORT

Proviso 7.6 of the 2015-16 General Appropriation Act required the Education Oversight Committee (EOC), the Office of the Inspector General, and the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) to conduct a review of the educational and therapeutic processes and procedures at John De La Howe (JDLH). The report was completed and submitted to the Governor, the Senate Finance Committee and House Ways and Means Committee on January 14, 2016. A summary of the key findings and recommendations follows:

Capacity and Enrollment

- The capacity for JDLH should be 120 students; however, with two residential cottages not currently licensed by the Department of Social Services, the capacity is 104 students.
- Between July 1, 2015 and October 12, 2015, 68 students had been served at JDHL with 57 students still actively enrolled on October 12. JDLH was operating at less than 60 percent capacity. Moreover, there are 22 direct, school-related staff members providing educational services. A middle school teacher instructs an average of 17.8 students per semester. A high school teacher instructs an average of 11.3 students per semester.

Therapeutic Needs, Services and Best Practices

- Research documents that residential treatment programs for children with an extended length of stay, beyond six months, are not in the best interest of the child, family or society. The “average” length of stay for adolescents at John de la Howe is between seven and nine months per student.
- JDLH reports that in 2014 approximately seven percent of students were expelled from their home schools, 85 percent enrolled with documented trauma (death in family and/or friend, physical/sexual abuse, or family separation), and 65 percent have or are being prescribed some form of psychotropic drug. As reported by JDLH, there are serious behavioral needs among the students they serve.
- None of the clinical therapists on staff at JDLH had certification as a LPC (licensed professional counselor), LMFT (Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist), LMSW (Licensed Master’s of Social Work), or LISW-CP (Licensed Independent Social Worker-Clinical Practice). The certification is generally required to diagnosis a student’s behavioral issues.

Educational Services

- Teacher academic schedules (minus the principal’s teaching load) for the core courses show teachers at JDLH teach an average of 17.8 students per semester for middle school with a range of 14-25 and an average of 11.3 students per semester for high school with the range of students of 9-13.

- For the 2014-15 school year, the school at JDLH, L.S. Brice was placed on probation for not meeting all accreditation standards for middle and high school.
- For the 2015-16 school year any deficiency L.S. Brice receives will take the school to “Accreditation Denied.” The JDLH district and school submitted an online compliance document in October 2015 for the 2016 school year accreditation report stating that they were in compliance. SCDE has attempted to verify this status; however, as of December 30, 2015, the deficiencies have not yet been cleared.
- Since 2013 JDLH has improved efforts in collecting student achievement data. However, based upon student academic achievement on the STAR assessment, the majority of students at JDLH are not seeing academic growth in reading and mathematics, despite there being a small student:teacher ratio.
- The Office of Special Education Services (OSES) in the SCDE completed a compliance audit in the fall of 2015. The OSES found that JDLH was not in compliance regarding certain regulatory requirements and is requiring JDLH to complete prescribed corrective actions. At the time of the monitoring visits, four students had active Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). According to the files reviewed by the OSES, only one student had a behavioral intervention plan. Given this school specifically describes itself as a school that enrolls students with behavioral issues, one would expect more students with behavioral intervention plans.

Overall Effectiveness

- There is a lack of measurable data to document many of the services and outcomes of JDLH. Data are collected regarding student academic performance, student conduct, parent/student surveys, etc., but there was no evidence the data are used to make changes for improvements, or if the data are collected and used for continuous improvement.

Options for the Future

- JDLH should consider applying for flexibility allowed to schools and districts under South Carolina law. These include (a) becoming a school of choice (S.C. Code § 59-19-350); (b) becoming a charter school; (c) revising its defined program; and (d) transitioning from being a “school” to being a “program.”
- JDLH might consider elimination of the L.S. Brice School and continuation or expansion of the Wilderness Program as a viable option and effective approach for at-risk youth.
- JDLH could be placed under the auspices of the Department of Juvenile Justice who could use the facility to serve students with documented mental health issues who cannot be incarcerated.

Measuring Change

FULL-DAY 4K REPORT

On January 15, 2016, the EOC released a report evaluating the Child Development Education Program (CDEP), a full-day educational pre-kindergarten program for at-risk four-year-olds. CDEP was established in 2006 as a pilot program for children residing in the plaintiff districts in the school funding lawsuit, Abbeville County School District et al. vs. SC, but was written into permanent law in 2014.

The program is implemented in both public and private centers across the state. School districts can participate voluntarily and are eligible for CDEP funds if the district poverty index is at or above 70 percent. The SC Office of First Steps administers CDEP in private childcare centers located in eligible districts. The report released, the first in a two-part series, documents the expansion of the program; details the results of the CIRCLE assessment given during the 2014-15 school year; and looks ahead, examining how quality in 4K settings can be defined.

The evaluation found that there are approximately 40,755 four-year-olds living in poverty in South Carolina. Fifty-one percent, or 20,667 of these South Carolina four-year-olds, are currently being served in a formal early childhood education program (CDEP, Head Start, or the ABC Voucher Program). In the public school districts that are currently eligible for and participating in CDEP, 6,622 four-year-olds in poverty are not enrolled in these full-day, state or federally funded early learning programs. In districts that have participated for more than one year in CDEP, 83 percent of four-year-olds living in poverty are being served in a program.

District Status	Number of Districts	Total Number of 4-Year-Olds	Number of 4-Year-Olds Served	Number of 4-Year-Olds NOT Served	Percent of Children Served
Participating for more than one year in CDEP	60	23,465	17,093	6,372	83
Participating for first time in 2015-16 in CDEP	4	1,071	821	250	4
Not Eligible or Eligible and Not Participating in CDEP	17	16,219	2,753	13,466	13
TOTAL	81	40,755	20,667	20,088	100

This year’s evaluation also contains a strong focus on programmatic impact, quality and growth. The evaluation examines the following questions:

- Does CDEP impact young children’s learning and their readiness for kindergarten?
- What components constitute high-quality four-year-old kindergarten?
- What does quality look like and how can it be measured? What is the status of quality in CDEP?
- Is CDEP expanding statewide? Are more at-risk four-year-olds being served by formal early childhood education programs?



The full report summarizes findings and recommendations related to quality, CIRCLE results, as well as projections of enrollment and expenditures.

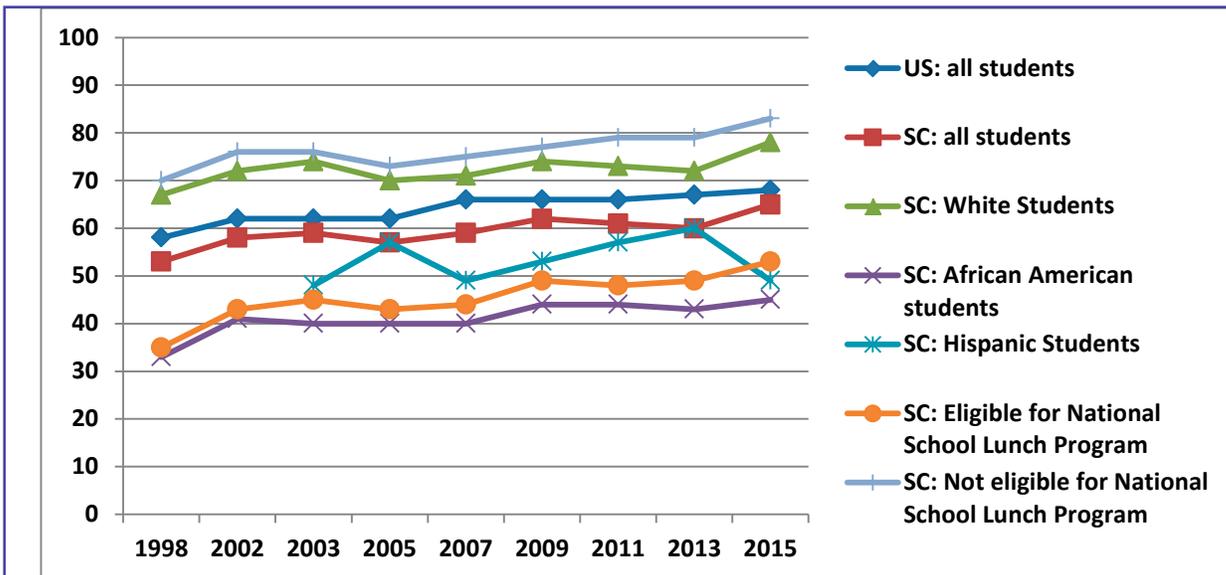
2015 NAEP DATA RELEASED

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America’s students know and can do in various subject areas. Paper-and-pencil assessments are conducted periodically in mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, U.S. history, and in Technology and Engineering Literacy (TEL). NAEP achievement levels are intended to measure how well students’ actual achievement matches the achievement desired of them in different subjects assessed by NAEP. There are three achievement levels for each grade assessed by NAEP (4, 8, and 12): Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. The following definitions apply to all subjects and all grades assessed by NAEP.

- **Basic:** Partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade.
- **Proficient:** 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:** Superior performance.

The 2015 NAEP results for Reading and Math were released this year. Although South Carolina students saw improvements in 4th grade reading scores overall, performance in Math and Reading was relatively stagnant.

NAEP Reading Performance at the *Basic and Above* level, 1998-2015



2015 Quality Counts

Quality Counts, a project of Education Week’s Research Center, issued State Highlights this year. The grading summary for South Carolina is:

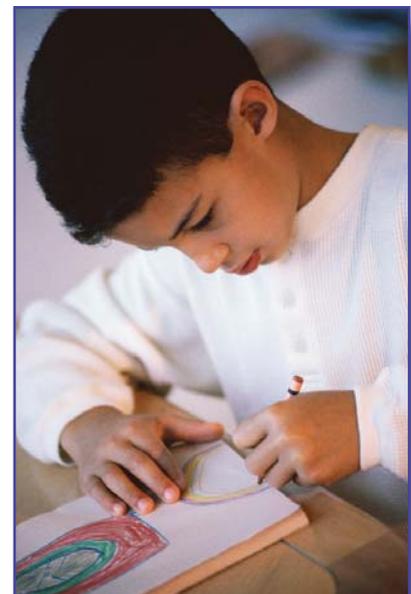
Chance for Success (2015) Grade: C

School Finance (2015): C-

K-12 Achievement (2014): D

OVERALL GRADE: D+

Source: <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2015/shr/16shr.sc.h34.pdf>



RESULTS OF 2015 ACT PLUS WRITING RELEASED

In 2015, all SC 11th graders were given The ACT®, a college readiness exam. In October, the SCDE released results of the assessment. The results of The ACT Plus Writing®, given to 11th graders, show that fewer than half of SC students are meeting benchmarks showing readiness for college in four subject areas. According to ACT, “the benchmarks are scores on The ACT® subject-area tests that represent the level of achievement required for students to have a 50 percent chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher in corresponding credit-bearing first-year college courses.”

Results of The ACT Plus Writing®
Administered to 11th Graders in South Carolina, 2014-15 School Year

College Course	ACT Subject Area Test	ACT College Ready Benchmark	SC Average Scale Score	% SC Students Meeting Benchmarks
English Composition	English	18	16.5	38.7%
College Algebra	Mathematics	22	18.1	21.6%
Social Sciences	Reading	22	18.3	25.8%
Biology	Science	23	18.1	17.9%
	Composite*	NA	17.9	NA

*Composite scores combine the English, Reading, Math, and Science scores. <https://www.act.org/solutions/college-career-readiness/college-readiness-benchmarks/>

2015 WORKKEYS RESULTS RELEASED

In 2015, all SC 11th graders were given WorkKeys®, a career readiness exam. In October, the SCDE released results of the assessment. Results from this exam indicate a student’s readiness for foundational workplace skills, and many employers use the results to choose qualified job applicants for open positions. South Carolina joins three other states – Alabama, Michigan, and Wisconsin – in requiring WorkKeys® testing of all students in a particular grade.

Statewide, 88 percent of all 11th graders taking the assessment earned a National Career Readiness Certificate on WorkKeys®. The table below records the percentage of students in school districts and in schools that received a Bronze or better certificate. One-fourth of all districts had 91 percent or more of its students earn a Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum National Career Readiness Certificate. Approximately 37 percent of high schools had over 91 percent of its students earning the readiness certificate, an important step for young people preparing to further their education, training, or careers. The table below shows how South Carolina students compared with NCRC qualifiers nationally.

Lowest Minimum Score on All Three Assessments:	Qualifies for the Following National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC)	Qualifier Has Skills for the Following % of Jobs in U.S.	% of NCRC Qualifiers by Certificate in U.S. (2006-2011)	% of NCRC Qualifiers by Certificate in SC (2014-15 11th grade administration)
3	Bronze	16%	21%	25%
4	Silver	67%	47%	40%
5	Gold	93%	18%	22%
6	Platinum	99%	1%	0.8%

Promoting Progress

SC COMMUNITY BLOCK GRANT FOR EDUCATION PILOT PROGRAM

Proviso 1.94 of the 2014-15 General Appropriations Act created the SC Community Block Grants for Education Pilot Program, which provided grant opportunities for the purpose of encouraging partnerships that improve student learning among community groups and school districts. The grant also was designed to encourage sustainable partnerships among school districts and community groups.

A six-member review committee composed of representatives from the business and education community appointed by the Executive Director of the SC Education Oversight Committee (EOC) guided the grants process. The final decision on grant awardees was made by the review committee.

The grant opportunity was open to all school districts in South Carolina. Districts with higher poverty indices were given priority. School districts were required to provide a match to the grant on a sliding scale since many high poverty districts

lack the resources to have robust partnerships. Each grant was a one-year grant. The Block Grants for Education Pilot Program made available \$1 million dollars to school districts for this grant opportunity with no grant exceeding \$250,000. The number of grants awarded was up to the discretion of the review committee. Although community partnerships were a focus of the grant, school districts were the lead agencies on the grant would provide reports, summaries and items for the evaluation component of the grant.

The 2015 South Carolina Community Block Grants for Education grant awardees were:

- Beaufort County School District, Beaufort Community Learning Program
- Charleston County School District, Charleston Promise Neighborhood Learning Community
- Clarendon School District 1, STEM Initiative
- Colleton County School District, First Lego League ACE Robotics
- Jasper County School Districts, STEM Afterschool and Summer Enrichment Program.

The five winning school districts were chosen from 37 applications received. The impact of the innovative programs will be measured and reported publicly so that lessons learned could be replicated in other districts in the state.



STUDENT READING SUCCESS GUIDE

Last year, the EOC published the “Student Reading Success Activity Guide”, a resource designed to provide families, tutors, caregivers, and teachers with simple activities to promote literacy among K-3 grade students. The guide was re-designed from material previously published by the Mississippi Department of Education.

Due to high demand, 55,000 copies of the guide have been printed and distributed to all school districts for summer reading camps, school districts upon request, as well as Save the Children programs, public libraries, and county United Ways.

The guide is being used in the professional development of reading tutors working with United Way of the Midlands, Boys and Girls Club reading tutors and volunteers, as well as public library staff working with students in elementary schools.

“READ YOUR WAY TO THE BIG GAME” PARTNERSHIP

In 2015, the EOC launched “Read Your Way to the Big Game,” a partnership with the athletic departments of both the University of South Carolina and Clemson University to motivate and incentivize all elementary and middle school students in South Carolina to read grade level texts.

The “Read Your Way to the Big Game” contest, which provided the opportunity for all elementary and middle school students who met a six-book challenge to qualify for tickets to the Palmetto Bowl, the “big game” between the University of South Carolina and Clemson University football teams. Two students were chosen at random to win two tickets each as well as pre-game passes to the historic match-up, which took place at Williams Brice Stadium in Columbia on November 28, 2015. There will be two student winners; one for the University of South Carolina and one for Clemson University.

This year, 73 percent of schools participated in the contest. The EOC received over 76,000 entries from students. The winners included:

Student Winners: “Read Your Way to the Big Game” Contest

- USC Student Winner: Travija Austin, 4th grader, Ford Elementary (Laurens 55 School District)
- Clemson Student Winner: Lilliana Trejo, 2nd grader, Greendale Elementary (Aiken County School District)

School Winners (had at least 70% student participation, won \$2,000 for their libraries)

- Chesterfield-Ruby Middle School (Chesterfield County School District)
- Iva Elementary (Anderson 3)

Teacher Winners of \$500

- Ms. Monica Wilson, 5K teacher, Bishopville Primary School (Lee County School District)
- Ms. Joni Levesque, 4th grade Math Teacher, Bethel Elementary School (Clover)
- Mr. Eric Hanks, ELA Teacher, River Oaks Middle School (Dorchester 2)
- Ms. Stacey Finch, 1st grade teacher, Chester Park Center of Literacy Through Technology (Chester)
- Mr. Roman Singleton, Teacher, Estill Middle School (Hampton 2)

OVER 456,000 BOOKS READ!!



Winners of Bulletin Board / Door Contest

- Ms. Deborah Palmer, School Library Media Specialist, Sullivan’s Island Elementary (Charleston County School District)
- Ms. Suzanne Baxley, Teacher, Discovery School (Lancaster County School District)

Twenty-nine schools had at least 70 percent of their student population participating in the contest, which required



EOC ISSUES 2016-17 EIA BUDGET AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In December, the EOC adopted budget recommendations for the 2016-17 fiscal year. The programmatic and funding recommendations were designed to accelerate improvements in student and school performance by better preparing students for success in careers or in postsecondary education. Committee members annually make recommendations for the spending of Education Improvement Act (EIA) funds, which are generated by the penny sales tax. In November, the Board of Economic Advisors projected that the EIA will generate \$716 million in total revenues in fiscal year 2016-17, an increase of \$54.9 million over the current year's EIA appropriation base.

Highlights of the recommendations, which were forwarded to the General Assembly and the Governor for consideration during the current legislative session, included:

Supporting Educators: Improving Teacher Salaries

The committee recommended reallocating current, available appropriations to improving the overall teacher salary schedule or to the Rural Teacher Initiative. Unexpended funds from the recurring EIA appropriations for National Board Certification and Teacher Salary Supplement and Fringe Benefits could be reallocated to an initiative to increase the statewide minimum teacher salary for teachers with less than five years of experience. The committee also recommended that an outside expert would be consulted to develop a teacher salary schedule that would develop, attract, and retain high quality teachers.

To further support educators, the committee recommended fully funding individual teacher supply stipends at \$275, up from \$250.

Supporting Educators: Recruiting teachers of STEM

The committee recommended allocating EIA funds to develop an initiative to recruit highly qualified STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) teachers at the secondary levels in rural communities. While student interest in STEM is growing, there is a dwindling supply of teachers in these subject areas.

Student College and Career Readiness: Assist students in their next steps

The EOC supported new funding of \$300,000 for STEM Premier, a digital platform for students to showcase their skills, talents, interests, and assessment scores to colleges and companies. The goal of the initiative is to help students in choosing

their path after graduation. The platform is an innovative, technology-based approach to furthering the goals of the Education and Economic Development Act.

Student College and Career Readiness: Increased funding for Middle Schools that Work and High Schools that Work

The goals of the Middle Schools that Work and High Schools that Work programs are to have 85% of all students meeting college and career ready standards in reading, mathematics and science and achieve a 90 percent graduation rate. Currently, school districts have to absorb much of the \$8,000 cost of the program. The committee recommends a \$1.3 million increase in EIA funds, which would fully fund the programs.

Student College and Career Readiness: Incentivize schools for performance on national industry exams

National industry exams can typically cost as much as \$100 a student, but are very valuable for students who are ready to enter the workforce. The committee recommends a phase in approach, fully instituting the incentive program by FY 2019-20.

Student College and Career Readiness: Initiate a Computer Science Initiative

The EOC recommended that a Computer Science Initiative, a public-private partnership, be implemented in FY2016-17 to determine a timeline for phasing in a requirement that all secondary schools offer computer science. Twenty-seven states allow computer science to count toward high school math or science graduation requirements. Computer science instruction could also be a requirement of each career cluster.

Student College and Career Readiness: Establish College Readiness Benchmarks

The committee recommended that the Commission on Higher Education and the Technical College System adopt benchmarks as college readiness indicators with at least one of the indicators being the college readiness assessment that all 11th graders in South Carolina take. Students scoring at or above the scores indicated would not be required to take remedial courses in English language arts or mathematics and would be allowed to enter into college credit-bearing coursework.

HIGH SCHOOL WORKING GROUP



The EOC asked the staff to engage stakeholders in developing a report on the “Redesign of the High School Experience” for South Carolina students. A High School Task Force was created in January 2016 under the guidance of Dr. Lee D’Andrea, former superintendent for Anderson School District 4, Pendleton. The High School Task Force is expected to complete their work by May 2016. The purpose of the task force is to review the existing status of high schools in South Carolina, discuss current barriers to all students being college and career ready upon graduation, and what would a redesign for high school look like? The task force is charged with considering the following questions:

- What is the current preparation system? How do we know it is not working?
- What results will insure we have a prepared workforce and a system that has choices for students and families? What are the current barriers or system roadblocks?
- Where are there redundancies or gaps? Where are the opportunities?

The High School Task Force is scheduled to include the following presentations as part of their deliberations for recommendations on a Redesign of the High School Experience.

“As America’s Workforce Ages, Here’s where the Jobs Will Be.”

- Over next decade, 6.5% growth in jobs (9.8 million)
- Jobs of the future focus on services for the elderly i.e. health care
- Other growth areas: Construction, Education, Professional & Business Services.

Wall Street Journal, December 8, 2015.

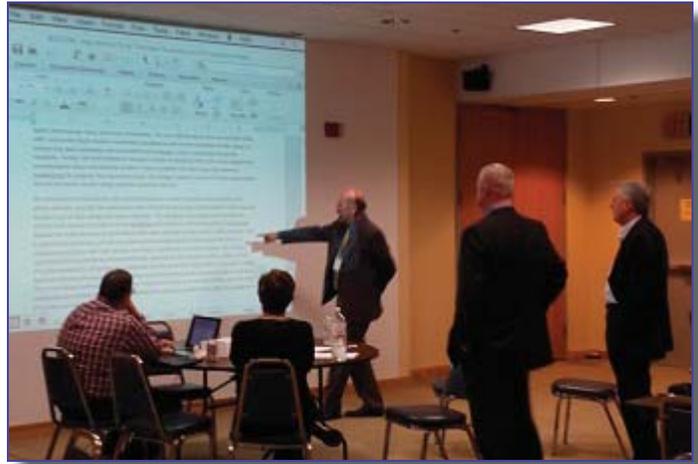
SCHOOL DISTRICT EFFICIENCY REVIEW PILOT PROGRAM

Per Proviso 1.95 of the 2014-15 General Appropriation Act, the EOC contracted with an independent entity to review certain school districts’ central operations with a focus on non-instructional expenditures so as to identify opportunities to improve operational efficiencies and reduce costs for the district. “The review shall include, but not be limited to, examinations of: (1) overhead; (2) human resources; (3) procurement, (4) facilities use and management, (5) financial management; (6) transportation; (7) technology planning; and (8) energy management. The review shall not address the effectiveness of the educational services being delivered by the district.

The review was completed by Tidwell & Associates in June 2015 with reports going to the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee; the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, the Chairman of the House Education and Public Works Committee; and the Governor detailing the findings of the review, including the estimated savings that could be achieved, the manner in which the savings could be achieved, and the districts’ plan for implementation of the recommendations. Four districts, Barnwell 19, Clarendon 1, Lexington 4, and Dorchester 2 -- volunteered and were chosen to participate in the studies. Consulting teams reviewed documents, visited schools and district facilities, held a community feedback session and met with students, parents, school staff, and district leadership and staff. The team reviewed district operations in financial management; overhead/district leadership, organization and management; human resources; procurement/purchasing and warehousing; facilities use and management; transportation; technology planning and management; energy management; and food services.

SOUTH CAROLINA COLLEGE-AND CAREER-READY STANDARDS APPROVED

Pursuant to Act 200 of 2014, passed by the SC General Assembly, the EOC consulted with the State Board of Education to conduct a cyclical review of the previous ELA and math standards. The new South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards in English Language Arts and Math were completed in March 2015. Numerous individuals served as evaluators during the standards review process.



EOC staff members receive award from the SC Council of Teachers of Mathematics

In November, three members of the EOC staff who worked closely with the standards review were awarded the Richard W. Riley Award from the SC Council of Teachers of Mathematics. The award celebrates time, energy, expertise, and commitment towards the improvement of mathematics education in South Carolina.



NEW REPORTING CRITERIA ADDED TO SCHOOL AND DISTRICT REPORT CARDS

New criteria were added to the publication of the school and district report cards, released in November 2015. The following data were collected via the SCDE Summer Survey, a survey administered to school library media specialists statewide, and a technology survey:

- college applications completed
- devices per student
- FAFSA completion
- online course completion
- devices per teacher
- average age of books/electronic media
- bandwidth capacity
- library / media center book / e-Book access
- online course offered
- one-to-one computing
- percent of classrooms with wireless access
- college enrollment



The school and district report cards will be released in an online report card portal format as SC moves toward a joint accountability system.

Challenges Ahead for SC

EOC RELEASES RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT SURVEY OF DISTRICTS AND TEACHERS

At its summer retreat the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) asked the staff to conduct an online survey of school districts to determine what assessments beyond the assessments required by state or federal law were administered in school year 2014-15. There were two components of the survey:

1. Part I was a survey of district instructional personnel to determine what continuous, formative, benchmark, diagnostic or interim assessments were administered district wide in school year 2014-15 and how the results were used. Responses were obtained from 34 districts of the 39 that had agreed to participate, which is 41 percent of the 82 school districts in South Carolina.
2. Part II was a survey of classroom teachers in districts to also determine what assessments they administered in 2014-15, their perceptions of how the assessment results were used and communicated, and for teachers in grades 3 through 8, their preparation for summary assessments used for state and/or federal accountability. Teacher surveys (Part II of the survey) were distributed to the original 39 school districts that had agreed to participate in the survey. Large, urban school districts were slightly over-represented among respondents. Teacher responses were obtained from 37 of these districts; however seven of these districts had fewer than ten respondents. A total of 5,518 teacher responses were used.

District- and school-level assessments

Beyond the requirements of assessment for state and federal accountability, schools and school districts utilize assessment in a variety of ways to support teaching and learning. In general, district personnel indicated that fewer assessments were administered than did teachers, with more substantial differences for grades 3 through 8 and grades 9 through 12. Teachers of students in grades 3 through 8 indicated that they gave the greatest number of assessments, followed by teachers of students in grades 9 through 12, and by teachers of students in Pre-K through grade 2. Although the largest number of assessments reported to be given by grade 3 through 8 teachers was 16, 90 percent of teachers indicated they gave nine or fewer assessments. For teachers of grades 9 through 12, 90 percent of teachers indicated they gave eight or fewer assessments, and for teachers of Pre-K through grade 2, 90 percent of teachers indicated they gave five or fewer assessments.

Summary of Findings

1. In the school year 2014-15, the mean number of hours students spent in testing for state or federal accountability in grade 3 is 2.9 hours, and ranges from 6.6 hours (grade 6) to 6.7 hours (grade 8) for students in grades 4 through 8.
2. In general, district personnel indicated that fewer assessments were administered than did teachers, with more substantial differences for grades 3 through 8 and grades 9 through 12.
3. The median number of assessments teachers reported giving in 2014-15 was two for teachers of Pre-K through grade 2; three for teachers of grades 3 through 8; and two for teachers of grades 9 through 12.
4. The maximum number of assessments teachers reported giving in 2014-15 was nine for teachers in Pre-K through grade 2; 16 for teachers of grades 3 through 8; and 14 for teachers of grades 9 through 12.
5. Both district personnel and teachers perceived that the most important purposes of assessments given in 2014-15 were to inform instruction, to determine student interventions and accelerations, and to inform curriculum decisions. School district personnel placed greater value on the use of assessments to develop professional learning opportunities than did teachers. On the other hand, teachers across all grade levels consistently ranked the uses of assessments for the development of professional learning opportunities as least important.
6. Thirty-six percent of teachers spent one week or less preparing for assessments used for state and/or federal accountability, but 24 percent of teachers spent four weeks of the month before testing preparing for these assessments.
7. The purposes for the testing of students are often not understood by teachers.
8. Teachers do not distinguish among assessments administered for district, state, or federal purposes when judging whether too much assessment is occurring.
9. Among teachers, there is little agreement about who is the primary communicator of assessment results to students and parents.
10. Issues teachers raised in their comments were: (a) the amount of assessment; (b) the redundancy of assessment; (c) the time taken from instruction; (d) the desire to obtain more information from assessment in order to use it effectively and communicate it to others; and (e) the focus on standardized assessments leading to a loss of focus on instruction.

Recommendations

1. Teachers administering assessments should know the purpose of each assessment they administer to students and how each is used to promote the teaching and learning process.
2. Districts should accept the responsibility of educating their teachers on the usage of assessments they elect to administer.
3. As part of the SC Department of Education's commitment to serving school districts, the SCDE should develop communication materials for districts to use regarding state and federal-required testing. Additional materials should be developed to assist teachers in communicating the purposes and results of testing to students and parents.
4. Teacher preparation institutions should evaluate the preparation of novice teachers in how assessment is used as a teaching and learning tool so that future generations of teachers are trained to integrate assessment with teaching and learning.
5. School districts should develop a district assessment plan that promotes continuous improvement of student achievement, and which includes: a. identification of all assessments administered, whether they be at the initiative of the district, state, or federal government; b. justification for administering each assessment, including specification of the purpose of the assessment and the tested population; c. specification of professional development to provide staff the knowledge and skills to utilize the results of assessment to enhance teaching and learning; and d. clear delineation of the responsibilities for the communication of assessment results to appropriate audiences (students, parents, teachers, administrators, and public entities).

Competing Through KNOWLEDGE

A group of top business leaders formed the SC Business Leaders of Higher Education Council to identify ways to ensure South Carolina's two and four year colleges and universities are strong, effective partners in meeting workforce and economic development challenges. The effort, Competing Through Knowledge, released a report that was commissioned by the Darla Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina that found:

Between 2013 and 2030 in SC:

- 553,884 new jobs to be created of which 52% will require higher education
- Percent of ALL jobs requiring higher education will increase from 61.5% in 2013 to 66.7% in 2030
- Shortages in: Healthcare , Management, Education, Business and Financial Operations, and Computers and Mathematics

Are our Students College and Career Ready?

Fall 2013, percentage of freshman who retained scholarship in same institution in Fall of 2014:

- 89.0% Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Recipients
- 51.4% LIFE Scholarship Recipients
- 24.6% HOPE Scholarship Recipients

Remedial Courses: Approximately \$21 million spent on remedial courses at two-year colleges

SC has the 14th highest average debt for students graduating from four-year institutions - \$29,163



Single Accountability System Forthcoming

According to Act 200, the SC Education Oversight Committee (EOC) "must develop and recommend a single accountability system that meets federal and state accountability requirements by the Fall of 2016."

Members and staff of the EOC are working closely with the SC Department of Education to merge the state and federal systems, creating a rigorous accountability system that will benefit all SC students.

ADVISORY GROUPS

SUMMER READING PARTNERSHIP REPORT

Kimberly Carmichael, Columbia
Zelda Quiller Waymer, Columbia
Greg Tolbert, Spartanburg

COMMUNITY BLOCK GRANT PILOT

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Scott Price, Columbia
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Martha Scott Smith, Columbia

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John Lane, Columbia
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Darrell Owings, Spartanburg
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Hope Rivers, Columbia
Ann-Marie Stieritz, Columbia
Helena Tillar, Marlboro
Frances Welch, Charleston
Jimmy Williamson, Columbia

MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENTS REPORT

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Cynthia Hearn, Columbia
Mellanie Jinnette, Columbia
Sharon Lone, Clemson
Susan McPherson, Columbia
Jerry Mitchell, Columbia

SC PARENT SURVEY

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Cynthia Hearn, SCDE

STANDARDS EVALUATION TEAM

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Amy Brant, Lexington
Bill Brown, Columbia

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Michael Cates, Columbia, SC
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TEACHER LOAN REPORT

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FULL-DAY 4K REPORT

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Penny Danielson, Columbia
Mary Lynne Diggs, Columbia
Christine DiStefano, Columbia
Fred Greer, Columbia
Mellanie Jinnette, Columbia
Keller Anne Ruble, Columbia
Martha Strickland, Columbia
Joe Waters, Greenville
Dan Wuori, Columbia

DISTRICT EFFICIENCY REVIEWS

District staff and school boards from school districts:

Barnwell 19
Clarendon 1
Dorchester 2
Lexington 4

JOHN DE LA HOWE REPORT

Betsy Carpentier, Columbia
Virgie Chambers, Columbia
Melanie Gambrell, Greenwood
Mellanie Jinnette, Columbia
Patrick Maley, Columbia
Shelley McGeorge, Columbia
Bradley Mitchell, Columbia
John Payne, Columbia
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Jose Mulero, Lugoff
Stephanie Schaffer, Simpsonville
Joanne Swofford, Rock Hill
Susan Thomas, West Columbia
Larry Watt, Orangeburg

READ YOUR WAY TO THE BIG GAME PARTNERSHIP

Students and Staff from:

America Reads (Clemson University)
Call Me Mister (Clemson University)
Moore Scholars (Clemson University)
Reading Recovery (Clemson University)
Teaching Fellows Program (University of SC)
Ben Harling, Clemson
Darren McPhail, Columbia
Suzanne Rosenblith, Clemson
Kimberly Smoak, Columbia

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SC EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

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Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress.