

Section VI PALMETTO GOLD AND SILVER AWARDS CRITERIA

Statutory Authority

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.

Awards History and Criteria

Prior to the enactment of Act 282, the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards program and the EOC 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 indices 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 approved by the EOC on December 8, 2008. 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).

Based on criteria approved by the EOC in December 2008, separate Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards were established for general performance and for closing the achievement gap. Schools meeting the criteria for general performance would 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 would receive a Palmetto Gold or Silver Award for closing the achievement gap.

Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards for General Performance

The EOC amended the criteria in October of 2012 to exclude schools having an Average or better Growth index for three years from being eligible to receive a Silver award. Regarding schools with steady Growth, *only schools that had a Growth rating of Good or better for two consecutive years could receive a Palmetto Silver Award.* As a result of the change, approximately 277 elementary, middle and high schools did not receive a Silver Award based upon academic achievement in school year 2011-12 for having three years of an Average or better Growth rating. Table 60 shows the criteria for Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards for General Performance.

Table 60
Gold and Silver Awards Criteria for General Performance
Beginning with the 2012-13 Academic Year

Absolute Rating	Growth Rating	Award Designation	Steady Growth
Excellent	Excellent	Gold	
Excellent	Good	Gold	
Excellent	Average	Gold	
Good	Excellent	Gold	
Good	Good	Silver	
Average	Excellent	Gold	
Average	Good	Silver	
Below Average	Excellent	Gold	
Below Average	Good	Silver	
		Silver	Good or better Growth for 2 Years

Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards for Closing the Achievement Gap:

The criteria for the Palmetto Gold and Silver Award for Closing the Achievement Gap are based on exceptional performance or exceptional growth in performance in a school by at least one of the targeted historically underachieving groups of students on the state accountability tests (PASS) for elementary and middle schools and in graduation rate for high schools.

The historically underachieving groups are defined as:

- Students with non-speech disabilities
- African American students
- Hispanic students
- Students participating in the Federal free- or reduced-price lunch program

Schools having at least one historically underachieving group in which at least 30 students are enrolled and tested are eligible for consideration for a Gold or Silver Award for Closing the Achievement Gap.

Award Eligibility

All schools and career and technology centers having accountability test results or high school graduation rates are eligible. Schools that have an absolute rating or a growth rating of “At Risk” for the current year are not eligible for awards for closing the achievement gaps. 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.

Schools with Students Enrolled in Grades 3 through 8

In April 2012, the EOC reviewed and approved a change in the Growth Value Table (Table 19) which is used to determine the indices for the Growth rating for elementary and middle schools. The Growth Value Table is only used to create the Growth ratings for elementary and middle schools. To determine the effect of the changes in the Growth Value Table on the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program for the general performance awards, the EOC requested staff use the new Growth indices to determine its impact on the number and percent of schools that would receive Palmetto Gold and Silver awards for achievement and closing the achievement gap.

A review of the current process when applied to data using the new value table indicated that the number of schools that would receive awards for closing the achievement gap would increase dramatically. An examination of the process of deriving closing the achievement gap awards projected that 87 percent of schools would receive awards for closing the achievement gap if the current process remained intact.

Based on the June 2013 analysis the EOC adopted changes to the calculation of the Closing the Achievement Gap Award for elementary and middle schools beginning with the results of the 2013 state district and school report cards. The process is as follows:

- 1) For each school, find the Growth index computed for each of the four historically underachieving groups (African-Americans, Hispanic, subsidized meal, students with disabilities).
- 2) For each school, find the maximum Growth index among the Growth indices based on 30 or more students for the four historically underachieving groups.

- 3) Create a distribution of the maximum Growth indices obtained from step (2). Let the 85th percentile of this distribution be the Growth index criterion.
- 4) Compare the Growth index for each HUG group to the Growth index criterion obtained in step (3). If at least one HUG group exceeds the Growth index criterion, the school receives an award for closing the achievement gap.

To clarify step (2) above by example, consider Table 61 below, which presents the number of students and the Growth indices for each of the four historically underachieving groups in two schools. In both of these schools the number of African-American students, subsidized meal students, and students with disabilities is greater than 30, and the number of Hispanic students is less than 30. For both schools the maximum Growth index among all four groups is the Growth index for Hispanic students. However, because there are fewer than 30 Hispanic students, their Growth index is not considered when obtaining the maximum Growth index for determining the Growth index criterion. For school 1, the maximum Growth index for determining the Growth index criterion (103.429) is the Growth index for students with disabilities, and for school 2, the maximum Growth index for determining the Growth index criterion (102.061) is the Growth index for African-American students.

Table 61
Identifying the maximum Growth index used in finding the Growth index criterion

School	African-American		Hispanic		Subsidized		Students with Disabilities		Maximum Growth Index	
	N	Growth Index	N	Growth Index	N	Growth Index	N	Growth Index	All Groups	For Criterion
1	349	102.748	21	111.000	517	102.730	63	103.429	111.000	103.429
2	509	102.061	22	106.136	749	101.311	150	100.468	106.136	102.061

High Schools

Palmetto Gold or Silver awards for closing the achievement gap at the high school level are awarded to schools in which the on-time graduation rate of at least one historically underachieving group of students (African American, Hispanic, free- or reduced-price lunch recipients, or students with disabilities) exceeds that of historically higher-achieving students (white or pay lunch students) statewide. The graduation rates of historically underachieving groups of students in a school are compared to a statewide criterion rather than to those of other groups of students in the same school to ensure that high standards are met and to avoid making within school comparisons in schools having insufficient numbers of white or pay lunch students for accurate comparison.

- Determine the average school-level on-time graduation rates for white students and for pay lunch students statewide. If the average statewide graduation rates for the two groups differ, average the rates to determine a single statewide criterion to be used for comparison to average school-level on-time graduation rates for historically underachieving demographic groups of students.

- Determine the average school-level on-time graduation rates for African American, Hispanic, free- or reduced-price lunch students, and students with disabilities in each high school.
- Compare the on-time graduation rate for each historically underachieving group in the school to the statewide criterion. To earn an award for closing the achievement gap, the on-time graduation rate for at least one of the historically underachieving groups of students must meet or exceed the statewide criterion.

In April 2008, the SC Education Oversight Committee adopted the state high school on-time graduation rate of 88.3% for all students. The evaluation of school growth in closing the achievement gap is based on the graduation rate goal. Schools in which at least one of the historically underachieving groups of students meets or exceeds the annual increase in the on-time graduation rate needed for that group in the school to achieve the goal by 2014 is recognized for exceptional growth in closing the achievement gap. The methodology for evaluating growth in closing the gap in on-time graduation rates includes the following procedural steps.

- Determine the on-time graduation rate for the current year and the previous year of each of the historically underachieving groups of students in the school.
- Determine the annual rate of growth needed to reach the 2014 goal by subtracting the graduation rate for the previous year of the historically underachieving group from 88.3% and dividing by the number of years between the previous year and 2014.
- Determine the actual rate of growth by the historically underachieving group from the previous year to the current year by subtracting the group's previous year graduation rate from the current year graduation rate.
- Compare the actual growth rate in graduation rate for the historically underachieving group to the expected rate needed to achieve the 2014 goal. If the group's actual rate for the current year equals or exceeds the expected rate, the school is recognized for exceptional growth in closing the graduation rate achievement gap.

Table 62 presents a history of the number of Palmetto Gold and Silver/Closing the Gap awards. From 2001-02 through 2007-08, the number of Palmetto Gold awards ranged from 114 to 285, and the number of Palmetto Silver Awards ranged from 77 to 149. In 2008-09, several changes were made: the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) replaced the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT), the value table methodology was adopted to create Growth indices and ratings, and the Palmetto Gold and Silver program was amended to include schools that closed the achievement gap. Closing the achievement gap awards were given when one or more of the historically underachieving student groups (African-American, Hispanic, students receiving subsidized meals, and students with disabilities) either (1) obtains a mean score on PASS Reading and Writing or PASS Mathematics that is as high or higher than that of the average of white and full-pay meals students, or (2) the Growth index (computed using scores from ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies) for one or more the historically underachieving student groups is as high or higher than the average Growth index of white and full-pay meal students. For the 2012 report cards, the EOC amended the criteria to discontinue Palmetto Silver awards for schools having three years of Average or better Growth. By eliminating this award, the number of Palmetto Silver awards in 2011-2012 declined to 189 schools because 277 schools did not receive a Palmetto Silver award for having three years of Average Growth or better.

Table 62
Schools Receiving Palmetto Gold or Silver Award / Closing the Gap Award *

Academic Year	Award Category	Number of Schools Receiving Gold Award	Number of Schools Receiving Silver Award	Total Number of Schools Receiving General Performance Award	Total Number of Schools Being Recognized for General Performance and /or for Closing the Achievement Gap	Number of Elementary and Middle Schools Receiving EOC Award for Closing the Achievement Gap
2000-01	General Performance	198	100	298	NA	NA
2001-02	General Performance	198	92	290	NA	87
2002-03	General Performance	229	77	306	NA	107
2003-04	General Performance	285	135	418	NA	132
2004-05	General Performance	187	125	312	NA	138
2005-06	General Performance	163	147	310	NA	135
2006-07	General Performance	114	126	240	NA	141
2007-08	General Performance	162	149	311	403	NA
	Closing Achievement Gap	79	163	242		NA
2008-09	General Performance	211	129	340	403	NA
	Closing Achievement Gap	66	150	216		NA
2009-10	General Performance	297	200	497	551	NA
	Closing Achievement Gap	55	243	298		NA
2010-11	General Performance	339	476	815	852	NA
	Achievement Gap	76	165	241		NA
2011-12**	General Performance	449	189	638	677	NA
	Achievement Gap	91	140	231		NA

* Totals reflect school report cards; based on grade configurations some schools receive more than one report card.

** Eliminated Silver awards for Average or better Growth for three consecutive years

Recognition

Schools recognized for closing the achievement gaps will receive an award certificate and a congratulatory letter from the SC State Superintendent. If funds are appropriated for the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards program, an award bonus is allocated. The General Assembly did not appropriate any funds for the recognition program in the 2012-13 General Appropriations Act.

