

AGENCY NAME:	State Department of Education		
AGENCY CODE:	H63	SECTION:	

**Fiscal Year 2015-16
Accountability Report**

SUBMISSION FORM

AGENCY MISSION	The mission of the SC Department of Education is to provide leadership and support so that all public education students graduate prepared for success.
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AGENCY VISION	All students graduate prepared for success in college, careers, and citizenship. By 2018, at least one school in every district will have implemented personalized learning that supports students' meeting the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate.
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Please state yes or no if the agency has any major or minor (internal or external) recommendations that would allow the agency to operate more effectively and efficiently.

RESTRUCTURING RECOMMENDATIONS:	
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Please identify your agency's preferred contacts for this year's accountability report.

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email</i>
PRIMARY CONTACT:	Emily Heatwole	803-734-4066	eeheatwole@ed.sc.gov
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I have reviewed and approved the enclosed FY 2015–16 Accountability Report, which is complete and accurate to the extent of my knowledge.

AGENCY DIRECTOR (SIGN AND DATE):	
(TYPE/PRINT NAME):	Molly M. Spearman

BOARD/CMSN CHAIR (SIGN AND DATE):	
(TYPE/PRINT NAME):	

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AGENCY’S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This fall marks almost two years since Superintendent Spearman was elected to serve South Carolina students, parents, schools and communities. The past fiscal year has brought many opportunities for collaboration with the institutions of higher education, the technical college system and businesses across the state to ensure that students are graduating with the world class knowledge, skills and characteristics to be successful in post-secondary college, careers and citizenship. The department strives to model a culture of excellence, innovation and continuous improvement. It is working to ensure that high quality, evidence based strategies are utilized to consistently improve educational outcomes for the students in our state while paying special attention to those areas of our state where students and citizens may have less access to high quality opportunities.

Performance Impacts

Each year there will be factors that will impact both the performance of the agency and the performance of our students, schools and districts. These should be viewed as a learning opportunity whereby the agency can replicate positive outcomes and learn from experiences that result in negative outcomes. As South Carolina moves closer to consistency in standardized state assessments and a new state and federal combined accountability structure, the agency is poised to analyze impact of its work in the field and utilize performance data even more effectively in the evaluation of legislated programs, but also use those data with districts and schools to ensure increased student performance and readiness for college and careers across the state.

Internal

Coming into the close of the second year that the Superintendent has been in office, the agency has continued to work to organize staff in a manner that will provide optimal support to students, parents, schools and districts. Without the support of the Governor and the General Assembly, who supported the agency through the provision of additional funding and staff over the past two years, this would have been impossible. The agency has now fully implemented the Read to Succeed office, the Office of Family and Community Engagement and the Office of School Transformation. It has continued to build out VirtualSC (now serving over 75,000 students, almost 10 percent of our public school population, PM 30).

The agency is currently working to ensure all data elements collected continue to be stored securely to protect privacy, but are also maintained in a manner that ensures quality and availability around student information systems, assessment, standards, learning, finance and career and technical education. The agency is collaborating with other state agencies on an operational Student Longitudinal Data System that aligns data elements from birth to the workforce and informs policies and practices.

Further, the department has put in place a new strategic planning support to increase high quality program evaluation and institute a continuous improvement framework (7.1.1-7.1.2, 7.3.1-7.3.3). The

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South Carolina Department of Education is focused on making certain all programs result in a high return on taxpayer investment, customer satisfaction and effectiveness. Our goal is to ensure that commitment to stakeholders and an ability to provide high-level service in all aspects of agency work is consistent, efficient and sustainable over time.

External

On December 10, 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act was signed into law, reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and replacing No Child Left Behind. Decision-making authority has been redirected back to the states at a level not seen under No Child Left Behind, while still requiring challenging academic standards and ensuring success for all students through robust assessment and accountability systems. There is a focus on providing support for low-performing schools and districts. The law continues to require states to ensure that minority students and those living in poverty do not disproportionately receive instruction from educators who are ineffective, inexperienced or out of field; this continues to be addressed through the state’s Federal Title II Plan (3.5.1).

South Carolina will be able to develop a state plan to submit to the US Department of Education that is tailored to the educational needs of the children in our state without creating undue burden to simply meet federal regulations. The state continues to receive stakeholder input for preparation of the draft plan, which will then be available for further input and review by the Governor. The plan must be submitted to the US Department of Education during Spring 2017. States await final regulatory guidance, which certainly could be impacted based upon the results of the General Election this November.

Additionally, there were changes again this year in the statewide assessment system. To address concerns about federal peer review approval, the department requested approval from the US Department of Education to use the Algebra 1 and English 1 end-of-course assessments to meet high school federal accountability requirements; this was approved. Further changes included a switch to a new English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics test for grades 3 through 8 that will be used for accountability purposes and will also indicate whether a third grade student is ready for promotion to fourth grade under Read to Succeed (1.3.6-1.3.8). Some number of districts successfully administered this test online in Spring 2016. These districts noted challenges in student preparedness to execute an exam online and also to complete a writing portion that requires keyboarding skills that are above that which most third graders currently possess. The department completed testing readiness assessments of the plaintiff districts and will continue to assist all districts in assessing technology capabilities and needs with a focus on preparedness for online testing. The agency worked with the State Board of Education to develop a process for waivers for districts that cannot successfully test online this year. Additionally, the department is encouraging districts to ensure students in grades 1 and 2 receive keyboarding instruction that will assist in the ability to effectively complete typed writing portions of online assessments. VirtualSC’s typing course for elementary students is available to all students. Act 281, passed by the General Assembly in June, requires that all districts test students online in the last 20

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days of the school year, beginning in 2017–18. To assist districts in preparing for this mandate, the department requests of districts that SC Ready and PASS tests should be given in the last 30 days of school this year in an effort to prepare for next year’s window.

Current Efforts and Results

Support for Low-Performing Schools and Districts

The General Assembly passed several bills this year that help guide and support the work of the department to ensure that every child has access to a quality public education. The Office of School Transformation, codified by Act 178 of 2016, ensures that schools and districts identified as low-performing receive needed support. The department offers tiered levels of intervention to these schools and districts that includes funding support as well as placement of transformation coaches and personnel to provide on-site technical assistance. Professional learning opportunities will include data analysis and evidence-based strategies to improve the performance of low-achieving students. Diagnostic and leadership capacity reports for priority schools were provided in FY 2015–16. Additional learning opportunities to support increased student achievement include extended learning opportunities and summer reading camps. Extended learning opportunities and data analysis by educators are necessary to achieve academic growth. Summer learning opportunities and reading camps will combat summer reading loss (1.3.1-1.3.5, 2.2.1-2.2.5, 3.5.1-3.5.2).

Support for students who may struggle in school, especially those in underperforming or low-performing schools and districts, must focus on the whole student. The department encourages increased access to counselors, social workers and mental health professionals with a focus on schools in districts that have less access to such professionals. The department is working with MUSC and Boeing to pilot health initiatives in the Federal Strike Force Zones and will continue to build on that work (6.4.3). The department will also provide needed assistance and resources to districts to support health activities and identification of students in poverty as well as compliance with SC Department of Health and Human Services requirements (6.4.4 – 6.4.6).

The Profile of the South Carolina Graduate

Act 195 of 2016 codified the Profile of the Graduate, setting to the course to ensure all students are prepared for success in college, career and citizenship. Ensuring that each student is prepared must be achieved using metrics that will correspond to the evolving single accountability system (1.2 .1 -1.2.4). The single accountability system is a major focus for the coming year. The department, the State Board of Education and the Education Oversight Committee are currently collaborating with stakeholders on the design of a single accountability system to align federal and state accountability requirements. The new accountability system will incorporate multiple measures of student readiness across elementary, middle and high school grades. At the high school level, it is imperative that students graduate college- and career-ready, as demonstrated through a system of multiple pathways and measures. These metrics must be incorporated into the state level data system and be accessible to stakeholders (4.1.1-4.2.1).

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Standards and coursework must align to the Profile and support preparedness at each educational level. Through VirtualSC, the department continues to ensure that robust virtual coursework options are available to all students in every district. VirtualSC is highly responsive to course requests and consistently strives to ensure that demand is met. This year the program is developing virtual course work for the middle grades as well as working to serve students who have been expelled and for whom no other educational options are available (5.1.1-5.1.4).

In 2015–16, 65 percent of students who completed a CATE Program of Study earned a silver or higher on the National Career Readiness Certificate; 38 percent attained industry certificates (PM 39, 40). Career and technology coursework shall continue to be aligned to workforce needs. The department received a preliminary SC Yes grant to enhance this alignment, and is competing for the second grant this October. The next year will show an increase in the number of students completing a career and technology program as well as completers who earn stackable credentials and industry certificates. In 2014–15, 2,375 students accessed technical college coursework for dual credit (PM 64). Dual credit course access will increase and include courses that can be utilized for career and technology programs. Students who are able to access and complete these programs and access the necessary industry credentials directly increase the available ready workforce in our state (5.2.1-5.2.3, 5.4.6).

By 2018, each school district shall be developing high quality personalized learning programs. During the coming year, the department will finalize the framework that will serve as an incubator for the programs as they are implemented in 2017–18. Professional learning opportunities for STEM, STEAM and project-based learning shall be offered in formats that increase the capacity of educators in districts and encourage innovation (1.1.1-1.1.5).

Early Learning & Literacy

Using carry forward dollars, the department was able to provide districts with CDEP waiting lists funds for additional classes. The department will ensure that early learning and literacy programs are high quality and will ensure that every classroom in the *Abbeville* trial and plaintiff districts receives technical assistance (5.3.1). The department’s goal is that all public early childhood programs have the feedback and support needed to show quality improvements by the next year. Every district is implementing the 4K and 5K readiness assessments. The department and the Education Oversight Committee are reviewing metrics to ensure readiness not just in these grades, but also extending to grades one and two to support the goals of Read to Succeed (5.3.3, 5.3.6).

Educator Retention and Leadership Development

The department supports educators in building expertise to increase student growth and achievement, close the achievement gap and support the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. Revisions to the teacher evaluation system and growth-focused student learning objectives are a key focus. The department is collaborating with the Center for Educator Recruitment Retention and Advancement to provide training for mentors and trainers in the new evaluation criteria. Training for teachers, districts and evaluators continues in the development of student learning objectives. A multi-level observation

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rubric is being implemented to provide educators more specific, student-centered feedback (3.1.1-3.1.3). Professional learning opportunities for educators will include personalized learning development and implementation, and best practices in coaching.

Facilities, Transportation and Nutrition

The department received funding this year to begin work assessing the facilities needs of districts and the efficiency of district operations. This work will inform guidance and support provided to districts in using funds and partnering with other districts to increase effectiveness. The department will continue to serve as the statewide building official and assist districts with facilities improvements (6.3.1-6.3.4). All students need safe environments in which to learn. The department will provide anti-bullying technical assistance to assist districts in meeting best practices for safety and climate (6.4.1, 6.4.2).

The General Assembly has provided the department with funding over the past two fiscal years to purchase close to 500 new buses, which will include some alternative fuel buses. The department continues to refine the transportation system to ensure it is safe and efficient and that student ride time is as short as practicable (6.1.1, 6.1.3).

Once students arrive at school, they must be welcomed into a safe and constructive learning environment. Many students rely on schools for one or two meals per day and students are supported during the summer through the USDA’s Summer Nutrition Program. During the summer of fiscal year 2015–16, over 3.2 million summer meals were served in South Carolina (PM 51). The department will continue to focus on ensuring these students receive healthy meals that meet the necessary nutritional guidelines (6.2.3, 6.2.4).

Education and economic development must work hand in hand to ensure that South Carolina is producing a ready and effective workforce.

Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategies

If the Department of Education through the public schools in South Carolina fails to ensure that each student meets the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate, it will have a negative impact on the state in a multitude of ways. Students, parents, families and the taxpaying public will suffer, as there would be a growing number of adults who would be unable to become productive members of society. This could disproportionately impact students and families in more rural areas and in economically disadvantaged areas. Lack of a qualified workforce directly impacts the ability of the state to recruit and retain industry. Ensuring that students receive a high quality education from high quality educators is the most important goal that our state must achieve.