

# STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT 2008-2009 UPDATE

## Mission

*The mission of Greer Middle School is to empower students to become independent, productive learners who exemplify good character in an increasingly global society.*

## Refining the Guiding Principles of the School

*We believe our students should:*

- Give and be given respect
- Be constantly challenged with standards-driven curriculum and instruction
- Share the accountability for education with parents, teachers, and the community
- Receive curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned to meet their individual learning needs
- Be able to communicate effectively and solve problems
- Feel safe both emotionally and physically in and out of the classroom
- Reflect upon ideas and events in a global setting
- Perform community service as a component of learning



## Vision

When the vision of Greer Middle School is implemented, teachers will be assisting and supporting students who are actively engaged in optimal learning opportunities. Students will learn through relevant, hands-on instructional techniques that are geared to their learning needs. Students and teachers will be guided by the state and International Baccalaureate curriculum standards. Teams of teachers will strive to constantly evaluate student learning in order to promote the idea that assessment is the bridge to revision and academic growth. Vertical teaming will be used to provide a smooth transition for all students across all grade levels, from our feeder schools, and into high school. Real-world activities and research-based learning strategies will be used to make learning relevant for all students. Teachers will use ongoing authentic assessment of student learning that is aligned with the state and International Baccalaureate standards.

Conversations about student success become a regular element of communication among students, parents, and teachers. Students will participate in service learning and reflect on what they have learned and how it may affect the world in which they live. This community will strive to create an environment of quality learning that heavily integrates technology into the school's curriculum and will be committed to student success through highly effective interaction and problem-solving. Students will continue their education knowing they have even greater opportunities to become independent, productive learners in a global community.



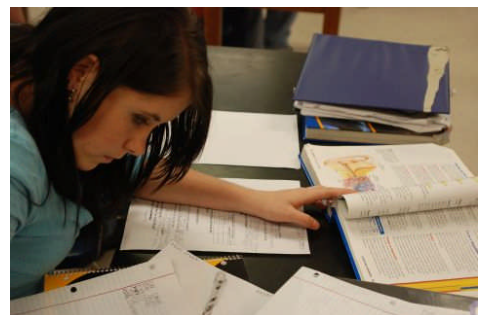
### *Learning Expectations*

Expectations for student learning are high at every level of governance. The portfolio committee researched federal, state and local goals for education and selected the following as being most appropriate for our school and its students.

The No Child Left Behind Act places expectations at a very high level and states that each school must make adequate yearly progress or there will be consequences. It also places additional requirements on public schools such as: Annual testing of all public school students in reading and math; annual report cards on school performance for parents, voters and taxpayers; ensuring that every child reads by the 3rd grade; a highly qualified teacher in every public school classroom by 2005. NCLB goes even further and states the need for accountability with these statements: A significant achievement gap exists between disadvantaged students and their more affluent peers, despite billions in Federal spending since 1965. 60% of poor fourth-graders cannot read at a basic level. U.S. students lag behind their international peers in key subjects. Past federal education policy has lacked focus and has never insisted on results. The new law mandates increases in student achievement yearly based on scores of the state testing program. Clearly the federal government is serious about providing all students with a quality education. For more information please visit the NCLB website at

<http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=ln> .

The state of South Carolina through the Education Oversight Committee has established its own



expectations for student learning. They have established ten goals for education in our state. The ones that are most germane to our school and situation are as follows: Goal 1: SC will rank in the top half of states on NAEP examinations and other international and national measures. Goal 2: Nine out of 10 SC students will score at or above grade level on PACT, SC's standards-based criterion-referenced tests. Goal 9. The gap among achievements of students of different racial/ethnic groups and different economic status will be eliminated. The state Department of Education has developed state standards for the curriculum of each course or class offered in South Carolina schools. The Palmetto Achievement and Challenge Test, which is also a measure used in meeting adequate yearly progress, is based upon the state standards. Schools are expected to show an increase in student achievement each year on these tests. For more information you may wish to visit the following websites:

[http://www.state.sc.us/eoc/PDF/SCEOC\\_Objectives\\_0304.pdf](http://www.state.sc.us/eoc/PDF/SCEOC_Objectives_0304.pdf)

<http://www.myschools.com/offices/cso/>

Our district, Greenville County Schools, has established its own expectations for student achievement which are known as Priorities for Performance. Priorities for Performance is designed to support the district mission and the goals adopted by the Board of Trustees in March 1999. These goals include the primary goal to accelerate significantly the academic achievement of each student, and four support goals: (1) ensure quality personnel in all positions, (2) provide an optimal school environment, (3) secure and manage financial resources responsibly, and (4) improve public understanding and support of the school district's needs, achievements, and actions. These goals were developed in response to the following needs and key issues that our district must address

if it is to move forward. These are quoted from the district website and for more information you may visit this website at

<http://www.greenville.k12.sc.us/district/admin/edplan/index.asp>

- Bring concerted attention to a limited number of critical milestones of student achievement - important “gateways” to continuous progress in school: readiness to enter school, reading on grade level by the end of 3rd grade, enrollment in Algebra I as the standard math curriculum in the 8th grade, and successful completion of Algebra I by the end of 9th grade.
- Expect every student to perform at high levels in every area of study in school - including proficiency in writing, science, social studies, literature, the arts, computer-based communications, health, career education, and other school experiences - while providing instruction that meets the diverse learning needs of all types of students.
- Provide every student with educational experiences that are engaging and worthwhile - enabling every student to develop his unique gifts, pursue his natural talents and interests, and become a motivated, lifelong learner.
- Raise the level of challenge and performance of any identified groups of students who do not achieve academic success comparable to other groups of students in Greenville County.
- Provide teachers and principals with a system of high quality professional development, support for individual initiative, time for collaboration, opportunities for career advancement, and rewards for outstanding performance - in return for which they must accept increased accountability for improving student achievement.
- Ensure that schools provide a safe, inviting, technology-rich environment for learning in which the active involvement of parents is welcome and essential to their children’s success.
- Design more effective ways for the school district and community partners to work together in developing and coordinating the variety of resources necessary to meet the varied needs of students, educators, parents, and the school system itself.
- Address on a community-wide scale the problems attributed to “poor communications” - through activities, technologies, and organizational strategies that reduce the sense of isolation and disconnection often felt by school and district staff, parents, and community members.



- Align the responsibilities and services of district divisions, departments, school programs, community initiatives, and available resources to achieve the priorities of a focused plan of action to improve student learning: Greenville County’s Guide to Educational Excellence: Priorities for Performance.

**2008-2009 School Year**

<b>Demographic</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Totals</b>
Male	143	161	161	465
Female	138	145	150	450
Black Male	33	38	30	115
Black Female	26	27	44	83
White Male	90	91	93	274
White Female	84	90	104	278
Hispanic Male	20	23	13	54
Hispanic Female	17	18	19	56
Subsidized Meals				

*Overview*

Based on 2007 and 2008 PACT scores, our data research and analysis indicated achievement gaps between three identified groups of students. First, white Americans scored higher than Hispanic Americans who in turn scored higher than African Americans in Math and English/Language Arts. Secondly, female students scored higher than male students in Math and English/Language Arts. Third, meal status reflected similar statistics with students who received subsidized meals scoring lower than those students who did not receive subsidized meals. To meet increased state and federal goals for student success in the coming years, Greer Middle School must raise the percentage

of students scoring in basic, proficient and advanced categories of the Palmetto Achievement and Challenge Test. Using state standards, differentiated teaching strategies, the Learning Focus model, MAP Testing and Compass Learning, the faculty and staff intend to increase student achievement. Greer Middle met twenty out of the twenty-nine objectives on the state report card in 2007. The 2008 report has yet to be released. The faculty is committed to making changes that will enhance the abilities of our students to perform at their highest level.

#### *Ethnicity and Student Achievement*

In all academic curriculum areas tested by PACT, our white population had the highest percentage of our subgroups in Proficient and Advanced scores. These scores across the board are significantly higher than that of our African American and Hispanic populations. Our African American population has the smallest percentage of students scoring in the Proficient and Advanced categories and also had the highest percentage scoring in basic and below basic. The percentage of whites scoring Proficient or Advanced in math is 32.9% compared to 7% of the African American population and 9.8% Hispanic population in math. In English/Language Arts 30.6% of the white population scored proficient or advanced while 10.2% of the African American population did and 13.1% Hispanic population did. The percents are similar for social studies and science scores for these subgroups scoring Proficient and Advanced on PACT.

We also compared the percents of each subgroup scoring Below Basic on the PACT. White Americans had 23.6% Below Basic (BB) on the English Language Arts portion of

the PACT, African Americans 52.9% BB, which is over half of the total population, and Hispanics 44.9% BB. In Math, 20.8% White Americans scored BB, 48.0% African Americans were BB, and 38.1% Hispanic Americans had BB PACT scores. The gaps in achievement seem to be significant, and they were evident across time. The data researched covered a five-year span. These results are seen across grade levels and the gaps widen, as the achievement level gets higher. The results indicated to us that our classroom strategies are not working effectively with minority students in raising PACT scores.



### *Gender and Student Achievement*

The male population has outnumbered the female population at Greer Middle School for the past two years. The 2008-09 school year continued those trends as we have 465 males as compared to 433 females. In 2006 it was 526 males to 497 females and in 2007 it was 482 males to 450 females. Data was reviewed that displayed 2007 and 2008 PACT scores by gender in English/language arts and Math. The data revealed that female students scored higher in English/language Arts than male students: 25% Below Basic for females compared to 41% of males who scored Below Basic. Also, females scored higher in Math: 25% Below Basic compared to 33% of the males Below Basic on PACT. In science, the data revealed only slight differences in achievement levels between males and females. Males held a single percentage point advantage over females in social studies scores in the Below Basic category.

Due to the success of single gender classroom in the state, our school is currently investigating single gender classrooms for Greer Middle School. The discrepancy in PACT scores between male and female students is the motivation for researching the advantages and disadvantages of incorporating single gender classroom. At this time a committee has been formed to research the specific advantages and disadvantages of schools similar to ours who have actually implemented the single gender classroom.



### *Meal Status and Student Achievement*

In 2006 PACT Scores indicated that the number of students in the free lunch subgroup and scoring below basic had declined 18.4% over the past five years. The number of this same subgroup of students scoring at the basic and proficient levels has increased over the past five years by 13.2% in the basic category and 3.9% in the proficient category. Although there are fluctuations during the middle three years, the overall result in the reduced lunch status student scores is a decrease in below basic and basic scores with an increase in proficient and advanced scores. This positive trend is also evident with the paid lunch status students. Over the past five years, the number of students in this group

have decreased in the below basic and basic categories while increasing in the proficient and advanced ones.

In 2007 the way these scores were documented changed. Instead of being listed as free lunch, reduced lunch or paid lunch, the population of students who receive free or reduced lunch are called “Subsidized Meals” on our school’s state report card. Also, there is no category for paid lunch students. So, students are currently categorized as receiving subsidized meals or not. Therefore, we can not compare PACT Scores like we did in the past. New comparisons will have to be made starting with next year’s scores. Based on 2007 PACT data, the percentage of students receiving subsidized meals and scoring proficient and above on PACT in English Language Arts are 12.7% and in Math are 13.8%.

### *Conclusions*

Various issues were listed by the portfolio committee following the team meetings that were held to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Greer Middle School students. Language arts teachers stressed the need for students to increase writing and research skills. Math teachers identified solving word problems and multi-step problems as areas to improve upon. Science teachers expressed a concern about a lack of process skills and research skills by their students. Social studies teachers discussed the need for improved informational text reading skills for students to be successful. Assessment of student work such as science projects, research papers, open responses and technology products

such as PowerPoint presentations and brochures in classes indicate that students need to develop greater ability in research skills. They also need to improve upon thinking and reasoning skills in all subject areas. Finally, students at Greer Middle School need to have more instruction and assessment on constructed responses based on state standards to be successful on the PACT Test.

Most teachers agreed that our students have an area of strength in technology and computer usage. They felt that the MAP testing program has helped to identify individual student strengths and weaknesses and is a great tool for the teachers to use in assisting students to identify deficiencies and improve learning. This tool allows both the teacher and student to work smarter and it concentrates their efforts in areas that would produce the most beneficial results in student achievement.

