

AGENDA

Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee

Monday, January 28, 2019
10:00 a.m.
Room 433, Blatt Building

- I. Welcome Neil Robinson
- II. Approval of Minutes, November 26, 2018 Neil Robinson
- III. Information Item:
2018 Report Card and School Ratings Melanie Barton
Student Engagement Survey AdvancED®
- IV. Action Item:
Proposed Changes to Accountability for School Year 2018-19
South Carolina Department of Education

Dr. John Payne,
Deputy Superintendent of Education
Division of Federal Programs, Accountability & School Improvement

EOC Staff Response Melanie Barton
- IV. Information Item:
Palmetto Gold and Silver Program Dr. Kevin Andrews
Dr. Rainey Knight

Adjournment

Academic Standards and Assessments

Neil Robinson, Vice Chair
Barbara Hairfield
Sen. Greg Hembree
Dr. John Stockwell
Patti Tate
Dr. Scott Turner

Bob Couch
VICE CHAIR

Terry Alexander

April Allen

Raye Felder

Barbara B. Hairfield

Greg Hembree

Kevin L. Johnson

Dwight A. Loftis

John W. Matthews, Jr.

Henry McMaster

Brian Newsome

Neil C. Robinson, Jr.

Molly Spearman

John C. Stockwell

Patti J. Tate

Scott Turner

Ellen Weaver

Melanie D. Barton
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Meeting Minutes

Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee

November 26, 2018

10:00 a.m., Room 433 Blatt Building

Subcommittee Members Present:

Neil Robinson (Chair); Barbara Hairfield; Sen. Greg Hembree; Dr. Scott Turner; Dr. John Stockwell; and Patti Tate.

EOC Staff Present: Dr. Kevin Andrews; Melanie Barton; Hope Johnson-Jones; Dr. Rainey Knight; Bunnie Ward; and Dana Yow.

Mr. Robinson welcomed members and guests in attendance.

Mr. Robinson asked that the items related to the release of the report cards and the revisions to the English language arts standards be discussed first.

Mr. Robinson called up Mrs. Yow and Dr. John Payne, Deputy Superintendent for Federal Programs, Accountability and School Improvement (FPASI) at the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) to give an update on the delay regarding the release of the 2018 school report cards. Mrs. Yow explained that due to data issues surrounding the AdvancED student engagement survey that the report cards had been delayed. Dr. Payne noted that the issues focused on data quality and that, while the Department hoped to get the report cards released by November 29, it likely would be the first week of December to give districts time to review the information on the report cards before the public release.

Dr. Turner asked if the Department had received requests from school districts to get the raw data from the student engagement survey. Dr. Payne responded in the affirmative. Mrs. Yow noted that the EOC and SCDE staff had conducted regional workshops throughout the state where over 600 principals and other district staff attended. Dr. Stockwell asked for a summary of the comments received from the workshop.

Mr. Robinson then called upon Mrs. Barton who reported that the Department of Education would initiate a modified cyclical review of the English language arts standards beginning January of 2019 to address the recommendations of the Fordham Institute report.

The minutes of the May 21, 2018 meeting of the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee were approved as distributed.

Mr. Robinson called upon Dr. Knight to give an overview of the *South Carolina Social Studies College- and Career-Ready Standards* as adopted on first reading by the State Board of Education on November 13, 2018. Dr. Knight noted that the EOC, in coordination with the State Board of Education, is charged with the responsibility of approving academic standards during the cyclical review process. During the cyclical review process, the EOC first reviews the existing standards.

In the fall of 2016 the EOC convened state and national panels to review and provide guidance on the *SC 2011 Social Studies Academic Standards*. A report was written and approved by the EOC with recommendations for the development of new social studies standards and shared with SCDE. The Department then convened a writing team to begin development of the new standards. The first draft of the standards was posted online in December of 2017 and the feedback was used by the Department to further refine the standards. On November 13, 2018 the State Board of Education approved for first reading the social studies standards under consideration by the EOC.

Dr. Knight stated that she had reviewed the *South Carolina Social Studies College- and Career-Ready Standards* against the recommendations made in the EOC's 2016 report as well as the expectations outlined in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. Her work was provided to the members of the Subcommittee. First, Dr. Knight pointed out an error in the report, Table 1, that misidentifies the tested grade levels in elementary and middle school. A corrected copy of Table 1 was distributed to the members. Per current state law, Grades 5 and 7 are the grade levels tested with an end-of-course assessment in US History and The Constitution at the high school level.

Dr. Knight summarized her findings noting:

1. The standards incorporate inquiry skills in each grade level and emphasize higher cognitive complexity and effort.
2. The standards emphasize South Carolina's importance in the historical context of US history.
3. The standards integrate geography throughout the grades.
4. Personal finance is now included in the high school economic course.
5. The standards emphasize greater cognitive complexity and thereby increased the rigor required for the teaching and learning of social studies standards and indicators.
6. An inquiry-based approach to the teaching of social studies has been interwoven in the standards and indicators.
7. The overall number of standards and indicators has been reduced to provide teachers greater opportunity to focus on specific content/skills in their teaching.

Dr. Knight then identified strengths and weaknesses of the standards by grade spans:

1. At the high school level, grades 9-12, the Department created a sequence of suggested and required courses beginning with Human Geography in grade 9, to

Modern World History in grade 10, US History and The Constitution in grade 11 and US Government and Economics/Personal Finance in grade 12. Each course has a reasonable number of standards and indicators. Each course has a set of deconstructed skills specific for each course which makes learning targets clear and helps identify skills needed for instruction.

2. At the middle grades level, grades 6-8, the standards focus on: World Civilization in grade 6; Geography of 6th of World Regions in grade 7; and SC and the US in grade 8. This sequence of required courses provides students with a broad perceptive in social studies during their middle school years. The number of standards and indicators is reasonable. Each course has a set of deconstructed skills specifics for each discipline such as a skill set for history in grade 8; however, for grade 8 the other social studies skill sets are not clearly identified in geography, economics, and civics.

A learning progression skill set should be developed so that students can develop the social studies competencies in all strands for each course. For example, while an indicator may ask students to analyze the social, political and economic issues surrounding an historical event, there is concern that classroom teachers do not know the specific economic and government/civics skills in social studies expected to be taught and developed. In addition, each social studies strand should be identified after each indicator to provide greater clarification to teachers. For example, in grade 8 SC and the US, an indicator states: Analyze significant founding principles that led to the development of federalism in SC and the US. The social studies strand of government could be identified and a learning skills progression for government should be provided for teachers.

3. In grades 4 through 5, the standards focus on US History and South Carolina, broken down over two school years starting with European colonization to 1865 in grade 4 and then 1865 to the present. The role of South Carolina in the country's history is integrated into the study of the exploration of the US. The organization of content is well developed and provides students with a broader view of SC while studying sequentially the history of the US. Each grade level has a set of deconstructed skills for history; however, the other social studies skill sets are not clearly identified in geography, economics, and civics. As with the middle grades, a learning progression skill set should be developed so that students can develop the social studies competencies in all strands for each course. In addition, each social studies standard should be identified after each indicator to provide greater clarification to teachers. For example, in grade 4, "examine the economic and political motivation by colonists to declare independence from Great Britain". The social studies strand of Economics and Government could be identified along with a learning skills progression.

4. Finally, kindergarten through grade 3 standards begin with Community Around Us, Life in SC, Life in the US and SC and World Geography in grade 3. The standards take a survey approach of the four social studies standards in kindergarten through grade 2. The four strands are: history, economics, civics and geography. However, in history, civics and geography the content is not vertically aligned to build content and skill sets at each grade level. Also, the rigor does not progress across the grade levels, and some standards are redundant.

Grade 3 is classified as World Geography and SC, but the standards are overwhelming geography. Students might be better served if in grades K-3: the four social studies strands were more closely aligned in content, the indicators were more rigorous and better defined, with grade 3 integrating all social studies strands with a SC focus.

Overall, Dr. Knight noted the following:

- There needs to be developed a strong supporting document to assist teachers in the teaching of the social studies standards is needed for them to understand the instructional shift in the 2018 Social Studies College and Career Ready Standards. The document should include sample activities for each indicator with emphasis on the inquiry skills, examples of resources for both in class and out of class experiences, sample activities for classroom instruction, and resources on Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to showcase the increased rigor.
- There is inconsistency in the writing of the standards across grades, creating the impression that the standards were written by separate, independent writing teams without having clearly defined expectations. This inconsistency causes problems for teachers who move from one grade level to another across years.

Mrs. Hairfield stressed the importance of the teaching and learning of social studies for the development of civic readiness for all students, a key component of the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. While the proposed standards focus more on skills than content, a significant step forward for South Carolina, she expressed her disappointment that the four social studies strands, especially civics, are not clearly identified in the standards as a progression of skills. As explained by Mrs. Hairfield, civic readiness is more than voting or more community service. Civic readiness implies life skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, life skills such as understanding laws and consequences. Dr. Turner asked for clarification on what a progression of skills might reflect. Mr. Robinson asked about the standards for kindergarten through grade 3 and how the standards should be amended. Dr. Knight discussed the lack of progression in the skills. For example, in grade 2 students are asked to understand the Bill of Rights without having any mention of the Constitution.

Mr. Robinson turned to the EOC staff's recommendations:

1. Approval of the high school social studies standards as written.
2. Approval of the grades 4-8 standards as written **contingent upon** the Department creation a progression of the four social studies skills (history, economics, geography and civics) across these grade levels as was developed for K-2. The progression should be developed prior to implementation of the standards. The progression should clearly articulate for teachers the social studies skills that students should develop competencies in at each grade level and across grade levels. The progression could be accomplished in multiple ways: included in the grade-level standards; addressed in an appendix to the standards document; or included in the supporting document. To be consistent with the current English language arts (ELA) and mathematics standards, the progression should be included in the standards document. While the progression is being developed, SCDE can develop professional learning opportunities for grades 4-8 and the assessments for grades 5 and 7.
3. For grades K-3, the standards should not be approved as drafted and instead the following suggestions are made for improving the standards:

While the focus of the key concepts of the four social studies skills is appropriate and essential to prepare students for the higher cognitive demands in grades 4 and beyond, the essential content, alignment and rigor of the standards need to be improved and the foundations of democracy more clearly articulated in the standards. The EOC would recommend that the standards for K-3 be revised to create a strong foundation in the four social studies skills accordingly:

- a. Increase the cognitive demands as proposed in other state standards in Georgia, North Carolina, Ohio, Florida, Maryland and Wisconsin.
- b. The K-2 standards should include more information on foundations of democratic principles including symbols, events, people and practices associated with United States government; skills and attitudes of being a responsible citizen; and rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups. K-2 standards should also be reviewed to eliminate redundancies in standards across grades. Some of the standards that focus on instructional practices rather than on skills and knowledge should be revised. An example is Standard 2.E.3 – “create a simple budget and articulate the priorities using economic terms such as expenses, income, and savings.”
- c. The grade 3 standards are titled *South Carolina and World Geography*; however, the content is overwhelming world geography. The recommendation would be that the grade 3 standards be revised around

the four social studies skills (history, economic, geography and civics & government) with an emphasis on South Carolina. Teachers could be given flexibility to teach these skills using examples from the past or present in South Carolina. For example, students could learn competencies in civics and government by learning about the relationship between state, federal and local governments. They could learn geography by learning the key landforms in South Carolina. Skills in economics could be learned by looking at the local, state or national current businesses in South Carolina (agricultural, high tech manufacturing, etc.) Teachers could then ask students to analyze and compare the economic, political, geographic or historical differences within South Carolina, between South Carolina and other states or even between South Carolina and other countries.

4. SCDE should develop a strong support document for teachers while also providing high quality professional learning opportunities. These standards focus less on rote memorization and more on critical thinking. As was the case with the Fordham Institute's review of our English language arts (ELA) standards, such supporting documents are crucial to assist teachers and improve learning. Furthermore, fewer school districts have dedicated social studies coordinators to provide technical assistance and support to classroom teachers. While SCDE will provide professional learning opportunities to teachers, a very small percentage of teachers will be able to participate in the training. A strong supporting document would ensure that all teachers have access to the information. A strong supporting document would include information on the progression of skills as well as guidance on such issues as the following. Several indicators ask students to be able to "analyze multiple perspectives of economic, political and social developments." Giving teachers optional examples of what constitutes multiple perspectives without specific examples of names would be most beneficial to teachers.
5. In the future, especially during the upcoming revision to the South Carolina science standards, SCDE should consider hiring a consultant to assist the standards writing teams with guidance on writing the standards with common language across grade levels. Having consistency across grade levels is crucial to teachers who may move from one year to the next across grade levels.

Mr. Robinson then called upon Dr. David Mathis, Deputy Superintendent of the Division of College and Career Readiness at SCDE, to ask if the Department can work with the EOC staff on improving the social studies standards and on creating the support documents for teachers as proposed. Dr. Mathis stated that the Department would have to reconvene a team to amend the K-3 standards. Dr. Stockwell and Mrs. Tate asked for confirmation that early education teachers would be involved in the work. Dr. Turner

moved to adopt the staff recommendations as proposed. Sen. Hembree seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Subcommittee: Academic Standards and Assessments

Date: January 28, 2019

INFORMATION

2018 Report Card and School Ratings

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY

Pursuant to Sections 59-18-900 of the Education Accountability Act, report cards were issued on November 29, 2018 along with overall school ratings for elementary, middle and high schools.

CRITICAL FACTS

Staffs of the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) and the EOC held regional workshops in the months of October and November with principals and other district and school staff to explain the report cards. Feedback provided at these workshops and summary of the 2018 school report card ratings are attached.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS

October – November 2018

Regional Workshops

November 29, 2018

Public Release of 2018 Report Cards

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC

Cost: No fiscal impact beyond current appropriations

Fund/Source:

ACTION REQUEST

☐ For approval

☒ For Information

☐ Approved

ACTION TAKEN

☐ Amended

☐ Not Approved
(explain)

☐ Action deferred



The following information provides a summary of the 2018 School Ratings – the overall Ratings for schools as well as the Ratings that schools receive for rated indicators.

Summary of the overall Ratings

Overall Ratings

- Based on a 100-point scale, per state law
- Overall ratings for schools were determined based on SC's performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 2015. The percentage of schools in each rating category mirrors the performance of students on NAEP performance in reading and mathematics in 2015 in grades 4 and 8. For the 2019 report card ratings, the range of scores will remain consistent but the percentage of schools earning each overall rating will change

Ranges of scores necessary to receive overall Ratings by school type

Overall Rating	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
Excellent	61-100	56-100	67-100
Good	53-60	48-55	60-66
Average	42-52	36-47	51-59
Below Average	34-41	29-35	40-50
Unsatisfactory	0-33	0-28	0-39

Number and percentage of schools receiving overall Ratings for school year 2017-18

Overall Rating	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	TOTAL
Excellent	99 (14.9%)	51 (15.6%)	36 (14.8%)	186
Good	136 (20.5%)	63 (19.3%)	53 (21.7%)	252
Average	241 (36.3%)	118 (36.1%)	74 (30.3%)	433
Below Average	122 (18.4%)	59 (18.0%)	46 (18.9%)	227
Unsatisfactory	62 (9.3%)	30 (9.2%)	18 (7.4%)	110
Not rated	4 (.6%)	6 (1.8%)	17 (7.0%)	27
TOTAL	664	327	244	1235

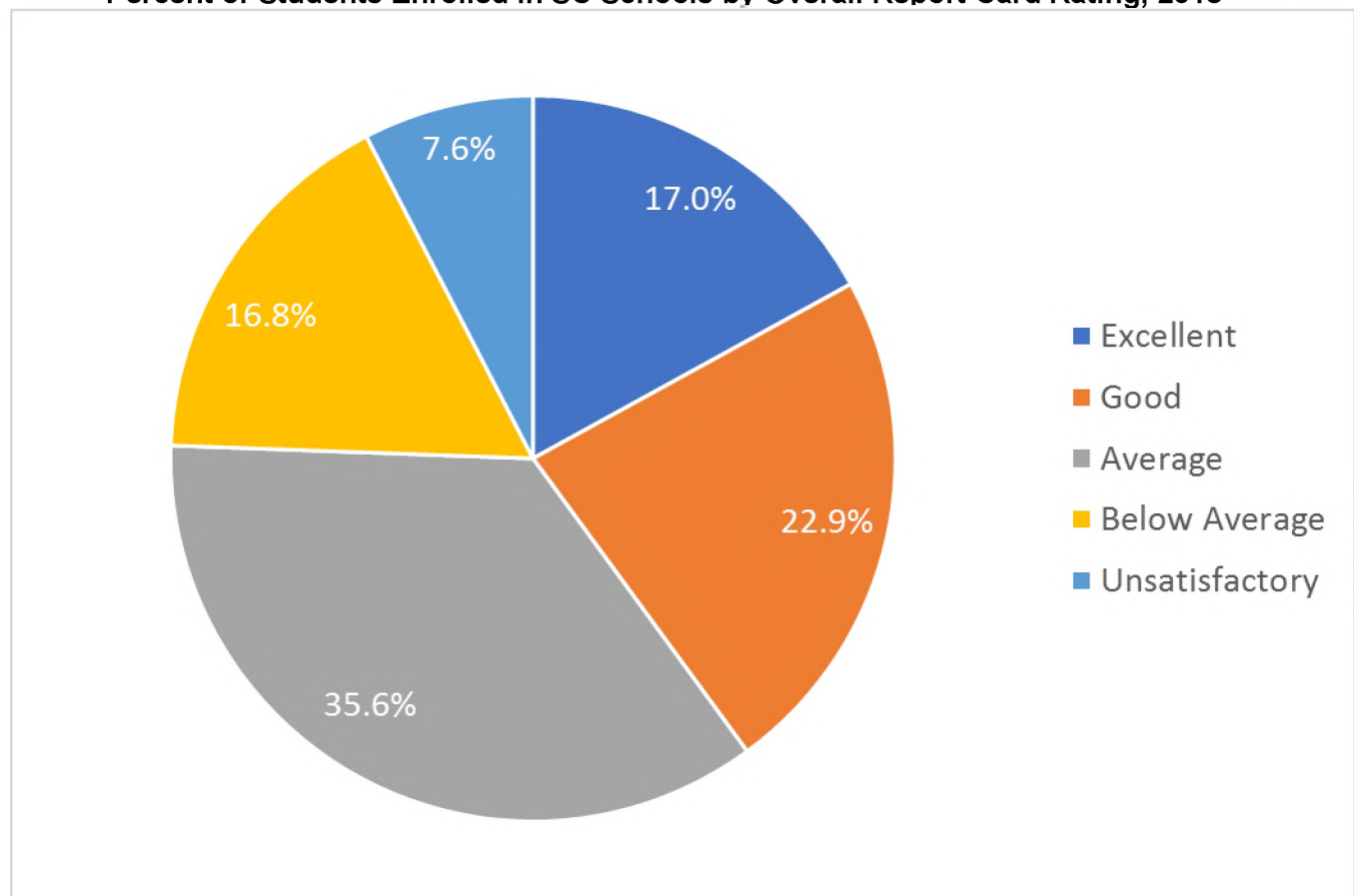
Not included are Primary Schools, Career Centers, and schools with fewer than 20 students.

How the 100 points are broken down by indicator

Indicator	Elementary / Middle Schools		High Schools	
	Without ELP*	With ELP	Without ELP	With ELP
Academic Achievement	40	35	30	25
Preparing for Success	10	10	10	10
Student Progress (All Students & Lowest Performing 20% of students)	40	35	N/A	N/A
School Quality	10	10	5	5
English Learners' Progress Toward Proficiency	0	10	0	10
Graduation Rate	N/A	N/A	30	25
College and Career Ready	N/A	N/A	25	25
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

***Schools with ELP have 20 or more English language learners who in school year 2017-18 were assessed to determine their English proficiency; therefore, these schools received a rating for English Learners' Proficiency. Schools without ELP have fewer than 20 English language learners who in school year 2017-18 were assessed to determine their English proficiency; therefore, these schools did not receive a rating for English Learners' Proficiency, and the points were distributed to Academic Achievement and Student Progress.*

Percent of Students Enrolled in SC Schools by Overall Report Card Rating, 2018



Percentages reflect the student enrollment of SC public schools on the 180th day of instruction.

WHAT do the SC Report Cards Measure?

Schools report information for the South Carolina School Report Cards in specific areas – called indicators. The indicators are **Academic Achievement**; **Student Progress**; **Preparing for Success**; **College and Career Ready**; **English Learners' Proficiency**; **Graduation Rate**; **School Quality**; **Classroom Environment**; **Student Safety**; and **Financial Information**. Seven of the ten indicators will receive a Rating for the indicator. Three of the indicators are measured but not Rated. Each school will also receive an overall School Rating. The Ratings, as well as the information contained in each indicator, helps give parents, community members, business leaders, and others a snapshot of the quality of education schools are providing children.



ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

This indicator determines if students in a school are meeting state standards in English Language Arts (Reading and Writing) and Math. *Impacts all schools and is Rated.*



STUDENT PROGRESS

This indicator determines how students are growing or improving academically in English Language Arts and Math and how the lowest performing 20% of students in a school are growing academically. *Impacts Elementary and Middle Schools and is Rated.*



PREPARING FOR SUCCESS

This indicator determines if students in a school are meeting state standards in the Sciences and Social Studies AND to help understand if schools are preparing students for success in critical areas. *Impacts all schools and is Rated.*



ENGLISH LEARNERS' PROFICIENCY

This indicator determines if students who are non-native-English speakers are meeting growth targets to learn the English Language. *Impacts all schools and is Rated.*



COLLEGE AND CAREER READY

The College and Career Ready indicator determines if students who are graduating from a high school are prepared for college or careers after graduating. *Impacts High schools and is Rated.*



GRADUATION RATE

The Graduation Rate indicator determines what percentage of students who entered the high school in the 9th grade, graduated in at least 4 years. *Impacts High schools and is Rated.*



SCHOOL QUALITY

This indicator determines if students feel engaged in their school and reports data to better understand the school climate. *Impacts all schools and is Rated.*



CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

This indicator shows all the data that is collected about teachers in a school and how it relates to students. *Impacts all schools and is not Rated.*



STUDENT SAFETY

The Student Safety indicator shows information about unsafe incidents that have occurred on school grounds, on some transportation, or at school-sponsored events. *Impacts all schools and is not Rated.*



FINANCIAL INFORMATION

This indicator shows all of the financial information that is collected about schools and school districts -- from average salaries to the percent of money spent on classroom instruction. *Impacts all schools and is not Rated.*

Academic Achievement indicator

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings for **Academic Achievement** indicator,
school year 2017-18

Overall Rating	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	TOTAL
Excellent	93 (14.0%)	36 (11.0%)	19 (7.8%)	148
Good	97 (14.6%)	55 (16.8%)	27 (11.1%)	179
Average	244 (36.8%)	119 (36.4%)	78 (32.0%)	441
Below Average	160 (24.1%)	77 (23.6%)	62 (25.4%)	299
Unsatisfactory	66 (9.9%)	34 (10.4%)	45 (18.4%)	145
Not rated	4 (.6%)	6 (1.8%)	13 (5.3%)	23
TOTAL	664	327	244	1235

Preparing for Success indicator

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings for **Preparing for Success** indicator,
school year 2017-18

Overall Rating	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	TOTAL
Excellent	94 (14.2%)	36 (11.0%)	25 (10.3%)	155
Good	94 (14.2%)	50 (15.3%)	33 (13.5%)	177
Average	233 (35.1%)	117 (35.8%)	85 (34.8%)	435
Below Average	153 (23.0%)	69 (21.1%)	59 (24.2%)	281
Unsatisfactory	85 (12.8%)	49 (15.0%)	28 (11.5%)	162
Not rated	5 (.8%)	6 (1.8%)	14 (5.7%)	25
TOTAL	664	327	244	1235

English Learners' Proficiency indicator

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings for **English Learners' Proficiency** indicator,
school year 2017-18

Overall Rating	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	TOTAL
Excellent	18 (2.7%)	0 (0%)	2 (.8%)	20
Good	101 (15.2%)	7 (2.1%)	15 (6.2%)	123
Average	136 (20.5%)	46 (14.1%)	63 (25.8%)	245
Below Average	40 (6.0%)	74 (22.6%)	35 (14.3%)	149
Unsatisfactory	1 (.2%)	8 (2.5%)	1 (.4%)	10
Not rated	368 (55.4%)	192 (58.7%)	128 (52.5%)	688
TOTAL	664	327	244	1235

School Quality indicator

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings for **School Quality** indicator,
school year 2017-18

Overall Rating	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	TOTAL
Excellent	65 (9.8%)	30 (9.2%)	22 (9.0%)	117
Good	130 (19.6%)	62 (19.0%)	46 (18.9%)	238
Average	194 (29.2%)	92 (28.1%)	69 (28.3%)	355
Below Average	132 (19.9%)	64 (19.6%)	46 (18.9%)	242
Unsatisfactory	129 (19.4%)	60 (18.4%)	45 (18.4%)	234
Not rated	14 (2.1%)	19 (5.8%)	16 (6.6%)	49
TOTAL	664	327	244	1235

Student Progress indicator

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings for **Student Progress** indicator,
school year 2017-18

Overall Rating	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	TOTAL
Excellent	102 (15.4%)	23 (7.0%)	125
Good	165 (24.9%)	57 (17.4%)	222
Average	216 (32.5%)	140 (42.8%)	356
Below Average	128 (19.3%)	75 (22.9%)	203
Unsatisfactory	46 (6.9%)	25 (7.7%)	71
Not rated	7 (1.1%)	7 (2.1%)	14
TOTAL	664	327	991

Graduation Rate indicator

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings for **Graduation Rate** indicator,
school year 2017-18

Overall Rating	High Schools
Excellent	49 (20.1%)
Good	101 (41.4%)
Average	47 (19.3%)
Below Average	18 (7.4%)
Unsatisfactory	12 (4.9%)
Not rated	17 (7.0%)
TOTAL	244

College and Career Ready indicator

Number and percentage of schools receiving ratings for College and Career Ready indicator, school year 2017-18

Overall Rating	High Schools
Excellent	36 (14.8%)
Good	68 (27.9%)
Average	56 (23.0%)
Below Average	39 (16.0%)
Unsatisfactory	28 (11.5%)
Not rated	17 (7.0%)
TOTAL	244

SC On-Time Graduation Rate, 2009-2018

2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
81.0%	84.6%	82.6%	80.3%	80.1%	77.5%	74.9%	73.6%	72.1%	73.7%

Note: For 2018, students who leave high school and enter adult education can no longer be excluded from the calculation per federal requirements.

High Poverty Elementary, Middle and High Schools with a 2018 Overall Rating of Excellent or Good (NO HIGH SCHOOLS)

District	School	Poverty Index (Students in Poverty)	Overall Rating 2018
Williamsburg	D.P. Cooper Charter School (Middle Card)	94.26	Excellent
Horry	Academy of Hope Public Charter School (Middle Card)	94.04	Excellent
Marlboro	Clio Elementary School	91.24	Excellent
Spartanburg 7	Meeting Street Academy	90.15	Excellent
Allendale	Allendale Fairfax Middle	96.32	Good
Hampton 2	Estill Elementary	94.64	Good
Richland 1	South Kilbourne Elementary	94.64	Good
Barnwell 19	Blackville-Hilda Middle School	93.33	Good
Lee	Lower Lee Elementary School	93.07	Good
Greenville	Hollis Academy	92.66	Good
Marion	Palmetto Middle School	92.48	Good
Aiken	North Aiken Elementary School	91.67	Good
Calhoun	St. Matthews K-8 (Middle Card)	90.29	Good
Charleston	Edith L. Frierson Elementary	90.24	Good



SC School Report Cards Principal Workshop Summary

The Education Oversight Committee (EOC) and the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) held twelve School Report Card Regional Workshops for principals and district/school personnel in October and November of 2018. Over 600 educators attended the workshops. The purposes of the sessions were to answer questions about the 2018 report card and its release. The EOC staff also distributed copies of *Guide to the 2018 SC School Report Cards* at each meeting.

The meetings encouraged questions and concerns from principals. The frank, honest dialogue assisted the EOC staff in understanding issues related to the accountability system and changes to be considered. Some of the concerns, as noted below, were able to be addressed before the final release of the report cards. At the request of EOC member Dr. John Stockwell, EOC staff has compiled a summary of comments and questions from attendees of the sessions:

1. The AdvancED survey, which was intended to measure student engagement, was often brought up during the sessions. This indicator for elementary and middle schools was the metric used for School Quality/Student Success as required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Principals questioned the timing of the survey, citing they only had a short window in which to administer the survey. One district personnel attending asked why with all the technical difficulties (technology, accommodations for students with special needs, customer support and reporting) was the indicator not removed from the report cards. They also expressed frustration with what the survey results gave them, one stating it was the least useful of all surveys given to students, leaving them with “nothing actionable.” Then, when the report card release was delayed by problems with the accuracy of the data, the educators expressed even more doubt about the legitimacy of the data. One principal candidly explained that next year he would spend professional development time to train teachers in how to “coach” their students in responding to the survey.
2. School personnel noted concern over the removal of end-of-course tests results from middle school accountability, as those results often helped middle school ratings in the past.
3. Some expressed concern over the reporting of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) results for districts and schools. While the results did not count in a school’s ratings, educators questioned the subjective nature of the results of the assessment. The EOC staff responded to the concerns with information that a kindergarten readiness assessment is required by two state laws.
4. There were concerns about data quality such as the “percent of teachers certified.” Schools did not have confidence in some data elements, especially when the embargoed information was displayed. Poor data quality, at the school, district, and state level, was often noted. NOTE: The “percent of teachers certified” data point was removed for this year’s report card for further study due to the concerns raised.
5. Educators were concerned that the calculation of the Student Progress indicator resulted in the schools getting “hit twice” for the performance of the bottom 20 percent of students. The indicator

equally measures growth of all students and growth of the lowest-performing 20 percent of students. The EOC staff is analyzing the Student Progress indicator and its components.

6. There was confusion about how students met the criteria for being career ready by earning a national or state industry credential. Some principals candidly explained that there was no requirement that the industry certification earned be in the student's career cluster. For example, in one district, students who had identified business as a career cluster earned "career readiness" by passing the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certification. In many cases, this certification may not have been applicable to a student's career. The EOC staff is reviewing this issue.
7. Initially, there was concern that the Student Safety data, which were data from school year 2015-16 provided by the districts to the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), were not accurately reported by districts or not accurately reported by OCR. ESSA requires the reporting of school safety data submitted by districts to the U.S. Department of Education (USED). USED provided guidance that states should use the 2015-16 data on the Office of Civil Rights web pages as the data for the report cards. In response to the concerns raised, SCDE amended the data reporting element to the satisfaction of schools and districts to reflect the most recent school year and to meet federal reporting requirements.
8. There was confusion about how the overall ratings were established. Some thought that the ratings were based on actual NAEP scores. In discussing the process that the EOC took, which included reviewing public perception surveys and historical ratings, the EOC staff often engaged the principals with the following question: in their professional judgment, what percentage of schools in our state would you consider Excellent. The overwhelming response was 10 percent of schools are Excellent.

Since release of the report cards on November 29, 2018, the EOC staff has begun compiling the concerns and questions raised. This list currently contains the following issues, but districts and schools continue to contact EOC staff with questions:

1. Poor communication about the release itself. District personnel has expressed frustration with the last-minute announcements sent to superintendents about the public release amid documented concerns about the errors. Public information coordinators and accountability coordinators were not alerted to the Accountability Addendum publication until the day of the report card release. The EOC only published it one day prior to the release. The media was not given enough time to localize stories and the districts were not given time to craft their own communication.
2. Some districts had problems uploading the ASVAB scores into Enrich. The issue involved either time or insufficient district staff to upload the information.
3. Data issues with Prime Instructional Time data reporting.
4. AdvancED data were changed by the SCDE during the delay of the Report Cards, sometimes causing schools to lose points and overall ratings. Districts complained that they were not given the opportunity to verify the data from AdvancED themselves.
5. Districts stated that some schools who did not participate in the AdvancED student survey received "Not Rated" instead of an indicator rating of "Unsatisfactory." The EOC staff is still investigating this issue.
6. There was confusion with what is reported as compared to "what counts" in dual enrollment/dual credit. EOC staff is working to address the questions.
7. There was confusion about what data were collected and reported for chronic absenteeism. The EOC staff is trying to address the question.

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Subcommittee: Academic Standards and Assessments

Date: January 28, 2019

INFORMATION

Amendments to Accountability Under ESSA for School Year 2018-19

PURPOSE/AUTHORITY

States may submit proposed amendments to the United States Department of Education regarding the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan by March 1, 2019. Pursuant to Section 59-18-900 of the Education Accountability Act (EAA), the state's accountability system must meet federal requirements. Therefore, any changes to the accountability of schools requires EOC approval.

CRITICAL FACTS

The staffs of the EOC and South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) met in December of 2018 and January of 2019. SCDE is proposing changes to the state's ESSA plan. The EOC staff will provide feedback to the EOC on these changes prior to the January 28 subcommittee meeting.

TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS

December 12, 2018	EOC and SCDE staff meet to discuss revisions.
December 19, 2018	EOC and SCDE staff meet to discuss revisions.
January 10, 2019	EOC and SCDE staff meet to discuss revisions.

ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC

Cost: No fiscal impact beyond current appropriations

Fund/Source:

ACTION REQUEST

☒ For approval

☐ For Information

☐ Approved

ACTION TAKEN

☐ Amended

☐ Not Approved
(explain)

☐ Action deferred



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

NOV 13 2018

Dear Chief State School Officer:

I am writing to provide important information regarding the process for submitting amendments to your approved ESEA consolidated State plan under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

We appreciate the work you and your team have done in developing a consolidated State plan that meets the requirements of the ESEA while also representing the needs of your districts, schools and stakeholders. The U.S. Department of Education (Department) expects that each State will revise and strengthen its consolidated State plan, as appropriate, to better address the educational needs of children in the State. Prior to implementing any revisions to its approved consolidated State plan, a State must submit its proposed amendments to the Department for review and approval. Consistent with the consolidated assurances each State submitted in June 2017 under ESEA section 8304, prior to submitting any amendment to the Department, a State must consult with the Governor on the amendment, afford a reasonable opportunity for public comment on the amendment, and consider such comments.

When submitting an amendment to the Department for approval, please submit:

- 1) A redlined version of the approved consolidated State plan that reflects all proposed changes;
- 2) A cover letter describing the proposed changes;
- 3) The signature of the chief State school officer or authorized representative; and
- 4) A description of how the State provided the public a reasonable opportunity to comment on the plan.

A State may not implement a change until the amendment has been approved. Therefore, we recommend that a State submit proposed amendments to the Department as much in advance of the State's desired date of implementation as possible. Please submit any amendments related to accountability determinations for the 2019-2020 school year no later than **March 1, 2019**. Amendments must be submitted by that date in order for the Department to determine whether a requested amendment complies with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements in time for your State to implement changes to its accountability determinations for the 2019-2020 school year based on data from the 2018-2019 school year (e.g., identification of schools for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement for the 2019-2020 school year). While amendments submitted after that date will be accepted and reviewed, they may not be approved in time for the State to make accountability determinations no later than the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year.

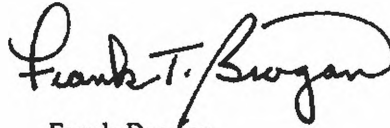
400 MARYLAND AVE. SW, WASHINGTON, DC 20202

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The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access

Thank you again for the work that you continue to do to implement the ESEA and provide a high-quality education to all your students. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact your Office of State Support program officer at OSS.[State]@ed.gov (e.g., OSS.Alabama@ed.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Frank T. Brogan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Frank" and last name "Brogan" clearly legible, and "T." as a small middle initial.

Frank Brogan
Assistant Secretary
for Elementary and Secondary Education

cc: State Title I, Part A Directors
State Title I, Part C Directors
State Title I, Part D Directors
State Title II, Part A Directors
State Title III, Part A Directors
State Title IV, Part A Directors
State Title IV, Part B Directors
State Title V, Part B, Subpart 2 Directors
State Assessment Directors
State Directors for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Education for
Homeless Children and Youths Program



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

January 14, 2019

Melanie Barton
Director, South Carolina Education Oversight Committee
1205 Pendleton Street, Room 502
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Ms. Barton:

Thank you for our ongoing collaboration as we review and refine South Carolina's Consolidated Plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). As you know, revisions to be reflected on the 2018–19 Report Cards, scheduled for release in November 2019, must be submitted for review and approval by the U.S. Department of Education by March 1, 2019.

Attached, please find from the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) a list of pending revisions we intend to make to the ESSA plan. Overall these edits will make the plan more generic, to allow the State greater flexibility in meeting its needs without the necessity of seeking additional federal approval. (As we discussed there may be other edits related to ESSA-only information, not used for accountability purposes.) Through these generic edits giving us greater flexibility, we are also providing recommendations for changes to the 2018–19 accountability metrics, based upon feedback from superintendents and other stakeholders.

At the January and February Education Oversight Committee meetings, the SCDE will be prepared to discuss these recommendations and respond to any questions. In addition, as we discussed, we will be working toward more robust revisions to the ESSA plan in the coming months, and will be prepared to discuss those, too, at the January or February meeting(s).

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John R. Payne".

John R. Payne
Deputy Superintendent

SCDE Proposed Changes for SY 2018-19 Accountability

Accountability Metric	SCDE Proposed Change	Rationale
Academic Achievement	Explore changing the denominator from the “Exceeds” and “A” level to reflect the overall state goals of 90% at “Approaches” and above and 70% at “Meets” and above	The current system requires all students to earn “Exceeds” or “A” in achievement in both English language arts and mathematics in order for a school to receive full points. A revision in the denominator could better align to the goals and to public perception of a 100-point system, thereby making the 100 points achievable as required in the EAA. No school received full points; only the Governor’s SSM and the Charleston Academic Magnet scored 29/30 points.
Student Growth	Review the impact of the growth measure on high achieving schools for whether some decision rule should be put in place.	Perception is that high-achieving schools cannot retain high growth scores over time. This is being investigated. If the denominator on achievement is changed, we would implement a business for a school had low growth, similar to previous accountability models.
College & Career Readiness	Add to career-ready the dual credit courses aligned to a completer pathway (6 hours, “C” or better) and additional certifications + completer status.	Especially in small, rural districts the access to varied CTE pathways and certifications is limited. These additions would make this indicator more equitable and acknowledge the post-secondary readiness of these students.
Preparing for Success	Explore modification of the denominator as with Academic Achievement.	No school scored all points and only 5 scored 9 or above. See Academic Achievement above.
Graduation Rate	Give full points for reaching the state goal of 90%	Superintendents requested that points be distributed based upon meeting the state’s goal and/or percentage of graduation rate. Reviewing a distribution between 50% and 90%.
English Language Proficiency	Determine whether 4.0 (approved for some other states) is	Level the playing field for our state on this new assessment by not

	“proficiency” on the ACCESS assessment.	overstating the proficiency score without more data.
Student Engagement Survey	Work with the vendor to set a criterion-referenced method of distributing points.	The current “competitive” decile method is not tied to whether a school is “Excellent” or “Unsatisfactory” and does not consider “compliant” students in ranking schools. A school with 50% Committed, 40% Compliant, and 10% disengaged is ranked the same as one with 50%, 10% Compliant and 40% disengaged.

SCDE Edits to ESSA Plan, March 1, 2019

Accountability Metric	SCDE Proposed Change	Rationale
General Narrative	Review and remove superfluous information not asked or required, and/or make language more generic.	The ESSA plan contains a great deal of granular information that may inhibit the state's flexibility in making tweaks, as appropriate.
Academic Achievement	Make language more generic, as applicable.	To give the state greater flexibility should changes be needed.
Student Growth	Make language more generic. Remove references to vendor name(s).	Per Proviso, the State issued an RFP for a new platform. That process is currently under an appeal from another vendor. The language will enable the state to meet this requirement irrespective of vendors.
College & Career Readiness	Make language more generic or inclusive.	Enable the state to include Cambridge into college readiness (in addition to AP/IB). It will allow more inclusiveness for industry credentials.
Preparing for Success	Make language more generic, as applicable.	To give the state greater flexibility should changes be needed.
Graduation Rate	Make language more generic, as applicable.	To give the state greater flexibility should changes be needed.
English Language Proficiency	Make language more generic, as applicable.	To give the state greater flexibility should changes be needed.
Student Engagement Survey	Make language more generic, as applicable.	To give the state greater flexibility should changes be needed.

FYI



POLICY ANALYSIS

FOCUS IN.
Study up
on important
education policies.

Chronic Absenteeism: A key indicator of student success

ALYSSA RAFA

For students to succeed academically, they must be present and engaged at school. Nationwide, approximately 6.8 million—or one in seven—students miss 15 or more days during the school year.² By most definitions, these students are considered 'chronically absent.' Research shows that

NATIONWIDE, APPROXIMATELY ONE IN SEVEN STUDENTS MISSED 15 OR MORE DAYS OF INSTRUCTION IN 2013-14.¹

chronic absenteeism can affect academic performance in later grades and is a key early warning sign that a student is more likely to drop out of high school.³ Several states enacted legislation to address this issue, and many states are currently discussing the utility of chronic absenteeism as an indicator of school quality or student success (SQSS) in their accountability systems under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This policy brief provides information for policymakers and state education leaders on the research, key issues and policy options available to address chronic absenteeism and improve attendance.

Understanding Chronic Absenteeism

States use several measures to track student attendance, including average daily attendance (ADA), chronic absenteeism and truancy. ADA refers to the percentage of students who attend school each day and is widely used by states to demonstrate attendance. ADA figures do not, however, reveal whether absences are concentrated among a small group of students with many absences, or dispersed amongst a larger number of students with fewer absences. As a result, ADA may mask chronic absenteeism problems because it will not identify students with excessive absences.⁴

While ADA is defined very clearly, definitions of chronic absenteeism vary. For purposes of data collection and reporting in the Civil Rights Data Collection, the federal government defines chronic absenteeism as missing 15 or more days of school per year. State definitions differ; some states base

Chronic absenteeism is most prevalent among students in poverty, students with disabilities, students of color, students who are mobile and students who are involved in the juvenile justice system.

Several states are using chronic absenteeism as an indicator of SQSS in their ESSA state plans.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?*

Average Daily Attendance

A measure of the percentage of students in attendance each school day.

Chronic Absenteeism

A measure of how much school a student misses for any reason—including excused, unexcused and discipline-related absences.

Truancy

A measure of a student's unexcused absences only.

*While official state definitions vary, the definitions provided reflect the common understanding of each term.

the definition on the number of days missed, while others define it in terms of percentage of time missed. For those states with percentage thresholds, chronic absenteeism is generally defined as missing 10 percent or more of the school year—approximately 18 days—depending on the length of the school year.⁵ While these varying definitions can create difficulties in data comparison and analysis, at the root of *all* definitions is the common understanding that chronic absenteeism includes all days of missed instruction, regardless of the reason.

Truancy measures a student's unexcused absences—omitting absences that are excused and/or related to disciplinary measures. Due to a growing body of research that suggests missed instructional time inhibits student success, regardless of the cause of absence, some states have started to use chronic absenteeism as a primary measure of attendance. Additionally, ESSA now requires states to collect and report data on chronic absenteeism in their annual report cards.

Who is Chronically Absent?

High school students with **disabilities** are **1.4 times** as likely to be **chronically absent** as high school students without disabilities. Compared to their white peers in elementary school, **Native students** are **1.9 times** as likely, and **black students** are **1.4 times** as likely, to be **chronically absent**.

While chronic absenteeism affects students from all backgrounds at all grade levels, data indicate that some student groups are disproportionately affected. Chronic absenteeism is most prevalent among the youngest

and oldest students, particularly those who already face significant academic challenges, including students living in poverty, students with disabilities, students of color, students who are mobile and students who are involved in the juvenile justice system.⁶ These student groups are often targeted with efforts to close the achievement gap, but unless such students are present and engaged, the impact of those efforts will likely be diminished.

Why are Students Chronically Absent?

Students miss days of school for a host of reasons. Research studies indicate that students missing 10 percent or more of the school year typically struggle with various barriers to attendance. In addition to the demographic factors mentioned above, these barriers may include, but are not limited to: poor health, family and work responsibilities, limited transportation options and unsafe routes to school, bullying and other safety issues, homelessness, ineffective school discipline, undiagnosed disabilities or disengagement from the school system. It is challenging to collect data on why students miss school, which impedes efforts to determine the root cause of chronic absence. However, developing a better understanding of these potential causes could inform more effective interventions.

The Link Between Chronic Absenteeism and Student Success

Chronic absence is a proven sign of academic risk, as students who miss school are less likely to meet key academic milestones. Further, since students who already face significant academic challenges are disproportionately affected, persistent chronic absence has the potential to exacerbate the achievement gap. There is great potential to make headway in closing that gap, improving graduation



rates and providing a higher-quality education to all students, if issues of chronic absenteeism are addressed effectively.

Evidence from several state-specific studies suggests that, even as early as preschool, chronic absenteeism is related to lower academic achievement.⁷ Students who are chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade are much less likely to achieve reading proficiency by third grade.⁸ By the sixth grade, chronic absenteeism becomes one of the primary indicators that a student will drop out of high school;⁹ a study in Utah showed that students who were chronically absent for any year between eighth grade and twelfth grade were more than seven times more likely to drop out.¹⁰

The consequences of chronic absenteeism can persist through higher education and adulthood. High school dropouts are more likely to experience poverty and diminished health, and have an increased risk of being involved in the criminal justice system.¹¹ Beyond high school, chronic absenteeism can predict lower levels of persistence and success in college.¹²

State Action to Address Chronic Absenteeism

Research on the effects of chronic absence on student success has drawn the attention of policymakers and state education leaders throughout the nation. Many states have enacted policies to address chronic absenteeism in recent years. State action can be categorized into four general areas: attendance improvement plans, public awareness initiatives, data usage and early warning systems, and school improvement efforts.

State Plans to Guide Attendance Improvement

To spur better attendance, some state leaders instituted requirements for the development of attendance improvement plans and attendance monitoring teams.

- In 2015, policymakers in **Connecticut** enacted legislation aimed at reducing chronic absenteeism at the local level by requiring the establishment of district and school attendance review teams where rates of chronic absenteeism are high. The legislation also required the Connecticut Department of Education to develop a Chronic Absenteeism Prevention and Intervention Plan for use by local and regional boards of education.¹³
- Similarly, **Indiana** enacted legislation in 2013 requiring that the Indiana Department of Education provide resources and guidance to school districts concerning evidence-based practices and effective strategies to reduce absenteeism. This guidance includes an overview of the research on the predictors and effects of student absenteeism, as well as information on effective, research-based interventions.¹⁴
- A 2016 **Oregon** law requires the Oregon Department of Education to develop a state plan to, in part, provide schools and school districts with guidance and best practices for tracking, monitoring and addressing chronic absences.¹⁵

Public Awareness Initiatives

Another strategy states use to combat poor attendance is to increase public awareness of the problem. While several public awareness campaigns revolve around Attendance Awareness Month each September, some states institute year-long strategies to raise public awareness of poor attendance.¹⁶

- In addition to working directly with districts to reduce absenteeism, the **Arkansas** Make Every Day Count initiative, led by the Arkansas Campaign for Grade Level Reading, releases public service announcements on local radio stations and provides messaging tools—including handouts, buttons, banners and posters—to districts to reinforce the importance of attendance.¹⁷
- The Every Student Present! campaign in **New York** is a partnership between government, non-profit and educational organizations targeted toward school administrators, parents and community partners that aims to shed light on how chronic absence impacts student success. The campaign includes efforts to publish articles in education membership organization



publications, distribute informational materials, collaborate with youth advocacy organizations and develop a website to help local groups systematically address chronic absenteeism.¹⁸

- In **Utah**, Voices for Utah Children leads a public awareness campaign focused on educating stakeholders about the relationship between attendance and achievement. This campaign is centered around Attendance Awareness Month and aimed at the state's teachers' union, parent teacher association, elected officials and community leaders.¹⁹

Data Usage and Early Warning Systems

Federal law now requires that states collect and report data on chronic absenteeism. States, schools and districts can use that data to identify problems of chronic absence and intervene as needed. The U.S. Department of Education defines an early warning system as "a system based on student data to identify students who exhibit behavior or academic performance that puts them at risk of dropping out of school."²⁰ Schools that implement early warning systems often use data to track attendance, behavior and course performance indicators. These indicators trigger interventions and provide a mechanism to identify those students who may be off track. There are several examples of states that use chronic absence data effectively and/or have incorporated measures of chronic absence into their early warning systems.

- **Hawaii** provides on demand access to chronic absenteeism data at the school level and designates school officials with access to a list of students who miss more than 5 percent of the school year. This data is incorporated into the risk measures used in the state's early warning system.
- The **Massachusetts** Early Warning Indicator System collects a wealth of data on students in first-12th grade and provides information to districts about whether their students are on track to meet their academic goals. Student attendance is included as an indicator for evaluating whether students require an intervention.²¹
- The **Rhode Island** Department of Education includes

information on chronic absenteeism for the state, districts and public schools as part of a publicly accessible, user friendly data resource called InfoWorks.²²

- The **Virginia** Early Warning System monitors student progress by tracking several warning signs, including 10 percent absenteeism in the first 20 days of school, in the first grading period and over the entire year.²³

School Improvement

The strong link between chronic absenteeism and poor academic performance led some states to require this measure in the school improvement plans of low-performing schools. Many of the previously mentioned state guidance plans were developed with this effort in mind.

- As part of their 2013 chronic absence legislation, **Indiana** required that schools with a B grade or lower include a strategy to reduce absenteeism in their school improvement plan.²⁴
- As part of efforts to improve third-grade literacy, **Iowa** now mandates that school districts include measures of chronic absenteeism in elementary schools in their school improvement plans.
- **New Jersey** added chronic absenteeism to its latest school performance reports, and any school with more than a 6 percent chronic absenteeism rate is advised to pay closer attention to attendance trends.
- In **Virginia**, high schools identified under the state accountability system as "in need of improvement" are required to use the Virginia Early Warning System to monitor whether students are on track to graduate.

ESSA and Chronic Absenteeism

ESSA requires that annual state report cards include the chronic absenteeism information submitted for purposes of the Civil Rights Data Collection. ESSA also provides increased flexibility to states to incorporate chronic absenteeism directly into state accountability systems as one indicator of SQSS. Finally, ESSA provides flexibility to school districts to use their Title II professional development fund allocations

to train staff on issues “related to school conditions for student learning,” including chronic absenteeism.²⁵

ESSA Accountability Systems

As a part of state accountability systems, ESSA requires five indicators: four specified academic indicators and one measure, chosen by the state, of SQSS. Taken together, this accountability structure is intended to provide a more holistic measure of school performance.

The SQSS indicator must be given less than “substantial weight” in accountability calculations, with the four other measures receiving “much greater weight” in the aggregate.²⁶ Research suggests that chronic absenteeism serves as a good measure of school performance under accountability systems because it is measurable, it provides meaningful differentiation between schools and because reductions in chronic absence are linked to improvements in academic achievement. Chronic absenteeism is a measure that meets the requirements of an SQSS indicator and because ESSA requires reporting of chronic absenteeism in state report cards, states that use this measure for SQSS should have the data readily available.

Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, states could apply for waivers to customize their accountability systems, and a few states chose to use chronic absenteeism as a measure of school and student performance under those waivers.²⁷ For example, **California’s** CORE districts received a federal waiver and created the School Quality Improvement Index, including chronic absenteeism as one of the five social-emotional and culture-climate factors.²⁸

Policy Considerations

- **Adopt a standard state definition of chronic absence.** Varying definitions create unnecessary difficulties in data comparison and analysis. Research suggests that a definition using a specified percentage of missed

instructional days is preferable to one using a specified number of days, because a percentage threshold promotes earlier identification of students to trigger intervention.²⁹

- **Use data effectively** by collecting longitudinal attendance data, calculating chronic absence rates, breaking the data down by sub group, and providing schools and districts with the ability to target resources and interventions based on those data. Consider incorporating chronic absenteeism data into early warning systems to provide timely interventions to at-risk students.³⁰
- **Consider incorporating chronic absenteeism into ESSA-required state accountability plans**, as research shows that improvements in attendance boost efforts to close achievement gaps. Incorporating this measure will encourage schools to adopt and implement effective interventions to reduce chronic absenteeism. This measure meets the law’s requirements, is closely linked to student achievement and is valid and reliable.³¹
- **Use Title II training funds** to train school personnel in addressing issues related to school conditions for student learning, including chronic absenteeism.³²
- **Use coordinated and cross-sector approaches** to understand and address the root causes of chronic absenteeism. States may consider creating an inter-agency task force or commission to determine how resources and information can best be leveraged across sectors. Key partners in addressing this issue include education departments, health departments and organizations, homelessness organizations, children’s advocacy organizations and juvenile justice departments.
- **Encourage schools and districts to institute parental engagement initiatives.** Research suggests that low cost communication with parents—including a simple mailing—can help reduce absenteeism. A Harvard study showed that a single mailing to the parents and guardians of chronically absent students in Philadelphia improved attendance in all grades K-12.³³



AUTHOR

Alyssa Rafa is a policy researcher at Education Commission of the States. She has her master's degree in international relations from the University of Denver. Outside of work, she spends her time hiking, skypeing with her nephews and talking policy with anyone and everyone. Contact Alyssa at arafa@ecs.org or 303.299.3691.

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Data Matters: Using Chronic Absence to Accelerate Action for Student Success

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

September, 2018

Over the past decade, chronic absence has gone from being a virtually unknown concept to a national education metric that provides every school with critical data revealing how many students miss so much school that their academic success is jeopardized. The inclusion of chronic absence in the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was a watershed moment that made this metric an integral component of efforts to help students succeed in school and later in life.

ESSA requires all states to include chronic absence data in their school report cards, which must be posted by December 2018 for the prior school year. In addition, 36 states and the District of Columbia chose chronic absence as a metric for school accountability in their implementation plans.

Chronic absence can have adverse consequences for academic achievement throughout life, research shows. Starting as early as pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, absenteeism can affect a child's ability to read well by the end of third grade, a critical milestone. In middle school, missing valuable instruction time can lead students to fail courses. High school students who are chronically absent are more likely to drop out or, if they make it to college, to not graduate.

Especially hard hit are children who live in poverty, have chronic health conditions or disabilities, or experience homelessness or frequent moves. When chronic absence reaches high levels in a school or classroom, it can affect every student's opportunity to learn, because the resulting churn – with students cycling in and out of the classroom – is disruptive for all and hampers teacher's ability to meet students' diverse learning needs.

Find Your Chronic Absence Data!

This brief – as well as the accompanying [interactive data map](#) developed by The Hamilton Project at the Brookings Institution and the [state chronic absence reports](#) produced by the Everyone Graduates Center at The Johns Hopkins University – highlights the value of making chronic absence data transparent and available to families, community partners and other stakeholders outside school systems.

The Hamilton Project at the Brookings Institution has created an interactive map that allows everyone to explore chronic absence at the school, district, state and country level. Comprehensive and easy to use, the map allows users to track and compare levels of chronic absence across states, school districts and schools. Users can examine the scope of chronic absence by school characteristics (grade span and location) and student characteristics (gender, race, English Language learner or students with disabilities).

The map makes it possible for everyone, including parents and community leaders, to have access to chronic absence data even if educational authorities have not yet made it easy to find or use for their schools, district or state. Although the map is based upon data from 2015-16 school year the data are still telling. Chronic absence is likely to be a problem if data show that it was a challenge several years ago. Use the interactive map to discover if there is a problem, then look into more current data.

Download the full report at:
www.attendanceworks.org

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Increasingly available, chronic absence data offer a unique tool for spotlighting where we as a country have failed to provide all students with an equal opportunity to receive a quality education. It sheds light on how our nation has not recognized that barriers to getting to school cause students to miss so much class that they fall academically behind. Pinpointing where chronic absence levels are high offers an unprecedented opportunity to anticipate which schools and students need additional support in order to ensure an equal opportunity to learn.

Aimed at motivating action, this report:

- ▶ Shares key findings from our analysis of the scale, scope and concentration of chronic absence in schools throughout the nation.
- ▶ Discusses how to use chronic absence data to anticipate and put in place effective solutions to address poor attendance that are tailored to local realities.
- ▶ Recommends steps that key stakeholders—at the school, district and state level—can take to support a data-driven approach to reducing chronic absence.

Examining the prevalence and concentration of chronic absence in the United States

Attendance Works partnered with the Everyone Graduates Center at The Johns Hopkins University and The Hamilton Project at the Brookings Institution to analyze data for the 2015-16 and 2013-14 school years. We examined the chronic absence levels in 94,549 schools using the most current data available from the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), released by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). Information about school characteristics was added from the federal education department's Common Core of Data.

Data analysis revealed the national trends that follow. These trends vary significantly by state so it is important to also examine state and local data. [Chronic absence charts for all 50 states and the District of Columbia can be obtained here.](#)

Defining Chronic Absence

Attendance Works recommends that chronic absence be defined as missing 10 percent of school—the equivalent of two days every month or 18 days over a 180-day school year—because this better enables early detection and action to improve attendance. In this brief's data analysis, however, chronic absence refers to missing 15 or more days each year because this is the data point captured in the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC).

Key Findings

1 In 2015-16, nearly 8 million students in the nation were chronically absent, an increase of more than 800,000 students from 2013-14.

Improved reporting accuracy appears to explain much of the growth in the number of chronically absent students.

2 Chronic absence is a pervasive challenge affecting the entire nation. Nationwide, 15 percent of all students – or one out of seven – is chronically absent. In eight states and the District of Columbia, more than 20 percent of students were chronically absent in 2015-16. In 58 percent of schools nationwide – or about 52,000 schools – at least one out of 10 students was chronically absent.

3 The percentage of schools with at least 20 percent or more students chronically absent increased between 2013-14 and 2015-16. The proportion of schools with high (20-29 percent of students) and extreme (30 percent or more of students) levels of chronic absence increased from 11 to 13 percent and 9 to 11 percent, respectively. On average, 24 percent of all schools in a state have either high or extreme levels of chronic absence. (See Appendix A in the full report for a comparison state table.)

4 Just over half (nearly 52 percent) of all chronically absent students are concentrated in schools with high or extreme levels of chronic absence, while over a third (33 percent) attend schools with significant levels (10-19 percent of students) of chronic absence.

5 While nearly half (44 percent) of high schools have high and extreme levels of chronic absence, elementary schools should not be overlooked. By number, slightly more elementary schools than high schools have high and extreme levels of chronic absence (8,363 vs 8,131 respectively).

6 Schools serving children in special education, alternative education and vocational education are much more likely to have extreme levels of chronic absence. Further analysis is needed to better understand this.

7 Schools with high levels of poverty are more likely to experience high and extreme chronic absence. But this is not always the case. Some high-poverty schools have low chronic absence because they have adopted effective, prevention-oriented approaches that motivate daily attendance and help students and their families overcome challenges to getting to class.

8 Chronic absence is found in every locale – rural, town, suburban and city. National data shows a slightly higher concentration for cities but high levels exist in every locale.

9 Data suggests that poverty, not locale, remains the driving factor for chronic absence. Levels of chronic absence are much higher, regardless of locale, in schools where a majority (75 percent or more) of students live in poverty. Low levels of chronic absence are most common in schools where a minority (less than a quarter) of students live in poverty, regardless of locale.

10 Chronic absence disproportionately affects particular student populations. Patterns, however, vary across states and locales. National data show that while the majority of students of any demographic group are NOT chronically absent, some populations are more likely to experience chronic absence than others.



Leveraging Chronic Absence Data to Anticipate Need and Develop Solutions

Chronic absence data is a powerful tool to use in improving attendance because it helps schools, districts and communities interrupt and change poor attendance patterns before students' academic performance is negatively affected. Real-time data can be used to identify students who need help immediately. States, districts and schools also can use prior-year data to anticipate which attendance supports and interventions need to be in place by the next school year. Studies show that the best predictor of students' continued chronic absence is if they were chronically absent during the prior school year and/or during the first month of school. When schools target effective interventions to students with a history of chronic absence, the students can improve their attendance and avoid falling farther behind academically due to missed instruction.

Although chronic absence data have historically been difficult to obtain, this is quickly changing. A growing number of districts now produce chronic absence reports. More states are making chronic absence data publicly available. Over time, as the ESSA requirement to include chronic absence data in school report cards is fully implemented, data will be easier to obtain. In the meantime, if data are not readily available or easy to work with, stakeholders can use The Hamilton Project's [interactive data map](#) and the accompanying [state data reports](#) to gain an initial understanding of the scale and concentration of chronic absence.

When chronic absence affects many students from a particular sub-population or place, schools and communities should invest in determining the underlying causes, as well as the solutions. Attendance Works has found it helpful to group the causes in four categories: barriers, negative school experiences, lack of engagement and misconceptions. Whether the issue is a student with a chronic absence history or a school with high chronic absence, understanding the contributing factors (i.e. a chronic

illness, unreliable transportation, bullying, etc.) helps determine the best supports or interventions. High levels of absenteeism typically signify multiple and more systemic attendance barriers.

A working group can be formed to help a school or district better understand the barriers that keep students from getting to school as well as the resources and assets that can be used to support attendance. The working group should involve leadership from the school, district and community partners and engage teachers, students and families.

A variety of quantitative and qualitative tools and strategies can be used to unpack what affects attendance. They can be grouped into the following categories:

1. **Student and Family Perspectives** – gained through efforts including surveys, studying reasons for absences, phone banking, professional assessments, success mentors and a scan of environment and attendance.
2. **Relevant District Data** – including suspension and school discipline data, attendance patterns over time, chronic health conditions and school climate surveys.
3. **Community and Agency Data** – including transit routes, health data, participation in early childhood programming and integrated interagency data systems.

Recommendations for Action

Stakeholders at multiple levels play critical roles in reviewing chronic absence data for accuracy, helping to understand the scale and size of the chronic absence challenge, and developing solutions based on a clear understanding of attendance barriers. This brief offers recommendations for students and families, community agencies and partners, state education departments, school leaders and administrators, district leaders and administrators, as well as school board members, research institutions and schools of education.

Conclusion

Chronic absence data is a powerful tool for organizing and accelerating efforts to improve outcomes for children. Most people understand from common sense as well as research that children need to be present in the classroom to gain from what is offered at school. As a result, key stakeholders quickly and easily understand that high levels of chronic absence in their school or community is a challenge worth working together to address.

Equally helpful, chronic absence data is highly responsive to community efforts to improve attendance. When barriers to attendance persist, the data show that students don't show up to class. When communities put the right supports and solutions in place, the data confirm that students are getting to school. Attendance rises!

Chronic absence data, alone, however, is insufficient to produce change. A major danger with the growing availability of chronic absence data is that it will be used to blame and penalize children and families. Everyone using chronic absence data, from administrators to teachers to elected officials and community organizations, needs to make sure that data are used to activate positive problem-solving.

To leverage the policy win achieved through ESSA, we must all use this new educational metric—chronic absence—to interrupt patterns of inequity and improve outcomes for all children, particularly our most vulnerable students who deserve an equal opportunity to learn and thrive.



Attendance Works

(www.attendanceworks.org) is a national initiative dedicated to improving attendance policy, practice and research. Its website offers a rich array of free materials, tools, research and success stories to help schools and communities work together to reduce chronic absence.



Everyone Graduates Center

(www.every1graduates.org) at The Johns Hopkins University, School of Education seeks to identify the barriers that stand in the way of all students graduating from high school prepared for adult success, develop strategic solutions to overcome the barriers and build local capacity to implement and sustain them.

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Rollout of ESSA Report Cards Frustrates School Leaders

Arduous process yields new accountability systems

By **Daarel Burnette II**

December 11, 2018 | Updated: December 13, 2018

The rollout of states' redesigned school accountability systems in recent weeks has reignited tensions between policymakers, practitioners, and parents over how best to define and incentivize school success. [Back to Story](#)

Virtually every state, after the passing of the federal **Every Student Succeeds Act** in 2015, redesigned their school accountability systems, an arduous, combative, and yearslong process that led to the resignation of several state education chiefs.

Those new systems are now being presented to the public for the first time on sleek new websites that allow visitors to compare among schools and dive into test scores and several new data points, including chronic absenteeism, teacher quality, and student preparation for colleges and careers.

But how state departments then used those data points to rank schools has riled many district superintendents in recent weeks who, in editorials and school board meetings, have accused state officials of being overly simplistic and still too reliant on test scores to determine the winners and losers.

"It doesn't really tell the whole story of the effectiveness of any school or any district," said Felecia Gomez-Walker, the superintendent of St. Charles Parish school district in Louisiana, whose letter grade dropped from an A to a B under the state's new system. Gomez-Walker said she appreciates Louisiana's redesigned report card for its detailed breakdown of academic outputs but is frustrated with the state's use of letter grades.

States' accountability systems determine where tens of millions of federal and state school improvement dollars flow, and for a variety of reasons in many states, districts and schools haven't been ranked in several years. So there has inevitably been a lot of angst among district leaders and advocacy groups over the accuracy and reliability of new report cards.

Several states, including Missouri and South Carolina, had technical, logistical, and design glitches that delayed the release of schools' scores.

Tennessee, for example, redesigned for the second time its entire accountability system over the summer after some schools' test scores were reported inaccurately and the legislature told its department not to issue letter grades to schools this year.

Defining School Success

In many states, there is still a sharp divide between what policymakers, practitioners, and parents think should define school success and what state departments have the capacity to measure accurately. Those battles will likely spill into next year's legislative session.

Officials in Indiana, Wyoming, and New Mexico have already indicated that they will make significant changes to their ESSA plans in the coming months.

States' accountability systems offer an opportunity for federal and state officials to communicate to those on the front lines where they should prioritize their work, said Chris Domaleski, the associate director for the Center for Assessment who helps states design accountability systems.

"It's important for accountability systems to provide accurate information about how schools are achieving, given that communities make substantial investments in public schools," Domaleski said.

Rhode Island's education commissioner, Ken Wagner, appearing on a television show, jokingly threw a chair across the room last week to exhibit how frustrated he was that the state's test scores lagged behind Massachusetts.

"It's not true that our kids can't do it. They can do it!" he said.

See Also: **[Approved ESSA Plans: Explainer and Key Takeaways From Each State](#)**

In other states, the timing of the state's report card turned into a political message on its own.

Oregon's Gov. Kate Brown, a Democrat, was accused by Republican opponent Knute Buehler of delaying the release of the state's new report card until after the election to avoid political backlash over perceived stagnant results.

"It shouldn't take the threat of the governor losing her election for her to do the right thing," Buehler said on Twitter. "Oregonians, and especially our students and parents, deserve better than this. Help is on the way in 13 days."

Brown ultimately won the election.

California officials were lambasted by advocates and parents for their redesigned dashboard. The Los Angeles Times editorial board called it a "color in the blank" chart.

The state invested another \$300,000 this year in order to redesign the report card yet again, a preview of which was provided for reporters last week.

ESSA requires states to collect and report to the public plenty more data about the goings on in their schools. But with layoffs in recent years of so many of the technicians in state departments and districts who are responsible for processing data, there were bound to be technical glitches.

In South Carolina, the state department collected more than 11 million data points for its new accountability system, a process that required the state to purchase a new data-collection system for \$1 million.

But the state outsourced to AdvancED for \$1.3 million the task of measuring how engaged students were at their schools, a process that requires students to fill out electronic surveys and would amount to more than 10 percent of districts' scores.

AdvancED didn't at first properly match the scores with the students' responses, delaying for several weeks the rollout of the entire state's accountability system. (AdvancED said in a statement to local media it was remedying the problem.)

"We haven't issued a rating in quite some time," said Ryan Brown, a spokesman for South Carolina's department of education. "We want to show to the public what the expectations are at the state and federal level so it's important that people buy into it. We have some who are accepting it and some who are still skeptical."

With all the new indicators states are factoring into districts' scores, many state officials scrambled in recent weeks to discourage reporters and the public from comparing their scores to prior rankings.

Outrage in Texas

Texas for the first time gave its schools a letter grade, a system that outraged many district superintendents, many of whom told parents in local newspapers to dismiss the rankings outright.

"The grades were what the news stories were all about," said Dax González, a spokesman for the Texas Association of School Boards. "Reporters were going to seize on the letter grade and determine what it meant when we really still don't know what it means. There could be just one indicator that's in there that knocked a district down to a C."

In other states, including Utah, Florida, and Indiana, state officials weren't able to figure out in time how to merge their state accountability system with federal requirements under ESSA and they ended up this year releasing two sets of assessments of schools.

Tom Edington, the superintendent of Wawasee Schools in Syracuse, Ind., said he's gotten so irritated with the state's waffling over what its accountability system should look like that he and the board created their own accountability system, complete with its own standardized test indicators, and letter grade. That means the district's schools will this year be given federal, state, and local grades.

"We know ours is an unchanging standard and has remained stable enough for us to be able to adequately and fairly measure our students," he said. "We started six years ago doing this and we haven't looked back."

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