Ratings for Schools Enrolling Students in Only Grade Two or Below

During the 2008–2009 school year, 36 schools served students enrolled in only grade two or below. These schools pose a complex challenge to the accountability system. Achievement testing is neither required nor recommended. The education of young children involves assisting them with developmental tasks as well as the acquisition of content that is the focus of upper grades. The model for accountability below focuses not on test behaviors but on other correlates of school success. The model focuses on teacher behaviors, on classroom and school practices, and on parental and child behaviors that research indicates are related to school success.

Ratings Criteria

In 2005 the primary school ratings criteria were reviewed by Education Oversight Committee (EOC) staff and by an advisory committee composed of primary school principals and other early childhood educators. The purpose of the review was to develop recommendations regarding revisions of the criteria needed to improve their accuracy and usefulness for evaluating primary school quality. The process followed for this review of the primary school ratings involved three steps:

- A review of the research literature pertaining to the measurement of the quality and performance of primary schools;
- An analysis of South Carolina primary and elementary school performance and school profile data; and
- Consultation with a Primary Ratings Advisory Committee to review the research and data analyses and identify appropriate criteria for determining primary school ratings.

Based on the findings from this process, recommendations for the revision of the ratings were adopted by the EOC in February 2006 to include the following criteria:

- Prime instructional time: Prime instructional time is a measure of the amount of school instructional time during which both teachers and students are present and is calculated in the same manner as for other South Carolina schools. (See Appendix A: Definitions and Formulas for the formula.)
- Pupil-teacher ratios: Pupil-teacher ratio is calculated by dividing the number of students enrolled in the school on the forty-fifth day of school by the total number of teachers in the school (excluding counselors, librarians, administrative personnel, specialists, and teachers of the arts, physical education, or special education).
- Parent involvement: Involvement is calculated by dividing the number of students in the schools whose parents/guardians attend at least one individual parent conference (unduplicated count) during the school year by the 135th-day average daily membership (ADM).
- External accreditation: Accreditation that is early childhood specific is determined by application and/or receipt of accreditation. The scale ranges from SC Department of Education (SCDE)accreditation through early childhood specific accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to the accreditation by the American Montessori Society or the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Professional development: The professional development time devoted exclusively to knowledge and skills working with young children (less than eight years) is calculated.

- Percentage of teachers having advanced degrees: Percentage of teachers having advanced degrees, a measure of the qualifications of the teachers in the school, is calculated in the same manner as for other South Carolina schools. (See Appendix A of the *Accountability Manual* for the formula.)
- Percentage of teachers returning from the previous school year: Percentage of teachers returning from the previous school year, a measure of the instructional continuity and stability, is calculated in the same manner as for other South Carolina schools. (See Appendix A of the *Accountability Manual* for the formula.) Note: To ensure that sufficient data are available, this variable is calculated only for schools that have been in operation for four years or more, so ratings will not be calculated for primary schools in operation for less than four years.

Absolute Rating Calculation

The Absolute Ratings are calculated using a mathematical formula that results in an index. The absolute index is calculated using a mathematical formula in which point weights are assigned to the ratings criteria listed in Table 1:

Table 1
Absolute Ratings Criteria for Schools with Only Grade Two or Below

Criterion (Weight)	Points Assigned				
	5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
Prime Instructional Time (14.3%)	95.2% or greater	91.4–95.1%	83.8–91.3%	80.0–83.7%	Less than 80.0%
Pupil-Teacher Ratio (14.3%)	21 or less	22-25	26-30	31-32	Greater than 32
Parent Involvement (14.3%)	99.9% or greater	99.3–99.8 %	97.6–99.2%	96.8–97.5%	Less than 96.8%
External Accreditation (14.3%)	NAEYC or Montessori	SCDE and SACS-early childhood	SCDE	Conducting self-study	Not pursuing accreditation
Professional Development on Educational Needs of Children Under 8 Years of Age (14.3%)	1.5 days or greater	1.0 to 1.5 days	1.0 day	0.5 to 0.9 days	Less than 0.5 day
Teachers with Advanced Degrees (14.3%)	80.3% or greater	66.6-80.2%	39.2-66.5%	25.5-39.1%	Less than 25.5%
Teachers Returning from Previous Year (14.3%)	99.1% or greater	93.7-99.0&	82.8-93.6%	77.3-82.7%	Less than 77.3%

The index is calculated by adding the points (weights or values) assigned to each rating criterion in the table above and dividing the total points by the number of criteria (7) used to calculate the ratings. The index is rounded then to the nearest one-tenth of a point.

The resulting index determines the school's Absolute Rating as follows:

Table 2

Index Values for Determining Absolute Ratings
Schools Having Only Grade Two or Below

Year	Range of Indices Corresponding to Absolute Rating				
	Excellent	**Good**	**Average**	**Below Average**	**School at Risk**
2010 and beyond	3.9 and above	3.5–3.8	3.1–3.4	2.7–3.0	Below 2.7

Sample Calculation of an Absolute Rating for a K–2 Only School

Prime instructional time is 92 percent:	4 points
Pupil-teacher ratio is 26 to 1:	3 points
Parent involvement is 65 percent:	1 point
External accreditation from SCDE:	*3 points*
Professional development is .5 day:	2 points
Teachers with advanced degrees is 80%:	4 points
Teachers returning is 91%:	3 points
Total Points:	20 points
Divided by 7 (number of criteria):	2.9 Index
Absolute Rating:	Below Average

Note: This school's index of 2.9 corresponds to a Below Average Absolute Rating.

Growth Rating Values

For schools enrolling students in only grade two or below, the rating will be calculated based upon the change in the absolute performance rating index from year to year.
Note: Longitudinal student data are not available.

The Growth Ratings are calculated using a mathematical formula that results in an index. The index is calculated by subtracting the school's Absolute Rating index for the prior year from the Absolute Rating index for the year on which the report card is based. The amount of change determines the rating as follows:

Table 3

Growth Rating Index Values

Rating	Growth Index
Excellent	0.4 or greater
Good	0.3
Average	0.1–0.2
Below Average	0.0
School at Risk	-0.1 or less

Sample Calculation of a Growth Rating for a K–2 School

Absolute Ratings index for school year for which report card is based:	2.4
Absolute Rating index for the prior school year:	-2.2
Difference:	0.2
Growth Rating:	Average

Schools with Absolute Ratings of Excellent in Two Subsequent Years

If a school is rated Excellent for absolute achievement for both the current and immediately previous years, the school will receive a Growth rating of Good. If the school's growth index is a positive number (i.e., greater than zero), the school's Growth rating will be elevated to Excellent. Schools achieving an absolute index of 4.75 or higher for two consecutive years will be awarded an Excellent Growth rating.