

Section VIII SYSTEM SAFEGUARDS

Ratings Impact

The SC Department of Education (SCDE) conducts procedures to ensure that student performance on the state testing program assessments is measured properly and that accurate data are collected. Data used to rate schools and districts undergo routine screening before and after the release of accountability ratings. The Education Oversight Committee bears responsibility for the annual review to determine the utilization of the report card and the impact of the accountability system on student, school, and district performance.

Serious Data Problems

If data problems of sufficient magnitude to question the validity of any accountability rating are uncovered, then the SCDE should take one or more of the following steps after consulting with the district:

- Attempts will be made to rectify the data problems within the accountability calendar.
- If the problem cannot be resolved by the rating release date, then
 - a delayed rating may be issued; *or*
 - if the problem pertains to assessment data, ratings may be determined using assessment results for "all students tested."

Ratings Changes

The SC Department of Education (SCDE) may change ratings of schools and districts after November 1 if problems in the data used to determine the ratings subsequently are discovered.

Analyses Undertaken Prior to the Release of Ratings

Analyses to examine data reasonableness are undertaken prior to applying accountability system criteria. The SCDE and the EOC may analyze current year accountability information to include: the percent of test-takers at each school; excessive numbers of students having modified or alternate test forms; excessive absences during testing; unusual increases in percentage of students with disabilities; excessive rates of student mobility; and unusual changes in indicator or fact data. Secondly, the testing contractor for the student assessment program should notify the SCDE of potential data problems for a school district. The school district is contacted by the SC Department of Education (SCDE) about potential data problems for a school district.

The SC Department of Education (SCDE) is responsible for the data collection and printing of the annual school and district report cards. This work includes analyses checking for incomplete results or data, inconsistency with assessment results, and other anomalies. The Education Accountability Act (Section 59-18-900) was amended in 2006 directing the State Board of Education to promulgate regulations outlining the procedures for data collection, data accuracy, data reporting, and consequences for failure to provide required data.

Questions

Inquiries concerning the analyses prior to the release of the ratings should be directed to the South Carolina State Department of Education.

Analyses Undertaken after the Release of Ratings

The Education Oversight Committee assumes responsibility for annual and longitudinal reviews of the accountability system.

The annual reviews will address the following:

- ❑ the format and readability of the school and district report card;
- ❑ public and professional access to the report card and their use of it;
- ❑ patterns within the data reported;
- ❑ identification of potential data sources to increase understanding of school processes and results;
- ❑ accuracy in data reporting and analyses;
- ❑ study of the performance of subgroups of the student population; and
- ❑ other elements as identified by policymakers.

The longitudinal reviews of the accountability system will address the following:

- ❑ use and misuse of the system;
- ❑ intended and unintended consequences;
- ❑ validity of the ratings methodologies and categorical definitions;
- ❑ impact of the system on student, school, district, and state performance; and
- ❑ other studies as identified by policymakers.