



from the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee
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SC schools and districts show improvement as on-time graduation rate increases significantly

Columbia – Today, the results of the 14th annual state district and school report cards were released, showing improvement among schools and districts. Forty-two school districts received a rating of *Excellent* this year, compared to only one in 2009. The increase in ratings is consistent with a statewide increase in the on-time graduation rate from 77.5% to 80.1%. The on-time graduation rate accounts for 40 percent of the district's Absolute Rating on the state report card. However, three school districts received an Absolute Rating of *At Risk*. While the improvements made by students and schools should be applauded, adjustments must be made to the accountability system to better prepare all students for college and careers. This year's state report card release will mark the end of state ratings for two years as the state prepares for a combined state and federal report card. The "hiatus" for state school and district report card results occurs as a result of Act 200, legislation that passed the SC General Assembly last session.

According to Melanie Barton, Executive Director of the EOC, the next two years will allow policymakers, with input from educators, business, higher education, and community leaders, to craft an accountability system focused first and foremost on the skills, knowledge, and expertise individual students must master to succeed in college, careers, and life.

"Too many SC students are still not well-served by the current education system and for far too long, the needs of the business community have not been intertwined with what is emphasized in schools," stated Barton. "We are beginning to see transformative change, and I have confidence that students will be better prepared for the success in the global, digital, and knowledge-based world that we live in."

Accountability is a necessary component of the success of the system, Barton emphasized.

"The measures used to determine how well our children are prepared for the 21st century will require more than just snapshots of how students perform on achievement measures of knowledge within K-12," stated Barton. "The system must also account for measures of skills and opportunity, as well as how students perform once they graduate from high school."

Barton pointed to measures of skills like collaboration and persistence, "soft-skills" that business leaders often cite as deficient in many graduates. Measures of opportunity could include access to arts programs, dual enrollment courses, AP/IB course, among others. She also sees an emphasis on a seamless system of data collection among P-20 to be a critical priority area.

Barton's focus on transformation, innovation, and an emphasis on excellence were emphasized by Dr. Marc Sosne, Superintendent of York 2, one of seven school districts who earned an *Excellent* rating for both

Absolute and Growth this year.

“Through a year of transition and uncertainty in our state’s education system, our focus locally remained unchanged,” stated Sosne. “Our unwavering commitment to analyze student data and use the findings to further personalize and individualize instruction is reflected in these rankings. We will not be complacent. Rather, we continue to strive for excellence for each of our students.”

Other reactions to the 2014 School and District Report Card Release:

“The success of Anderson One can be attributed to the culture of high expectations for all and a tradition of excellence that starts with a supportive school board. We have a quality teaching staff. Part of our success can be attributed to professional learning networks that have provided opportunities for teachers to collaborate and plan together. College and Career Readiness standards have raised the bar in the classroom. Teachers have created appropriate learning environments to help students learn and apply their knowledge.” – *David Havird, Superintendent, Anderson 1*

“Dorchester School District Four students performed higher than the state averages in four of the five areas assessed on PASS. The focus on academics at all levels has led to the increase in ratings for the district to the status of Excellent. We continue to hold high expectations for staff and students and provide a rigorous curriculum on a daily basis.” – *Dr. Morris Ravenell, Superintendent, Dorchester 4*

“Williston School District #29 is a rural district with three schools serving students in Barnwell County. With a poverty level of 86.15%, Williston excels at making sure all students, regardless of economics, have the opportunity to be successful in their academic choices leading up to graduation and then on to college/career endeavors....The district is very thankful for the commitment and dedication of our parents and community members who support our mission to develop respectful and productive citizens by providing challenging and enriching experiences in a safe environment and our vision of promoting respectful and productive citizens who are prepared for the global work force.” – *Dr. Carol Lenderman, Interim Superintendent, Williston School District (Barnwell 29)*

“The vision for Greenwood District 52 – Ninety Six—is one of excellence. A supportive community, hard-working and dedicated staff and faculty, and conscientious students all have combined efforts to enable the district to achieve *Excellent* on the state report card. The district believes in a world class education for all of its students. Whether its dual credit or middle college degrees for high schoolers or inquiry based learning at the primary and elementary schools or the expectation that all eighth graders will take Algebra I, the district focuses upon providing a challenging standards-based curriculum for all students. Through response to intervention strategies and providing academic assistance, the staff works hard to truly leave no student behind.” – *Dr. Mark Petersen, Superintendent, Greenwood 52*

Use of *Measures of Academic Progress* results, benchmarks, End of Course District Tests, and most importantly Professional Learning Teams at grade levels (subject specific and district-wide grade levels) have impacted teacher-growth and student achievement. Administrators/Teachers working together helped create the most powerful practice that will be ongoing as we meet even the next challenge for improvement! We are so proud of the commitment our Superintendent, Dr. Randy Dozier, and staff have made to ensure our students receive the most challenging instruction to impact their career choice beginning with Pre-K students! Way to go GCSD! – *Patti Hammell, Executive Director for Student Performance and Federal Programs*

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The SC Education Oversight Committee is an independent, non-partisan group made up of 18 educators, business persons, and elected leaders. Created in 1998, the committee is dedicated to reporting facts, measuring change, and promoting progress within South Carolina’s education system.