

Recommendation for Revised Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program
Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee
November 17, 2008

Recommendation adopted by full EOC, December 8, 2008

Introduction

The Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program was established by the Education Accountability Act (EAA) of 1998. The EAA was amended in 2008 to include closing the gaps in achievement between historically lower- and higher-achieving demographic groups of students as an additional criterion to overall school performance for the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards program. This document presents three proposed models for revising the existing Palmetto Gold and Silver awards criteria to comply with the amended EAA. The document also reports the results from data simulations based on the proposed models.

The statutory authority for the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards is from the EAA, as amended in 2008 (Act 282 of 2008):

Section 59-18-1100. The State Board of Education, working with the division and the Department of Education, must establish the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program to recognize and reward schools for academic achievement and for closing the achievement gap. Awards will be established for schools attaining high levels of absolute performance, for schools attaining high rates of growth, and for schools making substantial progress in closing the achievement gap between disaggregated groups. The award program must base improved performance on longitudinally matched student data and may include such additional criteria as:

- (1) student attendance;
- (2) teacher attendance;
- (3) graduation rates; and

(4) other factors promoting or maintaining high levels of achievement and performance. Schools shall be rewarded according to specific criteria established by the division. In defining eligibility for a reward for high levels of performance, student performance should exceed expected levels of improvement. The State Board of Education shall promulgate regulations to ensure districts of the State utilize these funds to improve or maintain exceptional performance according to their school's plans established in Section 59-139-10. Funds may be utilized for professional development support.

Special schools for the academically talented are not eligible to receive an award pursuant to the provisions of this section unless they have demonstrated improvement and high absolute achievement for three years immediately preceding.

Prior to the enactment of Act 282, the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards program and the Education Oversight Committee awards to schools closing the achievement gap existed independently. The original Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards program selected schools for award on the basis of the combined end of year general performance by all students and the general growth during the school year by all students. Schools were selected based on having high Absolute or Growth ratings or a combination of Absolute and Growth ratings. Schools were also selected if their growth indexes were exceptionally high. The designation of a Gold or Silver award was dependent on the level of general performance by students in the school, with Gold awards for the highest performance levels.

The original achievement gap awards were based on exceptional performance in a school by at least one of the targeted historically underachieving groups of students, and the awards were available only to schools in which the PACT state accountability tests were administered (elementary and middle schools). In response to Act 282, and to maximize the number of schools eligible for receiving an award based on closing the achievement gap, the procedures for identifying gap-closing schools were reviewed and modified for use in the revised Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards program. The modifications are based on changes to the awards program discussed in the September 22, 2008 Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee meeting. The modifications include:

- Including performance by students with disabilities along with performance by the other historically underachieving groups (African American students, Hispanic students, and students participating in the Federal free- or reduced-price lunch program) in the identification of schools closing the gap;
- Including measures of exceptional growth in performance on the state accountability tests (PACT or PASS) by students belonging to historically underachieving groups of students;
- Including high schools in the gap-closing awards by identifying schools in which students from the four historically underachieving groups have closed the gap in graduation rates or are making annual gains in their graduation rates such that they will meet the state graduation rate goal of 88.3% on or before the year 2014 (details on the methodology are available in a technical report on www.eoc.sc.gov).

All schools and career and technology centers with student learning achievement outcome data or high school graduation data will be eligible for participation in the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program. Schools enrolling students in only grade two or below are not eligible for a Palmetto Gold or Silver Award for lack of student learning achievement outcome data. Special schools are also eligible for the awards program. The data simulation results for this report are based on data from the 2006-2007 school year, and include data from 882 elementary and middle schools, 210 high schools, 40 career centers, and 9 special schools, for a total of 1,141 schools. Data for evaluating closing the achievement gap were not available for the career and technology centers or special schools, but data were available for determining Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards for general performance for these schools.

Schools receiving an Absolute or Growth rating of “School At Risk” (previously designated “Unsatisfactory”) are not eligible to receive a Palmetto Gold and Silver award for the year they are rated “School At Risk.”

At its September 22, 2008 meeting the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee discussed proposed revisions to the program and requested that alternative models be simulated and reported for discussion at its November 17, 2008 meeting. Three models were simulated and discussed by the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee at its November 17, 2008 meeting:

1. Model 1 combined results based on the original Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards methodology for general performance with results from the revised achievement gap methodology. Schools which met the criteria for either Gold or Silver awards based on the original Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards criteria were classified as meeting the general performance criterion for Model 1. Model 1 placed highest

- value on schools demonstrating both exceptional general performance and success at closing the achievement gap: schools meeting the criteria in both areas would receive a Gold award. Schools demonstrating either exceptional general performance or closing the achievement gap, but not both, would receive a Silver award for general performance or closing the gap, respectively.
2. Model 2 maintained the separate identities of the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards program for general performance and the awards for closing the achievement gap. Under Model 2 schools may receive a Palmetto Gold or Silver Award for general performance based on the criteria for the awards in use since the inception of the awards program. With Model 2 schools may also receive a Palmetto Gold or Silver Award for closing the achievement gap, with Gold awards for elementary or middle schools closing the gap based on end of year high performance in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics by at least one historically underachieving group, and Silver awards for schools having high performance in ELA or mathematics or having exceptional achievement growth by at least one historically underachieving group of students. In high schools, schools may receive a Gold award for closing the gap if the graduation rate by at least one historically underachieving group meets or exceeds the statewide graduation rate of historically high achieving students or a Silver award if the yearly gain in the graduation rate by at least one historically underachieving group meets or exceeds the rate needed to meet the state high school graduation rate goal of 88.3% by 2014.
 3. Model 3 combined the results from the revised gap closing methodology used in Models 1 and 2 with the results from a methodology based on separate consideration of Absolute and Growth ratings so that schools may receive Silver awards if they have exceptional general overall performance (Absolute Rating), exceptional general growth performance (Growth Rating), or close the achievement gap. Under Model 3, if a school is recognized for at least two of the three areas (overall performance, growth performance, or closing the gap), the school receives a Gold award.

Following discussion of all three models and the simulated outcome data for each model, the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee chose Model 2 for recommendation for adoption by the Education Oversight Committee. The Subcommittee cited the following issues recommending Model 2:

1. By maintaining separate awards for general performance and for closing the achievement gap, the model is the most consistent with the statute, which calls for, "Awards ... established for schools attaining high levels of absolute performance, for schools attaining high rates of growth, and for schools making substantial progress in closing the achievement gap between disaggregated groups" (Section 59-18-1100);
2. School and district personnel are familiar with the methodology long in use for the general performance awards, so the addition of an awards criteria methodology based on closing achievement gaps will increase their interest in and attention to closing the gap;
3. Similarly, the model draws the attention of the general public to both excellence in general school performance and to school success in raising the achievement of students belonging to historically underachieving demographic groups.

Note on funding for the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards program: The program is funded through EIA, with \$2,825,310 appropriated for the 2008-2009 school year,

reduced by \$73,097 to \$2,752,213 as of October 8, 2008. It is likely that the funding for the 2008-2009 program will be reduced by another 7% before the end of the fiscal year. Funds are allocated and distributed to schools based on their award status, with Gold awards receiving higher funding than Silver awards.

Simulation Results for Revised Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Recommended by Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee

Table 1
Model 2: Simulation of Numbers of Schools Receiving Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards for General Performance

School Type	Silver Award for General Performance (Row %)	Gold Award for General Performance (Row %)	Totals (Column %)
Elementary	100 (71.4)	40 (28.6)	140 (58.6)
Middle	16 (88.9)	2 (11.1)	18 (7.5)
High	9 (20.9)	34 (79.1)	43 (18.0)
Career Centers	1 (3.2)	30 (96.8)	31 (13.0)
Special Schools	0 (0.0)	7 (100)	7 (2.9)
Totals	126 (52.7)	113 (47.3)	239 (100)

Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 2
Model 2: Simulation of Numbers of Schools Receiving Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards
for Closing Achievement Gap

School Type	Silver Award for Closing Achievement Gap (Row %)	Gold Award for Closing Achievement Gap (Row %)	Totals (Column %)
Elementary	83 (65.3)	44 (34.6)	127 (59.3)
Middle	20 (90.9)	2 (9.1)	22 (10.3)
High	35 (53.8)	30 (46.2)	65 (30.4)
Career Centers	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Special Schools	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Totals	138 (64.5)	76 (35.5)	214 (100)

Note: Totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The simulation found a total of 356 schools would receive at least one award using Model 2. Of the 356 total schools, 239 would receive an award for general performance (126 Silver and 113 Gold). Of the 356 schools, 214 would receive an award for closing the achievement gap (138 Silver and 76 Gold). Ninety-seven of the 356 schools would receive an award both for general performance and for closing the achievement gap. The distribution of the awards by area and award level is listed in Table 3.

Table 3
Model 2: Distribution of Award Levels for General Performance and for Closing the Gap

Award for General Performance	Award for Closing the Gap	Number of Schools (%)
Gold	Gold	30 (8.4)
Gold	Silver	17 (4.8)
Silver	Gold	13 (3.7)
Silver	Silver	37 (10.4)
Gold	None	66 (18.5)
Silver	None	76 (21.3)
None	Gold	33 (9.3)
None	Silver	84 (23.6)
Total		356 (100)

Table 4
Results From Model 2 Simulation
Revised Palmetto Gold and Silver Award Criteria

Model	Number of Silver Awards (Row %)	Number of Gold Awards (Row %)	Total Number of Awards	Total Number of Schools Receiving Awards
Palmetto Gold or Silver for General Performance	126 (52.7)	113 (47.3)	239	356
Palmetto Gold or Silver for Closing the Gap	138 (64.5)	76 (35.5)	214	
Subtotals	264 (58.3)	189 (41.7)	453	

Subcommittee Recommendation

Based on its consideration of the alternative models and the simulations of their outcomes, the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee adopted the following recommendation for the revision of the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards program to comply with Act 282 of 2008:

Establish separate Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards for general performance and for closing the achievement gap. Schools meeting the criteria for general performance may receive a Palmetto Gold or Silver Award for general performance based on the criteria in use since the inception of the Palmetto Gold and Silver Award program. Schools meeting the criteria for closing the gap may receive a Palmetto Gold or Silver Award for closing the achievement gap.

Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards for General Performance:

- School meets criteria for Silver award for high general absolute performance, high growth, or a combination of the two based on criteria in original Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards program.
- School meets criteria for Gold award for exceptional general absolute performance, exceptional growth, or a combination of the two based on criteria in original Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards program.

Palmetto Gold and Silver Award for Closing the Achievement Gap:

- School meets criteria for Silver award if end of year performance in English language arts (ELA) or mathematics or growth in achievement by at least one historically underachieving group meets or exceeds performance of historically high achieving students (elementary or middle schools), or, the growth in the graduation rate by at least one historically underachieving group meets or

- exceeds the annual growth rate needed to meet the state high school graduation rate goal of 88.3% by 2014 (high schools).
- School meets criteria for Gold awards if end of year performance in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics by at least one historically underachieving group meets or exceeds performance of historically high achieving students (elementary or middle schools), or, the graduation rate of at least one historically underachieving group of students meets or exceeds the statewide graduation rate of historically high achieving students (high schools).

Schools Eligible: All schools and career and technology centers having accountability test results or high school graduation rates. Schools with Absolute or Growth Ratings of "At Risk" for the current year are not eligible.