

REPORT ON THE  
EDUCATIONAL  
CREDIT FOR  
EXCEPTIONAL  
NEEDS CHILDREN  
(ECENC) PROGRAM

Compliance and Assessment  
Results for 2018–19



**SC EDUCATION  
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**



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## Executive Summary

This report is the second annual report on the impact of the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children (ECENC) program as required by Act 247 of 2018. The ECENC program provides grants and parental tax credits to exceptional needs students attending private schools that meet specific eligibility requirements and that are approved by the Education Oversight Committee (EOC). Exceptional SC is a 501(c)(3) that raises and accepts funds and reviews student grant applications. The law defines qualifying students and eligible schools for participation in the ECENC program. The law also specifically requires the EOC annually to:

issue a report to the General Assembly documenting the impact of the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Program on student achievement. In addition, the report must include information on individual schools if at least fifty-one percent of the total enrolled students in the private school participated in the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Program in the prior school year. The report must be according to each participating private school, and for participating students, in which there are at least thirty participating students who have scores for tests administered. If the Education Oversight Committee determines that the thirty participating-student cell size may be reduced without disclosing personally identifiable information of a participating student, the Education Oversight Committee may reduce the participating-student cell size, but the cell size may not be reduced to less than ten participating students. *(Section 12-6-3790(E)(6) of the SC Code of Laws)*

Act 247 of 2018 requires schools participating in the ECENC program to submit to the EOC student test scores that are used to provide program level reports to determine if students participating in the program have experienced measurable improvement.

(b) student test scores, by category, on national achievement or state standardized tests, or both, for all grades tested and administered by the school receiving or entitled to receive scholarship grants pursuant to this section in the previous school year. The school also shall provide individual student test scores on national achievement or state standardized tests, or both, for any student in grades one through twelve who received a grant from the program during the prior school year. The information must be used to provide program level reports to determine whether students participating in the program have experienced measurable improvement. Students with disabilities for whom standardized testing is not appropriate are exempt from this requirement; *(Section 12-6-3790(E)(1)(b) of the SC Code of Laws)*

This report, which meets the requirements of Act 247 of 2018, includes the following:

- Information about the process for collecting individual student assessment results used to document the impact of the program on student achievement;
- Information on the participation and compliance of schools;
- Information on the 2018-19 academic achievement of students who received grants from the ECENC program; and,
- State-level information on academic gains from school year 2017-18 to 2018-19 for students who received grants from the ECENC program in 2018-19.

The authors of this report acknowledge that comparisons between the academic performance of students receiving grants from the ECENC program on national assessments and South Carolina public school students with disabilities and their performance on state summative assessments are not ideal because nationally normed data is based on students with and without special needs.

## Findings

1. Schools participating in the ECENC program responded to the request for assessment data by providing either assessment information or a reason for not having the information for 2,106 (93 percent) of the 2,261 students who received grants from Exceptional SC in 2018-19.
2. Student level assessment information was obtained from 1,799 (80 percent) of all students who received a grant from Exceptional SC in school year 2018-19.
3. Of the assessment data provided, the EOC could use assessment data from approximately 1,650 students, or 73 percent of all students who received a grant from Exceptional SC in 2018-19 to calculate median percentile rankings in Reading and Mathematics.
4. At the state level, the assessment data results for school year 2018-19 for students who received a grant from Exceptional SC showed:
  - a. The median Reading percentile rank was 51, and the median Mathematics percentile rank was 40. In Reading, approximately, half of the students scored higher than 51 percent of students in a national representative sample of students. In Mathematics, half of the students scored higher than 40 percent of students in a nationally representative sample of students.
  - b. The mean Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) was 49.8 for Reading and 45.0 for mathematics, both of which are slightly lower than the national norm, which includes students with and without exceptional needs.
  - c. The data must be viewed in light of the following limitation. Students receiving grants from Exceptional SC all have documented exceptional needs. One would expect that students participating in the ECENC program

would score lower than a nationally representative sample of students that includes students with and without exceptional needs. However, using median national percentile ranks over time will provide information on the relative performance of ECENC students and information on their academic growth.

5. Based on data from approximately 925 students with assessment information from 2017-18 and 2018-19, there appears to be a slight decline in Reading scores but no difference in Mathematics scores from school year 2017-18 to school year 2018-19. These results are consistent with the results obtained from the 2017-18 school year.
6. There were eight schools with more than 51 percent of their students who received grants from Exceptional SC in 2018-19. Of these eight schools:
  - a. Two schools administered the Woodcock-Johnson assessment in 2018-19 which does not report percentile rank scores, and therefore could not be used in this evaluation.
  - b. Two additional schools assessed students in the previous school year (2017-18) with portfolios, which also do not provide percentile rank scores. Current year (2018-19) scores are reported for these schools but gain scores from 2017-18 to 2018-19 could not be analyzed.
  - c. The four schools with assessment information in both 2017-18 and 2018-19 differed markedly in their median percentile ranks and mean NCEs. There should be no inference to differences in school efficacy based on these data, as students self-select to attend each school.

**Recommendations:**

1. For future submissions, the EOC recommends that Exceptional SC also collect the following information - child's date of birth as well as gender and race – to better facilitate matching student data across school years. This recommendation was included in the 2017-18 report, and was partially implemented for 2018-19.
2. The EOC recommends that first time recipients of ECENC grants be asked to provide information for previous year assessments in order to assess student improvement.
3. The EOC is concerned about the percentage of valid assessments reported. To address this concern, the EOC will highlight student assessment reporting requirements published in the Application Process for School Eligibility ([https://eoc.sc.gov/sites/default/files/Documents/ECENC%202020/ECENC%20Manual%20for%200SY2020-21.links\\_.pdf](https://eoc.sc.gov/sites/default/files/Documents/ECENC%202020/ECENC%20Manual%20for%200SY2020-21.links_.pdf)).
4. The EOC will monitor schools failing to report either valid assessment scores or a reason for not providing assessment scores.
5. The EOC will ensure that student information from portfolios can be received.

## Background

Since creation of the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children (ECENC) program in Fiscal Year 2013-14 through a proviso in the state budget, eligible independent schools participating in the program are required to administer a national achievement test or state standardized tests to determine student progress. Furthermore, when applying to the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) for approval to participate in the ECENC program, a school is required to submit summary information of student test scores for all grades tested and administered in the school. The EOC posts school-level summary information based on 10 or more students on its website each year.

Act 247 of 2018 codified the ECENC program into permanent law and created an additional reporting requirement. In addition to school-level test scores being provided and made public, the EOC must evaluate the ECENC program using individual student assessment results to determine the impact of the program on educational outcomes of students who received grants from Exceptional SC. The law specifically requires the EOC annually to:

issue a report to the General Assembly documenting the impact of the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Program on student achievement. In addition, the report must include information on individual schools if at least fifty-one percent of the total enrolled students in the private school participated in the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Program in the prior school year. The report must be according to each participating private school, and for participating students, in which there are at least thirty participating students who have scores for tests administered. If the Education Oversight Committee determines that the thirty participating-student cell size may be reduced without disclosing personally identifiable information of a participating student, the Education Oversight Committee may reduce the participating-student cell size, but the cell size may not be reduced to less than ten participating students. (*Section 12-6-3790(E)(6) of the SC Code of Laws*)

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to determine whether students participating in the program have experienced measurable improvement. Students with disabilities for whom standardized testing is not appropriate are exempt from this requirement; (*Section 12-6-3790(E)(1)(b) of the SC Code of Laws*)

The law requires that an evaluation of the program's impact on student achievement at the following levels to address the following questions:

- At the state level, how did exceptional needs students who received grants from Exceptional SC under the ECENC program perform academically, both in terms of overall achievement and growth?
- In schools where a majority of students enrolled in the school (fifty-one percent or more of students) received a grant from Exceptional SC, how did exceptional needs students perform academically, both in terms of overall achievement and growth?



## Collection of Assessment Data

To maintain student privacy and to ensure the highest level of data security, the EOC contracted with the South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs (RFA) Office to oversee the collection of the individual student assessment results. RFA was selected because of its mission and work in collecting, storing and safeguarding health, demographic, and other state data. Following is a description of the data collection protocol and compliance.

### **Data Collection Timeline and Protocol**

The timeline of activities for data collection through the secure portal was:

**July 25, 2019** – RFA sent a data sharing memorandum of understanding (MOU) to Exceptional SC. RFA needed to have the names of students by school who received a grant from Exceptional SC in school year 2018-19 to be able to pre-populate the school-level information.

**August 23, 2019** – RFA and Exceptional SC finalized data sharing memorandum of agreement.

**September 12, 2019** – Schools participating in the ECENC program in school year 2018-19 were emailed a data sharing memorandum of understanding assuring the confidentiality of any and all individually identifiable information shared between the parties. A copy of the memorandum is included in the Appendix.

Between **September 16, 2019 and December 10, 2019** - Schools completed the MOU. These MOUs will be valid through the 2022-2023 school year.

**October, 2019** – Exceptional SC provided to RFA an initial list of students by school who received a grant from Exceptional SC in 2018-19. Updates to the list were provided through mid-December.

Between **October 28, 2019 and mid-December, 2019** - Schools that completed the MOU were able to upload student assessment results.

Only schools that completed the data sharing agreement with RFA were given access to the secure portal. Furthermore, RFA implemented the following procedures to maintain the confidentiality and security of the data portal:

- Access restrictions based on enrollment information provide by Exceptional SC through a MOU with RFA. Every school is restricted to seeing student data for only those students enrolled in their school. A subset of RFA staff, specifically assigned

to this project, could see all student data and uploaded assessments to conduct reviews and enter scoring data; these staff members must receive annual privacy training.

- Schools were required to go through the project manager for access to the data portal, following execution of a MOU.
- All users were given a login and one-time password, unique to them, to access the data portal. They were required to change their password upon login before accessing the rest of the data portal. RFA staff were required to utilize two-factor authentication to access the data portal due to their elevated data privileges. All passwords were required to comply with NIST 800-63 Authentication standards.
- The data portal was hosted at the SC Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) secured data center. Physical access to the building is restricted by State Government ID, where guests must sign-in and be escorted. The data center is further restricted to a subset of IDs controlled by SCDHHS. RFA servers are in a locked cabinet that only RFA information technology staff may access.
- Assessment data on the servers are encrypted, with the key only known by a select subset of the RFA staff with access to the data portal codebase.

**Data entry process:**

- 1) Using a login unique to each school, an initial data entry screen allowed for the selection of a student who was enrolled in the ECENC Program in the school in the 2018-19 school year.
- 2) A second screen, which showed the selected student name, allowed school personnel to select the assessment for which the student had data (e.g., SAT, ACT, ITBS, etc.) from a drop-down menu.
- 3) A third screen, which showed both the student name and assessment selected for data entry, allowed school personnel to:
  - a. Enter the date the student took the assessment,
  - b. Enter the Verbal and Non-Verbal scores for the assessment,
  - c. Identify whether the scores entered were percentile ranks,
  - d. Verify the entered results to be correct, and
  - e. Attach an electronic copy of the student score report from the test publisher.

Note: Only an official student score report from the test publisher was accepted; unofficial handwritten or typed assessment data were rejected. Assessment data submitted without the student's name or testing date visible were also rejected.

## Compliance and Analysis of Assessment Data

As required by state law, schools participating in the ECENC Program are required to administer national achievement or state standardized assessments, or both, at progressive grade levels to determine student progress. The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) interpretation of the Education Accountability Act prohibits private school students from taking state assessments which include, but are not limited to, SC READY in grades 3 through 8 and end-of-course assessments in Algebra 1, English 1, Biology and US History and The Constitution. Instead, private schools have the flexibility to choose any assessment to measure student performance. Schools that administer national assessments typically select an assessment or assessments that measure reading or English language arts (ELA) competencies and mathematics competencies. Examples of assessments that are used in elementary and middle school grades are the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). Examples of assessments that are unique to high school are the ACT, PSAT, and SAT.

Exceptional SC provided to RFA a datafile that contained a list of 2,261 students in kindergarten through grade 12 who received grants in the 2017-18 school year (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
Count of Children by Grade (K-12) who Received Grants from Exceptional SC  
2018-19

Grade Level	Number of Students
Kindergarten	79
1	96
2	125
3	196
4	209
5	239
6	252
7	235
8	258
9	170
10	162
11	127
12	113
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,261</b>

Source: RFA as provided by Exceptional SC.

The Department of Revenue issued a report on January 15, 2020 in which they report Exceptional SC awarded 2,295 scholarship recipients for the 2018-19 school year, 1,638

to students who previously received an ECENC scholarship, and 657 to new scholarship recipients.<sup>1</sup> Exceptional SC staff are aware of the 34 student difference between the number of student records reported by RFA (2,261) and the number of students reported by the Department of Revenue (2,295) and are working to modify their data processing to ensure the integrity of future data (personal communication, February 27, 2020).

RFA populated the secure portal with the name and grade level of each student by school. To reiterate, only schools that completed the data sharing agreement with RFA were given access to the secure portal to upload individual student assessment reports for students whom Exceptional SC verified had received a grant in 2018-19 and had attended their school in 2018-19. Schools were asked specifically to upload a score report from a test publisher; therefore, scores obtained from hand-scoring of assessments by school officials or by the classroom teacher were not accepted. Schools that did not provide student scores from a test publisher score report were asked to provide a reason for not providing the information.

Scores from achievement tests that were judged to best align with the content of Reading Comprehension and Mathematics Concepts were recorded. Similarly, scores from aptitude tests that best aligned with the content names Verbal and Non-Verbal were recorded. Although the assessments differ in meaning across publishers, they were treated as if they measure the areas of Reading Comprehension/Verbal Skills and Mathematics Concepts/Non-Verbal similarly: the labels used for the subjects in this report are Reading and Mathematics. When available, national percentile rank scores were reported; in their absence scale scores were reported. Using national percentile rank scores promotes comparability of scores across assessments, because the scores are assumed to be referenced to comparable nationally representative samples of students.

A unique student identifier was associated with each student who received a grant in the 2018-19 school year. The datafile for students who received a grant in the 2017-18 school year was also accessed. When it could be determined that a student in the 2017-18 school year matched a student in the 2018-19 school year, the student record for 2017-18 was assigned the same unique student identifier.

## **Analysis of Data**

On December 31, 2019 the EOC received two data files from RFA to conduct the analyses. The first contained all 2,261 records RFA received from the Department of Revenue for students who received grants in the 2018-19 school year, where each record contained information from one assessment administration or an explanation of why the assessment information was not provided. The second contained data for 1,574 students who also received a grant in the 2017-18 school year. In both datafiles, RFA redacted all

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<sup>1</sup> SC Department of Revenue. 2018-2019 Report of Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Program. Columbia, SC: January 15, 2020.

personally identifiable information from the datafile, leaving the unique student identification number as the only identifier for each student. Of the 2,261 records for the 2018-19 school year, 1,799 records contained assessment information, and 462 records did not contain assessment information and should have included a reason for not providing assessment information. A total of 1,574 student records with information for the 2018-19 school year also had information for assessments administered in the 2017-18 school year.

Table 2 documents the number and percent of the 1,799 students with valid assessment information by grade level. Approximately 84 percent of all assessment results were for students in grades 3 through 10.

**Table 2**  
Number and Percent of Valid Assessment Results by Grade Level, 2018-19

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Kindergarten	31	2
1	43	2
2	93	5
3	163	9
4	191	11
5	200	11
6	222	12
7	217	12
8	228	13
9	143	8
10	137	8
11	93	5
12	38	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,799</b>	

The assessments reported are summarized in Table 3. The assessment most frequently reported (31 percent) was the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment, which is a computer adaptive achievement test that can be administered to students in kindergarten through grade 12. Approximately 10 percent of all assessments reported were the Stanford Achievement Test, which is administered to students in grades K through 12, and fourteen percent of all assessments were the PSAT, which is administered to high school sophomores and juniors.

**Table 3**  
Number and Percent of Assessments Reported, 2018-19

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
ACT	10	1
ACT Aspire	93	5
CTT	135	8
Gates MacGinitie	3	Less than 1
Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)	126	7
Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)	559	31
Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT)	18	1
PSAT	244	14
SAT	35	2
Stanford Achievement Test	187	10
TerraNova	73	4
Woodcock-Johnson	119	7
Other	197	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,799</b>	

Of the 462 students without assessment results for 2018-19, schools provided specific reasons for not providing results for 323 of these students. Table 4 documents that 169 students (37 percent) of the students were in a grade for which the school did not administer a norm-referenced test, such as kindergarten. For a total of 155 students (34 percent) either no reason was provided for not providing assessment information or the reason was “Other”.

**Table 4**  
Reasons for Not Providing Assessment Information

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>
Student was sick or absent on the day of testing.	8
Student not enrolled, or not enrolled for testing.	51
School did not assess grade level (includes students in kindergarten and grade 12).	169
Parents opted their child out of testing.	8
Academic progress was assessed via other means including self-scored by teacher or staff.	3
Student with disabilities – allowable exemption	68
Other	16
<b>Total Reasons Given:</b>	<b>323</b>
<b>School provided no reason.</b>	<b>139</b>

## Compliance

One criterion for compliance is the percentage of schools providing individual student assessment information through the secure portal. Of 117 schools with student records from RFA, 109 (93 percent) provided valid student information (either assessment scores or a valid reason for not providing scores) for at least one student.

Another criterion for compliance is the percentage of students receiving ECENC scholarships for whom assessment information is provided. Three scenarios for summarizing student-level compliance are presented in Table 5.

Of the 2,261 students in kindergarten through grade 12 who received a grant from Exceptional SC in 2018-19, schools provided valid assessment data on 80 percent of the students. Calculating compliance as the percentage of students in grades 3 through 10 only for which assessment data were provided, resulted in a compliance rate of 87 percent (1,501 of 1,721 students, Table 5). Evaluating the compliance for students in grades 3 through 10 is reasonable because students in K-2 and 11-12 typically have less opportunity to take assessments. In the early grades, assessments are generally administered for diagnostic purposes while assessments in grades 11 and 12 are typically used for college admissions tests. Each of grades KG, 1, 2, 11, and 12 represent less than 6 percent of the population receiving ECENC grants, and collectively they receive 24 percent of the scholarships. Finally, if valid reasons for not submitting assessment data are considered to be valid responses, compliance was approximately 93 percent.

**Table 5**  
Summary of Student-Level Compliance

<b>Scenario 1: K-12 Students with Assessment Data</b>	
Number of Students (K-12) Receiving Exceptional SC Grants*	2,261
Number of students with Valid Assessment Data	1,799
Percent of Students (K-12) with Valid Assessment Data	<b>80%</b>
<b>Scenario 2: Grades 3-10 Students with Assessment Data</b>	
Number of Students (3-10) Receiving Exceptional SC Grants*	1,721
Number of students with Valid Assessment Data	1,501
Percent of Students (3-10) with Valid Assessment Data	<b>87%</b>
<b>Scenario 3: K-12 Students with Assessment Data or Valid Reasons</b>	
Number of Students (K-12) Receiving Exceptional SC Grants*	2,261
Number of Students (K-12) with Valid Assessment Data	1,799
Number of Students (K-12) with Valid Reasons for Not Submitting Assessment Data	307*
Percent of Students (K-12) with Valid Assessment Data or Reasons for Not Submitting Assessment Data	<b>93%</b>

\*Excludes 16 students for whom the reason was "Other".

## **Data Analysis Methods**

The EOC staff analyzed the assessment data to determine: (1) for all students who received a grant from Exceptional SC in 2018-19 and for whom assessment data were collected, how well did students in grades kindergarten through grade 12 statewide perform based on national percentile ranks; and (2) how well did students perform in schools for which at least 51 percent of students in the school received grants from Exceptional SC.

The EOC staff used or converted assessment data into percentile rank scores based on the test publisher national norms. When national percentile rank scores were not available, reports usually provided a scale score, for example, a reported score on the SAT of 540 or an ACT Score of 22 are examples of scale scores. For the ACT, SAT, and PSAT, EOC staff converted scale scores to percentile ranks using conversion tables published online. When national norms were not available, such as in the case with the Woodcock Johnson assessment, the assessment data were not included.

By reporting information from all assessments as percentile ranks, a common metric is in place; an assumption is made in this process that the national norms for different assessments are comparable – which may not be justified. For example, when a student has a national percentile rank score of 45, the student scored higher than 45 percent of students in a nationally representative sample of students. However, care must be taken when summarizing percentile rank scores, because whereas equal differences between scale scores imply equal differences in student achievement (or aptitude), equal differences in percentile ranks do not; therefore, percentile ranks should not be averaged. For example, on the SAT Verbal, the difference between scores of 530 and 550 (20 points) implies the same difference in student achievement as does the difference between scores of 640 and 660 (20 points). The corresponding percentile rank for an SAT Verbal score of 530 is 58 and for a SAT Verbal score of 550 is 65 (a 7-point difference in percentile rank), and the corresponding percentile rank for an SAT Verbal score of 640 is 88 and for a SAT Verbal score of 660 is 92 (a 4-point difference in percentile rank). Although the differences between SAT Verbal scores of 530 and 550, and 640 and 660 suggest the same differences in academic achievement, the differences between their percentile ranks are not the same.

Two possible solutions to this problem are available. The first is to report median percentile ranks. The median percentile rank is the percentile rank that half of the students are below, and half are above; it gives information about where a typical student performs. Percentile ranks can be computed for assessments in the 2017-18 school year and for assessments in the 2018-19 school year. If the median percentile rank from both academic years is the same, the inference can be made that these students increased in their academic achievement as a typical student would. If the median percentile rank from 2018-19 is higher than for 2017-18, these students may have made greater progress than typical students.



The second is to convert all percentile rank scores to Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs). NCEs have a mean of 50, and a range from 0 to 100. A student with a percentile rank less than 50 will have an NCE less than 50. For example, a student with a percentile rank of 30 will have an NCE score of 39, while a student with a percentile rank of 70 has an NCE of 61. An advantage of NCEs is that they can be averaged. This is possible because equal differences (e.g., the 10 point differences from 35 to 45 and 70 to 80) imply the same increase in academic achievement. If the average of the NCEs for both years is the same (a difference of 0), the inference can be made that students made progress similar to a typical student. If the NCE in 2018-19 is greater than the NCE from 2017-18, these students appear to have higher achievement in 2018-19 than in 2017-18.

One advantage of using NCEs is that the scores from each student (2017-18 and 2018-19 are included in the indicator of student progress). A disadvantage of NCEs is that there is no simple reference for whether the difference in the average NCEs from 2017- 18 to 2018-19 is large or small. What does it mean to have an average difference of NCEs of 5? It is not clear.

If percentile ranks are used, when the median 2018-19 percentile rank is 5 points higher than the median 2017-18 percentile rank, it means that in 2018-19 students scored higher than 5 percent more students in a national norm group than did the students in 2017-18.

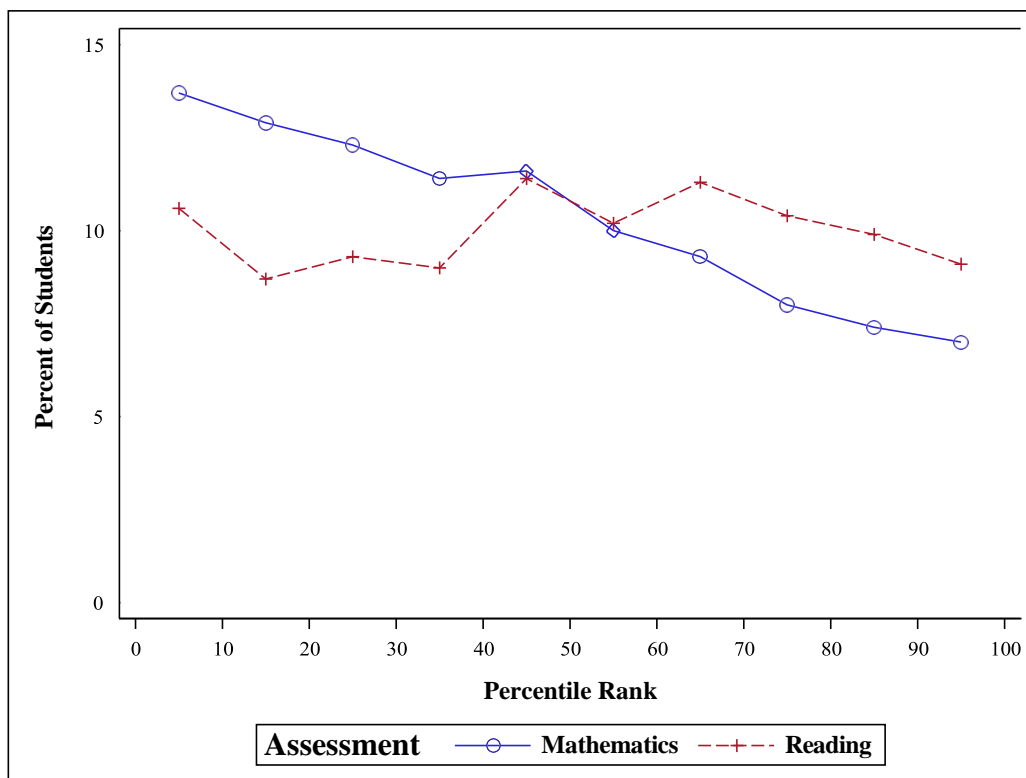
## Assessment Data of Exceptional SC Students in 2018-19

### Statewide Results:

Of all students who received ECENC grants in school year 2018-19, 60 percent or 1,399 students had valid assessment data collected. Assessment data results for some assessments like the Woodcock Johnson assessment were excluded because the scores could not be converted into national percentile rankings.

The distribution of scores for Reading and Mathematics are presented in Figure 1. For Reading, assessment results were evenly distributed from high to low percentile ranks, with approximately 10 percent of students in each 10-point range of percentile ranks, and not clear associated with the assessment score. For Mathematics, there were significantly more assessment results at lower percentile ranks, with a fairly regular decrease in the percentage of students in each increasing 10-point range of percentile ranks from 14 to 7 (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
Distributions of Mathematics and Reading Scores from 2018-19



The statewide results are presented in Table 6. The median Reading percentile rank is 51, and the median Mathematics percentile rank is 40; which suggest that the overall academic achievement of ECENC students is similar to students nationally for Reading but lower than students nationally in Mathematics. The mean NCE for Reading is 49.8 for Reading, and 45.0 for Mathematics. The overall Reading achievement of ECENC

students appears to be similar to students nationally, but for Mathematics the achievement level appears to be slightly lower. As a reminder: students receiving grants from Exceptional SC all have documented exceptional needs whereas national norms include students with and without disabilities; therefore, lower levels of achievement for ECENC students are not unexpected.

**Table 6**  
All Students in 2018-19

	Reading	Mathematics
Number of Students	1,648	1,664
Median Percentile Rank	51	40
Mean Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE)	49.8	45.0

Making direct comparisons between the academic performance of students receiving grants from Exceptional SC and South Carolina public school students with disabilities is not presented because it is problematic for several reasons. First, students in private schools cannot take state summative assessments; therefore, these students do not take assessments that measure their progress in learning state academic content standards. Instead, students in private schools participating in the ECENC program take national assessments or formative assessments like the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). Second, students receiving grants from Exceptional SC are students who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or are students who have been diagnosed by a licensed speech-language pathologist, psychiatrist or medical, mental health or health care provider as having a neurodevelopmental disorder, a substantial sensory or physical impairment or some other disability or acute or chronic condition that impedes the students' ability to learn and succeed in school. On the other hand, public school students with disabilities who take the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Assessment (SC READY) in grades 3 through 8 are students with an IEP. Public-school students with significant cognitive disabilities take the South Carolina Alternate Assessment on Alternate Achievement Standards (AA-AAS). Data from AA-AAS is not included in this report. Third, there are no data to confirm or deny that students with disabilities who are enrolled in public schools have comparable disabilities or exceptional needs to students receiving a grant from Exceptional SC or that students served in public schools or in the ECENC program have comparable socioeconomic status.

Schools with 51 percent or more students receiving grants from Exceptional SC: There were eight schools that had more than 51 percent of their total school enrollment receiving grants from Exceptional SC in 2018-19. Total school enrollment was determined using information provided by the schools on their 2019-20 application to participate in the ECENC program. These eight schools are:

- Camperdown Academy
- Einstein Academy
- Glenforest School
- HOPE Christian Academy
- Miracle Academy Preparatory School
- Sandhills School
- The Chandler School
- Trident Academy

Both Hope Christian Academy and Sandhills School administered the Woodcock-Johnson assessment which does not report percentile rank scores. Consequently, their assessment information could not be used in this evaluation.

A summary of the scores obtained from the schools for which data was available are provided in Table 7. For each school, the median percentile ranks in Reading range from 15 to 61, with only one median greater than 50; similarly, the mean NCE ranges from 37.5 to 53, with two values greater than 50. For Mathematics a similar pattern is present; the median percentile ranks range from 6.0 to 53 with only 1 school having a median percentile rank above 50, while the mean NCE in Mathematics ranges from 29.4 to 51.7 with only one value above 50. The trend appears to be that the students in these schools score lower on their assessments than do students nationally.

**Table 7**

Reading, 2018-19

School	n	Median Percentile Rank	Mean NCE
Camperdown Academy	136	47.5	50.9
Einstein Academy	58	32.0	42.9
Glenforest School	39	15.0	37.5
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	34	61.0	53.0
The Chandler School	60	46.0	49.3
Trident Academy	39	45.0	44.8

Mathematics, 2018-19

School	n	Median Percentile Rank	Mean NCE
Camperdown Academy	131	53.0	51.7
Einstein Academy	55	14.5	32.1
Glenforest School	41	6.0	29.4
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	33	44.0	45.8
The Chandler School	60	34.5	44.4
Trident Academy	40	26.0	34.5

### Gain scores from 2017-18 to 2018-19

Of the 1,648 students with percentile rank Reading scores for the 2018-19 school year, 919 (56 percent) also had scores reported for the 2017-18 school year. Of the 1,664 students with percentile rank scores in Mathematics for the 2018-19 school year, 925 (56 percent) also had scores reported for the 2017-18 school year. Based on these sampling percentages, caution must be exercised not to over interpret the results presented here. Even greater caution must be exercised when considering data at the school level, as the numbers of students reported on for each school in the matched student samples are all less than 50.

Tables 9 through 13 document the assessment results for matched students in the schools having at least 51 percent of their students who received a grant from Exceptional SC as well as in all schools in the state. Both Camperdown Academy and Trident Academy administered portfolios to their students in the previous school year (2017-18), which do not have national percentile rank scores reported. Consequently, neither of these schools had students with scores for both 2017-18 and 2018-19.

For all matched students, the median Reading percentile rank in 2017-18 was 46, and the median percentile rank in 2018-19 was 52 (Table 8); the mean NCE in Reading was 48.4 in 2017-18, and 49.8 in 2018-19 (Table 10); and the average NCE gain was 1.4 (Table 12). All of these measures suggest that the 2017-18 scores may be slightly higher than the 2016-17 scores.

For Mathematics, the median percentile rank in 2017-18 was 40, and the median percentile rank in 2018-19 was 41 (Table 9); the mean NCE in Reading was 45.0 in 2017-18, and 44.9 in 2018-19 (Table 11); and the average NCE gain was -0.1 (Table 12). Both the median percentile rank and NCE differences between 2017-18 and 2018-19 were very small. The most appropriate conclusion based on these data is that there is not enough evidence to suggest a change in student achievement from 2017-18 to 2018-19.

No evaluation was made of the pattern of scores over time for individual schools because the number of students with data for both 2017-18 and 2018-19 was too small.

**Table 8**

Median Reading Scores for All Students in 2018-19 and for Students with Data in Both 2017-18 and 2018-19 (Matched Students)

School	Matched Student		
	n	Median Percentile Rank	
		2017-18	2018-19
Camperdown Academy	1	*	*
Einstein Academy	45	28	39
Glenforest School	37	15	13
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	27	69	64
The Chandler School	44	37	46
Trident Academy	0	*	*
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>919</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>52</b>

\* Fewer than 10 students.

**Table 9**

Median Mathematics Scores for All Students in 2018-19 and for Students with Data in Both 2017-18 and 2018-19 (Matched Students)

School	Matched Students		
	n	Median Percentile Rank	
		2017-18	2018-19
Camperdown Academy	1	*	*
Einstein Academy	42	17	26
Glenforest School	39	7	6
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	27	52	48
The Chandler School	44	29.5	30.5
Trident Academy	0	*	*
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>925</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>41</b>

\* Fewer than 10 students.

**Table 10**

Mean Reading NCE Scores for All Students in 2018-19 and for Students with Data in Both 2017-18 and 2018-19 (Matched Students)

School	Matched Students		
	n	Mean	
		2017-18	2018-19
Camperdown Academy	1	*	*
Einstein Academy	45	44.1	45.8
Glenforest School	37	36.8	36.1
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	27	55.3	53.1
The Chandler School	44	45.2	47.8
Trident Academy	0	*	*
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>919</b>	<b>48.4</b>	<b>49.8</b>

\* Fewer than 10 students.

**Table 11**

Mean Mathematics NCE Scores for All Students in 2018-19 and for Students with Data in Both 2017-18 and 2018-19 (Matched Students)

School	Matched Students		
	n	Mean	
		2017-18	2018-19
Camperdown Academy	1	*	*
Einstein Academy	42	30.2	35.3
Glenforest School	39	30.6	28.0
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	27	51.6	46.6
The Chandler School	44	41.4	40.8
Trident Academy	0	*	*
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>925</b>	<b>45.0</b>	<b>44.9</b>

\* Fewer than 10 students.

**Table 12**

Average NCE Gain Scores for Reading and Mathematics

School	Reading		Mathematics	
	N	Mean	n	Mean
Camperdown Academy	1	*	1	*
Einstein Academy	45	1.7	42	5.1
Glenforest School	37	-0.7	39	-2.6
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	27	-2.2	27	-5.0
The Chandler School	44	2.7	44	-0.6
Trident Academy	0	*	0	*
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>919</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>925</b>	<b>-0.1</b>

\* Fewer than 10 students.

## Findings

1. Schools participating in the ECENC program responded to the request for assessment data by providing either assessment information or a reason for not having the information for 2,106 (93 percent) of the 2,261 students who received grants from Exceptional SC in 2018-19.
2. Student level assessment information was obtained from 1,799 (80 percent) of all students who received a grant from Exceptional SC in school year 2018-19.
3. Of the assessment data provided, the EOC could use assessment data from approximately 1,650 students, or 73 percent of all students who received a grant from Exceptional SC in 2018-19 to calculate median percentile rankings in Reading and Mathematics.
4. At the state level, the assessment data results for school year 2018-19 for students who received a grant from Exceptional SC showed:
  - d. The median Reading percentile rank was 51, and the median Mathematics percentile rank was 40. In Reading, approximately, half of the students scored higher than 51 percent of students in a national representative sample of students. In Mathematics, half of the students scored higher than 40 percent of students in a nationally representative sample of students.
  - e. The mean Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs) was 49.8 for Reading and 45.0 for mathematics, both of which are slightly lower than the national norm, which includes students with and without exceptional needs.
  - f. The data must be viewed in light of the following limitation. Students receiving grants from Exceptional SC all have documented exceptional needs. One would expect that students participating in the ECENC program would score lower than a nationally representative sample of students that includes students with and without exceptional needs. However, using median national percentile ranks over time will provide information on the relative performance of ECENC students and information on their academic growth.
5. Based on data from approximately 925 students with assessment information from 2017-18 and 2018-19, there appears to be a slight decline in Reading scores but no difference in Mathematics scores from school year 2017-18 to school year 2018-19. These results are consistent with the results obtained from the 2017-18 school year.
6. There were eight schools with more than 51 percent of their students who received grants from Exceptional SC in 2018-19. Of these eight schools:



- a. Two schools administered the Woodcock-Johnson assessment in 2018-19 which does not report percentile rank scores, and therefore could not be used in this evaluation.
- b. Two additional schools assessed students in the previous school year (2017-18) with portfolios, which also do not provide percentile rank scores. Current year (2018-19) scores are reported for these schools but gain scores from 2017-18 to 2018-19 could not be analyzed.
- c. The four schools with assessment information in both 2017-18 and 2018-19 differed markedly in their median percentile ranks and mean NCEs. There should be no inference to differences in school efficacy based on these data, as students self-select to attend each school.

**Recommendations:**

1. For future submissions, the EOC recommends that Exceptional SC also collect the following information - child's date of birth as well as gender and race – to better facilitate matching student data across school years. This recommendation was included in the 2017-18 report, and was partially implemented for 2018-19.
2. The EOC recommends that first time recipients of ECENC grants be asked to provide information for previous year assessments in order to assess student improvement.
3. The EOC is concerned about the percentage of valid assessments reported. To address this concern, the EOC will highlight student assessment reporting requirements published in the Application Process for School Eligibility ([https://eoc.sc.gov/sites/default/files/Documents/ECENC%202020/ECENC%20Manual%20for%200SY2020-21.links\\_.pdf](https://eoc.sc.gov/sites/default/files/Documents/ECENC%202020/ECENC%20Manual%20for%200SY2020-21.links_.pdf)).
4. The EOC will monitor schools failing to report either valid assessment scores or a reason for not providing assessment scores.
5. The EOC will ensure that student information from portfolios can be received.

# Appendix



## **Memorandum of Understanding for Data Sharing**

This Agreement is entered into by [Click or tap here to enter text.](#), hereinafter referred to as “Data Owner” and the South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office, hereinafter referred to as “RFA”, collectively the “Parties.”

Data Owner and RFA mutually assure each other that they will protect the confidentiality of any and all individually identifiable information shared with or made available to other parties in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232(g), the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and other applicable State and federal privacy regulations.

The purpose of this Agreement is for Data Owner to submit the assessment results of students receiving a grant from Exceptional SC to RFA to support the Education Oversight Committee’s (EOC) annual report documenting "the impact of the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Program on student achievement" as required by Act 247 of 2018, Section 12-6-3790(E)(6).

### **I. OBLIGATIONS AND ACTIVITIES OF DATA OWNER**

- A. Data Owner shall obtain consent, authorization, or permission from the individuals as may be required by applicable state or federal laws and/or regulations prior to furnishing the individually identifiable information pertaining to an individual to RFA. Such authorizations or permissions shall be furnished to RFA upon request.
- B. Provide to RFA with any changes in, or revocation of, permission by the individuals to use or disclose individually identifiable information, if such changes affect RFA’s permitted or required uses and disclosures.
- C. On an annual basis, provide to RFA via secure portal a copy of the test score sheet of each student who received a grant from Exceptional SC beginning with school year 2018-19 and for each successive school year through 2022-23.

### **II. OBLIGATIONS AND ACTIVITIES OF RFA**

- A. RFA will not use or disclose individually identifiable information other than as permitted or required by this Agreement or as required by state and federal law or as otherwise authorized by Data Owner.
- B. RFA will use appropriate safeguards to prevent use or disclosure of the individually identifiable information other than as provided for by this Agreement. RFA maintains and uses appropriate administrative, technical and physical safeguards to preserve the integrity and confidentiality of and to prevent non-permitted use or disclosure of individually identifiable information. These safeguards are required regardless of the mechanism used to transmit the information.

- C. RFA will mitigate, to the extent practicable, any harmful effect that is known to RFA of a use or disclosure of individually identifiable information by RFA or its workforce in violation of the requirements of this Agreement.
- D. RFA will report to Data Owner, in writing, any use and/or disclosure of individually identifiable information that is not permitted or required by this Agreement of which RFA becomes aware as soon as reasonable, but no more than 72 hours following knowledge of a breach of confidentiality, pursuant to Act No. 284, 2016 S.C. Acts, Proviso 117.
- E. RFA will ensure that any agent, including a subcontractor, to whom it provides individually identifiable information, received from, or created or received by RFA, executes a written agreement obligating the agent or subcontractor to comply with all the terms of the Agreement.

### **III. PERMITTED USES AND DISCLOSURES BY RFA**

- A. Functions and Activities: Except as otherwise limited in this and any other agreement between RFA and Data Owner, RFA may use or disclose individually identifiable information only for purposes authorized by Data Owners in a separate written agreement or amendment to this agreement, if such use or disclosure of individually identifiable information would not violate any applicable state or federal laws if done by Data Owners themselves. RFA may pass individually identifiable information to any of its subcontractors for use in filling the obligations of this Agreement as long as the subcontractor adheres to the conditions of this Agreement. This includes, but is not limited to, data being sent directly to any subcontractor to be used in data aggregation and quality assurance on behalf of RFA or Data Owners.
- B. RFA may make available individually identifiable information, with permission of Data Owners and in compliance with any applicable state or federal laws, to other entities as authorized by Data Owners in a separate written agreement or amendment to this agreement, if such disclosure of individually identifiable information would not violate any state or federal laws.
- C. RFA and any of its subcontractors, except as otherwise limited in this Agreement, may use individually identifiable information to provide feedback on quality issues and comparative analyses using data solely from this project or data generated under the data aggregation authority of this Agreement.
- D. RFA upon entering into an agreement using individually identifiable information for any of its functions and activities on behalf of this project or in its general operations will make available that agreement to Data Owner or Data Owners upon request.

### **IV. TERM AND TERMINATION**

- A. Term. The Agreement shall be effective when signed by both Parties (the "Effective Date"). The Agreement will automatically extend annually on the anniversary of the Effective Date for four additional one-year terms unless either Party elects to not renew and gives thirty (30) days' written notice to the other Party.
  - 1. Termination for Cause: Upon Data Owner's reasonable determination that RFA has breached a material term of this Agreement, Data Owner shall be entitled to do any one or more of the following:

- a) Give RFA written notice of the existence of such breach and an opportunity to cure upon mutually agreeable terms. If RFA does not cure the breach or end the violation according to such terms, or if RFA and Data Owner are unable to agree upon such terms, Data Owner may immediately terminate any agreement between Data Owner and RFA which is the subject of such breach.
    - b) Immediately stop all further disclosures of individually identifiable information to RFA pursuant to each agreement between Data Owner and RFA which is the subject of such breach.
  2. Effect of Termination: Upon termination of the contract or upon written demand from Data Owner, RFA agrees to immediately return or destroy, except to the extent infeasible, all individually identifiable information received from, created by, or received by RFA, including all such individually identifiable information which RFA has disclosed to its employees, subcontractors and/or agents. Destruction shall include destruction of all copies including backup tapes and other electronic backup medium. In the event the return or destruction of some or all such individually identifiable information is infeasible, individually identifiable information not returned or destroyed pursuant to this paragraph shall be used or disclosed only for those purposes that make return or destruction infeasible.
  3. Continuing Privacy Obligation: The obligation of RFA to protect the privacy of individually identifiable information is continuous and survives any termination, cancellation, expiration, or other conclusion of this Agreement or any other agreement between Data Owner and RFA.
- B. Notices. All notices pursuant to this Agreement must be given in writing and shall be effective when received if hand-delivered or upon dispatch if sent by reputable overnight delivery service, facsimile or U.S. Mail to the appropriate address or facsimile number as set forth at the end of this Agreement.

**V. MISCELLANEOUS.**

- A. Data Owner and RFA agree that Individuals who are the subject of individually identifiable information are not third-party beneficiaries of this Agreement.
- B. The parties acknowledge that state and federal laws relating to electronic data security and privacy are rapidly evolving and that amendment of this Agreement may be required to provide for procedures to ensure compliance with such developments. The parties specifically agree to take such action as is necessary to implement the standards and requirements any applicable laws relating to the security or confidentiality of individually identifiable information. The parties understand and agree that Data Owner must receive satisfactory written assurance from RFA that RFA will adequately safeguard all Information that it receives or creates pursuant to this Agreement. Upon request by Data Owner, RFA agrees to promptly enter into negotiations with Data Owner concerning the terms of any amendment to the Agreement embodying written assurances consistent with the standards and requirements of any applicable laws. Data Owner may terminate this Agreement upon thirty (30) days written notice in the event RFA does not promptly enter into negotiations to amend this Agreement when requested by Data Owner pursuant to this Section.

- C. In the event that any provision of this Agreement violates any applicable statute, ordinance or rule of law in any jurisdiction that governs this Agreement, such provision shall be ineffective to the extent of such violation without invalidating any other provision of this Agreement.
- D. This Agreement may not be amended, altered or modified except by written agreement signed by Data Owner and RFA.
- E. No provision of this Agreement may be waived except by an agreement in writing signed by the waiving party. A waiver of any term or provision shall not be construed as a waiver of any other term or provision. Nothing in Section 2 of this Agreement shall be deemed a waiver of any legally-recognized claim of privilege available to Data Owner.
- F. The persons signing below have the right and authority to execute this Agreement for their respective entities and no further approvals are necessary to create a binding Agreement.
- G. Neither Data Owner nor RFA shall use the names or trademarks of the other party or of any of the respective party's affiliated entities in any advertising, publicity, endorsement, or promotion unless prior written consent has been obtained for the particular use contemplated.
- H. All references herein to specific statutes, codes or regulations shall be deemed to be references to those statutes, codes or regulations as may be amended from time to time.

**VI. OWNERSHIP OF DATA**

- A. Nothing in this Memorandum of Understanding shall be construed as granting RFA any right, title or interest in or to, any license of any data. Ownership of client data remains that of Data Owner.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF** the parties have executed this agreement effective upon last dated signature.

Click or tap here to enter text.

S.C. Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office  
Health and Demographics Division  
Rembert C. Dennis Building  
1000 Assembly Street, Suite 240  
Columbia, SC 29201

BY:

BY:

Click or tap here to enter text.

W. David Patterson, Ph.D.  
Division Director

Date

Date

- C. In the event that any provision of this Agreement violates any applicable statute, ordinance or rule of law in any jurisdiction that governs this Agreement, such provision shall be ineffective to the extent of such violation without invalidating any other provision of this Agreement.
- D. This Agreement may not be amended, altered or modified except by written agreement signed by Data Owner and RFA.
- E. No provision of this Agreement may be waived except by an agreement in writing signed by the waiving party. A waiver of any term or provision shall not be construed as a waiver of any other term or provision. Nothing in Section 2 of this Agreement shall be deemed a waiver of any legally-recognized claim of privilege available to Data Owner.
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Division Director

Date

Date



*The SC Education Oversight Committee is an independent, non-partisan group made up of 18 educators, business persons, and elected leaders. Created in 1998, the committee is dedicated to reporting facts, measuring change, and promoting progress within South Carolina's education system.*

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

If you have questions, please contact the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) staff for additional information. The phone number is 803.734.6148. Also, please visit the EOC website at [www.eoc.sc.gov](http://www.eoc.sc.gov) for additional resources.

The Education Oversight Committee does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, or handicap in its practices relating to employment or establishment and administration of its programs and initiatives. Inquiries regarding employment, programs and initiatives of the Committee should be directed to the Executive Director 803.734.6148.