

## **EIA Program Report for Fiscal Year 2011-12**

### **Coversheet**

**EIA-Funded Program Name:** **SC Middle Grades Initiative**

**Current Fiscal Year:** **2011-12**

**Current EIA Appropriation:** **\$75,000**

**Name of Person Completing Survey and to whom EOC members may request additional information:**

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**Question 1: History of the program: Please mark the appropriate response (choose one):**

**This program:**

was an original initiative of the Education Improvement Act of 1984

was created or implemented as part of the Education Accountability Act of 1998

has been operational for less than five years

was funded last fiscal year by general or other funds

is a new program implemented for the first time in the current fiscal year

Other

**Question 2: What SC laws, including provisos in the current year's general appropriation act, govern the implementation of this program? Please complete citations from the SC Code of Laws including, Title, Chapter, and Section numbers.**

**Code of Laws:**

**Proviso(s):** (If applicable. Please make references to the 2011-12 General Appropriation Act as ratified. [www.XXXXX](http://www.XXXXX))

**Regulation(s):**

**Do guidelines that have been approved by the State Board of Education, the Commission on Higher Education or other governor board exist that govern the implementation of this program?**

Yes

No

**Question 3: What are the primary objective(s) or goals of this program? Please distinguish between the long-term mission of the program and the current annual objectives of the program. (The goals or objectives should be in terms that can be quantified, evaluated, and assessed.)**

The goals of this program are to improve the academic achievement and personal development of early adolescents in the middle grades. Thus, achievement of both academic standards and positive youth development are central purposes.

In order to achieve the goals of the middle grades initiative, objectives have been developed. The current objectives are to support, develop, and strengthen middle grades students, teachers, and schools. Therefore the current objectives are to: 1) provide and analyze data enabling decision-makers and educators to address non-academic determinants of academic achievement and thereby strengthen the academic achievement and personal development of middle grades students; 2) support the training and professional development of highly qualified middle grades teachers; and 3) support and strengthen middle schools to improve their effectiveness in promoting high academic achievement and positive youth development. For each of these objectives, the Middle Grades Initiative sponsors a project:

1. For the student achievement and development objective we sponsor the **Middle Grades Data Project (MGDP)**. The data project compiles and disseminates information regarding the nonacademic determinants of academic achievement and self-destructive risk-behaviors. The purpose of this project is to clarify the non-academic influences that must be improved in order for middle grades students to reach state academic standards. The project also links early childhood risk factors and elementary school academic performance into the middle grades.

2. For the highly qualified teachers objective, the project sponsors **MLTEI** (the **Middle Level Teacher Education Initiative**). MLTEI promotes and supports the training of middle grades teachers who are highly qualified in academic content, pedagogy, adolescent development, and middle school organization and philosophy. The programs are assisted in meeting the requirements of the AMLE/NCATE Standards and in preparing the highly qualified educators needed to fill the middle grades positions in South Carolina. A growing concern involves the state of adolescent literacy as indicated by the data analysis of the Middle Grades Data Project. Efforts have been planned to incorporate a focus on literacy as a component of MLTEI's work.

3. For the effective middle schools objective, the project sponsors **Schools to Watch**. SC Schools to Watch is part of a national program which promotes recognition for middle schools meeting high standards of excellence based on criteria that reflect academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organizational supports and processes in exemplary middle level schools. These middle schools in turn act as models and leaders of best practice, opening their doors to other middle schools around the state who are working toward effective middle level practices.

**Question 4: In the prior fiscal year, 2010-11, what primary program activities or processes were conducted to facilitate the program's performance in reaching the objective(s) as provided in Question 3? What, if any, change in processes or activities are planned for the current year?**

**Examples of program processes would be: training provided, recruiting efforts made, technical assistance services, monitoring services, etc.**

**Answers should be specific to the process undertaken at the state level to support the objectives of the program and should be quantifiable. Please include any professional development services provided.**

**IF the funds are allocated directly to school districts, please indicate any data collected at the state level to monitor how the funds are expended at the local level?**

**Middle Grades Data Project**: In past years, the primary work of the project has been the creation and linking of the data files and analysis of the "front end" early childhood data. Our assumption is that many of the academic, family, and chronic health or disability problems affecting adolescents have been present since the early years of their lives. Our hypothesis has been that cost-effective promotion of academic and personal development must be achieved in early and middle childhood as a foundation for subsequent success during adolescence. Both research and often-repeated commentary by educators in South Carolina emphasize how many students reach middle school achieving below state academic standards. To provide comprehensive data showing the early origins of academic achievement problems, the MGDG has linked academic and determinant data through several age cohorts. During FY08 and FY09 the Middle Grades Data Project gathered and analyzed data showing how many of which students failed to launch successful academic careers. Data demonstrating poor performance included the SC Readiness Assessment in kindergarten and first grade, retention and over-age in the early grades, and PACT scores in grades 3-5. Determinants of poor performance were explored: low birth weight, disabilities and chronic conditions, limited family literacy, child abuse and neglect, poverty, teen parent(s), and limited English proficiency. Also, the impact of the 4 year old preschool program and K-3 education was investigated. During FY10 and FY11 our statistician furthered the previous work investigating which students were unsuccessful in K-5. Doing additional analysis on the 1995-96 birth cohort, we were able to show that three main groups comprised 70% of students BB1 in grades 3-5. These three groups are children: 1) with disabilities, 2) from low literacy families, and 3) having emotional and behavioral problems. During FY10 we began to trace a cohort of SY03 8th graders back to their early childhood and forward to dropping out or graduation, post-secondary education, and young adult outcomes. Also during FY11 the outcomes of these high risk groups up through middle school were shown to be very poor with over half of the high risk students scoring Not Met on ELA, writing, and math. Furthermore, reading skills have been linked forward to 8th grade for low performers such as the lowest performers served in 1st grade by Reading Recovery. During FY11 we succeeded in linking the 8th grade

cohort forward to graduation, including analysis of the relationship of reading Lexile levels to graduation.

Close working relationships have been developed through New Carolina to investigate workforce preparation based on educational achievement and risk behaviors. This analysis will show which middle grades students succeed and which do not in educational advancement and adult independence.

The **Middle Level Teacher Education Initiative (MLTEI)** has been sponsored through the South Carolina Middle School Association (SCMSA). The Initiative's goals are to assist South Carolina's higher education institutions (IHEs) in planning and developing middle grades teacher preparation programs which effectively address middle level NCATE standards. NCATE standards define quality middle level teacher training programs. The MLTEI planning committee identified ten integrated components to implement during the five year contract to enhance the grant's efforts. The primary work of the grant has been bringing to the discussion table the needed voices to promote quality middle level teacher preparation programs, providing technical assistance and support to the IHEs to help them develop programs that meet NCATE standards and increasing numbers of middle level graduates. This has been done through: promoting sound practices that meet NCATE/AMLE standards, bringing the focus of adolescent literacy to the forefront through a planned emphasis during the 2011 SCPoMLE meeting, representing the concerns of middle level teacher education on the National Forum to accelerate Middle school Reform's Board of Directors, disseminating a CD with extensive resources for teaching Middle Level Philosophy and Organization effectively, changing the website service to provide more ease of use and relevance, encouraging middle level teachers to seek highly qualified status through coursework, Praxis exams, and related grants, taking an active role in planning and organizing the Southeast Professors of Middle Level Education Symposium held at Georgia College and State University in May, 2011, and educating middle level administrators about best practices and effective leadership in middle level schools through presentations at annual conferences. The grant team has used face-to face-meetings, phone conferences, correspondence, and annual conferences to accomplish our goals.

**Schools to Watch** is an initiative launched in 1999 by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle- Grades Reform, an alliance of more than 60 educators, researchers, and officers of national associations and foundations. Schools to Watch seeks to improve schools for young adolescents across the country by identifying exemplary middle grades schools to serve as models of best practices. To date 287 middle schools in 19 states have been identified as Schools to Watch. High-performing schools establish norms, structures, and organizational arrangements to support and sustain their trajectory toward excellence. South Carolina has reviewed 33 middle schools, visited 24 schools, and selected 11 schools as Schools to Watch since the state's program began. Of those 11 schools, three have been re-designated through the process of formal application and site review.

**Question 5: In the prior fiscal year, 2010-11, and using the most recent data available, what were the direct products and services (outputs) delivered by this Program?**

**Examples of program outputs would be: number of teachers attending professional development seminars, number of and passage rates on AP exams, number of students served in the program, improvements in student achievement, retention and graduation.**

**Middle Grades Data Project**: Since the project does not provide services, there are no outputs or direct service products. As parts of the data analysis for the middle grades are completed, they will be disseminated widely. The Middle Grades Project disseminated our data findings on the three highest risk groups through a network of group email managers organized by SC Kids Count. This report is posted on our website at <http://www.sckidscount.org/risk09.php>. During the past two years, a variety of reports using the 1995/96 cohort's risk factors and academic achievement have been produced and employed to help key stakeholder groups to plan their services. Some notable examples have been: planning sessions with individual school districts or counties (Charleston, Greenville, Beaufort, Richland 1 & 2, York 3, Horry, etc); an analysis of reading outcomes for all students in the Reading First project, as shown on the special Stanford Reading First test used in the Reading First evaluation; an exhaustive analysis of the outcomes for Reading Recovery students up to grade 8; and the graduation outcomes of 8th graders based on their reading Lexile levels. The *outputs* of all these analyses are data tables and reports for which the outcomes lie in improved understanding, policy, and practice of state and local education and other stakeholders.

Subsequent data reports linking 8th graders back to elementary school academic achievement and forward to graduation have been produced but not yet disseminated as products.

The **Middle Level Teacher Education Initiative (MLTEI)** sponsored grant team planning meetings, phone conferences, content quality network ELA meetings, a pre-conference session to promote networking and planning. There are now 16 middle level teacher education programs in South Carolina higher education institutions. The 2011 SCMSA Conference provided an opportunity for MLTEI to collaborate with SC POMLE in presenting updates on the work of the grant and the professors group, a visit and report from the National Professors of Middle Level Education President Nancy Ruppert, and sessions on efforts to increase literacy levels among middle school students and roundtable discussions on content literacy strategies. A team of researchers was engaged to assist the SCDE with current data to promote adolescent literacy efforts in middle schools and teacher education programs through a cooperative arrangement with EOC and the Middle Grades Project. Finally, as a direct outgrowth of the grant's support for past Middle Level Teacher Education Symposia held in South Carolina, MLTEI helped implement a Southeast NAPOMLE Symposium at Georgia College and State University in May, 2011.

**Schools to Watch** - The SC STW Program has more than 150 team members who are trained as application readers and/or site visitors. The SC team includes teachers, administrators, professors, State Department of Education personnel, and retired educators. Since 2006, over 33 SC middle schools have applied to be recognized as Schools to Watch, 24 schools were selected for site visits, and 11 have been designated as Schools to Watch.

Lugoff-Elgin Middle School in Kershaw County was selected as SC's first School to Watch in January 2007. In January 2008, Blythewood Middle School in Richland School District 2 and Palmetto Middle School in Anderson School District 1 were named as SC Schools to Watch. In 2009, Belton Middle School in Anderson School District 1 joined the other SC middle schools. In 2010, Indian Land Middle School in Lancaster County and Southwood Middle School in Anderson One were named Schools to Watch, while Lugoff-Elgin was re-designated as a School to Watch. In 2011, five additional schools were added to the SC Schools to Watch list. They were Castle Heights Middle School in Rock Hill, College Park Middle School in Berkeley County, League Academy in Greenville, Mabry Middle School in Spartanburg One, and Pickens Middle School in Pickens County. During 2011, Blythewood Middle School and Palmetto Middle School were re-designated as Schools to Watch.

## **Question 6: What are the outcomes or results of this program?**

**Outcome can be both quantitative and qualitative and should address the program's objectives. Please use the most recent data available:**

**Examples of outcomes would be: results of surveys, student achievement results, increases in participation, reduction in achievement gaps, loans awarded, textbooks purchased, etc.**

**Middle Grades Data Project**: As an analytical rather than service-providing project, the outcomes are difficult to quantify; however, our results are planned and monitored in an interpretive manner. The desired result is to influence the understanding and response of key stakeholders to the non-academic influences on academic achievement. Specifically, the Middle Grades Data Project seeks to sensitize policy-makers and practitioners to the importance of addressing the social, economic, and health determinants of academic achievement; and to motivate them to act to improve these important causes. This rationale was stated at the beginning of MGDGP as follows: "The purpose of the proposed analysis by the SC Budget and Control Board's Office of Research and Statistics (ORS) is to elaborate on and provide specificity for such concepts as: disadvantaged, poor, low SES, and at-risk as explanations for and predictors of failure to achieve state academic standards, especially as assessed by PACT [and PASS]. By looking at some of the concrete data indicators used to represent disadvantaged or at risk status, the analysis should help point decision-makers toward specific causes of poor academic performance. These specific causes, unlike vague labels like *at-risk*, point to and invite solutions rather than excuses. If children with poor PACT [or PASS] performance, for instance, are shown disproportionately to have disabilities and chronic health problems, to be in foster care, or to come from low literacy families, this encourages decision-makers to direct resources toward alleviating these problems. Enhanced services through Medicaid for asthma or depression or through better services for abused children put into foster care can take pressure off schools that typically rely on academic and instructional reforms as the sole remedy for low performance on PACT [or PASS]. Inevitably the solutions to poor school performance must be both academic assistance and non-academic services meeting family, health, and economic needs."

Initially our efforts concentrated on gathering and analyzing the data to achieve serious policy and programming attention for the early years up to the middle grades. Our current efforts are focused on the period from the middle grades onward to dropout, graduation, GED attainment, and post-secondary education participation. Most educators are focused on what they do directly with students enabling them to reach state academic standards. The Middle Grades Data Project has found that effective dissemination of the data warehouse information motivates more policy-makers and practitioners to respond assertively to produce the desired results. Experience over the past few years has shown that this data can be used to engage health, social services, family support, and youth development programs in supporting students with academic performance problems caused by social, health, economic, family, and other causes. Educators have responded by grasping the importance of early and

continuing attention to those students who have identifiable risk factors and problems predictive of poor academic outcomes. Our data is useful in showing: how early in life academic potential and achievement gaps appear; how predictable these risk factors are; what benefits early interventions appear to achieve; and that failure to train all educators thoroughly enough to provide effective instruction results in erosion of the benefits of early intervention. Most revealing have been our analyses of pre-school outcomes and of reading program outcomes.

**Middle Level Teacher Education Initiative:** Up through the present period of the MLTEI grant, the number of programs preparing Middle Grades teachers in South Carolina IHEs has grown from two to sixteen institutions (nine public and seven private institutions) serving a large geographic portion of the state. Two new programs have been approved during the current grant cycle, and several institutions have indicated their interest in beginning to plan proposals. MLTEI has been represented at SC House and Senate Education Committee hearings, meetings with the (formerly NMSA)/NCATE Middle Level Board of Examiners experts and SCDE staff to address common concerns regarding middle level preparation and certification. Using the "Top Ten" list to focus attention on the most critical aspects of the work ahead, the planning team meetings have expanded to include invited representatives of SCASA, the SCDE, CHE, and CERRA. The grant provides to IHEs an opportunity to become active participants in SCMSA and SCPOMLE, resulting in a stronger network of middle level advocates within each institution. The revision of the AMLE/NCATE Middle Level Teacher Preparation Standards has been a focus of review and comment during this past year. MLTEI is now represented on the National Forum Board of Directors to advance issues and solutions related to preparing middle level teachers as efforts continue to promote reform of middle level schools. The National Forum will hold a convening later this month in Washington, DC, to bring together members of Congress and their staff members with middle level educators and teacher educators to address common issues and concerns with achievement of middle grades students. SC MLTEI has been on the planning committee for this and will be an active participant at this meeting.

**Schools to Watch:** South Carolina's Schools to Watch schools are serving as model middle schools in the state. Many SC middle schools have requested information on the programs in place that resulted in their recognition as a School to Watch. SCMSA in conjunction with the SC Department of Education Making Middle Grades Work project hosted a very successful session during the SC Education Business Summit in Greenville in June of 2011. As a result, over 50 new state team members were trained as application readers and/or site visitors for future School to Watch applicants.

## Question 7: Program Evaluations

What was the date of the last external or internal evaluation of this program?

Has an evaluation ever been conducted?

Yes

No

If an evaluation was conducted, what were the results and primary recommendations of the most recent evaluation?

Middle Level Teacher Education Initiative: Continued growth in the number of Institutions of Higher Education offering middle level teacher education programs provide our internal evaluators evidence of positive outcomes, especially in tight budget times.

Schools to Watch: An informal internal evaluation of the Schools to Watch project shows growth in the number of team members trained as application readers and/or site visitors. We have also had a very successful year in the growth in number of middle schools selected as Schools to watch. 100% of the Schools to Watch that applied for re-designation have been re-designated, indicating a continuing trajectory on the path toward excellence.

Can you provide a URL link, electronic version, or hard copy of this evaluation to the EOC?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide URL link here.

If no, why not?

These are simple internal evaluations that are not published or disseminated.

**Question 8:**

**While EIA revenues increased in 2010-11 over the prior fiscal year and no mid-year cuts were made to any EIA programs, programs and agencies continue to implement conservative budget practices.**

**Please describe how the program and/or organization would absorb or offset potential EIA reductions totaling 5%, and 10% in the current fiscal year, Fiscal Year 2011-12?**

We can utilize limited reserve funds to carry the MG Initiative through FY12 if the EIA funding were cut by 5% or 10%, but the new funding is not a recurrent income stream that can be relied upon into the future.

**Question 9:**

**If no additional EIA revenues were appropriated to this program in Fiscal Year 2012-13 above the current year's appropriation level, how would the objectives, activities and priorities of this program change?**

**Please be specific to address the impact to students, teachers or schools. Are there regulatory or statutory changes that you would recommend to the legislature that would assist this program/organization in meeting its objectives?**

The MG Initiative would pursue the same objectives. Any substantial reduction would require us to limit data analyses somewhat. Therefore, analysis of high risk students beyond high school into post-secondary education and young adult outcomes or back to precise details of their educational career might be reduced.

Similarly, MLTEI would restrict meetings requiring funding, utilize electronic communication, and reduce the contract hours of its part-time workers.

**If you want to provide supporting documents or evaluation reports, either reference a website below or email the report directly to**

**[mbarton@eoc.sc.gov](mailto:mbarton@eoc.sc.gov)**

**Questions 10 and 11 Apply only to programs NOT administered by the South Carolina State Department of Education.**

**Question 10: Fiscal Year 2012-13**

**The total amount of EIA funds requested for this program for the next fiscal year will be:**

**The same as appropriated in the current fiscal year's appropriation**

**An increase over the current fiscal year's appropriation**

**A decrease over the current fiscal year's appropriation**

**If you indicated an increase or decrease in funding for the next fiscal year, what is the total amount requested for this program for the next fiscal year?**

**If you indicated an increase or decrease, please describe the reasons for the increase or decrease. How will the increase or decrease impact the objective of the program?**

**Question 11: Fiscal Years 2010-11 and 2011-12**

**Please fill in the attached charts to reflect the budget for this program in the prior fiscal year (2010-11) and the budget for this program in the current fiscal year (2011-12).**

**If the program was not funded in the prior fiscal year, please fill out information for the current fiscal year only.**

Funding Source	Prior FY Actual	Current FY Estimated
EIA	75,000	75,000
General Fund	0	0
Lottery	0	0
Fees	0	0
Other Sources	0	0
Grant	0	0
Contributions, Foundation	0	0
Other (Specify)	0	0
Carry Forward from Prior Yr	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75,000</b>	<b>75,000</b>

**Other: Please specify here.**

Expenditures	Prior FY Actual	Current FY Estimated
Personal Service	0	0
Contractual Services	71,000	74,600
Supplies and Materials	0	0
Fixed Charges	0	0
Travel	322.19	400.00
Equipment	0	0
Employer Contributions	0	0
Allocations to Districts/Schools/Agencies/Entities	0	0
Other: Please explain	0	0
Balance Remaining	3,677.81	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75,000</b>	<b>75,000</b>
#FTES	0	0

**Other: Please explain here.**

**Question 8:**

**While EIA revenues increased in 2010-11 over the prior fiscal year and no mid-year cuts were made to any EIA programs, programs and agencies continue to implement conservative budget practices.**

**Please describe how the program and/or organization would absorb or offset potential EIA reductions totaling 5%, and 10% in the current fiscal year, Fiscal Year 2011-12?**

We can utilize any additional funding obtained to carry the MG Initiative through FY11 and FY12 if the EIA funding were cut by 5% or 10%, but the new funding is not a recurrent income stream that can be relied upon into the more distant future.

**Question 9:**

**If no additional EIA revenues were appropriated to this program in Fiscal Year 2012-13 above the current year's appropriation level, how would the objectives, activities and priorities of this program change?**

**Please be specific to address the impact to students, teachers or schools. Are there regulatory or statutory changes that you would recommend to the legislature that would assist this program/organization in meeting its objectives?**

The MG Initiative would pursue the same objectives. Any substantial reduction would require us to limit data analyses somewhat. Therefore, analysis of high risk students into high school and post-secondary education or back to details of their educational career might be reduced. Similarly, MLTEI would restrict meetings requiring funding, utilize electronic communication, and reduce the contract hours of its three primary workers.

**If you want to provide supporting documents or evaluation reports, either reference a website below or email the report directly to [mbarton@eoc.sc.gov](mailto:mbarton@eoc.sc.gov).**

**Questions 10 and 11 Apply only to programs NOT administered by the South Carolina State Department of Education.**

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**The same as appropriated in the current fiscal year's appropriation**

**An increase over the current fiscal year's appropriation**

**A decrease over the current fiscal year's appropriation**

**If you indicated an increase or decrease in funding for the next fiscal year, what is the total amount requested for this program for the next fiscal year?**

**If you indicated an increase or decrease, please describe the reasons for the increase or decrease. How will the increase or decrease impact the objective of the program?**

**Question 11: Fiscal Years 2010-11 and 2011-12**

**Please fill in the attached charts to reflect the budget for this program in the prior fiscal year (2010-11) and the budget for this program in the current fiscal year (2011-12).**

**If the program was not funded in the prior fiscal year, please fill out information for the current fiscal year only.**

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EIA	75,000	75,000
General Fund	0	0
Lottery	0	0
Fees	0	0
Other Sources	0	0
Grant	0	0
Contributions, Foundation	0	0
Other (Specify)	0	0
Carry Forward from Prior Yr	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75,000</b>	<b>75,000</b>

**Other: Please specify here.**

Expenditures	Prior FY Actual	Current FY Estimated
Personal Service		
Contractual Services	72,928	74,800
Supplies and Materials		
Fixed Charges	1,910	
Travel	162	200
Equipment		
Employer Contributions		
Allocations to Districts/Schools/Agencies/Entities		
Other: Please explain		
Balance Remaining		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75,000</b>	<b>75,000</b>
#FTES		

**Other: Please explain here.**