



EOC Statement Regarding 2014 Statewide PASS Results Reaction to Data Published on SCDE Website August 5, 2014

The Education Oversight Committee shares the disappointment with the release of the 2014 results from the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS). However, a decline in the percentage of students meeting state standards in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics was expected with the administration of a bridge assessment. Full implementation of the new standards will occur this school year, 2014-15, with a new assessment in the spring of 2015. Per Act 200 the current standards are also undergoing a cyclical review.

The 2014 PASS tests in Reading and Research and mathematics were different from the 2013 PASS tests. The South Carolina Department of Education dropped all items that were unique to South Carolina standards and substituted items that were common to both the prior South Carolina standards and the Common Core State Standards.

States that have implemented Common Core State Standards and assessments have seen a decline in results due to the increased rigor of the standards and assessments. The standards and assessments require a higher depth of understanding by the student. For example, in Kentucky, in the first year of assessment of the new standards, student scores in ELA and math in elementary and middle schools dropped by one-third or more.

It is important to remember that the academic skills and knowledge required of these standards and assessments are to ensure that students will be ready for college, careers and life in the 21st century. Today, 41 percent of students who graduate from a public high school in South Carolina require remediation in math and English in our two-year colleges. Clearly, too many students are not college or career ready.

These results have also placed a spotlight on the persistence of the achievement gap in our schools. A cursory review of the data show that schools serving historically underachieving groups of students, like students receiving free- and reduced-lunch, showed the greatest declines. As we move to more rigorous, relevant standards and we change the way teachers deliver content and students consume it, we must make certain that these students have access to the quality teaching and technology they need. Governor Haley and the General Assembly began proactively addressing many of these issues last legislative session when revisions to the funding formula were made, when additional appropriations for technology were adopted and when Read to Succeed was passed.

The decline in scores in social studies and science was not expected. The EOC questions whether these content areas were placed at a lower priority. However, beginning in the current school year, all students in grades 4 through 8 will be assessed in science and social studies each year. In the past students were sample tested in grades 3, 5, 6, and 8.