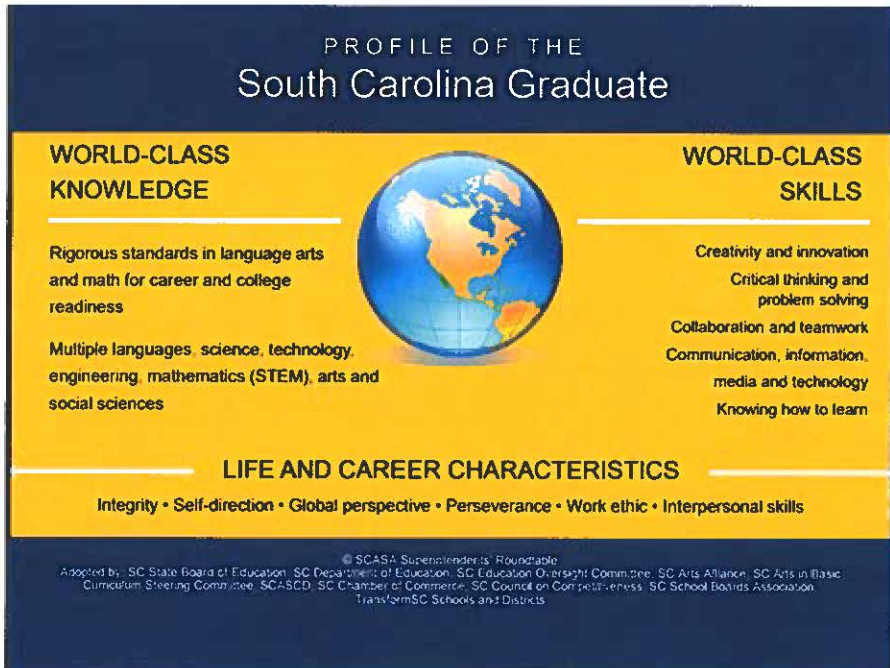


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Fiscal Year 2019–2020 Accountability Report

SUBMISSION FORM

AGENCY MISSION	The mission of the South Carolina 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 2022, districts will have available a system of personalized and digital learning that supports students in a safe learning environment to meet the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate.  The graphic is titled 'PROFILE OF THE South Carolina Graduate'. It features a central globe. To the left of the globe is the section 'WORLD-CLASS KNOWLEDGE' with two bullet points: 'Rigorous standards in language arts and math for career and college readiness' and 'Multiple languages, science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), arts and social sciences'. To the right of the globe is the section 'WORLD-CLASS SKILLS' with four bullet points: 'Creativity and innovation', 'Critical thinking and problem solving', 'Collaboration and teamwork', and 'Communication, information, media and technology'. Below the globe is the section 'LIFE AND CAREER CHARACTERISTICS' with a single line: 'Integrity • Self-direction • Global perspective • Perseverance • Work ethic • Interpersonal skills'. At the bottom, in small text, it says: 'Adopted by: SC State Board of Education, SC Department of Education, SC Education Oversight Committee, SC Arts Alliance, SC Arts in Basic Curriculum Steering Committee, SCASCD, SC Chamber of Commerce, SC Council on Competitiveness, SC School Boards Association, TransformSC Schools and Districts'.
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Does the agency have any major or minor recommendations (internal or external) that would allow the agency to operate more effectively and efficiently?

	Yes	No
RESTRUCTURING RECOMMENDATIONS:	☐	☒

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Is the agency in compliance with S.C. Code Ann. § 2-1-230, which requires submission of certain reports to the Legislative Services Agency for publication online and to the State Library? See also S.C. Code Ann. § 60-2-30.

REPORT SUBMISSION COMPLIANCE:	Yes	No
	☒	☐

Is the agency in compliance with various requirements to transfer its records, including electronic ones, to the Department of Archives and History? See the Public Records Act (S.C. Code Ann. § 30-1-10 through 30-1-180) and the South Carolina Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (S.C. Code Ann. § 26-6-10 through 26-10-210).

RECORDS MANAGEMENT COMPLIANCE:	Yes	No
	☒	☐

Is the agency in compliance with S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-120(J), which requires an agency to conduct a formal review of its regulations every five years?

REGULATION REVIEW:	Yes	No
	☐	☒

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

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Email</u>
PRIMARY CONTACT:	Katie Nilges	803-734-1215	knilges@ed.sc.gov
SECONDARY CONTACT:	Laurie Traywick	803-734-8491	ltraywick@ed.sc.gov

I have reviewed and approved the enclosed FY 2019–2020 Accountability Report, which is complete and accurate to the extent of my knowledge.

AGENCY DIRECTOR (SIGN AND DATE):			9.15.2020
(TYPE/PRINT NAME):	Molly M. Spearman		

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

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AGENCY'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

PERFORMANCE IMPACTS:

INTERNAL

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of the agency has centered on providing guidance, technical assistance, and flexibility to schools and districts as they work to return to as normal of operations and instruction as public health conditions allow. The safety of students, educators, and staff has remained at the forefront of the agency's agenda during this time. Throughout this time period, the agency has sought and utilized public health guidance from the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to ensure all appropriate safety measures are met.

The agency also continues to focus on providing intensive technical support to South Carolina's lowest performing districts. In these districts, and all others, the agency works with the goals of increasing opportunity, student performance, efficient use of taxpayer dollars, and fostering high quality school and district leadership. These districts, particularly those with a student membership of 1,500 or less, are an integral part of the State and agency's effort to increase shared services and encourage consolidation.

EXTERNAL

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic has been at the front of the agency's priorities as continues to provide the latest public health guidance, flexibility, and necessary tools and resources to restart learning and classroom instruction across the state. The agency has worked alongside state agencies such the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Department of Administration, Emergency Management Division, Department of Social Services, Department of Mental Health, Health and Human Services, as well as the Governor's Office and General Assembly, to ensure the needs of students, parents, and educators are being met amidst the pandemic.

CURRENT EFFORTS AND RESULTS & FUTURE PLANNING

VIRTUAL SC/CATE

The agency's VirtualSC continued to serve 45,912 students statewide in the 2019-2020 school year and remains one of the fastest growing and most successful virtual programs in the nation. The cost per enrollment (approximately \$200 per student) is one of the lowest amongst similarly sized and neighboring states. The agency will again request additional funding to serve students and continue to develop a middle school program to meet the growing needs and requests of schools statewide.

In an effort to support schools as they continue to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, VirtualSC will pilot a middle school program by offering core content courses for students in grades 6-8. The middle school pilot will begin in January 2021 and run through December 2021. In addition to expanding the core VirtualSC program, VirtualSC currently partners with 25 school districts through our "franchise opportunities" as well as provides adult education opportunities, with 48 percent of students' ages 17-21 meeting their education goals.

Virtual learning has made its way to the forefront of education as we are adjusting to the impacts and innovative ways of learning due to COVID-19. As schools develop their own local virtual education programs, VirtualSC saw an unprecedented level of growth of the franchise program enrollment. VirtualSC is currently providing support for an additional 45,000 local district enrollments by supplying high quality, South Carolina standards-aligned curriculum that also meets Quality Matters standards for design and development. As a result of needs from

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districts for virtual learning support, VirtualSC has already seen a 383% growth in enrollments across all areas of the program in the early stages of the 2020-2021 school year.

Further, as part of the new accountability system, the state will need to ensure that students have access to advanced coursework such as AP/IB and Career and Technical Education courses that lead to an industry certification. VirtualSC will continue to serve as a conduit for such course work, especially for students who may have limited access. VirtualSC had 7,390 student enrollments complete CTE courses in the 2018-2019 school year with an 89 percent pass rate meaning that 6,558 enrollments earned a CTE credit through VirtualSC in this school year. (3.3, 2.2).

TRANSPORTATION

Approximately 350,000 students ride the bus to school each day. Implementation of a safe and reliable transportation system remains a paramount focus for the agency and the General Assembly has provided consistent support to improve the system over the past four years.

By January 2021, the remaining 1988-1990 model school buses will be retired from service. This will leave the agency with 456 buses fifteen years or older with the replacement cost being \$41,097,456. To allow the agency to continue to lease-purchase buses as well as to allocate additional buses to districts with high student growth to help reduce ride time, the agency will request the General Assembly to increase the recurring funds for the upcoming fiscal year. (1.2).

Additionally in 2013, the agency made a commitment to provide air-conditioned equipped buses. Currently 70 percent of that commitment has been met. The cost to upgrade the remaining 30 percent with air-conditioning will be \$151,175,342. The current fleet of buses includes 218 propane buses located in ten districts.

In response to the school facility closures due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Office of Transportation installed 300 hot spots on buses for students to utilize and districts deployed over 1,500 buses to deliver meals during this time. The agency absorbed the 1.5 million miles that resulted from these services. In addition the agency has supplied all 79 districts with electrostatic sprayers at a cost of \$430,834.00, as well as with the chemical to clean the buses twice a day costing approximately \$4000.00 per day. The Office of Transportation was also able to supply five cloth masks for each school bus driver and assistant in the state.

On March 17, 2020, the South Carolina Department of Education announced a five year contract with Tyler Technologies, Inc. (Tyler) for GPS hardware and software. This contract marks the first ever statewide agreement for both routing software and telematics (GPS) for K-12 transportation. The agreement with Tyler includes transportation management software for all 79 K-12 school districts, GPS installed on all of the State's school bus fleet, tablets for all special needs school buses, and business intelligence dashboard for the SCDE to analyze data from across the State. South Carolina has the unique opportunity to advance our school transportation program at the State level, positively impacting bus drivers, administration, parents and students. This contract will be funded by general fund operating budget from the Office of Transportation. We are currently working on implementing phase one. This will consist of GPS installed on all State-owned buses and the software for potentially 22 districts. We scaled back the number of districts with software installation for phase one due to budget impacts from COVID-19.

Prior to widespread shutdowns due to COVID-19, the Office of Transportation began streamlining the School Bus Driver Classroom Instruction program, first by introducing an online end-of-course test in July 2019 and then by condensing instruction to reduce the amount of required seat time from 20 hours to 14 hours. Beginning the last week of April 2020, instruction went online utilizing the Microsoft Teams platform, enabling participants across

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the state to participate in the training without the need to travel to a physical classroom. Initially, training was held for four hours per day over 4 days, but as SCDE Driver Training Coordinators have become more acclimated to the new platform, we have been able to once again keep instruction and testing within the 14 hour range.

Over 800 individuals have completed classroom training since going virtual, with classes frequently exceeding 100 participants. Our plans are to continue offering the online instruction twice per month, and we are reevaluating the district classroom instructor program since we are able to offer instruction to anyone without the need for Driver Training Coordinators to spend time on the road travelling to a classroom. By having SCDE trainers conduct the class, we can better control the content and pace of the training.

FOOD SERVICE

The Office of Health and Nutrition (OHN) was an integral part of the agency's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. From March 2020 to June 2020, the state served over 18 million meals to children in South Carolina. In addition, the Meals to You Program shipped 1,707,400 meals to 7,315 rural households. OHN also sponsored an additional 20 school gardens, bringing the total to 40 across the state. (1.1).

For the first time, the state held the Jr. Chef Competition featuring locally grown products at the University of South Carolina. The winner is slated to compete in Kentucky against other states in the region.

PERSONALIZED LEARNING

The Office of Personalized Learning has a tiered system of support in place for individual educators, schools and districts implementing personalized learning and the competencies for the Profile of the SC Graduate. The office directly served a total of 397 schools during 2019-2020 and plans to serve at least 425 schools during 2020-2021 by adapting our working model for professional learning. A crosswalk developed by the office for the Profile of the SC Graduate competencies and the Collaborative for Social Emotional Learning (CASEL) competencies is being incorporated across professional learning from multiple offices at SCDE to ensure social emotional learning is integrated and supported in SC classrooms. Additionally, the office has launched a podcast and a #PersonalizeSC online community to elevate the stories and experiences of educators to further connect and share what is working as they implement personalized learning in SC. (4.3).

The work of the office during the COVID19 pandemic to support educators has been highlighted in numerous publications and webinars throughout the year, including CCSSO, ExcelinEd, the Aurora Institute, the Center for Assessment, and the Campaign for Grade Level Reading to name a few.

EDUCATOR RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND EFFECTIVENESS

There continues to be rising need for high quality educators to join the profession, as well as remain in the profession. On the recruitment front, in addition to the teachers who graduated from a traditional educator preparation program, 484 educators entered the profession through an alternate route during 2017-2018 with the goal being 500 in 2018-2019. (4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3).

Additionally, the agency has supported districts and educator preparation programs with the evaluation data management system, principal and teacher evaluation models, and the evaluation of hybrid and virtual instruction through face-to-face trainings, monthly virtual office hours, on-demand web resources, and technical assistance from regional liaisons. (4.2.1, 4.2.2). The evaluation data management system allows districts and educator preparation programs to obtain information about the effectiveness of educators and to support personalization of support and coaching for principals and teachers. (4.2.3, 4.3.3).

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Finally, the agency continues to support year-long cohorts of school and district leaders to grow their skills in instructional leadership. Although targeted to specific job-alike needs, all cohorts, including 446 participants in 2019-20, focused on using data to increase equitable access to effective teachers for all students, personalizing support for teachers, and collective leadership. During emergency school closings in the spring, leadership cohorts were able to continue to meet virtually and to include collaboration for how to lead school communities through the pandemic.

TECHNOLOGY

The Chief Information Office (CIO) within the SCDE has worked over the past year to become more efficient within the agency, as well as to improve the ability to collaborate with school districts.

Specifically within the agency, the CIO has improved system reliability and stability by moving the Data Center equipment the Department of Administration. In addition to completing the implementation of Microsoft Office 365 and Microsoft TEAMS, the CIO was able to replace over forty printers and copies for the Columbia area offices. To streamline processes, automated forms were created for the Human Resources office and an Agency activity calendar was created.

The CIO was also able to provide costs savings measures to benefit the agency. By migrating to Microsoft Teams, eliminating the need for specific database tools, and switching to a new auditing system, the agency was able to save over \$100,000 annually. Additionally, the CIO was able to improve the processes to increase the recovery of Medicaid expense reimbursements for the state, as well as the districts. By implementing a new backup strategy leveraging existing hardware and software, significant storage space savings was also a goal the CIO was able to reach.

The agency completed a State Education Technology Strategic plan for schools and districts, which consisted of recommendations on how to effectively serve the technology needs of students and educators within the state. One of the recommendations included within the plan was the implementation of a Learning Management System (LMS) in all districts. The agency, using a portion of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Education Relief (ESSER) funds, was able to provide LMS licensing for approximately 70 school districts and over 600,000 students. To help with the increased technology and data burdens on districts, the agency is also providing daily data backup services to fourteen of the 81 school districts.

In response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the agency provided an abundance of technical assistance to districts and the SCDE employees. As an effort to ensure that all students had access to the necessary technologies to succeed in an e-learning environment, the agency provided Wi-Fi on over 300 buses so that enhanced internet access was available. Additionally, the agency ensured updated maps of Wi-Fi, feeding sites, and district instruction plans were placed on the SCDE website. The agency worked closely with the Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) to provide over 100,000 internet hotspots to student households. As an interim solution for the need of additional internet services in South Carolina, the agency also worked with South Carolina Educational Television (SCETV) to pilot a datacasting initiative.

As state agency employees were required to work from home, the CIO helped prepare staff with extra laptops, additional storage options, and instructions on how to operate remotely. Due to the increased traffic on the agency website and systems, the CIO worked to alleviate issues caused by deploying a remote call-center functionality.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

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During the 2019-20 school year, 11,280 students were served in a state funded 4k classroom and the goal is to increase that number to at least 11,300 during the current school year. (2.2). The agency will support districts and educators in understanding and use of assessment data to drive instruction and support in the classroom with a particular focus on literacy and English language arts. (2.1, 2.3). The agency is currently targeting support to the lowest performing schools through the palmetto literacy project and the office of early learning and literacy. The office of standards and learning continues to provide professional learning opportunities and gather data from participants on evidence of implementation of the learning in their classrooms. (2.2, 4.3).

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS & SHARED SERVICES

The agency continues to provide assistance to low-performing schools and districts through the tiered levels of support. Currently, the agency is operating three school districts, Florence 4, Allendale, and Williamsburg and serving 41 Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools and 76 Priority Schools. Transformation coaches are placed in all Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools. The operation of Florence 4 has allowed the agency to assist the district in working with Florence 1 and Florence 2 to share services such as maintenance and human resources. This shared services model has resulted in a savings of more than \$500,000 for Florence 4 – funds that may now be dedicated to the classroom. The agency will continue to provide districts with guidance on sharing services with nearby districts. The General Assembly provided the Superintendent, through proviso, the authority to ask districts meeting certain requirements to submit plans for the implementation of shared services. The 2018-19 data will serve as baseline data as CSI and Priority Schools were identified as a part of the new accountability system with the release of the November 2018 report cards. Low performing schools will continue to receive assistance during the 2020-2021 school year due to the assessment and accountability waiver granted by the USED for school year 2019-2020.

Through the approved state ESSA plan, the agency will monitor the percent of Additional Targeted Support and Improvement Schools (schools with low-performing subgroups) that reduce their most significant subgroup achievement gap. (2.1). The agency will continue to effectively utilize both federal and state resources to provide such support (either comprehensive or targeted) to low-performing schools. It remains the goal of the agency to do this with fidelity to ensure that the support has a lasting positive impact on the students served in those schools and the educators who serve in those schools.

The agency will continue to support districts as they work to improve efficiencies through shared services and consolidation initiatives. (3.2). The agency will continue to request funds from the General Assembly to effect such consolidation initiatives and support increased educational opportunities for students in our most rural districts, many of which were parties in the Abbeville lawsuit.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

The SCDE risks are directly associated with the state’s kindergarten through twelfth grade public education system. The agency’s failure to meet its stated goals and objectives would correlate with a negative impact to the K-12 system and student learning.

The SCDE’s goal to support the social-emotional learning, health, and safety needs through a whole-child approach has been paramount during the COVID-19 pandemic. Failure to put the health and safety of South Carolina’s students would not only lead to negative outcomes in the classroom, but also in homes and businesses across our state. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the goal of strengthening standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessments alignment through differentiated supports has remained at the forefront of the agency’s priorities. Specifically, as schools and districts have had to shift their mode of instructional delivery during the school facility closures in the spring and again during reopening in the fall, a

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strong focus has been placed on any potential learning loss and ensuring the fundamental standards needed for success in the k-12 system are being met, amidst all forms of instructional delivery.

The agency's goals of enhancing the state's public educational system to include opportunities, resources, leadership development, data, and technology have been tested and strengthened in the face of the pandemic. In a time when weaknesses in these systems became more evident, the agency put forth and implemented short and long term solutions to ensure the success of the K-12 education system. The pandemic has shown us the importance of the state's public education and the myriad of supports and services it offers beyond instruction.

RESTRUCTURING RECOMMENDATIONS

The agency does not have any restructuring recommendations.

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South Carolina Department of Education • Organizational Chart

