



MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS & PLANNING,  
INC.

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**Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**  
**An Organizational Study of the South Carolina**  
**Department of Education**

Submitted to  
Inez Tenenbaum  
Superintendent of Education  
South Carolina Department of Education

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May 3, 1999

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## INTRODUCTION

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) carries major statutory responsibility for the leadership and oversight of the state's public education system. Many perceive that this system is at a crossroads: South Carolina students have traditionally scored poorly on national standardized tests, yet new accountability legislation requires appropriate grade level performance by each pupil. Individual plans for those below grade level, school and district report cards, and standards-based assessments are mandated. No district, school, teacher, or student is exempt.

Many South Carolinians may well view this opportunity as public education's last chance, perhaps with good reason. Despite a number of initiatives and a focus on low-performing schools, South Carolina student scores on national and state exams are low and have remained stagnant for most of this decade. Consider the following:

On the 1998 reading portion of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) only about 22% of fourth graders scored at or above the proficient level. Fourth grade scores show a slight improvement over the 1994 results but are virtually identical to the results of the test administered in 1992. The most recent eighth grade NAEP reading results also showed that only 22% of South Carolina students were rated at or above proficient.

On the 1992 mathematics portion of the NAEP only 13% of fourth graders and 15% of eighth graders scored at or above the proficient level. In 1996 those percentages dropped to 12 and 14 respectively.

On the MAT/7 exam, the percent of ninth graders above the national average in reading and mathematics has remained relatively constant at approximately 43 in each subject for the last four years.

On the state developed Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP) the percent of eleventh grade students meeting standard over the last four years has dropped in all three areas: reading from 82.8 to 81.5, writing from 85.7 to 83.8, and mathematics from 76.6 to 75.1.

On the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) scores have changed little in the last four years with the verbal (478) and mathematics (473) averages for 1997-98 at exactly the same levels as those for 1994-95.

Clearly, changes in the way all South Carolina students are educated must occur if true progress is to be made. Districts vary widely in their human and fiscal resources, and thus, in their capacity to effect the changes demanded. The success of such a major statewide reform demands strong leadership and support from the Department of Education. Without its resources and

concentrated, sustained effort the prognosis for substantially improving achievement for South Carolina students is bleak.

This challenge comes at a time when the Department is in transition. The newly elected State School Superintendent is off to a strong start. Those interviewed praised her early appointments and actions, particularly her outreach to local educators. All were enthusiastic about the potential of her administration. She succeeds two diverse predecessors, each with strengths and weaknesses, and has the opportunity to create an administration that features the best and avoids the worst of each. The Superintendent needs to carefully review what was effective and build upon it while eliminating that which was ineffective or divisive.

The new administration inherits several positive initiatives including a reduction in SCDE's excessive monitoring and enforcement, a strong advocacy for minority children statewide and staff in the Department, many resources targeted to lowest performing schools, a strong foundation for standards-based accountability, and a streamlined Department of Education. However, it also acquires a traumatized and under-resourced organization at a time when that agency's leadership, support, and expertise are essential for the success of the Education Accountability Act (EAA).

Although the former administration receives high marks for shrinking what was generally perceived as an overstaffed department, resources have been reduced to the point that the agency can no longer fulfill its mission. Department staff were reduced from 1,100 eight years ago to approximately 850 today. Almost half of the current staff work in transportation, leaving only about 400 people to carry out the primary mission of the Department. Staff were reorganized frequently and often placed outside their areas of expertise. Curriculum consultants, whose contribution to the implementation of the new standards, curriculum and assessments is critical to improved student achievement, were particularly affected by these reductions and reassignments.

Communication both internally and externally has been ineffective, except possibly with the media. Staff often felt uninformed and unable to provide timely assistance to local educators and the public. School district personnel perceived the Department as adversarial and generally lost confidence in its ability to carry out its mission of leadership, oversight and service.

The new Superintendent must rebuild Department capacity and restore confidence in its ability to accomplish its mission, a challenge even without the EAA. Increased human and fiscal resources are essential. Internally, the Superintendent must earn the trust and respect of employees and provide them with the resources necessary to do their jobs. She must furnish vision and leadership. Both the quantity and quality of staff must be improved and assignments need to be consistent with employees' skills and preferences. Ongoing professional development of existing staff is essential.

The EAA calls for reinventing the entire state instructional delivery system aimed at achieving higher student performance. Its statutory time lines are

unrealistically short and the mandated reform is enormously complex. Planning for such change is easy compared to making the change happen. Only a comprehensive implementation strategy that offers new options and support to local practitioners can succeed. Such a strategy builds on a clear vision of desired student outcomes and the characteristics of schools and teachers capable of producing them. It demands a careful analysis of the resources required compared to the resources currently available to do the job. Priorities must be established and decisions about what is to be done, when, and by whom must be made.

Improving student performance necessitates improving or changing instruction, which, in turn, implies the need for professional development of current teachers and improved preparation for teacher candidates. Consider a quote from the recent KPMG study of the Department: “Instruction will not change in South Carolina until **each teacher** has received training on the new standards.” There are approximately 45,000 teachers in South Carolina spread across myriad subject areas and grade levels, most of whom are already working as hard as they can to educate the state’s children. To improve student achievement, teachers and schools must begin to work in new ways, ways that must be defined by the performance targets and aligned with the new standards. Educators have not yet been introduced to these new ways or trained in their application.

SCDE is the agency charged with primary responsibility for the success of the EAA. Unless the Department provides leadership in promoting appropriate curricular and instructional innovation and providing adequate funding and infrastructure support, a high percentage of students will continue to fall below the academic standards set by the EAA.

Clearly, the agency currently lacks adequate human and fiscal resources to accomplish the job. Support from the legislature and the public is needed if the Department is to play its role in inventing the new ways of educating South Carolina children necessary to ensure every student’s academic success.

On a much more positive note, MAP found wide spread support for Superintendent Tenenbaum and her administration among local district superintendents and principals. In a survey conducted as a part of this study, “the state superintendent” and “new directions” were by far the most frequent responses to an invitation to name the Department’s greatest strengths. “New employees” and “new directions” were also frequently mentioned. While Superintendent Tenenbaum faces many formidable challenges, she also enjoys a high level of support and enthusiasm from many of those who can materially affect the outcome of her administration.

### **Organization of Report**

This report is comprised of four sections: Methodology and Scope, Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusions. In the first section we describe the purposes of the study and the data sources upon which our findings are based.

In both subsequent sections findings and recommendations are organized under five rubrics: Vision, Governance, Communication, Organization and Personnel, and Delivery Systems. In the second section we present information germane to the purposes of the study. In the third section we make recommendations for specific action we believe necessary for the Department to fulfill its mission. The final section presents concluding remarks. The appendices display interview questions, survey questions and survey responses. Where appropriate, we have referred to survey results in the report narrative.

## METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

On February 7, 1999 the South Carolina Department Education (SCDE) contracted with Management Analysis & Planning Inc. (MAP) to appraise the Department's organizational structure, internal resource deployment patterns, and leadership capacity. Specifically MAP was asked to:

- (1) [Conduct a]n objective appraisal of the organizational and managerial capacity of the SCDE leadership in preparing South Carolina students and schools for the personal and societal challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- (2) Recommend alternative arrangements intended to buttress whatever structural and operational shortcomings are uncovered in the above mentioned appraisal; and,
- (3) Suggest means by which the SCDE can begin implementing whatever needed changes emerge from this study<sup>1</sup>.

Data upon which our findings and recommendations are based were obtained from three sources—documents, interviews, and a survey of local educators. In the course of this study we reviewed dozens of documents, most of which were produced by the Department or State Board of Education. Documents reviewed included, but were not limited to, independent audits, state accountability reports, budgets, EIA reports, various personnel documents, Education Profiles, reports of the Tenenbaum Transition Team and documents volunteered by interviewees. While document review was ongoing throughout the study, early in the process it helped us form working hypotheses and frame interview questions.

During the week of February 14, 1999, MAP staff conducted approximately 60 semi-structured interviews of local district administrators, state policy makers, and Department of Education managers and employees, including Superintendent Tenenbaum. We also conducted two focus groups of approximately 15 Department employees each. Samples of the interview questions for each group are found in Appendix A.

During the months of March and April 1999 the University of South Carolina Department of Journalism and Mass Communication conducted a telephone survey of approximately 300 school and district level administrators. The sample was selected to be representative of the diversity of school districts in South Carolina. A copy of the survey questions is found in Appendix B. A summary of responses to the survey is contained in Appendix C.

The scope of this study is restricted to issues related to organizing SCDE in the near and intermediate future. It does not include detailed analysis of the Credentialing, Transportation or Facilities Offices. Time and budget constraints precluded a detailed analysis of the staffing and other resource levels necessary to implement our recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> Contract

## FINDINGS

This section presents the findings that were derived from our review of documents, interviews with district administrators, Department employees, and policy makers, and from the survey of local district educators. These findings are divided into five categories: Vision, Governance, Communications, Organization and Personnel, and Delivery Systems.

The reader should keep in mind that while we have made every effort to accurately report what we found, we have relied almost exclusively on information provided to us by individuals with knowledge about the Department, but who also have an interest in how it behaves. We have included only findings where the evidence was highly consistent among the various sources; but we acknowledge that it is possible that more research may reveal conflicting evidence.

### I. Vision

#### **1. A coherent vision for improving public education in South Carolina is needed to guide the efforts of Department employees and educators in school districts.**

The size, complexity and inertia of the public education system render it relatively invulnerable to significant change. Without a coherent and consistent vision for guidance, even the most dedicated Department employees and district educators, doing the best they can, will have little measurable impact on improving schooling in South Carolina. Any perceived ambiguity in the Superintendent's goals serves to reinforce the status quo. When in doubt—do not change.

In the beginning, vision tends to be a giant jigsaw puzzle with most of the pieces missing. It becomes defined in the final analysis more by actions (some symbolic, most substantive) than words. Mission statements and other formal pronouncements can help clarify and bound the vision, but ultimately it will be made clearer or more opaque by every decision, every action and every reaction taken by the Superintendent and her administration.

The clearer the vision, the more likely Department staff and local educators are to behave in a consistent and concerted manner. Pieces of the puzzle include structure of the organization of the Department, appointments to important and mundane posts, and hundreds of small decisions about resource allocation, staff assignments, legislative priorities, comments to the media, dispute resolution, etc. The more consistent these actions, the clearer the vision will become to those expected to implement it.

## **2. SCDE staff expressed an eagerness to see and hear more from Superintendent Tenenbaum.**

Department employees are not clear how the Superintendent's public pronouncements and campaign promises will play out in the Department. Among SCDE employees we encountered almost universal optimism and support for the new administration; however most still expressed some uncertainty about how their professional lives may be changed. For example, among Department employees and local educators it is well established that early childhood is one of Superintendent Tenenbaum's high priorities, but the nature and extent of her vision for this program is not generally understood. How will it be implemented? How does it relate to other priorities? Where does it fit in an overall strategy for improving student achievement? What does it mean for the Department? At some level, every employee wants to know: "How will the new Superintendent change my life?"

Meeting with employees is more than "showing the flag." SCDE employees are among the most important constituents of the Superintendent. As with any constituency, she must attend to them or risk losing their support. In this case support goes far beyond receiving their votes. Departmental employees are the primary instrument by which the Superintendent's vision will be translated into reality. Not until they understand that vision and embrace it will they effectively implement it. Employees who are clear about the vision are better positioned to independently make good decisions that are consistent with the vision. Meeting with the Superintendent in formal and informal settings can be a potent form of professional development for employees. Each interaction can be an opportunity to teach and to persuade employees what the Superintendent wants to happen and how they fit into that vision.

## **3. The State has adopted many, sometimes conflicting and unclear, initiatives; often providing insufficient time or resources for implementation.**

Based on our conversations with dozens of South Carolina educators and policy makers, we concluded that the Department has not been able to articulate a clear and compelling vision for improving schools. The prior administration initiated several important and valuable interventions, including standards, assessment, and frameworks, but we were unable to glean a coherent strategy from our interviews. Respondents were able to describe the various initiatives, but not how they were related or how they were ultimately to change student performance.

Many of those interviewed referred to the frequency and lack of follow-through of Department initiatives, including one reference to "initiatives du jour." Early in the Nielsen administration "pull-out" gifted education was abolished in favor of mainstreaming; however, the Department soon reversed course and returned to the prior model. The 12 schools project initiated to develop and pilot authentic assessments while exempting the schools from statewide testing was also abandoned before completion. Data collection was drastically reduced, only to be partially reinstated when needed information was not available. The

identification of the “200” lowest performing schools was to be an annual or biannual event; however, after the first list, no other group was identified and resources continued to flow only to the original recipients. Act 135 mandated developmentally appropriate curriculum and instruction and Department staff provided resources and training for that approach. However, the recent grade-by-grade standards and assessments replace this prior focus. Finally, at least two initiatives within the Department were also stopped before completion: the Demming total quality management approach and staff teaming within the Department and across other agencies.

Rather than ready, aim, fire, or even ready, fire, aim, the mode seemed to have been fire, fire, fire, reload, fire, fire, fire. A more disciplined, thoughtful strategy would have led to a more effective deployment of scarce resources.

## II. Governance

**1. The statutorily established roles and relationships of the State Superintendent, State Board of Education, State Department of Education, Education Oversight Committee and the Division of Accountability seem to encourage conflict, redundancy and confusion.**

District administrators and Department of Education officials and others we interviewed consistently expressed concern about the confusion and potential conflict of roles and responsibilities of the various entities responsible for implementation of the provisions of the Education Accountability Act. Their concerns focus on the potential for school districts to receive redundant and conflicting messages and requirements<sup>2</sup>, confusion as to which master is to be served, and the potential for scarce state level resources that should be aimed at local support being wasted on disputes over turf. The role and duties of the State Superintendent of Education are broadly specified by the state constitution and laws passed by the General Assembly. The policy-making function of the State Board of Education is specified by law. These roles would seem to be attenuated by and in conflict with those of the Education Oversight Committee. The following summary of the roles of the Superintendent, State Board and Accountability Division of the Education Oversight Committee as established in constitution and statutes highlight a potential for conflict.

### Superintendent

The South Carolina constitution of 1895 states that, The supervision of public instruction shall be vested in a State Superintendent of Education who shall be elected...by qualified electors of the State,.....his duties and compensation shall be defined by the General Assembly.”

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the Accountability Committee of the South Carolina Association of School Administrators in their March,1999 report “Education Accountability Act Framework for Effectiveness,” identified “Review and refine...roles and relationships among the Education Oversight Committee, the State Board of Education, and ...Department of Education...” as an area the Legislature should address.

The General Assembly of South Carolina established a State Board of Education and specified the duties of the State Superintendent as follows:

1. Serve as secretary and administrative officer of the State Board of Education.
2. Have general supervision over and management of all public school funds provided by the State and Federal Government.
3. Organize, staff and administer a State Department of Education which shall include such divisions and departments as are necessary to render the maximum service to public education in the State.
4. Keep the public informed as to the problems and needs of the public schools by constant contact with all school administrators and teachers, by his personal appearances at public gatherings and by information furnished to the various news media in the State.
5. Have printed and distributed such bulletins, manuals and circulars as he may deem necessary for the professional improvement of teachers and for cultivation of public sentiment for public education, and have printed all forms necessary and proper for the administration of the State Department of Education.
6. Administer, through the State Department of Education, all policies and procedures adopted by the State Board of Education.
7. Assume such other responsibilities and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by law or may be assigned by the State Board of Education.<sup>3</sup>

#### State Board of Education

The State Board of Education is the policy-making body for public elementary and secondary education in South Carolina. The board has the power to:

- Adopt policies, rules and regulations for the governance to the state's public elementary and secondary schools.
- Adopt standards for any phase of education considered necessary to aid in providing adequate educational opportunities and facilities.
- Prescribe and enforce rules for the examination and certification of teachers.
- Grant state teachers' certificates and revoke them .....
- Approve textbooks and other instructional materials.
- Appoint committees as needed to carry out the orderly function of the board.
- Cooperate with the State Superintendent at all times in efforts to constantly improve the state's public education system.
- Assume other responsibilities, exercise other powers and perform other duties as assigned by law or as the board may find necessary to aid in the carrying out the purpose and objectives of the constitution of the state<sup>4</sup>.

#### Education Oversight Committee Accountability Division

The division is to conduct in-depth studies on implementation, efficiency, and the effectiveness of academic improvement efforts and:

- (1) monitor and evaluate the implementation of the state standards and assessment;
- (2) oversee the development, establishment, implementation, and maintenance of the accountability system;
- (3) monitor and evaluate the functioning of the public education system and its components, programs, policies, and practices and report annually its findings

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<sup>3</sup> SCDE webpage, <http://www.state.us/sde/statedep/duties>

<sup>4</sup> State Board's webpage, <http://www.state.us/sde/statebrd>

and recommendations in a report to the commission no later than February first of each year;....<sup>5</sup>

The EAA establishes the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) with powers to review and monitor the implementation and evaluation of the Education Accountability Act and Education Improvement Act programs and funding, recommend changes to various programs operated by state agencies and others, and to review expenditure reports and budget requests of state agencies and other entities. (Section 59-6-100) It further establishes within the EOC the Division of Accountability to serve as staff to the Committee (59-6-110). How the EOC and Division of Accountability are to actually function is not entirely clear from the law. The law is replete with requirements for the parties to work with, advise, or recommend without defining the meaning of these terms or the consequences for either party failing to comply. Moreover, many of the functions assigned to the EOC are those formerly and traditionally the purview of a State Board of Education or State Superintendent. A recent EOC publication stated that the Committee has been “appointed by the legislature to enact the South Carolina Education Accountability Act” ...that the “EOC will enforce clear, measurable and challenging standards...that the “EOC will oversee the implementation of ...remedies.”<sup>6</sup> There was no mention in this particular publication of what role the Department of Education or the State Board of Education might play. While it is possible that these relationships will be worked out over time, in the short run unnecessary and counter productive conflict seems likely. The following excerpts from the EAA are several examples of ambiguity that can provide ample opportunities for disputes and conflict.<sup>7</sup>

“The State Board of Education is directed to adopt grade specific performance-oriented standards...(Section 59-18-300)....the State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, is required to develop or adopt a statewide assessment program to measure student performance on state standards....(59-18-310)....After the first statewide field test of the assessment program...the Education Oversight Committee...will review...and make recommendations for needed changes, if any....The Department of Education will then report to the Education Oversight Committee...on the changes made to the assessments to comply with the recommendations....After review and approval by the Education Oversight Committee, the...assessments...will be administered to all public school students...Any new standards and assessments...developed and adopted by the State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, must be developed and adopted with the advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee. (59-18-320)

The State Board of Education, following the recommendations of the Accountability Division of the Education Oversight Committee, is directed to select norm referenced test...(59-18-340)

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<sup>5</sup> South Carolina Education Accountability Act of 1998, section 59-6-110

<sup>6</sup> South Carolina Education Oversight Committee, “South Carolina A.P.P.L.E.” January 1999. Emphasis added.

<sup>7</sup> The following excerpts are illustrative, but not exhaustive. There are many other instances of ambiguous and potentially conflict inducing provisions.

The State Board of Education, in consultation with the Education Oversight Committee, shall provide for a cyclical review...of state standards and assessments....After approval by the Education Oversight Committee, the recommendations may be implemented. (59-18-360)

The Department must work with the Division of Accountability in developing formats of the assessment results. (59-18-370)

The state Board of Education, working with the Oversight Committee, will establish guidelines....The State Board of Education, working with the Accountability Division, will promulgate regulations. (59-18-500)

The Education Oversight Committee, working with the State Board of Education, is directed to establish an annual report card...The Oversight Committee shall determine the criteria for and establish...performance ratings...The Oversight Committee shall establish student performance indicators...(59-18-900)

The State Board of Education, working with the division [of Accountability] and the Department of Education, must establish the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program...The State Board of Education shall promulgate regulations to ensure districts of the State utilize these funds to improve or maintain exceptional performance...(59-18-1100)

The State Board of Education in consultation with the Education Oversight Committee must promulgate regulations and develop guidelines..[for providing flexibility to award recipients]. (59-18-1110)

The State Board of Education, based on recommendations of the division, must develop regulations requiring that...each district board of trustees must establish...a performance based accountability system..The Department of Education shall offer technical to any district requiring assistance in the development of an accountability plan. (59-18-1300)

When a school receives a rating of unsatisfactory ....., an external review team must be assigned by the Department of Education...The Education Oversight Committee, in consultation with the Department of Education shall develop criteria for the identification of persons to serve as members...[the review teams]. (59-18-1510)<sup>8</sup>

While the State has a strong and appropriate interest in holding the Department and local districts accountable for the performance of its schools, the provisions of the EAA could have the opposite effect. At the very best it is likely to divert energy from the very real task of improving student performance.

## **2. Certain practices of the prior administration ignored the governance structures of local school districts.**

The prior administration apparently adopted a policy of communicating around local governing boards and superintendents. Several cases where district

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<sup>8</sup> Emphasis added.

teachers received information in advance or different from district superintendents or school boards were reported. Slavish reliance on the formal “chain of command” may not always be expeditious, but it is not possible to hold districts accountable if their leaders’ authority is deliberately or inadvertently undermined. While this is clearly a communication problem, it also is an example of the state interfering with the governance of local districts.

### III. Communications

#### **1. Current systems for communication are not effective and potential avenues of communication are underutilized. Both internal and external relations have suffered.**

District personnel describe communications with the Department as ineffective. Apparently all written communications with school districts have required prior approval by the Superintendent’s office, and the majority were sent to districts on Fridays as “batch mail” for the district superintendent to distribute among appropriate employees. District personnel report that the batch mail approach is ineffective; that many individuals never get necessary information; that the information is often incomplete or dated, and that all other forms of communication such as personal calls have flowed only one way--from district to Department. Also, each Departmental unit develops and publishes its own documents and no centralized publications list or requisition office exists, reducing district educators’ knowledge about and acquisition of such material.

Information from the public relations office of the Department indicates that numerous communication approaches have been tried over the past several years; however, none of which appear to have been effective.

Districts have been unsure whom to call for assistance, and have often perceived that those they reach lack the expertise to provide relevant, correct answers or that the answers and interpretations often varied depending on the respondent.

Many school district officials indicated that they simply called “people they still knew” for information. Frequent reorganization and staff turnover left everyone unsure about staff assignments. Often staff were moved out of their areas of expertise and were then unable or unwilling to provide information.

One apparent result of the lack of effective communication is widespread confusion in the field regarding a number of significant issues. These include the respective roles of the Department, State Board, and Oversight Committee; the actual requirements and time line in the new EAA; the availability of materials and assistance for curriculum alignment with the new standards and assessments; and the new superintendent’s vision, priorities, and plans. The high stakes nature of the recent accountability legislation has only heightened the need for clear, effective communication. The business community is heavily involved and invested in the accountability oversight committee and apparently state newspapers have described the effort as the “last chance for public

education.” District personnel describe the challenge of meeting the requirements as the one of the biggest they will face in the next few years, particularly the “report card.” Obviously, communication is absolutely critical in the next few months and the Department quickly needs to clarify its positions, directions, and plans for implementation.

Internal as well as external communication has been problematic. Staff often learned about Department actions only after district personnel and the public. Also, interoffice collaboration and communication have been minimal. Staff cited occasions when actions were taken by one office that had significant implications for other areas without prior discussion or even notification.

**2. SCDE under-utilizes technology to communicate with school districts and technology employed may not be sufficiently user friendly.**

Web pages and email are two cost-effective ways to communicate with large audiences; however, the Department’s webpage is understaffed, underutilized and not particularly user-friendly. Most people interviewed did not refer to the Webpage at all or said that they used it infrequently. Email is not used in any systematic way to communicate with local districts and the public.

**3. The Department currently has no centralized publications function.**

Each office creates and publishes its own publications. There is no common policy on format, style or pricing. Requests for publications or price inquiries frequently are shuffled from office to office. Most departments of education, indeed most state agencies, maintain a publications office which ensures quality standards, establishes prices, handle publication sales, manages inventory, etc.

#### **IV. Organization and Personnel**

**1. The Department is generally understaffed and significantly understaffed in certain important functions.**

The Department has approximately 250 fewer employees than it did in 1991. The professional educator staff below the level of director was cut almost 23 percent from 204 to 158 in spite of substantially increased expectations associated with the implementation of the Education Accountability Act. School district administrators and Department staff concede that the Department may have been overstaffed in 1991; but our interviews revealed almost universal agreement that staff reductions over the past eight years have been excessive. Personnel shortages was second most frequently volunteered as the Department’s greatest weakness by district superintendents recently surveyed.

Virtually all respondents observed that the Department’s effectiveness had been reduced to a point that in some areas requiring state leadership it is was no

**Table 1: Salary Schedules for South Carolina Department of Education**

|                               | Band | Min      | Max       | Average  |
|-------------------------------|------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Education Associate           | 7    | \$36,447 | \$67,429  | \$50,910 |
| EA II (internal level)        | 7    | \$36,447 | \$67,429  | \$48,567 |
| EA III (internal level)       | 7    | \$36,447 | \$67,429  | \$58,206 |
| Program Manager II            | 8    | \$44,346 | \$82,043  | \$68,088 |
| Deputy Constitutional Officer | 10   | \$65,650 | \$121,456 | \$90,578 |

**Table 2: Average Salaries in South Carolina School Districts**

|                       | Superintendents | Assistant Superintendents | Directors of Instruction | Secondary Principals | Elementary Principals |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Districts under 2,500 | \$74,836        | \$62,903                  | \$63,291                 |                      |                       |
| Districts over 10,000 | \$101,912       | \$76,860                  | \$66,625                 |                      |                       |
| Districts over 30,000 | \$111,375       | \$76,395                  | \$50,900                 | **\$68,341           | *\$61,195             |
| Average               | \$85,924        | \$71,827                  | \$63,097                 | \$65,198             | \$58,880              |

\*ADM over 700

\*\*ADM over 1,000

**Table 3: SCDE Salaries Compared to District Salaries**

|                           | Average Salary | Average Large School/District Salary | % of EA's at/above average salary | Number (out of 143) | % of EA's at/above average large district salary | Number (out of 143) | % of PM's at/above average large district salary | Number (out of 18) |
|---------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|--|---------------------|--|--------------------|
| Elementary Principals     | \$58,880       | \$61,195                             | 13.3%                             | 19                  | 5%   | 7                   | 100%   | 18                 |
| Directors of Instruction  | \$63,097       | \$66,625                             | 1.4%                              | 2                   | 0%   | 0                   | 61%  | 11                 |
| Secondary Principals      | \$65,198       | \$68,341                             | 0.7%                              | 1                   | 0%   | 0                   | 56%  | 10                 |
| Assistant Superintendents | \$71,827       | \$76,860                             | 0.0%                              | 0                   | 0%   | 0                   | 0%   | 0                  |

EA = Education Associate

PM = Program Manager

**3. MAP was informed of several instances over the past eight years where employees were seemingly arbitrarily reassigned to jobs for which they had little training, experience, or interest.**

This practice would seem to have little positive purpose, and its effect was apparently to reduce organizational effectiveness and lower employee morale.

**4. Grouping of functions in the organization do not seem to be the result of any rational pattern.**

The organizational locations of various functions were shifted frequently over the past eight years<sup>9</sup>, and over time some of the resultant grouping of functions did not appear to be optimal. For example, the Collaboration Division contained community education, occupation education and the audio visual library. The Development Division contained staff development and research, and performed functions as diverse as monitoring school districts for compliance with state and federal laws and training SCDE personnel. Staff development, technical assistance and monitoring functions were shared by several divisions. Several of the more anomalous arrangements have been addressed in the past three months.

**5. Names of organizational units and titles of employees do not carry any meaning among local educators or the general public.**

Among the most frequent complaints we heard from Department staff and others was that the names of organizational units and titles of individuals were confusing and carried no real world meaning. Office names such as Collaboration, Education Initiatives, and Development tend to be ambiguous and lack analogs in school districts. As a consequence, many constituents seeking information were baffled as to where to access the Department. Even school district employees were confused by the organization. School district administrators informed us that when they were unable to obtain information from Department employees they knew, they would just give up rather than spend time being transferred from office to office.

Titles assigned to employees are similarly confusing. What functions would one divine from Education Associate II and III, or Executive Assistant III? Rank and function are more easily determined by titles such as Mathematics Consultant or Specialist, Assistant Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent.

**6. Supervisory spans of control are uneven throughout the organization and often unmanageable.**

In its apparent zeal to flatten the organization, the prior administration reduced the number of managers to the extent that those remaining were responsible for supervision of scores of professional and clerical employees. KMPG reported in

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<sup>9</sup> Described by one SCDE employee as "drive-by reorganizations."

1998 that one director had as many as 43 directly reporting subordinates.<sup>10</sup> This resulted in reported instances where clerical employees refused to take direction from non-managerial professionals, citing the fact that the professional did not evaluate the clerical employee. It also resulted in the practice of “self evaluation” described later in this report.

**7. Several SCDE employees reported that for the past several years they rarely have been clear about what was expected of them or for what they were accountable.**

Interviews with SCDE employees and managers revealed a high degree of uncertainty as to what they were expected to accomplish. Frequent reorganizations and reassignments served to exacerbate the confusion. Employees function best when management makes explicit its expectations for what and how employees will be accountable. All the rules of the game should be clear. What position do I play, what can I expect from my teammates, and how is score kept? Vague expectations lead inevitably to random behavior and timidity. Why should an employee hazard an opinion or take a risk if he or she is unclear about responsibility or consequences. Doing as little as possible would seem to be the rational response in the face of such uncertainty.

**8. Employees with similar classifications and duties receive significantly different salaries.**

The salary for Education Associates is established in pay band 07, a range of \$36,447 to \$67,429 with a midpoint of \$51,938. The Department has bifurcated the Education Associate Class into Education Associates II and Education Associates III. The former are assigned primarily “development” tasks and the latter “coordinate projects.” Even within these classes there appear to be salary discrepancies that can not easily be explained by differences in performance, work assignments, training or seniority. MAP was informed of cases where recent hires with responsibilities nearly identical to the responsibilities of incumbents with several years tenure in the Department were paid more than the incumbents. In some cases the new hires possessed less experience and training than incumbents, but still received a higher salary. These salary differentials are potent sources of low morale and discontent among those adversely affected.

**9. Secretarial and clerical support is unevenly distributed throughout the agency.**

Several SCDE employees reported in interviews that it was the practice of the prior administration to freeze, transfer or eliminate positions when vacancies occurred. As a result, clerical support appears to be more or less randomly assigned throughout the organization. Several support staff positions are filled with temporary employees who rarely stay long enough to be adequately

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<sup>10</sup> KMPG Peat Marwick LLP “Comprehensive of State Education Agencies”, January 27, 1998

trained. Moreover, some managers may have tolerated unsatisfactory employee performance merely to avoid risking loss of a position.

**10. The personnel evaluation system tends to be seen by SCDE employees as having little value. It carries no consequences and tends to be treated as a bureaucratic exercise.**

Employee Performance Management System (EPMS), the state mandated employee appraisal procedure, is applied unevenly throughout the organization. The prior administration required that only directors and above could evaluate employees. MAP was informed that it was fairly wide spread practice for an employee to complete his or her own appraisal and submit it for signature to a director who was unfamiliar with the employee's work. Most saw little value in the exercise since they received little if any feedback and there were no consequences associated with a positive or negative evaluation. One employee quipped that "at least it is one time a year that I have a face to face conversation with my supervisor."

**11. The prior administration tended to micromanage even the most mundane Departmental functions.**

Because of the prior administration's penchant for centralizing decision making into the Superintendent's office, extensive delays in communications with local districts were common place. For example, we were informed that it was required that all correspondence with local school districts be approved in the Superintendent's office. Even the smallest contract with a hotel or meeting facility required approval by the general counsel. Also, what appears to have been a disproportionate share of scarce resources were allocated to internal auditing. Since Department employees are unclear about the scope of their decision-making authority and anticipated being second guessed, they were discouraged from taking initiative for solving problems, further frustrating district administrators seeking clarification of various communications and directives from the Department.

## V. Delivery Systems

**1. The Department of Education does not have sufficient resources to provide all the assistance that local districts need or desire.**

Extensive reductions of staffing and other resources have severely attenuated SCDE's ability to provide leadership or statewide assistance in many critical areas. Leadership and assistance in the essential functions of curriculum, instruction and professional development are critically needed. School district administrators and policy makers with whom we spoke were nearly unanimous in their recommendation that SCDE should play a leadership and supportive role in improving South Carolina schools; but they reported that the Department's

presence in most South Carolina school districts had eroded almost to insignificance. From their perspective the quantity and quality of Departmental resources and assistance had been so reduced that the Department was no longer seen as a factor in improving educational programs in most school districts. Forty-two percent of the district superintendents surveyed thought that, "Marginal, has little impact on quality education," described the Department well or very well.

When we asked superintendents whether the Department behaved more as a coach, helping districts provide quality education, a referee, enforcing rules and regulations, or a spectator who is not an active participant in the educational process, 43.5 percent chose spectator, 38.7 percent chose referee. These responses stand in stark contrast to the role that superintendents would like the department to play. Asked which was the role the Department should perform, 72.6 percent chose coach. Interviews with district administrators and SCDE employees revealed nearly identical results.

On average, school administrators we interviewed gave the Department's overall performance for the past four to five years a grade of D. Most were quick to observe that they believed that SCDE employees had done the best they could under the circumstances. Only 16 percent of the district superintendents responding to the telephone survey reported that the Department had done a good or very good job during that period. Approximately 47 percent rated its performance as poor or very poor. Principals hold a somewhat higher opinion of the Department's performance, with nearly 33 percent giving its performance a good or very good rating. Over 40 percent of superintendents reported that the Department had done a poor or very poor job helping them provide quality education to their students, while just over 19 percent thought that it had done a good or very good job. Only just fewer than one third of the principals reported that the Department had done a good or very good job helping them provide a quality education to their students.

It usually is more cost effective for the state to develop curriculum, training programs, and assessments than it is for each district to go it alone. For this reason, development, research and initiation rather than retail delivery (i.e. services provided directly to schools by district employees) are where the state normally can make the greatest contribution. These activities require that the Department employ individuals with knowledge of research, best practices, and current trends in professional development, assessment and each curriculum area. Also, the advantages accruing to the imprimatur of the state are multiplied many fold when its employees are viewed as professionals with high levels of expertise.

**2. Department employees and district administrators described implementation of EAA as one of the biggest challenges schools face over the next several years, and were dubious that SCDE as currently staffed and organized would be adequate to meet that challenge.**

Districts need assistance aligning assessment, curriculum and instruction with standards; training teachers to teach to the standards; and using data from assessment to shape instruction. They need help recruiting and retaining qualified teachers. Small, rural and poor districts tend to evidence the greatest need.

**3. The Department and districts face major challenges in improving student achievement and in implementing the assessment requirements of the Education Accountability Act within the time lines specified and few, if any, systematic, sustained efforts to assist districts, schools, and teachers have been made.**

Grade level assessments based on the new integrated standards play a major role in South Carolina's accountability law. New assessments for grades 3 through 8 in mathematics and language arts will be used for the first time this spring to gather baseline data for accountability purposes and thereafter as the major criterion in promotion and retention decisions. They also eventually (2002) will form the basis for school and district report cards.

The KPMG<sup>11</sup> study conducted for the Department in 1997 concluded that although the state had a well designed assessment process, there was no evidence that this process had been implemented at the district level and advised the Department to spearhead efforts to implement curriculum standards to ensure consistent instruction statewide. Since that report, the Department's standards-based accountability system was redirected by the Performance and Accountability Standards for Schools Commission (PASS) and the Education Accountability Act (EAA). The Department has successfully integrated diverse standards and aligned them with new statewide assessments; however, standards for all areas are not yet finalized, performance targets have not been set, and little progress has been made in the alignment of standards, assessments, curriculum, and instruction at the district level.

The KPMG report states, "Instruction will not change in South Carolina until each teacher has received training on the new standards." Yet, Department efforts to help with this very alignment of standards, curriculum, and instruction as well as teacher training on the new system are perceived as "hit or miss" and largely ineffective.

Although a best practice document has been developed showing how to teach the standards, and seven workshops were conducted around the state, no one interviewed from districts knew of these attempts. All felt that systematic, sustained development and preparation were needed. Several mentioned the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

need for more attention to curriculum/standards alignment even in resource rich districts, and some even suggested a state curriculum.

The Department has made efforts to improve student achievement across the state by focusing on “impaired” districts. Those efforts were summarized by some district administrators as “initiatives du jour” with piece-meal implementation and little or no follow-up. Districts and schools not included in the “200” list have largely been on their own. In preparation for implementation of the new accountability system, some of them have developed and aligned curriculum and standards, developed sample items, etc. However, such efforts are not well documented and do not appear to be wide spread.

Finally, several grant programs to pilot types of assistance for low achieving students were launched for the 1998-99 school year: homework tutoring centers, alternative schools, and modified school year. Data are to be collected on each model. Even if these efforts prove to be very successful, they are too narrow in scope and incidence to make much difference. Only focused, systematic assistance from the state, begun immediately, offers any real promise of successful implementation of the EAA.

#### **4. Rural, low wealth, heavily-minority school districts appear to fare poorly on a number of dimensions but particularly facilities and quality staff.**

Based on limited information available within the constraints of this study, it appears as if there are serious discrepancies in the level of resources available among school districts. While educators from some districts expressed little concern for the absence of SCDE assistance in their districts almost all felt that small, rural and poor districts were unlikely to make much needed changes without substantial additional support from the state.

#### **5. Among the policies of the Nielsen administration that found favor with school district administrators was the significant reduction of bureaucratic monitoring and regulation enforcement.**

Prior to 1993 Department staff conducted unannounced, on-site reviews of one third of the school districts throughout the state annually to assess compliance with all standards. However, in 1993 funding for these visits was removed, staff in the accreditation area was reduced by at least 50 percent, and compliance was monitored only through district submitted reports. Site visits were conducted only if requested by a school district.

For many years, the standards, rules and procedures used and monitored by the Department were found, for many years, in state statutes, state regulations and the Department’s Defined Minimum Program (DMP). However, in 1997, in an effort to unify and streamline processes and regulations, the Department initiated a “regulation rollback.” Of 192 existing regulations, 88 were repealed, 15 were amended, and 83 were maintained. Action on the remaining six regulations is still pending and one new regulation was added.

Even in light of this significant reduction in enforcement, local educators still tend to view the Department as bureaucratic and rule bound. Two thirds of the district superintendents and 72 percent of the principals surveyed reported that the term “bureaucratic” described the Department well or very well, and approximately 40 percent of both groups thought it behaved like a rule enforcing referee.

While there is a case to be made for the state ensuring against theft and gross mismanagement of public funds, mandating and monitoring processes and inputs have rarely proven cost effective. Whenever a state mandates how resources will be allocated, it forfeits any real power to hold districts accountable for outcomes. Districts legitimately can justify unsatisfactory outcomes by claiming that they followed the rules. A basic tenant of the standards based accountability system described in EAA is that districts will be held accountable for results, not processes or inputs.

#### **6. Higher education officials expressed the opinion that South Carolina higher education institutions are insufficiently linked to elementary and secondary schools.**

Ultimately the quality of higher education in South Carolina is largely dependent on the quality of students who enter from high schools within the state. The Joint Legislative Committee to Study the Governance and Operation of Higher Education in South Carolina in its 1996 report identified the “Inadequate relationship with public education (K-12)” as an issue which needed to be addressed. Higher education officials with whom we talked also spoke of the necessity for building stronger linkages between higher education institutions and the schools from which the bulk of their students come.

Two particular areas of concern emerged: (1) The need to increase higher education opportunities for minority and low-income students in South Carolina; and (2) the requirement to increase the level of high school preparation in order better to prepare South Carolina students to perform successfully upon admission to higher education institutions. South Carolina’s SAT scores in 1997 were the lowest among the SREB states and are even more disappointing when compared to the national average. While there are some efforts to connect high schools and colleges, (e.g. tech-prep programs which directly link high schools to technical colleges<sup>12</sup>) much stronger links need to be made between other colleges and universities and their feeder schools.

Just as higher education is largely dependent on the quality of the products of public education in South Carolina, so too do the public schools depend on the quality of the South Carolina higher education system, which produces the vast majority of teachers for the public schools. South Carolina teacher training

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<sup>12</sup> Even within these programs the quality of the high school—Technical College connection is uneven.

institutions must better build into the teacher preparation curriculum instruction in aligning standards, curriculum frameworks, and assessment.

Part of the difficulty in connecting elementary and high schools with postsecondary institutions has been created by the complicated governance arrangements in higher education. The State of South Carolina has a Commission on Higher Education, a State Board of Technical and Comprehensive Education, 16 Local Area Commissions, one for each of the Technical Colleges and 10 Boards of Trustees for the Colleges and Universities. The University of South Carolina's Board of Trustees has under its purview nine institutions: the research University in Columbia, five two-year branches, two four year branches and the University Medical School. Apparently higher education does not send clear signals to high schools about expectations for college students and feedback on the performance of high school graduates upon attendance in higher education institutions. Pulling all these diverse parties together in order to focus on the K-12—higher education connection could be an important early initiative by the Superintendent.

### **7. Existing regional delivery systems tend to overlap and conflict.**

Currently at least three regional delivery systems exist. These appear to be independent and overlapping in jurisdiction. They include 13 math/science Hubs comprising the South Carolina Statewide Systemic Initiative, 16 Tech Prep Consortia of the South Carolina Preparation for the Technologies and Regional Technology Centers. The first two delivery systems are heavily dependent upon federal funding. Several districts also belong to less formal consortia formed to pool program improvement resources. Among the local district educators with whom we spoke, the regional programs received mixed reviews. Superintendents and principals responding to the telephone survey tended to view them more positively. About half the superintendents and three quarters of the principals gave the hubs and consortia an A or B on usefulness. Fewer than one third of the superintendents rated the tech centers as an A or B on usefulness and two thirds reported overlapping service areas and just over 30 percent identified overlapping functions. Principals tended to not see the overlap as a problem.

Decentralized delivery systems tend to be more costly than centralized systems and are indicated only when the costs associated with unique geographic or demographic factors outweigh the costs of redundant governance and the difficulty of managing employees and programs long distance. The physical size and number of school districts in South Carolina do not seem to warrant decentralized regional delivery systems. Virtually every district is only a few hours by automobile from Columbia.

### **8. Various data systems are antiquated, inadequate and not integrated.**

As South Carolina continues to move to a standards-based accountability system, the role of systematic data collection becomes increasingly important. Interviewees from school districts and the Department frequently complained

about the inadequacy of the Department's management information system. Data collection in the Department needs to be integrated so that data files relating to student information, finance and budget information, teacher and administrator information can be combined and easily accessed by state and local officials. Absent such an integrated system, the Department will be unable effectively to carry out its accountability and reporting responsibilities.

**9. The Department's school district auditing capacity has been reduced to a point where its effectiveness has declined dramatically.**

Under the prior administration, the Department of Education significantly reduced the size of its school district auditing function. This reduction was seen as part of an overall strategy to decrease what was perceived as an over reliance on the monitoring function and was designed to reduce state intrusions in local district matters. We generally applaud past attempts to reduce the state's reliance on monitoring, but suggest that in the area of school district audits the policy may have progressed too far. The state does have an important fiduciary role to ensure that district expenditures comply with complex and often changing state and federal laws and regulations. This is a particularly acute problem for small, rural districts which may not have sufficient staff and expertise to deal with the complex spending restrictions associated with diverse funding sources. In many cases, the stakes are very high—a single audit exception could have devastating impact on a small district's budget. District business officials we interviewed generally rated the state's audit staff as helpful and knowledgeable.

**10. The state operated school transportation system appears to be significantly under-funded.**

A study of the transportation system is beyond the scope of this study, but transportation was mentioned frequently as a problem area. Most of the bus fleet is nearing the end of its useful life. Approximately two thirds of the busses are older than 13 years or have traveled more than 150,000 miles. Service vehicles are in even worse shape, with many vehicles over 250,000 miles. The level of staffing is approximately 25 percent below the 1991 level. There is high turnover among mechanics, reportedly because salary levels are lower than those paid in the private sector and by other state agencies. The vacancy rate for bus drivers is approximately 10 percent, frequently making it necessary to pick up students earlier and return them home later. Frequent turnover of drivers and mechanics increases training needs and suggests potential safety concerns.

**11. District personnel report that the Teacher Certification Office is unable to process applications for certification and fulfill other requests in a timely manner.**

A study of this function is beyond the scope of this study, but virtually every school district administrator with whom we spoke complained about the inability of this office to provide timely assistance. The consensus of all respondents was that the fundamental problem was inadequate staffing and

insufficient use of technology. KMPG (1998)<sup>13</sup> cited a similar concern, but attributed the problem to low productivity. Further study is required to determine which perception is more accurate.

**12. District personnel reported excessive delays of the review and approval of building plans.**

A study of this function also is beyond the scope to this study, however the facilities management function frequently was cited as a bottleneck. SCDE is required to review and approve all plans for school buildings. The Department is also responsible for inspecting school district buildings. Counties lack the jurisdiction and expertise to enforce building codes pertaining to schools. The two architects employed by the Department are unable to meet the needs of school districts in a timely manner. Significant backlogs were reported. We were informed that these delays have resulted in increased interest costs for some school districts.

We were informed also that the facilities inventory maintained by SCDE is based on unvalidated district reporting. As a consequence the state does not have reliable data upon which to project school district facility needs.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides recommendations regarding ways in which the South Carolina Department of Education can address the various findings presented above. Most of our recommendations can be implemented in the short term, using existing resources. Some require law changes and additional resources. MAP makes these latter recommendations with the full recognition that real and serious constraints may preclude short term implementation. The Superintendent has to play the hand she was dealt. She must administer the laws presently on the books, she must live within the budget she inherited, and in the near term adequate expansion of staffing may not be feasible.<sup>14</sup> It is our hope that all of our recommendations will provide not only sound guidance, but also objective evidence of real needs that must be met if the state is to play a meaningful role in improving educational outcomes in South Carolina.

### General Recommendations

Michael Fullan<sup>15</sup> has extensively researched effective educational organizations and we offer here a summary of his conclusions as a form of general guidance. Fullan's research suggests six guidelines for state departments of education charged with responsibility for implementing complex educational reform. MAP offers them here as general advice. In our experience this is advice well worth heeding.

- 1. Concentrate on increasing the capacity of other agencies and organizations to implement changes. No state education agency should take it solely upon itself to make change happen.**
- 2. Be clear about what is being implemented, and devote time to ensuring that cooperating organizations understand what is meant by the change and what is expected in terms of results.**
- 3. Have a comprehensive, but flexible plan to guide the change process.**
- 4. Make sure that staff in the department responsible for guiding the change process develop knowledge and competence in both the process and the substance of the changes to be implemented.**
- 5. Focus attention on improving teaching and learning. Do not be distracted by other non-essential activities.**

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<sup>14</sup> It is possible, however, that available federal funds could be applied to support additional staff if positions were allocated. We recommend that SCDE exploit the maximum flexibility allowable under the law (which in many cases is considerable) to allocate these funds in support of the Superintendent's priorities.

<sup>15</sup> Fullan, Michael G. and Suzanne Stiegelbauer, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 1991, Teachers College Press, Columbia University, NY. Even though this research was first reported in 1991, its conclusions are still relevant.

**6. Understand that complexity and persistence go hand-in-hand. Large-scale change is never achieved quickly or easily.**

**I. Vision**

**1. Superintendent Tenenbaum should begin immediately the process of translating into operation her of vision for public schools in South Carolina.**

Superintendent Tenenbaum's success ultimately will be measured by improvements of student achievement, but she is in many ways far removed from schools. She must therefore motivate others to make the changes necessary to improve teaching and learning. But before that can happen those others must be clear about what they are expected to do. Local superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, students, SCDE employees all have a role to play, and the Superintendent's first responsibility is to make it clear to each group what she wants them to do and why doing that will improve student outcomes. Her job is larger, but a clear vision is *sine qua non*. Without it, not much else will make a difference.

It is not recommended that large amounts of time be expended on the development of a formal mission or goals statements. These are useful only as a point of departure. Nor is a large scale participatory process recommended at this time. The vision should begin to answer questions such as: What will improve schools? What is the nature of curriculum and instruction that will produce improved student outcomes? What purposes are served by various state interventions such as frameworks, standards, assessment, accreditation? How are each of these related? How should the public measure progress? What does SCDE service mean? What does SCDE leadership mean? What are the interim milestones on the way to achieving the vision, i.e. those objectives that indicate progress toward ultimate goals?

**2. Superintendent Tenenbaum should develop a strategic plan for accomplishing her vision.**

Improving education is a complex, long-term process. It is difficult under ideal conditions and almost impossible if all available resources are not working in concert. Development of a comprehensive, evolutionary implementation strategy will significantly enhance the probability of success. It is essential to determine all that needs to be changed to achieve the vision, then to devise a plan to make it happen. Given the Department's serious resource constraints every needed change can not be addressed immediately. It is essential that priorities be carefully set and communicated, and once set not changed without careful consideration. Too many priorities and too few resources are a recipe for chaos, employee burn out, and ultimately failure.

The Superintendent has under her control some powerful levers in the standards, assessment, frameworks, department staff, bully pulpit, and various processes and programs. Working together these levers can be reinforcing and produce

great synergy. Without a specific plan that addresses each potential lever, many will be misapplied; some will actually operate in conflict with the vision. Program by program, process by process, she should ask how can it help reach the vision? How does it have to change to maximize its potential?

For example, federal and state categorical programs are levers for change that are often over looked. Unchanged they become agents for preserving the status quo. Although these programs are intended to improve the academic performance in the regular program of eligible students, they are frequently used to fund separate programs, often isolated from the regular program. Treating categorical programs as funding sources for improving the academic performance of eligible students in the regular classroom will enhance their power as levers for effective change. Proposed changes in federal law are likely to make these resources even more flexible.

**3. Superintendent Tenenbaum should adopt a manageable, realistic set of priorities that are consistent with the resources available and resist the temptation to over commit and over promise.**

It is a common trap for enthusiastic leaders to proliferate initiatives. It appears as if the previous superintendent fell victim to this temptation. Typically there is no shortage of good ideas, but the most effective leaders are sufficiently disciplined to adopt a few good ideas and let them play out before beginning others. Each initiative will require local districts to act and Departmental resources to be expended. Too many initiatives will deplete local educator goodwill as well as Departmental resources. MAP does not advocate timidity, merely discipline. Beware of the “fire, fire, fire, reload, fire, fire, fire” syndrome.

Another problem associated with proliferating initiatives is that they become disconnected (or are never connected), thereby dissipating the potential synergy of a coherent strategy.

**4. Superintendent Tenenbaum regularly and frequently should interact with Department staff to convey substantive information such as organizational structure, priorities, etc.**

Agency staff are both the vehicle through which the vision is achieved and an important constituency requiring regular attention. Frequent interactions with employees is most important in the early days of a new administration. The Superintendent should view every interaction with Department staff as an opportunity to teach, to help them internalize and embrace her vision.

## II. Governance

**1. The Legislature and the Governor should reexamine the provisions of the Education Accountability Act with the goal of clarifying lines of authority and responsibility.**

Ultimately, the General Assembly and the Governor bear responsibility for the provision of all state governmental services, including education. The South Carolina Constitution assigns the responsibility for supervision of public instruction to the State Superintendent of Education. The General Assembly and the Governor appropriately share the responsibility for oversight of the Superintendent, the State Board and the Department of Education as these entities carry out their responsibilities. However, some provisions of the Educational Accountability Act have made it more difficult for state or even local parties appropriately to be held accountable for their actions. For example, the statute calls for the Education Oversight Committee to have final review and approval authority of standards-based assessments prior to their implementation. Changes in standards and assessments can only be made with the advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee. If the system does not work, who then is to be held accountable?

These and a multitude of similar provisions contained in the Educational Accountability Act make it more difficult to affix responsibility—one of the basic tenets of any successful accountability system. Another important principle for accountability systems is to ensure that clear expectations are established and that clear signals are being sent. This too has been complicated by certain provisions of the act. School district personnel repeatedly reported their confusion about the future direction of the accountability act. Implementing accountability is seen by districts as the one of biggest challenge they face—to have less than clear signals about what they are expected to do can only complicate this already formidable task.

The General Assembly and the Governor should revisit the specific provisions of the Education Accountability Act to address issues of ambiguity and to ensure that accountability is appropriately fixed. Responsibilities for the implementation and administration of the act should fall squarely on the shoulders of the Constitutional officer, the Superintendent. (Of course, responsibility without adequate resources and discretion for their allocation will almost guarantee failure.) Responsibilities for monitoring and oversight should fall on the shoulders of the General Assembly and the Governor or their designees—in this case, the Education Oversight Committee.

### **III. Communications**

#### **1. SCDE should develop a more effective communications strategy.**

SCDE should develop and implement a comprehensive communication strategy with specific plans for communicating with various stakeholders and constituencies. One size does not fit all. Even among educators, communication with teachers should be different from that with superintendents and principals. The message should be similar and reinforcing, but the level of detail, nature of language used and even medium of communication needs to be customized for

each audience. The advantages of using technology should be exploited, but more traditional media should not be overlooked.

Communication involves listening as well as talking. The plan should include ongoing procedures for obtaining feedback from parents, teachers, superintendents, school board members, legislators and others. We recommend some combination of formal and informal measures, ranging from personal conversations, review of letters to the editor, and town hall meeting, to regular formal surveys. We also recommend that at least some of the feedback be gathered and analyzed by objective third parties. Finally, we recommend that Superintendent Tenenbaum and SCDE listen carefully to their critics as well as their supporters.

## **2. SCDE should expand the use of email for communication with school districts and the public.**

MAP recommends that the Superintendent consider regularly (e.g. biweekly) sending email messages to district superintendents to communicate priorities and to invite feedback. E-mail also can be used to reduce walk-in and telephone inquiries; however, quick response time must be a priority or additional inquiries will be generated. Specific e-mail addresses for superintendents only, personnel directors only, etc. with 2-hour response times; e-mail addresses for the general public with 24-hour turn-around and automatically generated customer service surveys; a consistent e-mail address for all department personnel, e.g., name.name@scdoe.com, so that constituents can “always get through” all raise customer satisfaction level and maximize effectiveness of staff time and resources. SCDE directories with names, numbers, and e-mail addresses of personnel for each area should be widely available.

## **3. SCDE should expand the use of its webpage and make it more user friendly.**

The website should permit online ordering of publications, posting of procedures and applications for certification, summarizing current research concerning best practice, providing additional sample assessment questions, as well as additional sample lesson plans incorporating particular standards and assessments, establishing educator chat rooms on pertinent topics, and performing many other relevant functions.

## **4. SCDE management should ensure that adequate time is allocated for regular staff meetings to discuss activities and expectations, and generally facilitate communications between and among levels of the organization.**

Most decisions and activities in the Department cross division lines and affect more than one program or unit. Regular and effective communication across organizational boundaries is essential to ensure that all staff represent the Department consistently, and that all decisions have been considered from a variety of perspectives prior to implementation. We do not advocate more meetings for the sake of meeting, nor are we unaware of the cost of collaboration. It will fall to the Superintendent and her deputies to model the desired behavior

and create a climate where communication is efficient and collaboration is valued.

#### IV. Organization and Personnel

**1. SCDE should conduct a comprehensive review of salaries. Equity adjustments should be made in those cases where salary differences can not be justified by differentials in duties, performance, or seniority.**

An employee's salary should not be determined merely by when he or she was hired. Nor should it be based on political connections or cronyism. Salary differentials are a particular problem when loyal employees of long tenure make less than employees newly hired to perform the same function. We are not suggesting that all employees should receive the same pay, only that differences should be rational and purposeful.

**2. SCDE should redefine the professional education classes to differentiate between those who perform purely administrative and monitoring functions and those who provide programmatic leadership. MAP recommends that the latter class be renamed to better describe the function that they are to perform, e.g. consultant or specialist.**

The Department currently differentiates in the education classes between employees who are responsible for "developing" programs (Education Associates II) and those who "coordinate" programs (Education Associate III). From our experience it requires a very high level of expertise and sophistication to develop programs that find acceptance in local school districts and that can make a difference in teaching and learning. Managing or coordinating such programs requires a similarly high level of expertise. A more reasonable division should be between those employees who perform more administrative functions such as processing applications and plans, or who monitor categorical programs, enforce regulations, rules, etc. and those who are more directly involved in developing and implementing strategies to improve teaching and learning. As we recommend below, it will be necessary to offer higher salaries to attract the level of expertise necessary to provide meaningful state wide leadership.

**3. SCDE should set as a very high priority recruiting experts in curriculum, assessment and professional development who would be credible and enjoy the respect of local educators. Qualifications and salary levels should be comparable to those of elementary and secondary principals in school districts with more than 10,000 students.**

If SCDE is to become a credible player, let alone leader, in improving South Carolina public schools, it is essential that it employ a critical mass of individuals who are recognized for their expertise in the curriculum disciplines (e.g. mathematics, history/social studies, English/language arts), assessment, or professional development. The requisite expertise derives from training and

experience. As a rule of thumb, minimum qualifications would be comparable to those of an elementary or secondary school principal, assistant superintendent or district director of curriculum. Educators working in larger districts tend to have more breadth of experience and enjoy a larger, more statewide perspective. To attract the necessary level of expertise, it will be necessary to offer salaries competitive with those paid in local school districts.

MAP recognizes budget constraints presently faced by the Department. We recommend that SCDE develop a plan for acquiring this capacity over time. As positions become vacant or new positions are authorized by the General Assembly this plan will provide guidance for which positions are of highest priority. We further recommend that when presented the choice between quantity and quality, the latter be given preference. For example, using salary savings generated by three Education Associate II vacancies to hire two educators with a higher level of expertise would seem to be an excellent trade.

**4. SCDE should immediately implement a process whereby employees can express preference for assignments that more closely match their training, experience and interests. These expressions of preference should be considered in all subsequent staff reassignments.**

We can think of no useful purpose for assigning employees to jobs for which they have little expertise or interest. Employees with high levels of expertise are in sufficiently short supply that the administration should move immediately to ensure the best fits between expertise and job requirements. Such a move will undoubtedly enhance employee morale as well as advance the Department's general level of effectiveness.

**5. SCDE should systematically examine all functions and determine the level of specialization and expertise required for performing activities consistent with the Superintendent's vision.**

SCDE employees should possess at least the level of expertise expected of a person performing similar functions in a school district. Those functions requiring specialized knowledge should be staffed with individuals with experience and expertise in those functions. Generalists, by definition, are required to possess only general or superficial knowledge and expertise. This is inadequate if SCDE plans to assume any substantive leadership role in improving South Carolina Schools. Generalists should be employed only in those positions that require a general level of knowledge and experience to adequately perform the function.

**6. SCDE should assign a much higher priority and allocate adequate resources to the professional development of its own staff.**

In the short term it is essential that all SCDE employees not only internalize the Superintendent's vision, but begin to translate it into useful activities. The only way to ensure that all employees are sending a consistent message to school districts is through extensive staff development. Staff development should be

planned around agency priorities, and should be ongoing and predictable. Managers should hold regular, frequent meetings with subordinates that meet the same criteria. Periodic staff retreats could similarly be effectively used to communicate and clarify the Superintendent's vision and enhance the probability that staff would internalize it. In this regard the Department should model behavior that it expects of districts.

**7. Employees at all levels should be empowered and encouraged to make decisions about the work that they know best. Management should provide clear guidelines for expectations and hold employees accountable for results.**

Highly effective organizations all around the world are providing employees much more discretion over their day to day activities. They have found that those closest to clients often have a clearer idea about how to meet client needs. MAP does not recommend that management abdicate its responsibility for setting clear expectations and holding employees accountable for performance. For instance, the workers at the Saturn plant have significant discretion over how they organize their work, but they are still expected to build automobiles that meet certain specifications. Decentralization of decision-making should be an evolutionary process. Employees first need to internalize the Superintendent's vision and the role they are expected to play in its implementation. They should be provided adequate resources, including training, to meet those expectations. These things take time and patience, but are goals worth pursuing.

**8. SCDE should develop in every organizational unit annual workplans with measurable outcomes (not activities) and budgets specified. Employees should be evaluated, at least in part, on their performance relative to the approved outcomes and budgets.**

If you don't know where you are going, any path will get you there. A thoughtful, collaborative planning process almost always leads to a more cost-effective allocation of scarce resources. Developing plans and tying activities to budgets helps keep expectations realistic, and a serious planning process with the active engagement of management at all levels offers a very effective opportunity to ensure that resources are used in a way that reinforces the overall strategy. Resources will be expended whether or not there are management plans. The choice is how they will be expended.

We find that there are several common objections raised to the development of management plans. The first is that it is impossible to predict what will be the greatest need in the coming year for a person's or unit's time. Plans should not be cast in stone. Changes should be negotiated when indicated by changing conditions, but an uncertain future is no excuse for failing to plan.

A second objection is that the planner's activities occur too far from the end goal, e.g. student achievement, to hold them accountable for outcomes. This is a problem, but hardly insurmountable. At the very least, systematic feedback from clients could serve as a measure of performance. Professional development is a good example. The number of people trained is a weak measure of performance.

Evaluations by participants of the training provided is better. Follow up on how participants used the information or skills provided in the development activity is even better. Evaluation of the effect on student achievement over time is best.

A third objection is that planning is a bureaucratic exercise, with little meaning. For planning to be a useful tool management must treat it as such. Approval of plans should occur only after each successive level of management is convinced that the proposed activities and allocation of resources will contribute to the overall strategy and advance the Superintendent's vision. Once plans are approved they should be viewed as contracts with consequences tied to performance.

**9. SCDE should take immediate steps to address the quantity and quality of clerical support. Management should standardize the clerical to professional ratio.**

We recommend that SCDE establish a standard for clerical support, such as one support person per four to six educational professionals, one per program manager or assistant superintendent, and one per deputy superintendent. Not all functions would warrant such a rich ratio; others may have greater need, but the adopted standard should be the default option. Variance from the standard could be justified case by case as necessary. Salary levels for support staff should be set to ensure that they are competitive with those paid by other state agencies.

**10. A concentrated effort should be made to replace temporary clerical workers with well qualified permanent employees.**

Temporary employees tend to be more expensive and less productive than permanent employees, and frequently they depart just as they are learning the Department's procedures. One approach that MAP recommends SCDE consider is establishing a "floater" pool of clerical employees who can substitute for absent employees and replace those who have terminated. Also, they can be deployed to offices where there is short term need occasioned by a peak in work load. In addition to providing substitute clerical employees, service in the pool could serve as a source of training for newly hired support staff.

**11. SCDE should maximize the utility of the mandated employee appraisal process. All managers should be trained in its proper application. The annual appraisal should play a prominent role in decisions concerning compensation, promotion, demotion or disciplinary action.**

Regular and candid feedback to employees is essential to the effective management of any organization. Given all of the circumstances of beginning a new administration and the existing low morale of employees, an extra effort to provide feedback at SCDE is essential<sup>16</sup>. Effectiveness of the EPMS will be

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<sup>16</sup> Formal annual evaluations are an essential form of feedback, but they are no substitute for regular face to face feedback on performance.

enhanced when results figure prominently in subsequent decisions about compensation, promotion and other changes in employment status.

Any annual appraisal of employees is only as effective as the seriousness afforded it by top management. Management of the appraisal process might be facilitated if all appraisals were conducted in a specified time period and were due on the same date. To the extent permissible under state law and regulations, employees should be evaluated by that person who assigns and evaluates their work, regardless of his or her managerial status.

**12. MAP recommends SCDE consider “360 degree” evaluations whereby employees are evaluated by their peers and managers, and managers are evaluated by their peers and those they evaluate and supervise.**

An appraisal system that takes into account information from peers and subordinates as well as superiors tends to be more objective and comprehensive. In the system we propose managers would retain responsibility for overall evaluation of subordinates, but would be required to consider the information obtained from the other sources.

**13. SCDE should change names of organizational units and job titles to be more recognizable to local educators and the general public.**

Organizational names should communicate something about the functions they represent. Names such as education programs management, curriculum management, professional development, and assessment convey to all a sense of what persons in these units are likely to be doing. Deputy superintendent, assistant superintendent, and curriculum consultant tend to imply rank and the nature of the incumbent’s responsibilities. Deputy superintendent and manager or director may make more sense in non-educator classes.

**14. The Department’s organization should remain as flat as possible consistent with reasonable spans of control, with a limited number of levels of management below Superintendent/Chief of Staff.**

Flat organizations facilitate communication up and down the organization. In the education classes we recommend only three levels of management below the Superintendent and Chief of Staff. These would include deputy superintendents who would manage major divisions, assistant superintendents who would report to a deputy and manage offices comprised of major functions, and unit managers who would report to an assistant superintendent and supervise and coordinate the activities of logical collections of education professionals. Non-education specific functions should be similarly organized, but the nature of the functions performed may necessitate different titles, more levels of management and different spans of control.

**15. Managerial spans of control should be established based on functions performed by subordinates and the level of autonomy expected of subordinates.**

The number of subordinates should not be so large that an effective manager is unaware of the status of every important assignment of each directly reporting subordinate. The span of control should afford an effective manager sufficient time to provide frequent feedback to each employee. While it is not appropriate to establish *a priori* a precise ratio, under normal circumstances a manager's span of control should be approximately six to nine directly reporting subordinates.

**16. Superintendent Tenenbaum should adopt an official policy on staff diversity.**

The absence of an official organizational policy on staff diversity creates the impression that diversity is not a priority within the agency. Our conversations with Superintendent Tenenbaum persuade us that she perceives diversity as a valuable resource in the agency and the school districts of South Carolina. Official adoption of a diversity policy that guides all personnel transactions, including recruitment, assignments, and promotions will send a strong signal of the Superintendent's commitment to maintaining a diverse workforce in the Department.

**17. SCDE should create an organization that telegraphs the Superintendent's vision and priorities, groups similar functions together, and relies on specialists with the capacity to provide statewide leadership.**

The form of organization chosen, the relative prominence given certain functions, and staff appointments all are powerful forms of communicating what the Superintendent holds to be important. It should be apparent from the balance of this report that MAP strongly recommends that teaching and learning be given prominence and SCDE serve as a catalyst for preparing South Carolina schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Below we have outlined two organizational structures which would facilitate the Department playing that role. They assume SCDE will lead and provide support for local districts.

We offer these structures, not as the best ways to organize, but to illustrate structures that would be consistent with our various recommendations.

The organizational structures described below would meet the following criteria:

- are flattened to maximize communications
- telegraph mission and priorities
- group like functions together
- rely on specialists with capacity to provide statewide leadership
- feature reasonable spans of control
- name units consistent with functions and responsibilities

These structures are intended as illustrations and may not have addressed every major function.

A **Chief of Staff** would report directly to the Superintendent. It is essential that the incumbent would be able to serve as the Superintendent's alter ego. He or she should be able to speak for the Superintendent on a wide range of issues and would have primary responsibility for internal management of the Department.

The **Chief Counsel, Public Information Officer** and **Deputy for Intergovernmental Affairs** would report to the chief of staff or Superintendent, depending on the Superintendent's preference.

Four deputy superintendents would report to the chief of staff. The four deputies, chief of staff, chief counsel, head of intergovernmental affairs and public information officer would comprise the Superintendent's cabinet.

The deputies would each manage one of the following divisions—Education Programs, Fiscal and Business Services, Monitoring and Enforcement, and Internal Management.

The deputy for **Education Programs** must be a strong instructional leader as well as an experienced manager. This division would be the primary source of state level leadership in critical educational activities. Approximately six assistant superintendents (or equivalent) would report to this deputy and each would manage one of the following offices—Curriculum, Assessment, Professional Development, Categorical Programs, Child Development and Textbook Selection/Instructional Materials. It is highly recommended that all these offices report to the same deputy to maximize program consistency and articulation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> If the education experts in the Education Programs Division are to be effective as leaders with credibility among local educators, they must be at least as expert as the local educators they are to assist. Thus it is essential that salary levels be sufficient to attract and retain professionals with a high level of expertise. The Department should look to salaries paid to school principals in medium to large districts for comparison for education professionals in that division. The leaders of the various office should be paid at salary levels comparable to assistant superintendents in medium to large districts.

The **Curriculum Office** would be comprised of recognized experts and leaders in mathematics, language arts, science, history/social studies, vocational subjects, art, physical education, health, etc. These experts would be charged with developing statewide strategies for improving student performance in each discipline. Leadership for guidance and counseling and other support services would be located in this office as well. Strategies will, of necessity, be dependent on the ability of state staff to successfully influence and lever resources in professional associations, school districts, colleges and universities and elsewhere. Any strategies dependent upon retail delivery by state staff (i.e. state staff providing direct assistance school-by-school or even district-by-district) probably are doomed to failure. To the extent feasible, at least one specialist in each curriculum area should be funded by Title 1 and one by special education and given the responsibility to develop subject specific strategies for eligible populations. In order to maintain a reasonable span of control, specialists will be grouped into logical units. Each such unit should be headed by a coordinator or lead specialist with quasi-managerial responsibilities.

The **Assessment Office** would be responsible for managing all programs related to student and teacher assessment. It would be comprised of professional psychometricians, statisticians and other testing experts. It is essential assessment be located organizationally close to the curriculum experts to ensure content articulation.

The **Office of Professional Development** would focus on developing the capacity of school districts and other entities to deliver high quality training to teachers and administrators. The specialists in this office must work in close collaboration with their colleagues in the curriculum and assessment offices. Leadership academies and the development of SCDE staff would also be contained in this office. The Department should model behavior that they expect of districts and should assign a much higher priority to the professional development of its own staff. Such training should be planned around agency priorities, and should be ongoing and predictable.

The **Office of State and Federal Categorical Programs** would be responsible for the policy-making and administrative functions necessary to operate special education, Title 1, vocational education and other state and federal categorical programs. These categorical programs exist primarily to enhance the success of eligible student populations in the regular program, and are essentially funding sources rather than programs, per se. As such it is not only feasible, but highly recommended that resources allocated to the policy and administrative functions be minimized and resources devoted to curriculum specialists be maximized.

The **Office of Child Development** would be responsible for implementing Superintendent Tenenbaum's priority program for young children. As elsewhere in this division, it is essential that the employees

of this office possess extensive experience and expertise in developing and managing child development programs.

The **Office of Textbook Selection and Instructional Materials** would manage the textbook selection process. It should also evaluate textbooks and instructional materials and provide school districts with “Consumer Reports” analyses of all recommended materials.

The **Monitoring and Enforcement Division** would be responsible for implementation of various provisions of EAA, such as organizing and coordinating the external review teams, reviewing accountability plans, etc. It would also be responsible for accreditation, external audits, and monitoring of categorical programs. It is not recommended that this division be heavily staffed with full time state employees. Rather a small full time cadre would be augmented, as necessary, by specialists from other divisions and carefully recruited and trained school district personnel.<sup>18</sup>

The **Fiscal and Business Services Division** would be responsible for those non-program functions that serve school districts. These would include Subvention, School District Budgeting and Accounting, Transportation, School Facilities, Credentialing, and Food Services.<sup>19</sup>

The **Internal Management Division** would be responsible for Human Resources, Departmental Accounting and Budgeting, Procurement, Internal Audits, etc. We recommend that a Publications Office be created and assigned to this division. That office would be responsible for coordinating the publication and sales of all Department created documents other than regular correspondence. It could ensure consistency of format, content and quality across all Departmental publications. Properly structured it could generate sufficient revenue from the sale of publications to offset the cost of reprints.

We have made no specific recommendations for the placement of the State Special Schools or Governor’s Schools. Because the SCDE’s primary responsibility for these entities is largely administrative, it may make sense to assign them to the Fiscal and Business Services Division. The Education Programs Division would be a second choice.

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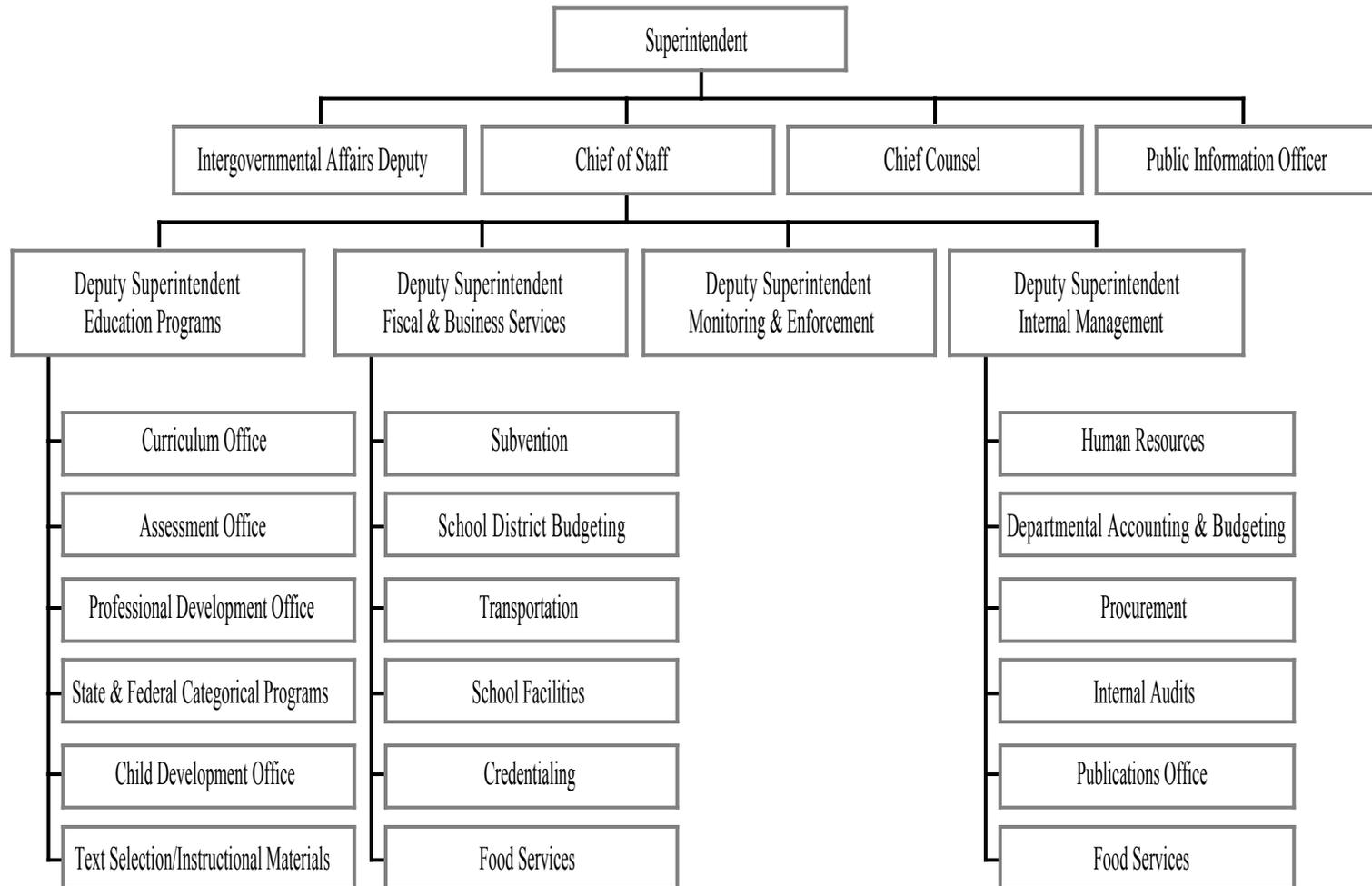
<sup>18</sup> The nature of skills necessary to perform the functions assigned to the Monitoring and Enforcement Division are mixed and should be determined case by case.

<sup>19</sup> The skills required by the staff and managers in the Fiscal and Business Services and Internal Management Divisions are different from, and typically less costly than, those required of education specialists employed in the Education Programs Division. Thus it would seem appropriate to use other state agencies as the comparison group for setting salary levels for positions in these divisions.

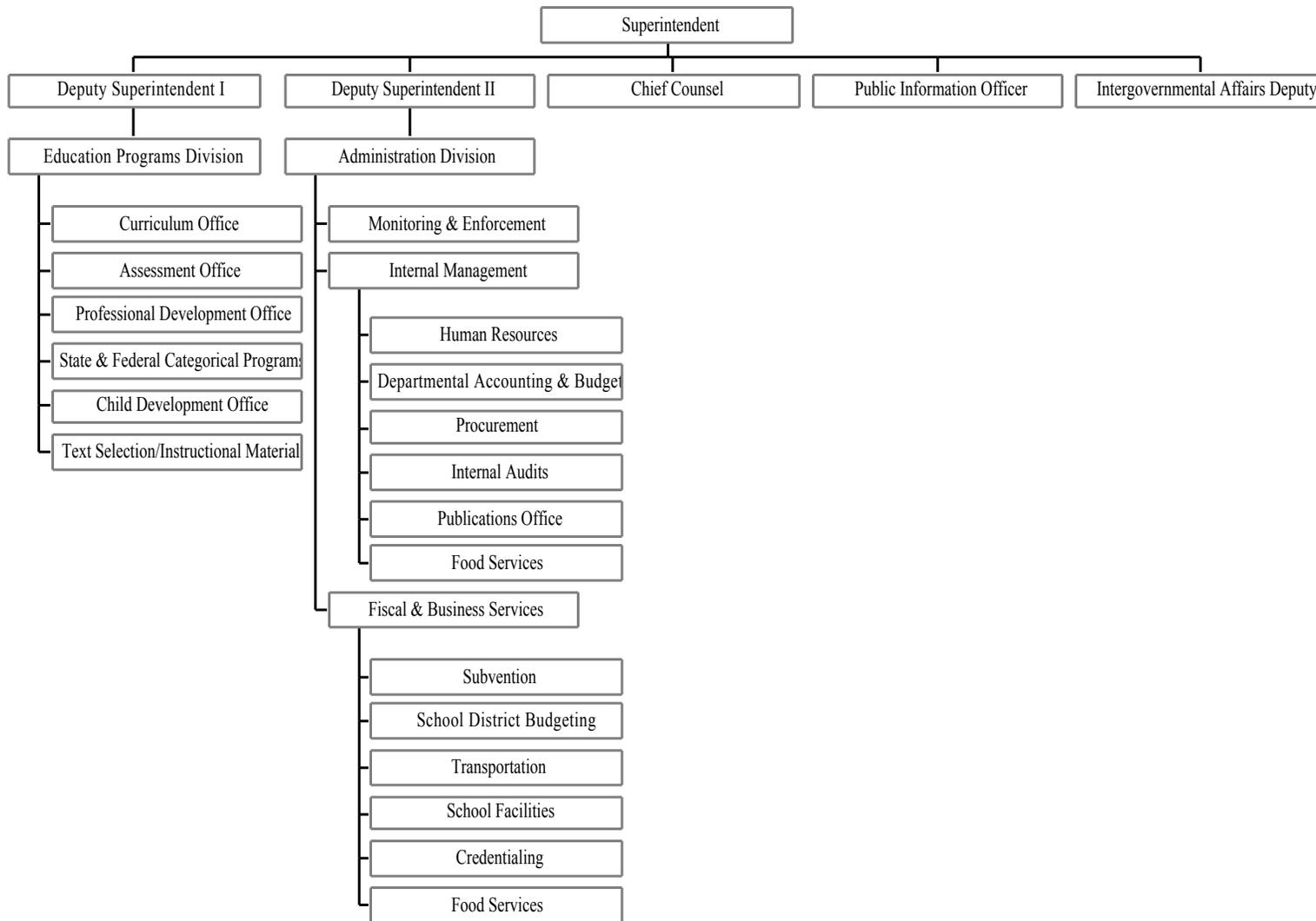
**Alternative Organization**

An alternative structure that would also be consistent with the criteria listed above would feature two deputy superintendents rather than a chief of staff reporting directly to the Superintendent. The Education Programs Division would remain the same. An Administration Division would replace Fiscal and Business Service, Internal Management and Monitoring and Enforcement Divisions, and reduce their status to offices and subsume them within the new division. Some of the functions within these new offices are sufficiently large and complex that it would be necessary for them to be led by a first level manager. In other cases somewhat disparate functions could be consolidated under a manager and in even others, a lead employee could assume quasi-managerial responsibilities.

### Illustrative SCDE Organizational Chart I



### Illustrative SCDE Organizational Chart II



## V. Delivery Systems

**1. SCDE should develop a coherent strategy for delivery of services and leadership. We recommend that a task force comprised of key Department staff, representatives of school districts, and other stakeholders be convened to systematically rethink the Department's delivery system.**

MAP recommends yet another plan. It is not that we are enamoured with plans or planning, but something as critical as how SCDE will deliver services to school districts is too important to leave to a couple hundred employees to create a couple hundred idiosyncratic plans. Be assured, in the absence of a guiding strategy, every employee will create his or her own delivery plan. District needs are too great, resources are too scarce and the stakes are too high to leave this decision to chance.

Instruction, curriculum, standards, assessments, and accountability targets all must be aligned. Personnel from Department staff to classroom teachers have to be educated about the expectations and the content of the standards and assessments. Classroom teachers must align daily instruction and at least some classroom assessments with the content priorities established and the formats used for testing. Responsibilities of all involved parties need to be clarified and communicated.

Key stakeholders should be involved in the design of this very critical strategy. It is essential that SCDE understand district needs and that local educators understand the limits of the Department's resources. This collaboration will result in the allocation of scarce resources according to real priorities and will minimize over-promising or creating unrealistic expectations.

The task force should be charged with developing short term and long term strategies that focus on building the capacity of local school districts to improve student outcomes. We recommend that the task force attempt to maximize the probability that the Department will behave more like a coach than a referee or spectator. It should consider available resources, resource constraints, requirements of EAA, comparative advantages of a state agency, cost-benefit of various interventions, and differential needs of districts depending on size, student population and other characteristics. While there is some urgency to develop this strategy, the task force should be given sufficient time and resources to complete this complex task.

**2. SCDE should immediately address the system needs for data and make short term and long term plans for developing a modern data management system. MAP recommends that the Superintendent convene a task force of appropriate stakeholders to develop these plans.**

The State's need for high quality, timely data will increase dramatically as it moves to a standards based accountability system. Good decisions are

dependent on good data. It is essential that SCDE rationalize its data gathering procedures, minimize demands on local educators and facilitate the easy transfer of data between districts and the state and from the state to districts and to the public.

This process will not succeed if it takes place in a vacuum. Stakeholders must be actively involved in the design of any data management system. The quality of data is determined ultimately at the point it is recorded. Unless the individuals responsible for entering data and everyone in between up to the end user understand the ultimate purpose to which the data will be put and perceive a personal stake in its quality, the State will lack sufficient information to make good decisions.

**3. The Department should increase its efforts to improve the district audit function.**

The Department's audit resources are disproportionately assigned to the internal agency audit function—representing a very small percentage of total education expenditures in the state. This focus on state level expenditures reduces the Department's capacity to monitor and assist local districts to ensure that local expenditures adhere to federal and state laws and regulations. The shift in resources will not necessarily result in a larger number of audits, but should result in improving technical assistance to districts to enable them to avoid audit exceptions in the future.

**4. SCDE should immediately conduct a systematic study of its transportation, including conditions of all vehicles and level and qualification of staff.**

**5. SCDE should immediately conduct a systematic study of the teacher certification function, with particular attention to the level of staffing and opportunities for automation.**

**6. SCDE should immediately conduct a systematic study of the school facilities management function, with particular attention to the level of staffing and the reliability of the facilities inventory.**

**7. SCDE should develop a district status report, detailing where each district is in the alignment of standards, curriculum, and instruction and the capacity of each for internal staff development.**

The Department and school districts are under intense pressure to meet the intent of the EAA. The public, business, and the legislature have made clear their expectations for improved student achievement. The education community feels the need to deliver. However, state and local educators must have the necessary resources and flexibility to address the critical pieces of such change in a reasonable sequence. One member of the Oversight Committee described the dilemma as follows, "The time lines are too tight. We are at least 3-5 years away from putting it all together; no curriculum alignment has taken place. The Department of Education and the state need a global connected strategy for putting it all in place. The standards haven't all even been adopted yet. The greatest danger is that no structure exists to link the Governor, the State School Superintendent, the State Board of Education, the Oversight Committee, and the legislature. There must be a link or we will all work in isolation and the time frame for success will expand."

A district status report would help those charged with developing a delivery strategy know the extent of the need for assistance in each school district. Care should be taken in the process of gathering this information to not unduly burden local educators. The process could be as informal and unobtrusive as a phone call to each district office.

**8. The Superintendent should consider forming a policy group to focus on the connections between K-12 and higher education in South Carolina. The group should be made up of the CEOs of each segment of education plus the Executive Director of the Commission on Higher Education as well as representatives of private colleges and universities.**

Effective education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will need to be a life-long enterprise, starting with pre-school and extending through college and beyond. The traditional barriers between levels of education and among institutions must be addressed if the total educational experience is to be successful. South Carolina can do a better job of connecting its K-12 general education policies and activities with postsecondary colleges and universities. The group should focus on specific policies aimed at improving high school preparation and removing barriers to access. One such policy would be to better inform high schools on how their graduates perform in the colleges in which they enroll—thereby identifying strengths and weakness of elementary and secondary school preparation. Another strategy might be to focus on making certain that early in their schooling experience, teachers and students understand what students will need to know and be able to do to succeed in higher education.

## CONCLUSION

In this last section we reemphasize several points we believe are critical to the success of the new administration. Superintendent Tenenbaum faces a formidable challenge. She must accomplish several complex tasks simultaneously. Internally, the superintendent must recreate the Department, establishing an effective organizational structure, improving employee morale and expertise, and increasing staff capacity to provide needed assistance to local districts. Externally, she must rebuild trust among all the Department's constituents from local superintendents to legislators; develop an effective plan for using the Department's scarce resources to meet diverse district needs, and create a climate in which increased achievement for all South Carolina students may be attained.

Several circumstances make these tasks all the more difficult: the human and fiscal resources currently available to the Department are inadequate; the Education Accountability Act establishes conflicting responsibilities and agendas between the Department and the Education Oversight Committee; and the time lines created in the legislation are unrealistic for such extensive reform.

However, MAP found overwhelming support and positive feelings toward the Superintendent, and her election has engendered new hope and optimism in both the Department and local school districts. She has the support of the new governor and strong connections to the business community. Such backing and connectivity make even difficult tasks attainable. But, goodwill does not last forever without visible results.

Systemic education reform is a complex task that requires team effort, adequate resources and perseverance. Elected officials, the Department, local educators, the Education Oversight Committee, and South Carolina citizens all have important roles to play. The State Superintendent and the South Carolina Department of Education have an essential and non-transferable role and mission. They provide the vision and the critical assistance (principally in the form of capacity building) to ensure that the desired results can be achieved. They will be successful only if they receive cooperation and support from the other stakeholders.

Superintendent Tenenbaum must consistently bring her own vision to the forefront. She must plan and establish priorities, creating a comprehensive, but flexible agenda to accomplish her mission. The plans must be feasible, not so grandiose as to over-promise or over-extend. The Superintendent must build the capacity of Department staff to provide real leadership in assisting local districts improve teaching and learning for all students through the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and through professional development.

Superintendent Tenenbaum has widespread support and has made a strong start in reestablishing positive relationships with both Department staff and local district educators. These initial steps evidence the beginnings of a vigorous, effective administration. MAP has been pleased to have had the opportunity to conduct this study for the Superintendent. We hope that the information contained in this report will contribute to her successful tenure and ultimately to an excellent education for every student in South Carolina.

**APPENDIX A**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**APPENDIX B**  
**SURVEY QUESTIONS**

**APPENDIX C**  
**SURVEY RESPONSES**  
**DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS ONLY**



MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS & PLANNING,  
INC.

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**Preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**  
**An Organizational Study of the South Carolina**  
**Department of Education**

Submitted to  
Inez Tenenbaum  
Superintendent of Education  
South Carolina Department of Education

*By*  
James R. Smith  
Gerald C. Hayward  
Margaret Torrey

May 3, 1999

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## INTRODUCTION

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) carries major statutory responsibility for the leadership and oversight of the state's public education system. Many perceive that this system is at a crossroads: South Carolina students have traditionally scored poorly on national standardized tests, yet new accountability legislation requires appropriate grade level performance by each pupil. Individual plans for those below grade level, school and district report cards, and standards-based assessments are mandated. No district, school, teacher, or student is exempt.

Many South Carolinians may well view this opportunity as public education's last chance, perhaps with good reason. Despite a number of initiatives and a focus on low-performing schools, South Carolina student scores on national and state exams are low and have remained stagnant for most of this decade. Consider the following:

On the 1998 reading portion of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) only about 22% of fourth graders scored at or above the proficient level. Fourth grade scores show a slight improvement over the 1994 results but are virtually identical to the results of the test administered in 1992. The most recent eighth grade NAEP reading results also showed that only 22% of South Carolina students were rated at or above proficient.

On the 1992 mathematics portion of the NAEP only 13% of fourth graders and 15% of eighth graders scored at or above the proficient level. In 1996 those percentages dropped to 12 and 14 respectively.

On the MAT/7 exam, the percent of ninth graders above the national average in reading and mathematics has remained relatively constant at approximately 43 in each subject for the last four years.

On the state developed Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP) the percent of eleventh grade students meeting standard over the last four years has dropped in all three areas: reading from 82.8 to 81.5, writing from 85.7 to 83.8, and mathematics from 76.6 to 75.1.

On the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) scores have changed little in the last four years with the verbal (478) and mathematics (473) averages for 1997-98 at exactly the same levels as those for 1994-95.

Clearly, changes in the way all South Carolina students are educated must occur if true progress is to be made. Districts vary widely in their human and fiscal resources, and thus, in their capacity to effect the changes demanded. The success of such a major statewide reform demands strong leadership and support from the Department of Education. Without its resources and

concentrated, sustained effort the prognosis for substantially improving achievement for South Carolina students is bleak.

This challenge comes at a time when the Department is in transition. The newly elected State School Superintendent is off to a strong start. Those interviewed praised her early appointments and actions, particularly her outreach to local educators. All were enthusiastic about the potential of her administration. She succeeds two diverse predecessors, each with strengths and weaknesses, and has the opportunity to create an administration that features the best and avoids the worst of each. The Superintendent needs to carefully review what was effective and build upon it while eliminating that which was ineffective or divisive.

The new administration inherits several positive initiatives including a reduction in SCDE's excessive monitoring and enforcement, a strong advocacy for minority children statewide and staff in the Department, many resources targeted to lowest performing schools, a strong foundation for standards-based accountability, and a streamlined Department of Education. However, it also acquires a traumatized and under-resourced organization at a time when that agency's leadership, support, and expertise are essential for the success of the Education Accountability Act (EAA).

Although the former administration receives high marks for shrinking what was generally perceived as an overstaffed department, resources have been reduced to the point that the agency can no longer fulfill its mission. Department staff were reduced from 1,100 eight years ago to approximately 850 today. Almost half of the current staff work in transportation, leaving only about 400 people to carry out the primary mission of the Department. Staff were reorganized frequently and often placed outside their areas of expertise. Curriculum consultants, whose contribution to the implementation of the new standards, curriculum and assessments is critical to improved student achievement, were particularly affected by these reductions and reassignments.

Communication both internally and externally has been ineffective, except possibly with the media. Staff often felt uninformed and unable to provide timely assistance to local educators and the public. School district personnel perceived the Department as adversarial and generally lost confidence in its ability to carry out its mission of leadership, oversight and service.

The new Superintendent must rebuild Department capacity and restore confidence in its ability to accomplish its mission, a challenge even without the EAA. Increased human and fiscal resources are essential. Internally, the Superintendent must earn the trust and respect of employees and provide them with the resources necessary to do their jobs. She must furnish vision and leadership. Both the quantity and quality of staff must be improved and assignments need to be consistent with employees' skills and preferences. Ongoing professional development of existing staff is essential.

The EAA calls for reinventing the entire state instructional delivery system aimed at achieving higher student performance. Its statutory time lines are

unrealistically short and the mandated reform is enormously complex. Planning for such change is easy compared to making the change happen. Only a comprehensive implementation strategy that offers new options and support to local practitioners can succeed. Such a strategy builds on a clear vision of desired student outcomes and the characteristics of schools and teachers capable of producing them. It demands a careful analysis of the resources required compared to the resources currently available to do the job. Priorities must be established and decisions about what is to be done, when, and by whom must be made.

Improving student performance necessitates improving or changing instruction, which, in turn, implies the need for professional development of current teachers and improved preparation for teacher candidates. Consider a quote from the recent KPMG study of the Department: “Instruction will not change in South Carolina until **each teacher** has received training on the new standards.” There are approximately 45,000 teachers in South Carolina spread across myriad subject areas and grade levels, most of whom are already working as hard as they can to educate the state’s children. To improve student achievement, teachers and schools must begin to work in new ways, ways that must be defined by the performance targets and aligned with the new standards. Educators have not yet been introduced to these new ways or trained in their application.

SCDE is the agency charged with primary responsibility for the success of the EAA. Unless the Department provides leadership in promoting appropriate curricular and instructional innovation and providing adequate funding and infrastructure support, a high percentage of students will continue to fall below the academic standards set by the EAA.

Clearly, the agency currently lacks adequate human and fiscal resources to accomplish the job. Support from the legislature and the public is needed if the Department is to play its role in inventing the new ways of educating South Carolina children necessary to ensure every student’s academic success.

On a much more positive note, MAP found wide spread support for Superintendent Tenenbaum and her administration among local district superintendents and principals. In a survey conducted as a part of this study, “the state superintendent” and “new directions” were by far the most frequent responses to an invitation to name the Department’s greatest strengths. “New employees” and “new directions” were also frequently mentioned. While Superintendent Tenenbaum faces many formidable challenges, she also enjoys a high level of support and enthusiasm from many of those who can materially affect the outcome of her administration.

### **Organization of Report**

This report is comprised of four sections: Methodology and Scope, Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusions. In the first section we describe the purposes of the study and the data sources upon which our findings are based.

In both subsequent sections findings and recommendations are organized under five rubrics: Vision, Governance, Communication, Organization and Personnel, and Delivery Systems. In the second section we present information germane to the purposes of the study. In the third section we make recommendations for specific action we believe necessary for the Department to fulfill its mission. The final section presents concluding remarks. The appendices display interview questions, survey questions and survey responses. Where appropriate, we have referred to survey results in the report narrative.

## METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

On February 7, 1999 the South Carolina Department Education (SCDE) contracted with Management Analysis & Planning Inc. (MAP) to appraise the Department's organizational structure, internal resource deployment patterns, and leadership capacity. Specifically MAP was asked to:

- (1) [Conduct a]n objective appraisal of the organizational and managerial capacity of the SCDE leadership in preparing South Carolina students and schools for the personal and societal challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- (2) Recommend alternative arrangements intended to buttress whatever structural and operational shortcomings are uncovered in the above mentioned appraisal; and,
- (3) Suggest means by which the SCDE can begin implementing whatever needed changes emerge from this study<sup>1</sup>.

Data upon which our findings and recommendations are based were obtained from three sources—documents, interviews, and a survey of local educators. In the course of this study we reviewed dozens of documents, most of which were produced by the Department or State Board of Education. Documents reviewed included, but were not limited to, independent audits, state accountability reports, budgets, EIA reports, various personnel documents, Education Profiles, reports of the Tenenbaum Transition Team and documents volunteered by interviewees. While document review was ongoing throughout the study, early in the process it helped us form working hypotheses and frame interview questions.

During the week of February 14, 1999, MAP staff conducted approximately 60 semi-structured interviews of local district administrators, state policy makers, and Department of Education managers and employees, including Superintendent Tenenbaum. We also conducted two focus groups of approximately 15 Department employees each. Samples of the interview questions for each group are found in Appendix A.

During the months of March and April 1999 the University of South Carolina Department of Journalism and Mass Communication conducted a telephone survey of approximately 300 school and district level administrators. The sample was selected to be representative of the diversity of school districts in South Carolina. A copy of the survey questions is found in Appendix B. A summary of responses to the survey is contained in Appendix C.

The scope of this study is restricted to issues related to organizing SCDE in the near and intermediate future. It does not include detailed analysis of the Credentialing, Transportation or Facilities Offices. Time and budget constraints precluded a detailed analysis of the staffing and other resource levels necessary to implement our recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> Contract

## FINDINGS

This section presents the findings that were derived from our review of documents, interviews with district administrators, Department employees, and policy makers, and from the survey of local district educators. These findings are divided into five categories: Vision, Governance, Communications, Organization and Personnel, and Delivery Systems.

The reader should keep in mind that while we have made every effort to accurately report what we found, we have relied almost exclusively on information provided to us by individuals with knowledge about the Department, but who also have an interest in how it behaves. We have included only findings where the evidence was highly consistent among the various sources; but we acknowledge that it is possible that more research may reveal conflicting evidence.

### I. Vision

#### **1. A coherent vision for improving public education in South Carolina is needed to guide the efforts of Department employees and educators in school districts.**

The size, complexity and inertia of the public education system render it relatively invulnerable to significant change. Without a coherent and consistent vision for guidance, even the most dedicated Department employees and district educators, doing the best they can, will have little measurable impact on improving schooling in South Carolina. Any perceived ambiguity in the Superintendent's goals serves to reinforce the status quo. When in doubt—do not change.

In the beginning, vision tends to be a giant jigsaw puzzle with most of the pieces missing. It becomes defined in the final analysis more by actions (some symbolic, most substantive) than words. Mission statements and other formal pronouncements can help clarify and bound the vision, but ultimately it will be made clearer or more opaque by every decision, every action and every reaction taken by the Superintendent and her administration.

The clearer the vision, the more likely Department staff and local educators are to behave in a consistent and concerted manner. Pieces of the puzzle include structure of the organization of the Department, appointments to important and mundane posts, and hundreds of small decisions about resource allocation, staff assignments, legislative priorities, comments to the media, dispute resolution, etc. The more consistent these actions, the clearer the vision will become to those expected to implement it.

## **2. SCDE staff expressed an eagerness to see and hear more from Superintendent Tenenbaum.**

Department employees are not clear how the Superintendent's public pronouncements and campaign promises will play out in the Department. Among SCDE employees we encountered almost universal optimism and support for the new administration; however most still expressed some uncertainty about how their professional lives may be changed. For example, among Department employees and local educators it is well established that early childhood is one of Superintendent Tenenbaum's high priorities, but the nature and extent of her vision for this program is not generally understood. How will it be implemented? How does it relate to other priorities? Where does it fit in an overall strategy for improving student achievement? What does it mean for the Department? At some level, every employee wants to know: "How will the new Superintendent change my life?"

Meeting with employees is more than "showing the flag." SCDE employees are among the most important constituents of the Superintendent. As with any constituency, she must attend to them or risk losing their support. In this case support goes far beyond receiving their votes. Departmental employees are the primary instrument by which the Superintendent's vision will be translated into reality. Not until they understand that vision and embrace it will they effectively implement it. Employees who are clear about the vision are better positioned to independently make good decisions that are consistent with the vision. Meeting with the Superintendent in formal and informal settings can be a potent form of professional development for employees. Each interaction can be an opportunity to teach and to persuade employees what the Superintendent wants to happen and how they fit into that vision.

## **3. The State has adopted many, sometimes conflicting and unclear, initiatives; often providing insufficient time or resources for implementation.**

Based on our conversations with dozens of South Carolina educators and policy makers, we concluded that the Department has not been able to articulate a clear and compelling vision for improving schools. The prior administration initiated several important and valuable interventions, including standards, assessment, and frameworks, but we were unable to glean a coherent strategy from our interviews. Respondents were able to describe the various initiatives, but not how they were related or how they were ultimately to change student performance.

Many of those interviewed referred to the frequency and lack of follow-through of Department initiatives, including one reference to "initiatives du jour." Early in the Nielsen administration "pull-out" gifted education was abolished in favor of mainstreaming; however, the Department soon reversed course and returned to the prior model. The 12 schools project initiated to develop and pilot authentic assessments while exempting the schools from statewide testing was also abandoned before completion. Data collection was drastically reduced, only to be partially reinstated when needed information was not available. The

identification of the “200” lowest performing schools was to be an annual or biannual event; however, after the first list, no other group was identified and resources continued to flow only to the original recipients. Act 135 mandated developmentally appropriate curriculum and instruction and Department staff provided resources and training for that approach. However, the recent grade-by-grade standards and assessments replace this prior focus. Finally, at least two initiatives within the Department were also stopped before completion: the Demming total quality management approach and staff teaming within the Department and across other agencies.

Rather than ready, aim, fire, or even ready, fire, aim, the mode seemed to have been fire, fire, fire, reload, fire, fire, fire. A more disciplined, thoughtful strategy would have led to a more effective deployment of scarce resources.

## II. Governance

**1. The statutorily established roles and relationships of the State Superintendent, State Board of Education, State Department of Education, Education Oversight Committee and the Division of Accountability seem to encourage conflict, redundancy and confusion.**

District administrators and Department of Education officials and others we interviewed consistently expressed concern about the confusion and potential conflict of roles and responsibilities of the various entities responsible for implementation of the provisions of the Education Accountability Act. Their concerns focus on the potential for school districts to receive redundant and conflicting messages and requirements<sup>2</sup>, confusion as to which master is to be served, and the potential for scarce state level resources that should be aimed at local support being wasted on disputes over turf. The role and duties of the State Superintendent of Education are broadly specified by the state constitution and laws passed by the General Assembly. The policy-making function of the State Board of Education is specified by law. These roles would seem to be attenuated by and in conflict with those of the Education Oversight Committee. The following summary of the roles of the Superintendent, State Board and Accountability Division of the Education Oversight Committee as established in constitution and statutes highlight a potential for conflict.

### Superintendent

The South Carolina constitution of 1895 states that, The supervision of public instruction shall be vested in a State Superintendent of Education who shall be elected...by qualified electors of the State,.....his duties and compensation shall be defined by the General Assembly.”

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the Accountability Committee of the South Carolina Association of School Administrators in their March,1999 report “Education Accountability Act Framework for Effectiveness,” identified “Review and refine...roles and relationships among the Education Oversight Committee, the State Board of Education, and ...Department of Education...” as an area the Legislature should address.

The General Assembly of South Carolina established a State Board of Education and specified the duties of the State Superintendent as follows:

1. Serve as secretary and administrative officer of the State Board of Education.
2. Have general supervision over and management of all public school funds provided by the State and Federal Government.
3. Organize, staff and administer a State Department of Education which shall include such divisions and departments as are necessary to render the maximum service to public education in the State.
4. Keep the public informed as to the problems and needs of the public schools by constant contact with all school administrators and teachers, by his personal appearances at public gatherings and by information furnished to the various news media in the State.
5. Have printed and distributed such bulletins, manuals and circulars as he may deem necessary for the professional improvement of teachers and for cultivation of public sentiment for public education, and have printed all forms necessary and proper for the administration of the State Department of Education.
6. Administer, through the State Department of Education, all policies and procedures adopted by the State Board of Education.
7. Assume such other responsibilities and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by law or may be assigned by the State Board of Education.<sup>3</sup>

#### State Board of Education

The State Board of Education is the policy-making body for public elementary and secondary education in South Carolina. The board has the power to:

- Adopt policies, rules and regulations for the governance to the state's public elementary and secondary schools.
- Adopt standards for any phase of education considered necessary to aid in providing adequate educational opportunities and facilities.
- Prescribe and enforce rules for the examination and certification of teachers.
- Grant state teachers' certificates and revoke them .....
- Approve textbooks and other instructional materials.
- Appoint committees as needed to carry out the orderly function of the board.
- Cooperate with the State Superintendent at all times in efforts to constantly improve the state's public education system.
- Assume other responsibilities, exercise other powers and perform other duties as assigned by law or as the board may find necessary to aid in the carrying out the purpose and objectives of the constitution of the state<sup>4</sup>.

#### Education Oversight Committee Accountability Division

The division is to conduct in-depth studies on implementation, efficiency, and the effectiveness of academic improvement efforts and:

- (1) monitor and evaluate the implementation of the state standards and assessment;
- (2) oversee the development, establishment, implementation, and maintenance of the accountability system;
- (3) monitor and evaluate the functioning of the public education system and its components, programs, policies, and practices and report annually its findings

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<sup>3</sup> SCDE webpage, <http://www.state.us/sde/statedep/duties>

<sup>4</sup> State Board's webpage, <http://www.state.us/sde/statebrd>

and recommendations in a report to the commission no later than February first of each year;....<sup>5</sup>

The EAA establishes the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) with powers to review and monitor the implementation and evaluation of the Education Accountability Act and Education Improvement Act programs and funding, recommend changes to various programs operated by state agencies and others, and to review expenditure reports and budget requests of state agencies and other entities. (Section 59-6-100) It further establishes within the EOC the Division of Accountability to serve as staff to the Committee (59-6-110). How the EOC and Division of Accountability are to actually function is not entirely clear from the law. The law is replete with requirements for the parties to work with, advise, or recommend without defining the meaning of these terms or the consequences for either party failing to comply. Moreover, many of the functions assigned to the EOC are those formerly and traditionally the purview of a State Board of Education or State Superintendent. A recent EOC publication stated that the Committee has been “appointed by the legislature to enact the South Carolina Education Accountability Act” ...that the “EOC will enforce clear, measurable and challenging standards...that the “EOC will oversee the implementation of ...remedies.”<sup>6</sup> There was no mention in this particular publication of what role the Department of Education or the State Board of Education might play. While it is possible that these relationships will be worked out over time, in the short run unnecessary and counter productive conflict seems likely. The following excerpts from the EAA are several examples of ambiguity that can provide ample opportunities for disputes and conflict.<sup>7</sup>

“The State Board of Education is directed to adopt grade specific performance-oriented standards...(Section 59-18-300)....the State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, is required to develop or adopt a statewide assessment program to measure student performance on state standards....(59-18-310)....After the first statewide field test of the assessment program...the Education Oversight Committee...will review...and make recommendations for needed changes, if any....The Department of Education will then report to the Education Oversight Committee...on the changes made to the assessments to comply with the recommendations....After review and approval by the Education Oversight Committee, the...assessments...will be administered to all public school students...Any new standards and assessments...developed and adopted by the State Board of Education, through the Department of Education, must be developed and adopted with the advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee. (59-18-320)

The State Board of Education, following the recommendations of the Accountability Division of the Education Oversight Committee, is directed to select norm referenced test...(59-18-340)

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<sup>5</sup> South Carolina Education Accountability Act of 1998, section 59-6-110

<sup>6</sup> South Carolina Education Oversight Committee, “South Carolina A.P.P.L.E.” January 1999. Emphasis added.

<sup>7</sup> The following excerpts are illustrative, but not exhaustive. There are many other instances of ambiguous and potentially conflict inducing provisions.

The State Board of Education, in consultation with the Education Oversight Committee, shall provide for a cyclical review...of state standards and assessments....After approval by the Education Oversight Committee, the recommendations may be implemented. (59-18-360)

The Department must work with the Division of Accountability in developing formats of the assessment results. (59-18-370)

The state Board of Education, working with the Oversight Committee, will establish guidelines....The State Board of Education, working with the Accountability Division, will promulgate regulations. (59-18-500)

The Education Oversight Committee, working with the State Board of Education, is directed to establish an annual report card...The Oversight Committee shall determine the criteria for and establish...performance ratings...The Oversight Committee shall establish student performance indicators...(59-18-900)

The State Board of Education, working with the division [of Accountability] and the Department of Education, must establish the Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards Program...The State Board of Education shall promulgate regulations to ensure districts of the State utilize these funds to improve or maintain exceptional performance...(59-18-1100)

The State Board of Education in consultation with the Education Oversight Committee must promulgate regulations and develop guidelines..[for providing flexibility to award recipients]. (59-18-1110)

The State Board of Education, based on recommendations of the division, must develop regulations requiring that...each district board of trustees must establish...a performance based accountability system..The Department of Education shall offer technical to any district requiring assistance in the development of an accountability plan. (59-18-1300)

When a school receives a rating of unsatisfactory ....., an external review team must be assigned by the Department of Education...The Education Oversight Committee, in consultation with the Department of Education shall develop criteria for the identification of persons to serve as members...[the review teams]. (59-18-1510)<sup>8</sup>

While the State has a strong and appropriate interest in holding the Department and local districts accountable for the performance of its schools, the provisions of the EAA could have the opposite effect. At the very best it is likely to divert energy from the very real task of improving student performance.

## **2. Certain practices of the prior administration ignored the governance structures of local school districts.**

The prior administration apparently adopted a policy of communicating around local governing boards and superintendents. Several cases where district

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<sup>8</sup> Emphasis added.

teachers received information in advance or different from district superintendents or school boards were reported. Slavish reliance on the formal “chain of command” may not always be expeditious, but it is not possible to hold districts accountable if their leaders’ authority is deliberately or inadvertently undermined. While this is clearly a communication problem, it also is an example of the state interfering with the governance of local districts.

### III. Communications

#### **1. Current systems for communication are not effective and potential avenues of communication are underutilized. Both internal and external relations have suffered.**

District personnel describe communications with the Department as ineffective. Apparently all written communications with school districts have required prior approval by the Superintendent’s office, and the majority were sent to districts on Fridays as “batch mail” for the district superintendent to distribute among appropriate employees. District personnel report that the batch mail approach is ineffective; that many individuals never get necessary information; that the information is often incomplete or dated, and that all other forms of communication such as personal calls have flowed only one way--from district to Department. Also, each Departmental unit develops and publishes its own documents and no centralized publications list or requisition office exists, reducing district educators’ knowledge about and acquisition of such material.

Information from the public relations office of the Department indicates that numerous communication approaches have been tried over the past several years; however, none of which appear to have been effective.

Districts have been unsure whom to call for assistance, and have often perceived that those they reach lack the expertise to provide relevant, correct answers or that the answers and interpretations often varied depending on the respondent.

Many school district officials indicated that they simply called “people they still knew” for information. Frequent reorganization and staff turnover left everyone unsure about staff assignments. Often staff were moved out of their areas of expertise and were then unable or unwilling to provide information.

One apparent result of the lack of effective communication is widespread confusion in the field regarding a number of significant issues. These include the respective roles of the Department, State Board, and Oversight Committee; the actual requirements and time line in the new EAA; the availability of materials and assistance for curriculum alignment with the new standards and assessments; and the new superintendent’s vision, priorities, and plans. The high stakes nature of the recent accountability legislation has only heightened the need for clear, effective communication. The business community is heavily involved and invested in the accountability oversight committee and apparently state newspapers have described the effort as the “last chance for public

education.” District personnel describe the challenge of meeting the requirements as the one of the biggest they will face in the next few years, particularly the “report card.” Obviously, communication is absolutely critical in the next few months and the Department quickly needs to clarify its positions, directions, and plans for implementation.

Internal as well as external communication has been problematic. Staff often learned about Department actions only after district personnel and the public. Also, interoffice collaboration and communication have been minimal. Staff cited occasions when actions were taken by one office that had significant implications for other areas without prior discussion or even notification.

**2. SCDE under-utilizes technology to communicate with school districts and technology employed may not be sufficiently user friendly.**

Web pages and email are two cost-effective ways to communicate with large audiences; however, the Department’s webpage is understaffed, underutilized and not particularly user-friendly. Most people interviewed did not refer to the Webpage at all or said that they used it infrequently. Email is not used in any systematic way to communicate with local districts and the public.

**3. The Department currently has no centralized publications function.**

Each office creates and publishes its own publications. There is no common policy on format, style or pricing. Requests for publications or price inquiries frequently are shuffled from office to office. Most departments of education, indeed most state agencies, maintain a publications office which ensures quality standards, establishes prices, handle publication sales, manages inventory, etc.

#### **IV. Organization and Personnel**

**1. The Department is generally understaffed and significantly understaffed in certain important functions.**

The Department has approximately 250 fewer employees than it did in 1991. The professional educator staff below the level of director was cut almost 23 percent from 204 to 158 in spite of substantially increased expectations associated with the implementation of the Education Accountability Act. School district administrators and Department staff concede that the Department may have been overstaffed in 1991; but our interviews revealed almost universal agreement that staff reductions over the past eight years have been excessive. Personnel shortages was second most frequently volunteered as the Department’s greatest weakness by district superintendents recently surveyed.

Virtually all respondents observed that the Department’s effectiveness had been reduced to a point that in some areas requiring state leadership it is was no

**Table 1: Salary Schedules for South Carolina Department of Education**

|                               | Band | Min      | Max       | Average  |
|-------------------------------|------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Education Associate           | 7    | \$36,447 | \$67,429  | \$50,910 |
| EA II (internal level)        | 7    | \$36,447 | \$67,429  | \$48,567 |
| EA III (internal level)       | 7    | \$36,447 | \$67,429  | \$58,206 |
| Program Manager II            | 8    | \$44,346 | \$82,043  | \$68,088 |
| Deputy Constitutional Officer | 10   | \$65,650 | \$121,456 | \$90,578 |

**Table 2: Average Salaries in South Carolina School Districts**

|                       | Superintendents | Assistant Superintendents | Directors of Instruction | Secondary Principals | Elementary Principals |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Districts under 2,500 | \$74,836        | \$62,903                  | \$63,291                 |                      |                       |
| Districts over 10,000 | \$101,912       | \$76,860                  | \$66,625                 |                      |                       |
| Districts over 30,000 | \$111,375       | \$76,395                  | \$50,900                 | **\$68,341           | *\$61,195             |
| Average               | \$85,924        | \$71,827                  | \$63,097                 | \$65,198             | \$58,880              |

\*ADM over 700

\*\*ADM over 1,000

**Table 3: SCDE Salaries Compared to District Salaries**

|                           | Average Salary | Average Large School/District Salary | % of EA's at/above average salary | Number (out of 143) | % of EA's at/above average large district salary | Number (out of 143) | % of PM's at/above average large district salary | Number (out of 18) |
|---------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|--|---------------------|--|--------------------|
| Elementary Principals     | \$58,880       | \$61,195                             | 13.3%                             | 19                  | 5%   | 7                   | 100%   | 18                 |
| Directors of Instruction  | \$63,097       | \$66,625                             | 1.4%                              | 2                   | 0%   | 0                   | 61%  | 11                 |
| Secondary Principals      | \$65,198       | \$68,341                             | 0.7%                              | 1                   | 0%   | 0                   | 56%  | 10                 |
| Assistant Superintendents | \$71,827       | \$76,860                             | 0.0%                              | 0                   | 0%   | 0                   | 0%   | 0                  |

EA = Education Associate

PM = Program Manager

**3. MAP was informed of several instances over the past eight years where employees were seemingly arbitrarily reassigned to jobs for which they had little training, experience, or interest.**

This practice would seem to have little positive purpose, and its effect was apparently to reduce organizational effectiveness and lower employee morale.

**4. Grouping of functions in the organization do not seem to be the result of any rational pattern.**

The organizational locations of various functions were shifted frequently over the past eight years<sup>9</sup>, and over time some of the resultant grouping of functions did not appear to be optimal. For example, the Collaboration Division contained community education, occupation education and the audio visual library. The Development Division contained staff development and research, and performed functions as diverse as monitoring school districts for compliance with state and federal laws and training SCDE personnel. Staff development, technical assistance and monitoring functions were shared by several divisions. Several of the more anomalous arrangements have been addressed in the past three months.

**5. Names of organizational units and titles of employees do not carry any meaning among local educators or the general public.**

Among the most frequent complaints we heard from Department staff and others was that the names of organizational units and titles of individuals were confusing and carried no real world meaning. Office names such as Collaboration, Education Initiatives, and Development tend to be ambiguous and lack analogs in school districts. As a consequence, many constituents seeking information were baffled as to where to access the Department. Even school district employees were confused by the organization. School district administrators informed us that when they were unable to obtain information from Department employees they knew, they would just give up rather than spend time being transferred from office to office.

Titles assigned to employees are similarly confusing. What functions would one divine from Education Associate II and III, or Executive Assistant III? Rank and function are more easily determined by titles such as Mathematics Consultant or Specialist, Assistant Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent.

**6. Supervisory spans of control are uneven throughout the organization and often unmanageable.**

In its apparent zeal to flatten the organization, the prior administration reduced the number of managers to the extent that those remaining were responsible for supervision of scores of professional and clerical employees. KMPG reported in

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<sup>9</sup> Described by one SCDE employee as "drive-by reorganizations."

1998 that one director had as many as 43 directly reporting subordinates.<sup>10</sup> This resulted in reported instances where clerical employees refused to take direction from non-managerial professionals, citing the fact that the professional did not evaluate the clerical employee. It also resulted in the practice of “self evaluation” described later in this report.

**7. Several SCDE employees reported that for the past several years they rarely have been clear about what was expected of them or for what they were accountable.**

Interviews with SCDE employees and managers revealed a high degree of uncertainty as to what they were expected to accomplish. Frequent reorganizations and reassignments served to exacerbate the confusion. Employees function best when management makes explicit its expectations for what and how employees will be accountable. All the rules of the game should be clear. What position do I play, what can I expect from my teammates, and how is score kept? Vague expectations lead inevitably to random behavior and timidity. Why should an employee hazard an opinion or take a risk if he or she is unclear about responsibility or consequences. Doing as little as possible would seem to be the rational response in the face of such uncertainty.

**8. Employees with similar classifications and duties receive significantly different salaries.**

The salary for Education Associates is established in pay band 07, a range of \$36,447 to \$67,429 with a midpoint of \$51,938. The Department has bifurcated the Education Associate Class into Education Associates II and Education Associates III. The former are assigned primarily “development” tasks and the latter “coordinate projects.” Even within these classes there appear to be salary discrepancies that can not easily be explained by differences in performance, work assignments, training or seniority. MAP was informed of cases where recent hires with responsibilities nearly identical to the responsibilities of incumbents with several years tenure in the Department were paid more than the incumbents. In some cases the new hires possessed less experience and training than incumbents, but still received a higher salary. These salary differentials are potent sources of low morale and discontent among those adversely affected.

**9. Secretarial and clerical support is unevenly distributed throughout the agency.**

Several SCDE employees reported in interviews that it was the practice of the prior administration to freeze, transfer or eliminate positions when vacancies occurred. As a result, clerical support appears to be more or less randomly assigned throughout the organization. Several support staff positions are filled with temporary employees who rarely stay long enough to be adequately

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<sup>10</sup> KMPG Peat Marwick LLP “Comprehensive of State Education Agencies”, January 27, 1998

trained. Moreover, some managers may have tolerated unsatisfactory employee performance merely to avoid risking loss of a position.

**10. The personnel evaluation system tends to be seen by SCDE employees as having little value. It carries no consequences and tends to be treated as a bureaucratic exercise.**

Employee Performance Management System (EPMS), the state mandated employee appraisal procedure, is applied unevenly throughout the organization. The prior administration required that only directors and above could evaluate employees. MAP was informed that it was fairly wide spread practice for an employee to complete his or her own appraisal and submit it for signature to a director who was unfamiliar with the employee's work. Most saw little value in the exercise since they received little if any feedback and there were no consequences associated with a positive or negative evaluation. One employee quipped that "at least it is one time a year that I have a face to face conversation with my supervisor."

**11. The prior administration tended to micromanage even the most mundane Departmental functions.**

Because of the prior administration's penchant for centralizing decision making into the Superintendent's office, extensive delays in communications with local districts were common place. For example, we were informed that it was required that all correspondence with local school districts be approved in the Superintendent's office. Even the smallest contract with a hotel or meeting facility required approval by the general counsel. Also, what appears to have been a disproportionate share of scarce resources were allocated to internal auditing. Since Department employees are unclear about the scope of their decision-making authority and anticipated being second guessed, they were discouraged from taking initiative for solving problems, further frustrating district administrators seeking clarification of various communications and directives from the Department.

## V. Delivery Systems

**1. The Department of Education does not have sufficient resources to provide all the assistance that local districts need or desire.**

Extensive reductions of staffing and other resources have severely attenuated SCDE's ability to provide leadership or statewide assistance in many critical areas. Leadership and assistance in the essential functions of curriculum, instruction and professional development are critically needed. School district administrators and policy makers with whom we spoke were nearly unanimous in their recommendation that SCDE should play a leadership and supportive role in improving South Carolina schools; but they reported that the Department's

presence in most South Carolina school districts had eroded almost to insignificance. From their perspective the quantity and quality of Departmental resources and assistance had been so reduced that the Department was no longer seen as a factor in improving educational programs in most school districts. Forty-two percent of the district superintendents surveyed thought that, "Marginal, has little impact on quality education," described the Department well or very well.

When we asked superintendents whether the Department behaved more as a coach, helping districts provide quality education, a referee, enforcing rules and regulations, or a spectator who is not an active participant in the educational process, 43.5 percent chose spectator, 38.7 percent chose referee. These responses stand in stark contrast to the role that superintendents would like the department to play. Asked which was the role the Department should perform, 72.6 percent chose coach. Interviews with district administrators and SCDE employees revealed nearly identical results.

On average, school administrators we interviewed gave the Department's overall performance for the past four to five years a grade of D. Most were quick to observe that they believed that SCDE employees had done the best they could under the circumstances. Only 16 percent of the district superintendents responding to the telephone survey reported that the Department had done a good or very good job during that period. Approximately 47 percent rated its performance as poor or very poor. Principals hold a somewhat higher opinion of the Department's performance, with nearly 33 percent giving its performance a good or very good rating. Over 40 percent of superintendents reported that the Department had done a poor or very poor job helping them provide quality education to their students, while just over 19 percent thought that it had done a good or very good job. Only just fewer than one third of the principals reported that the Department had done a good or very good job helping them provide a quality education to their students.

It usually is more cost effective for the state to develop curriculum, training programs, and assessments than it is for each district to go it alone. For this reason, development, research and initiation rather than retail delivery (i.e. services provided directly to schools by district employees) are where the state normally can make the greatest contribution. These activities require that the Department employ individuals with knowledge of research, best practices, and current trends in professional development, assessment and each curriculum area. Also, the advantages accruing to the imprimatur of the state are multiplied many fold when its employees are viewed as professionals with high levels of expertise.

**2. Department employees and district administrators described implementation of EAA as one of the biggest challenges schools face over the next several years, and were dubious that SCDE as currently staffed and organized would be adequate to meet that challenge.**

Districts need assistance aligning assessment, curriculum and instruction with standards; training teachers to teach to the standards; and using data from assessment to shape instruction. They need help recruiting and retaining qualified teachers. Small, rural and poor districts tend to evidence the greatest need.

**3. The Department and districts face major challenges in improving student achievement and in implementing the assessment requirements of the Education Accountability Act within the time lines specified and few, if any, systematic, sustained efforts to assist districts, schools, and teachers have been made.**

Grade level assessments based on the new integrated standards play a major role in South Carolina's accountability law. New assessments for grades 3 through 8 in mathematics and language arts will be used for the first time this spring to gather baseline data for accountability purposes and thereafter as the major criterion in promotion and retention decisions. They also eventually (2002) will form the basis for school and district report cards.

The KPMG<sup>11</sup> study conducted for the Department in 1997 concluded that although the state had a well designed assessment process, there was no evidence that this process had been implemented at the district level and advised the Department to spearhead efforts to implement curriculum standards to ensure consistent instruction statewide. Since that report, the Department's standards-based accountability system was redirected by the Performance and Accountability Standards for Schools Commission (PASS) and the Education Accountability Act (EAA). The Department has successfully integrated diverse standards and aligned them with new statewide assessments; however, standards for all areas are not yet finalized, performance targets have not been set, and little progress has been made in the alignment of standards, assessments, curriculum, and instruction at the district level.

The KPMG report states, "Instruction will not change in South Carolina until each teacher has received training on the new standards." Yet, Department efforts to help with this very alignment of standards, curriculum, and instruction as well as teacher training on the new system are perceived as "hit or miss" and largely ineffective.

Although a best practice document has been developed showing how to teach the standards, and seven workshops were conducted around the state, no one interviewed from districts knew of these attempts. All felt that systematic, sustained development and preparation were needed. Several mentioned the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

need for more attention to curriculum/standards alignment even in resource rich districts, and some even suggested a state curriculum.

The Department has made efforts to improve student achievement across the state by focusing on “impaired” districts. Those efforts were summarized by some district administrators as “initiatives du jour” with piece-meal implementation and little or no follow-up. Districts and schools not included in the “200” list have largely been on their own. In preparation for implementation of the new accountability system, some of them have developed and aligned curriculum and standards, developed sample items, etc. However, such efforts are not well documented and do not appear to be wide spread.

Finally, several grant programs to pilot types of assistance for low achieving students were launched for the 1998-99 school year: homework tutoring centers, alternative schools, and modified school year. Data are to be collected on each model. Even if these efforts prove to be very successful, they are too narrow in scope and incidence to make much difference. Only focused, systematic assistance from the state, begun immediately, offers any real promise of successful implementation of the EAA.

#### **4. Rural, low wealth, heavily-minority school districts appear to fare poorly on a number of dimensions but particularly facilities and quality staff.**

Based on limited information available within the constraints of this study, it appears as if there are serious discrepancies in the level of resources available among school districts. While educators from some districts expressed little concern for the absence of SCDE assistance in their districts almost all felt that small, rural and poor districts were unlikely to make much needed changes without substantial additional support from the state.

#### **5. Among the policies of the Nielsen administration that found favor with school district administrators was the significant reduction of bureaucratic monitoring and regulation enforcement.**

Prior to 1993 Department staff conducted unannounced, on-site reviews of one third of the school districts throughout the state annually to assess compliance with all standards. However, in 1993 funding for these visits was removed, staff in the accreditation area was reduced by at least 50 percent, and compliance was monitored only through district submitted reports. Site visits were conducted only if requested by a school district.

For many years, the standards, rules and procedures used and monitored by the Department were found, for many years, in state statutes, state regulations and the Department’s Defined Minimum Program (DMP). However, in 1997, in an effort to unify and streamline processes and regulations, the Department initiated a “regulation rollback.” Of 192 existing regulations, 88 were repealed, 15 were amended, and 83 were maintained. Action on the remaining six regulations is still pending and one new regulation was added.

Even in light of this significant reduction in enforcement, local educators still tend to view the Department as bureaucratic and rule bound. Two thirds of the district superintendents and 72 percent of the principals surveyed reported that the term “bureaucratic” described the Department well or very well, and approximately 40 percent of both groups thought it behaved like a rule enforcing referee.

While there is a case to be made for the state ensuring against theft and gross mismanagement of public funds, mandating and monitoring processes and inputs have rarely proven cost effective. Whenever a state mandates how resources will be allocated, it forfeits any real power to hold districts accountable for outcomes. Districts legitimately can justify unsatisfactory outcomes by claiming that they followed the rules. A basic tenant of the standards based accountability system described in EAA is that districts will be held accountable for results, not processes or inputs.

#### **6. Higher education officials expressed the opinion that South Carolina higher education institutions are insufficiently linked to elementary and secondary schools.**

Ultimately the quality of higher education in South Carolina is largely dependent on the quality of students who enter from high schools within the state. The Joint Legislative Committee to Study the Governance and Operation of Higher Education in South Carolina in its 1996 report identified the “Inadequate relationship with public education (K-12)” as an issue which needed to be addressed. Higher education officials with whom we talked also spoke of the necessity for building stronger linkages between higher education institutions and the schools from which the bulk of their students come.

Two particular areas of concern emerged: (1) The need to increase higher education opportunities for minority and low-income students in South Carolina; and (2) the requirement to increase the level of high school preparation in order better to prepare South Carolina students to perform successfully upon admission to higher education institutions. South Carolina’s SAT scores in 1997 were the lowest among the SREB states and are even more disappointing when compared to the national average. While there are some efforts to connect high schools and colleges, (e.g. tech-prep programs which directly link high schools to technical colleges<sup>12</sup>) much stronger links need to be made between other colleges and universities and their feeder schools.

Just as higher education is largely dependent on the quality of the products of public education in South Carolina, so too do the public schools depend on the quality of the South Carolina higher education system, which produces the vast majority of teachers for the public schools. South Carolina teacher training

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<sup>12</sup> Even within these programs the quality of the high school—Technical College connection is uneven.

institutions must better build into the teacher preparation curriculum instruction in aligning standards, curriculum frameworks, and assessment.

Part of the difficulty in connecting elementary and high schools with postsecondary institutions has been created by the complicated governance arrangements in higher education. The State of South Carolina has a Commission on Higher Education, a State Board of Technical and Comprehensive Education, 16 Local Area Commissions, one for each of the Technical Colleges and 10 Boards of Trustees for the Colleges and Universities. The University of South Carolina's Board of Trustees has under its purview nine institutions: the research University in Columbia, five two-year branches, two four year branches and the University Medical School. Apparently higher education does not send clear signals to high schools about expectations for college students and feedback on the performance of high school graduates upon attendance in higher education institutions. Pulling all these diverse parties together in order to focus on the K-12—higher education connection could be an important early initiative by the Superintendent.

### **7. Existing regional delivery systems tend to overlap and conflict.**

Currently at least three regional delivery systems exist. These appear to be independent and overlapping in jurisdiction. They include 13 math/science Hubs comprising the South Carolina Statewide Systemic Initiative, 16 Tech Prep Consortia of the South Carolina Preparation for the Technologies and Regional Technology Centers. The first two delivery systems are heavily dependent upon federal funding. Several districts also belong to less formal consortia formed to pool program improvement resources. Among the local district educators with whom we spoke, the regional programs received mixed reviews. Superintendents and principals responding to the telephone survey tended to view them more positively. About half the superintendents and three quarters of the principals gave the hubs and consortia an A or B on usefulness. Fewer than one third of the superintendents rated the tech centers as an A or B on usefulness and two thirds reported overlapping service areas and just over 30 percent identified overlapping functions. Principals tended to not see the overlap as a problem.

Decentralized delivery systems tend to be more costly than centralized systems and are indicated only when the costs associated with unique geographic or demographic factors outweigh the costs of redundant governance and the difficulty of managing employees and programs long distance. The physical size and number of school districts in South Carolina do not seem to warrant decentralized regional delivery systems. Virtually every district is only a few hours by automobile from Columbia.

### **8. Various data systems are antiquated, inadequate and not integrated.**

As South Carolina continues to move to a standards-based accountability system, the role of systematic data collection becomes increasingly important. Interviewees from school districts and the Department frequently complained

about the inadequacy of the Department's management information system. Data collection in the Department needs to be integrated so that data files relating to student information, finance and budget information, teacher and administrator information can be combined and easily accessed by state and local officials. Absent such an integrated system, the Department will be unable effectively to carry out its accountability and reporting responsibilities.

**9. The Department's school district auditing capacity has been reduced to a point where its effectiveness has declined dramatically.**

Under the prior administration, the Department of Education significantly reduced the size of its school district auditing function. This reduction was seen as part of an overall strategy to decrease what was perceived as an over reliance on the monitoring function and was designed to reduce state intrusions in local district matters. We generally applaud past attempts to reduce the state's reliance on monitoring, but suggest that in the area of school district audits the policy may have progressed too far. The state does have an important fiduciary role to ensure that district expenditures comply with complex and often changing state and federal laws and regulations. This is a particularly acute problem for small, rural districts which may not have sufficient staff and expertise to deal with the complex spending restrictions associated with diverse funding sources. In many cases, the stakes are very high—a single audit exception could have devastating impact on a small district's budget. District business officials we interviewed generally rated the state's audit staff as helpful and knowledgeable.

**10. The state operated school transportation system appears to be significantly under-funded.**

A study of the transportation system is beyond the scope of this study, but transportation was mentioned frequently as a problem area. Most of the bus fleet is nearing the end of its useful life. Approximately two thirds of the busses are older than 13 years or have traveled more than 150,000 miles. Service vehicles are in even worse shape, with many vehicles over 250,000 miles. The level of staffing is approximately 25 percent below the 1991 level. There is high turnover among mechanics, reportedly because salary levels are lower than those paid in the private sector and by other state agencies. The vacancy rate for bus drivers is approximately 10 percent, frequently making it necessary to pick up students earlier and return them home later. Frequent turnover of drivers and mechanics increases training needs and suggests potential safety concerns.

**11. District personnel report that the Teacher Certification Office is unable to process applications for certification and fulfill other requests in a timely manner.**

A study of this function is beyond the scope of this study, but virtually every school district administrator with whom we spoke complained about the inability of this office to provide timely assistance. The consensus of all respondents was that the fundamental problem was inadequate staffing and

insufficient use of technology. KMPG (1998)<sup>13</sup> cited a similar concern, but attributed the problem to low productivity. Further study is required to determine which perception is more accurate.

**12. District personnel reported excessive delays of the review and approval of building plans.**

A study of this function also is beyond the scope to this study, however the facilities management function frequently was cited as a bottleneck. SCDE is required to review and approve all plans for school buildings. The Department is also responsible for inspecting school district buildings. Counties lack the jurisdiction and expertise to enforce building codes pertaining to schools. The two architects employed by the Department are unable to meet the needs of school districts in a timely manner. Significant backlogs were reported. We were informed that these delays have resulted in increased interest costs for some school districts.

We were informed also that the facilities inventory maintained by SCDE is based on unvalidated district reporting. As a consequence the state does not have reliable data upon which to project school district facility needs.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides recommendations regarding ways in which the South Carolina Department of Education can address the various findings presented above. Most of our recommendations can be implemented in the short term, using existing resources. Some require law changes and additional resources. MAP makes these latter recommendations with the full recognition that real and serious constraints may preclude short term implementation. The Superintendent has to play the hand she was dealt. She must administer the laws presently on the books, she must live within the budget she inherited, and in the near term adequate expansion of staffing may not be feasible.<sup>14</sup> It is our hope that all of our recommendations will provide not only sound guidance, but also objective evidence of real needs that must be met if the state is to play a meaningful role in improving educational outcomes in South Carolina.

### General Recommendations

Michael Fullan<sup>15</sup> has extensively researched effective educational organizations and we offer here a summary of his conclusions as a form of general guidance. Fullan's research suggests six guidelines for state departments of education charged with responsibility for implementing complex educational reform. MAP offers them here as general advice. In our experience this is advice well worth heeding.

- 1. Concentrate on increasing the capacity of other agencies and organizations to implement changes. No state education agency should take it solely upon itself to make change happen.**
- 2. Be clear about what is being implemented, and devote time to ensuring that cooperating organizations understand what is meant by the change and what is expected in terms of results.**
- 3. Have a comprehensive, but flexible plan to guide the change process.**
- 4. Make sure that staff in the department responsible for guiding the change process develop knowledge and competence in both the process and the substance of the changes to be implemented.**
- 5. Focus attention on improving teaching and learning. Do not be distracted by other non-essential activities.**

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<sup>14</sup> It is possible, however, that available federal funds could be applied to support additional staff if positions were allocated. We recommend that SCDE exploit the maximum flexibility allowable under the law (which in many cases is considerable) to allocate these funds in support of the Superintendent's priorities.

<sup>15</sup> Fullan, Michael G. and Suzanne Stiegelbauer, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 1991, Teachers College Press, Columbia University, NY. Even though this research was first reported in 1991, its conclusions are still relevant.

**6. Understand that complexity and persistence go hand-in-hand. Large-scale change is never achieved quickly or easily.**

**I. Vision**

**1. Superintendent Tenenbaum should begin immediately the process of translating into operation her of vision for public schools in South Carolina.**

Superintendent Tenenbaum's success ultimately will be measured by improvements of student achievement, but she is in many ways far removed from schools. She must therefore motivate others to make the changes necessary to improve teaching and learning. But before that can happen those others must be clear about what they are expected to do. Local superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, students, SCDE employees all have a role to play, and the Superintendent's first responsibility is to make it clear to each group what she wants them to do and why doing that will improve student outcomes. Her job is larger, but a clear vision is *sine qua non*. Without it, not much else will make a difference.

It is not recommended that large amounts of time be expended on the development of a formal mission or goals statements. These are useful only as a point of departure. Nor is a large scale participatory process recommended at this time. The vision should begin to answer questions such as: What will improve schools? What is the nature of curriculum and instruction that will produce improved student outcomes? What purposes are served by various state interventions such as frameworks, standards, assessment, accreditation? How are each of these related? How should the public measure progress? What does SCDE service mean? What does SCDE leadership mean? What are the interim milestones on the way to achieving the vision, i.e. those objectives that indicate progress toward ultimate goals?

**2. Superintendent Tenenbaum should develop a strategic plan for accomplishing her vision.**

Improving education is a complex, long-term process. It is difficult under ideal conditions and almost impossible if all available resources are not working in concert. Development of a comprehensive, evolutionary implementation strategy will significantly enhance the probability of success. It is essential to determine all that needs to be changed to achieve the vision, then to devise a plan to make it happen. Given the Department's serious resource constraints every needed change can not be addressed immediately. It is essential that priorities be carefully set and communicated, and once set not changed without careful consideration. Too many priorities and too few resources are a recipe for chaos, employee burn out, and ultimately failure.

The Superintendent has under her control some powerful levers in the standards, assessment, frameworks, department staff, bully pulpit, and various processes and programs. Working together these levers can be reinforcing and produce

great synergy. Without a specific plan that addresses each potential lever, many will be misapplied; some will actually operate in conflict with the vision. Program by program, process by process, she should ask how can it help reach the vision? How does it have to change to maximize its potential?

For example, federal and state categorical programs are levers for change that are often over looked. Unchanged they become agents for preserving the status quo. Although these programs are intended to improve the academic performance in the regular program of eligible students, they are frequently used to fund separate programs, often isolated from the regular program. Treating categorical programs as funding sources for improving the academic performance of eligible students in the regular classroom will enhance their power as levers for effective change. Proposed changes in federal law are likely to make these resources even more flexible.

**3. Superintendent Tenenbaum should adopt a manageable, realistic set of priorities that are consistent with the resources available and resist the temptation to over commit and over promise.**

It is a common trap for enthusiastic leaders to proliferate initiatives. It appears as if the previous superintendent fell victim to this temptation. Typically there is no shortage of good ideas, but the most effective leaders are sufficiently disciplined to adopt a few good ideas and let them play out before beginning others. Each initiative will require local districts to act and Departmental resources to be expended. Too many initiatives will deplete local educator goodwill as well as Departmental resources. MAP does not advocate timidity, merely discipline. Beware of the “fire, fire, fire, reload, fire, fire, fire” syndrome.

Another problem associated with proliferating initiatives is that they become disconnected (or are never connected), thereby dissipating the potential synergy of a coherent strategy.

**4. Superintendent Tenenbaum regularly and frequently should interact with Department staff to convey substantive information such as organizational structure, priorities, etc.**

Agency staff are both the vehicle through which the vision is achieved and an important constituency requiring regular attention. Frequent interactions with employees is most important in the early days of a new administration. The Superintendent should view every interaction with Department staff as an opportunity to teach, to help them internalize and embrace her vision.

## II. Governance

**1. The Legislature and the Governor should reexamine the provisions of the Education Accountability Act with the goal of clarifying lines of authority and responsibility.**

Ultimately, the General Assembly and the Governor bear responsibility for the provision of all state governmental services, including education. The South Carolina Constitution assigns the responsibility for supervision of public instruction to the State Superintendent of Education. The General Assembly and the Governor appropriately share the responsibility for oversight of the Superintendent, the State Board and the Department of Education as these entities carry out their responsibilities. However, some provisions of the Educational Accountability Act have made it more difficult for state or even local parties appropriately to be held accountable for their actions. For example, the statute calls for the Education Oversight Committee to have final review and approval authority of standards-based assessments prior to their implementation. Changes in standards and assessments can only be made with the advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee. If the system does not work, who then is to be held accountable?

These and a multitude of similar provisions contained in the Educational Accountability Act make it more difficult to affix responsibility—one of the basic tenets of any successful accountability system. Another important principle for accountability systems is to ensure that clear expectations are established and that clear signals are being sent. This too has been complicated by certain provisions of the act. School district personnel repeatedly reported their confusion about the future direction of the accountability act. Implementing accountability is seen by districts as the one of biggest challenge they face—to have less than clear signals about what they are expected to do can only complicate this already formidable task.

The General Assembly and the Governor should revisit the specific provisions of the Education Accountability Act to address issues of ambiguity and to ensure that accountability is appropriately fixed. Responsibilities for the implementation and administration of the act should fall squarely on the shoulders of the Constitutional officer, the Superintendent. (Of course, responsibility without adequate resources and discretion for their allocation will almost guarantee failure.) Responsibilities for monitoring and oversight should fall on the shoulders of the General Assembly and the Governor or their designees—in this case, the Education Oversight Committee.

### **III. Communications**

#### **1. SCDE should develop a more effective communications strategy.**

SCDE should develop and implement a comprehensive communication strategy with specific plans for communicating with various stakeholders and constituencies. One size does not fit all. Even among educators, communication with teachers should be different from that with superintendents and principals. The message should be similar and reinforcing, but the level of detail, nature of language used and even medium of communication needs to be customized for

each audience. The advantages of using technology should be exploited, but more traditional media should not be overlooked.

Communication involves listening as well as talking. The plan should include ongoing procedures for obtaining feedback from parents, teachers, superintendents, school board members, legislators and others. We recommend some combination of formal and informal measures, ranging from personal conversations, review of letters to the editor, and town hall meeting, to regular formal surveys. We also recommend that at least some of the feedback be gathered and analyzed by objective third parties. Finally, we recommend that Superintendent Tenenbaum and SCDE listen carefully to their critics as well as their supporters.

## **2. SCDE should expand the use of email for communication with school districts and the public.**

MAP recommends that the Superintendent consider regularly (e.g. biweekly) sending email messages to district superintendents to communicate priorities and to invite feedback. E-mail also can be used to reduce walk-in and telephone inquiries; however, quick response time must be a priority or additional inquiries will be generated. Specific e-mail addresses for superintendents only, personnel directors only, etc. with 2-hour response times; e-mail addresses for the general public with 24-hour turn-around and automatically generated customer service surveys; a consistent e-mail address for all department personnel, e.g., name.name@scdoe.com, so that constituents can “always get through” all raise customer satisfaction level and maximize effectiveness of staff time and resources. SCDE directories with names, numbers, and e-mail addresses of personnel for each area should be widely available.

## **3. SCDE should expand the use of its webpage and make it more user friendly.**

The website should permit online ordering of publications, posting of procedures and applications for certification, summarizing current research concerning best practice, providing additional sample assessment questions, as well as additional sample lesson plans incorporating particular standards and assessments, establishing educator chat rooms on pertinent topics, and performing many other relevant functions.

## **4. SCDE management should ensure that adequate time is allocated for regular staff meetings to discuss activities and expectations, and generally facilitate communications between and among levels of the organization.**

Most decisions and activities in the Department cross division lines and affect more than one program or unit. Regular and effective communication across organizational boundaries is essential to ensure that all staff represent the Department consistently, and that all decisions have been considered from a variety of perspectives prior to implementation. We do not advocate more meetings for the sake of meeting, nor are we unaware of the cost of collaboration. It will fall to the Superintendent and her deputies to model the desired behavior

and create a climate where communication is efficient and collaboration is valued.

#### IV. Organization and Personnel

**1. SCDE should conduct a comprehensive review of salaries. Equity adjustments should be made in those cases where salary differences can not be justified by differentials in duties, performance, or seniority.**

An employee's salary should not be determined merely by when he or she was hired. Nor should it be based on political connections or cronyism. Salary differentials are a particular problem when loyal employees of long tenure make less than employees newly hired to perform the same function. We are not suggesting that all employees should receive the same pay, only that differences should be rational and purposeful.

**2. SCDE should redefine the professional education classes to differentiate between those who perform purely administrative and monitoring functions and those who provide programmatic leadership. MAP recommends that the latter class be renamed to better describe the function that they are to perform, e.g. consultant or specialist.**

The Department currently differentiates in the education classes between employees who are responsible for "developing" programs (Education Associates II) and those who "coordinate" programs (Education Associate III). From our experience it requires a very high level of expertise and sophistication to develop programs that find acceptance in local school districts and that can make a difference in teaching and learning. Managing or coordinating such programs requires a similarly high level of expertise. A more reasonable division should be between those employees who perform more administrative functions such as processing applications and plans, or who monitor categorical programs, enforce regulations, rules, etc. and those who are more directly involved in developing and implementing strategies to improve teaching and learning. As we recommend below, it will be necessary to offer higher salaries to attract the level of expertise necessary to provide meaningful state wide leadership.

**3. SCDE should set as a very high priority recruiting experts in curriculum, assessment and professional development who would be credible and enjoy the respect of local educators. Qualifications and salary levels should be comparable to those of elementary and secondary principals in school districts with more than 10,000 students.**

If SCDE is to become a credible player, let alone leader, in improving South Carolina public schools, it is essential that it employ a critical mass of individuals who are recognized for their expertise in the curriculum disciplines (e.g. mathematics, history/social studies, English/language arts), assessment, or professional development. The requisite expertise derives from training and

experience. As a rule of thumb, minimum qualifications would be comparable to those of an elementary or secondary school principal, assistant superintendent or district director of curriculum. Educators working in larger districts tend to have more breadth of experience and enjoy a larger, more statewide perspective. To attract the necessary level of expertise, it will be necessary to offer salaries competitive with those paid in local school districts.

MAP recognizes budget constraints presently faced by the Department. We recommend that SCDE develop a plan for acquiring this capacity over time. As positions become vacant or new positions are authorized by the General Assembly this plan will provide guidance for which positions are of highest priority. We further recommend that when presented the choice between quantity and quality, the latter be given preference. For example, using salary savings generated by three Education Associate II vacancies to hire two educators with a higher level of expertise would seem to be an excellent trade.

**4. SCDE should immediately implement a process whereby employees can express preference for assignments that more closely match their training, experience and interests. These expressions of preference should be considered in all subsequent staff reassignments.**

We can think of no useful purpose for assigning employees to jobs for which they have little expertise or interest. Employees with high levels of expertise are in sufficiently short supply that the administration should move immediately to ensure the best fits between expertise and job requirements. Such a move will undoubtedly enhance employee morale as well as advance the Department's general level of effectiveness.

**5. SCDE should systematically examine all functions and determine the level of specialization and expertise required for performing activities consistent with the Superintendent's vision.**

SCDE employees should possess at least the level of expertise expected of a person performing similar functions in a school district. Those functions requiring specialized knowledge should be staffed with individuals with experience and expertise in those functions. Generalists, by definition, are required to possess only general or superficial knowledge and expertise. This is inadequate if SCDE plans to assume any substantive leadership role in improving South Carolina Schools. Generalists should be employed only in those positions that require a general level of knowledge and experience to adequately perform the function.

**6. SCDE should assign a much higher priority and allocate adequate resources to the professional development of its own staff.**

In the short term it is essential that all SCDE employees not only internalize the Superintendent's vision, but begin to translate it into useful activities. The only way to ensure that all employees are sending a consistent message to school districts is through extensive staff development. Staff development should be

planned around agency priorities, and should be ongoing and predictable. Managers should hold regular, frequent meetings with subordinates that meet the same criteria. Periodic staff retreats could similarly be effectively used to communicate and clarify the Superintendent's vision and enhance the probability that staff would internalize it. In this regard the Department should model behavior that it expects of districts.

**7. Employees at all levels should be empowered and encouraged to make decisions about the work that they know best. Management should provide clear guidelines for expectations and hold employees accountable for results.**

Highly effective organizations all around the world are providing employees much more discretion over their day to day activities. They have found that those closest to clients often have a clearer idea about how to meet client needs. MAP does not recommend that management abdicate its responsibility for setting clear expectations and holding employees accountable for performance. For instance, the workers at the Saturn plant have significant discretion over how they organize their work, but they are still expected to build automobiles that meet certain specifications. Decentralization of decision-making should be an evolutionary process. Employees first need to internalize the Superintendent's vision and the role they are expected to play in its implementation. They should be provided adequate resources, including training, to meet those expectations. These things take time and patience, but are goals worth pursuing.

**8. SCDE should develop in every organizational unit annual workplans with measurable outcomes (not activities) and budgets specified. Employees should be evaluated, at least in part, on their performance relative to the approved outcomes and budgets.**

If you don't know where you are going, any path will get you there. A thoughtful, collaborative planning process almost always leads to a more cost-effective allocation of scarce resources. Developing plans and tying activities to budgets helps keep expectations realistic, and a serious planning process with the active engagement of management at all levels offers a very effective opportunity to ensure that resources are used in a way that reinforces the overall strategy. Resources will be expended whether or not there are management plans. The choice is how they will be expended.

We find that there are several common objections raised to the development of management plans. The first is that it is impossible to predict what will be the greatest need in the coming year for a person's or unit's time. Plans should not be cast in stone. Changes should be negotiated when indicated by changing conditions, but an uncertain future is no excuse for failing to plan.

A second objection is that the planner's activities occur too far from the end goal, e.g. student achievement, to hold them accountable for outcomes. This is a problem, but hardly insurmountable. At the very least, systematic feedback from clients could serve as a measure of performance. Professional development is a good example. The number of people trained is a weak measure of performance.

Evaluations by participants of the training provided is better. Follow up on how participants used the information or skills provided in the development activity is even better. Evaluation of the effect on student achievement over time is best.

A third objection is that planning is a bureaucratic exercise, with little meaning. For planning to be a useful tool management must treat it as such. Approval of plans should occur only after each successive level of management is convinced that the proposed activities and allocation of resources will contribute to the overall strategy and advance the Superintendent's vision. Once plans are approved they should be viewed as contracts with consequences tied to performance.

**9. SCDE should take immediate steps to address the quantity and quality of clerical support. Management should standardize the clerical to professional ratio.**

We recommend that SCDE establish a standard for clerical support, such as one support person per four to six educational professionals, one per program manager or assistant superintendent, and one per deputy superintendent. Not all functions would warrant such a rich ratio; others may have greater need, but the adopted standard should be the default option. Variance from the standard could be justified case by case as necessary. Salary levels for support staff should be set to ensure that they are competitive with those paid by other state agencies.

**10. A concentrated effort should be made to replace temporary clerical workers with well qualified permanent employees.**

Temporary employees tend to be more expensive and less productive than permanent employees, and frequently they depart just as they are learning the Department's procedures. One approach that MAP recommends SCDE consider is establishing a "floater" pool of clerical employees who can substitute for absent employees and replace those who have terminated. Also, they can be deployed to offices where there is short term need occasioned by a peak in work load. In addition to providing substitute clerical employees, service in the pool could serve as a source of training for newly hired support staff.

**11. SCDE should maximize the utility of the mandated employee appraisal process. All managers should be trained in its proper application. The annual appraisal should play a prominent role in decisions concerning compensation, promotion, demotion or disciplinary action.**

Regular and candid feedback to employees is essential to the effective management of any organization. Given all of the circumstances of beginning a new administration and the existing low morale of employees, an extra effort to provide feedback at SCDE is essential<sup>16</sup>. Effectiveness of the EPMS will be

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<sup>16</sup> Formal annual evaluations are an essential form of feedback, but they are no substitute for regular face to face feedback on performance.

enhanced when results figure prominently in subsequent decisions about compensation, promotion and other changes in employment status.

Any annual appraisal of employees is only as effective as the seriousness afforded it by top management. Management of the appraisal process might be facilitated if all appraisals were conducted in a specified time period and were due on the same date. To the extent permissible under state law and regulations, employees should be evaluated by that person who assigns and evaluates their work, regardless of his or her managerial status.

**12. MAP recommends SCDE consider “360 degree” evaluations whereby employees are evaluated by their peers and managers, and managers are evaluated by their peers and those they evaluate and supervise.**

An appraisal system that takes into account information from peers and subordinates as well as superiors tends to be more objective and comprehensive. In the system we propose managers would retain responsibility for overall evaluation of subordinates, but would be required to consider the information obtained from the other sources.

**13. SCDE should change names of organizational units and job titles to be more recognizable to local educators and the general public.**

Organizational names should communicate something about the functions they represent. Names such as education programs management, curriculum management, professional development, and assessment convey to all a sense of what persons in these units are likely to be doing. Deputy superintendent, assistant superintendent, and curriculum consultant tend to imply rank and the nature of the incumbent’s responsibilities. Deputy superintendent and manager or director may make more sense in non-educator classes.

**14. The Department’s organization should remain as flat as possible consistent with reasonable spans of control, with a limited number of levels of management below Superintendent/Chief of Staff.**

Flat organizations facilitate communication up and down the organization. In the education classes we recommend only three levels of management below the Superintendent and Chief of Staff. These would include deputy superintendents who would manage major divisions, assistant superintendents who would report to a deputy and manage offices comprised of major functions, and unit managers who would report to an assistant superintendent and supervise and coordinate the activities of logical collections of education professionals. Non-education specific functions should be similarly organized, but the nature of the functions performed may necessitate different titles, more levels of management and different spans of control.

**15. Managerial spans of control should be established based on functions performed by subordinates and the level of autonomy expected of subordinates.**

The number of subordinates should not be so large that an effective manager is unaware of the status of every important assignment of each directly reporting subordinate. The span of control should afford an effective manager sufficient time to provide frequent feedback to each employee. While it is not appropriate to establish *a priori* a precise ratio, under normal circumstances a manager's span of control should be approximately six to nine directly reporting subordinates.

**16. Superintendent Tenenbaum should adopt an official policy on staff diversity.**

The absence of an official organizational policy on staff diversity creates the impression that diversity is not a priority within the agency. Our conversations with Superintendent Tenenbaum persuade us that she perceives diversity as a valuable resource in the agency and the school districts of South Carolina. Official adoption of a diversity policy that guides all personnel transactions, including recruitment, assignments, and promotions will send a strong signal of the Superintendent's commitment to maintaining a diverse workforce in the Department.

**17. SCDE should create an organization that telegraphs the Superintendent's vision and priorities, groups similar functions together, and relies on specialists with the capacity to provide statewide leadership.**

The form of organization chosen, the relative prominence given certain functions, and staff appointments all are powerful forms of communicating what the Superintendent holds to be important. It should be apparent from the balance of this report that MAP strongly recommends that teaching and learning be given prominence and SCDE serve as a catalyst for preparing South Carolina schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Below we have outlined two organizational structures which would facilitate the Department playing that role. They assume SCDE will lead and provide support for local districts.

We offer these structures, not as the best ways to organize, but to illustrate structures that would be consistent with our various recommendations.

The organizational structures described below would meet the following criteria:

- are flattened to maximize communications
- telegraph mission and priorities
- group like functions together
- rely on specialists with capacity to provide statewide leadership
- feature reasonable spans of control
- name units consistent with functions and responsibilities

These structures are intended as illustrations and may not have addressed every major function.

A **Chief of Staff** would report directly to the Superintendent. It is essential that the incumbent would be able to serve as the Superintendent's alter ego. He or she should be able to speak for the Superintendent on a wide range of issues and would have primary responsibility for internal management of the Department.

The **Chief Counsel, Public Information Officer** and **Deputy for Intergovernmental Affairs** would report to the chief of staff or Superintendent, depending on the Superintendent's preference.

Four deputy superintendents would report to the chief of staff. The four deputies, chief of staff, chief counsel, head of intergovernmental affairs and public information officer would comprise the Superintendent's cabinet.

The deputies would each manage one of the following divisions—Education Programs, Fiscal and Business Services, Monitoring and Enforcement, and Internal Management.

The deputy for **Education Programs** must be a strong instructional leader as well as an experienced manager. This division would be the primary source of state level leadership in critical educational activities. Approximately six assistant superintendents (or equivalent) would report to this deputy and each would manage one of the following offices—Curriculum, Assessment, Professional Development, Categorical Programs, Child Development and Textbook Selection/Instructional Materials. It is highly recommended that all these offices report to the same deputy to maximize program consistency and articulation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> If the education experts in the Education Programs Division are to be effective as leaders with credibility among local educators, they must be at least as expert as the local educators they are to assist. Thus it is essential that salary levels be sufficient to attract and retain professionals with a high level of expertise. The Department should look to salaries paid to school principals in medium to large districts for comparison for education professionals in that division. The leaders of the various office should be paid at salary levels comparable to assistant superintendents in medium to large districts.

The **Curriculum Office** would be comprised of recognized experts and leaders in mathematics, language arts, science, history/social studies, vocational subjects, art, physical education, health, etc. These experts would be charged with developing statewide strategies for improving student performance in each discipline. Leadership for guidance and counseling and other support services would be located in this office as well. Strategies will, of necessity, be dependent on the ability of state staff to successfully influence and lever resources in professional associations, school districts, colleges and universities and elsewhere. Any strategies dependent upon retail delivery by state staff (i.e. state staff providing direct assistance school-by-school or even district-by-district) probably are doomed to failure. To the extent feasible, at least one specialist in each curriculum area should be funded by Title 1 and one by special education and given the responsibility to develop subject specific strategies for eligible populations. In order to maintain a reasonable span of control, specialists will be grouped into logical units. Each such unit should be headed by a coordinator or lead specialist with quasi-managerial responsibilities.

The **Assessment Office** would be responsible for managing all programs related to student and teacher assessment. It would be comprised of professional psychometricians, statisticians and other testing experts. It is essential assessment be located organizationally close to the curriculum experts to ensure content articulation.

The **Office of Professional Development** would focus on developing the capacity of school districts and other entities to deliver high quality training to teachers and administrators. The specialists in this office must work in close collaboration with their colleagues in the curriculum and assessment offices. Leadership academies and the development of SCDE staff would also be contained in this office. The Department should model behavior that they expect of districts and should assign a much higher priority to the professional development of its own staff. Such training should be planned around agency priorities, and should be ongoing and predictable.

The **Office of State and Federal Categorical Programs** would be responsible for the policy-making and administrative functions necessary to operate special education, Title 1, vocational education and other state and federal categorical programs. These categorical programs exist primarily to enhance the success of eligible student populations in the regular program, and are essentially funding sources rather than programs, per se. As such it is not only feasible, but highly recommended that resources allocated to the policy and administrative functions be minimized and resources devoted to curriculum specialists be maximized.

The **Office of Child Development** would be responsible for implementing Superintendent Tenenbaum's priority program for young children. As elsewhere in this division, it is essential that the employees

of this office possess extensive experience and expertise in developing and managing child development programs.

The **Office of Textbook Selection and Instructional Materials** would manage the textbook selection process. It should also evaluate textbooks and instructional materials and provide school districts with "Consumer Reports" analyses of all recommended materials.

The **Monitoring and Enforcement Division** would be responsible for implementation of various provisions of EAA, such as organizing and coordinating the external review teams, reviewing accountability plans, etc. It would also be responsible for accreditation, external audits, and monitoring of categorical programs. It is not recommended that this division be heavily staffed with full time state employees. Rather a small full time cadre would be augmented, as necessary, by specialists from other divisions and carefully recruited and trained school district personnel.<sup>18</sup>

The **Fiscal and Business Services Division** would be responsible for those non-program functions that serve school districts. These would include Subvention, School District Budgeting and Accounting, Transportation, School Facilities, Credentialing, and Food Services.<sup>19</sup>

The **Internal Management Division** would be responsible for Human Resources, Departmental Accounting and Budgeting, Procurement, Internal Audits, etc. We recommend that a Publications Office be created and assigned to this division. That office would be responsible for coordinating the publication and sales of all Department created documents other than regular correspondence. It could ensure consistency of format, content and quality across all Departmental publications. Properly structured it could generate sufficient revenue from the sale of publications to offset the cost of reprints.

We have made no specific recommendations for the placement of the State Special Schools or Governor's Schools. Because the SCDE's primary responsibility for these entities is largely administrative, it may make sense to assign them to the Fiscal and Business Services Division. The Education Programs Division would be a second choice.

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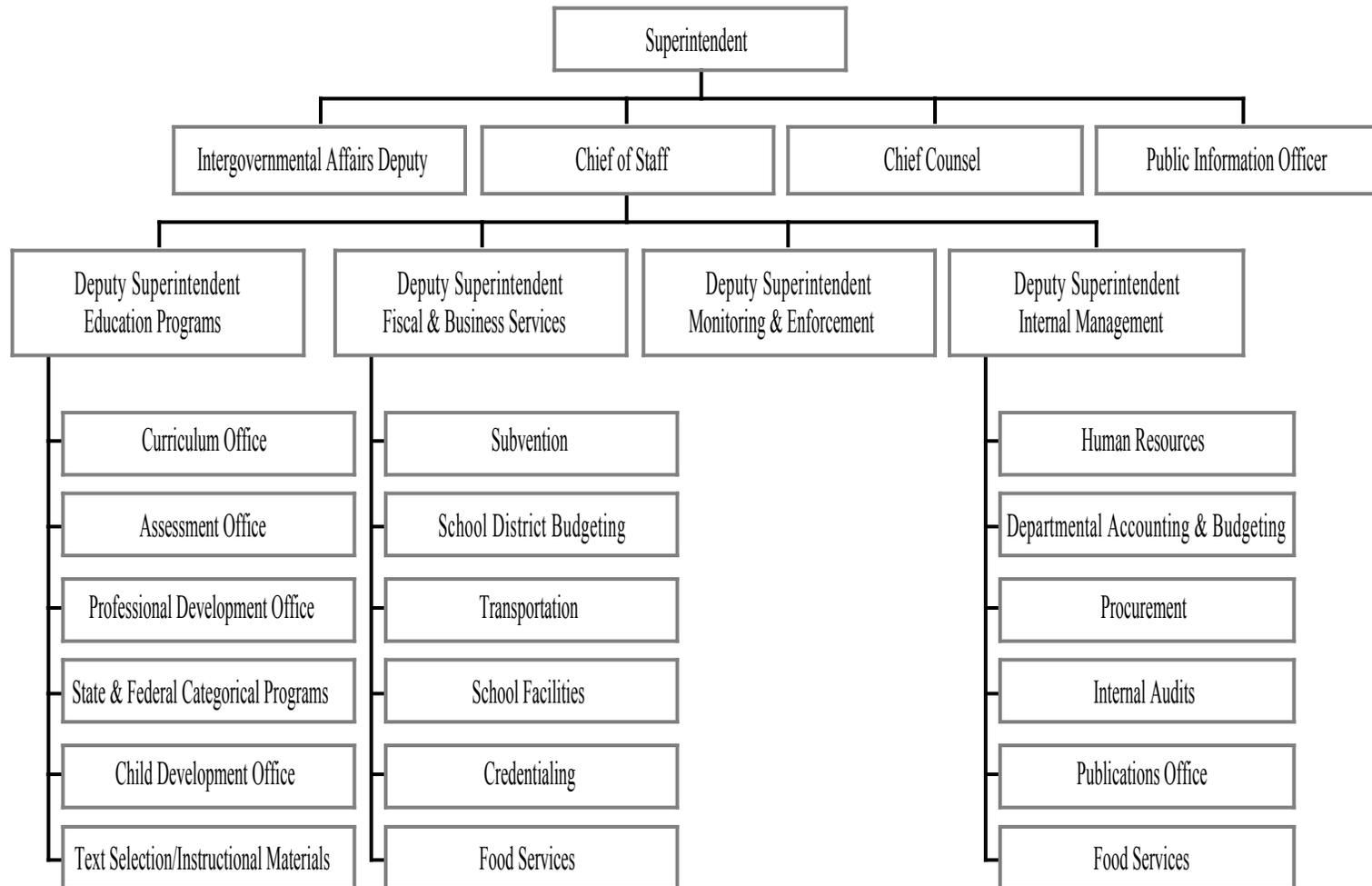
<sup>18</sup> The nature of skills necessary to perform the functions assigned to the Monitoring and Enforcement Division are mixed and should be determined case by case.

<sup>19</sup> The skills required by the staff and managers in the Fiscal and Business Services and Internal Management Divisions are different from, and typically less costly than, those required of education specialists employed in the Education Programs Division. Thus it would seem appropriate to use other state agencies as the comparison group for setting salary levels for positions in these divisions.

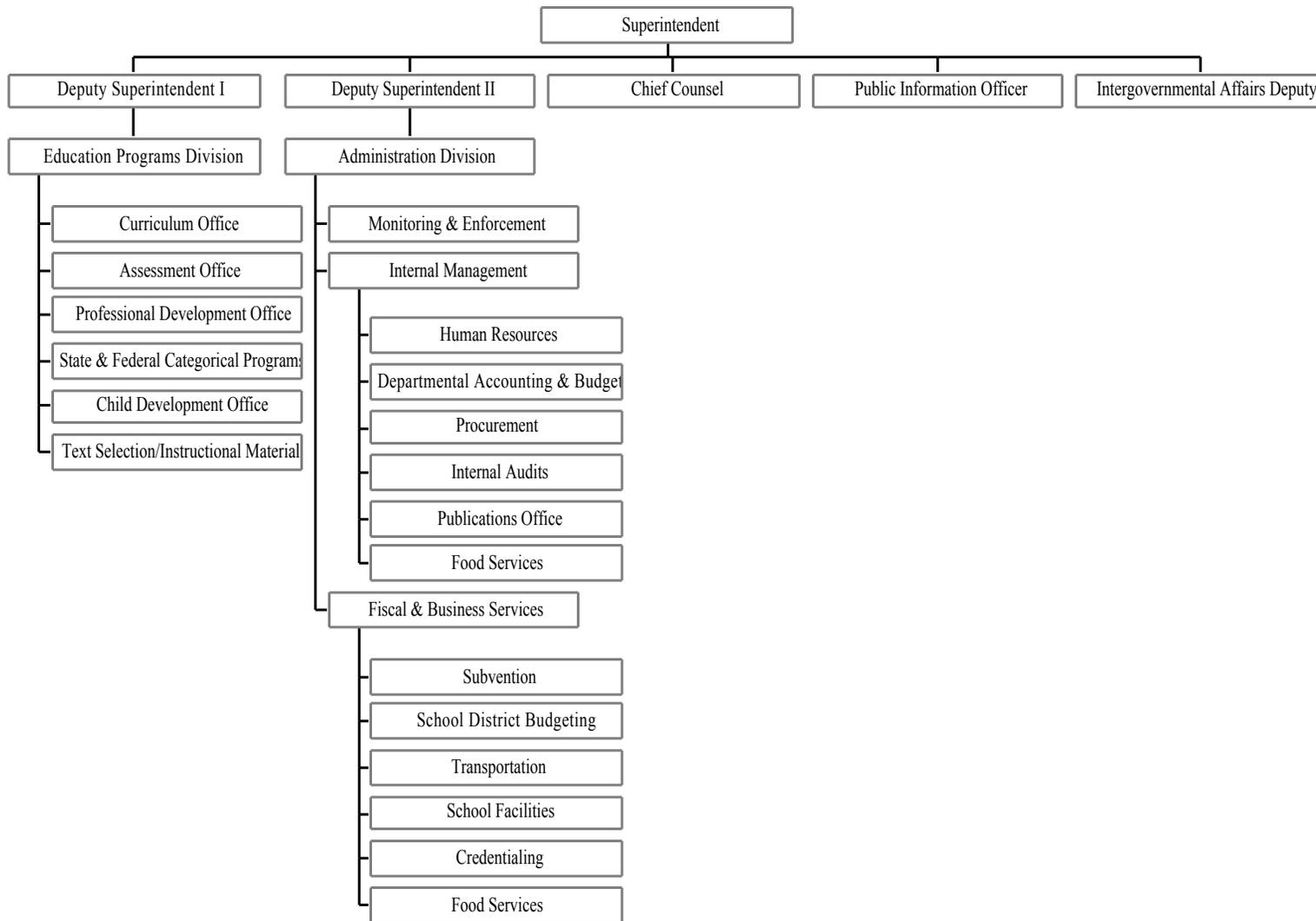
**Alternative Organization**

An alternative structure that would also be consistent with the criteria listed above would feature two deputy superintendents rather than a chief of staff reporting directly to the Superintendent. The Education Programs Division would remain the same. An Administration Division would replace Fiscal and Business Service, Internal Management and Monitoring and Enforcement Divisions, and reduce their status to offices and subsume them within the new division. Some of the functions within these new offices are sufficiently large and complex that it would be necessary for them to be led by a first level manager. In other cases somewhat disparate functions could be consolidated under a manager and in even others, a lead employee could assume quasi-managerial responsibilities.

### Illustrative SCDE Organizational Chart I



### Illustrative SCDE Organizational Chart II



## V. Delivery Systems

**1. SCDE should develop a coherent strategy for delivery of services and leadership. We recommend that a task force comprised of key Department staff, representatives of school districts, and other stakeholders be convened to systematically rethink the Department's delivery system.**

MAP recommends yet another plan. It is not that we are enamoured with plans or planning, but something as critical as how SCDE will deliver services to school districts is too important to leave to a couple hundred employees to create a couple hundred idiosyncratic plans. Be assured, in the absence of a guiding strategy, every employee will create his or her own delivery plan. District needs are too great, resources are too scarce and the stakes are too high to leave this decision to chance.

Instruction, curriculum, standards, assessments, and accountability targets all must be aligned. Personnel from Department staff to classroom teachers have to be educated about the expectations and the content of the standards and assessments. Classroom teachers must align daily instruction and at least some classroom assessments with the content priorities established and the formats used for testing. Responsibilities of all involved parties need to be clarified and communicated.

Key stakeholders should be involved in the design of this very critical strategy. It is essential that SCDE understand district needs and that local educators understand the limits of the Department's resources. This collaboration will result in the allocation of scarce resources according to real priorities and will minimize over-promising or creating unrealistic expectations.

The task force should be charged with developing short term and long term strategies that focus on building the capacity of local school districts to improve student outcomes. We recommend that the task force attempt to maximize the probability that the Department will behave more like a coach than a referee or spectator. It should consider available resources, resource constraints, requirements of EAA, comparative advantages of a state agency, cost-benefit of various interventions, and differential needs of districts depending on size, student population and other characteristics. While there is some urgency to develop this strategy, the task force should be given sufficient time and resources to complete this complex task.

**2. SCDE should immediately address the system needs for data and make short term and long term plans for developing a modern data management system. MAP recommends that the Superintendent convene a task force of appropriate stakeholders to develop these plans.**

The State's need for high quality, timely data will increase dramatically as it moves to a standards based accountability system. Good decisions are

dependent on good data. It is essential that SCDE rationalize its data gathering procedures, minimize demands on local educators and facilitate the easy transfer of data between districts and the state and from the state to districts and to the public.

This process will not succeed if it takes place in a vacuum. Stakeholders must be actively involved in the design of any data management system. The quality of data is determined ultimately at the point it is recorded. Unless the individuals responsible for entering data and everyone in between up to the end user understand the ultimate purpose to which the data will be put and perceive a personal stake in its quality, the State will lack sufficient information to make good decisions.

**3. The Department should increase its efforts to improve the district audit function.**

The Department's audit resources are disproportionately assigned to the internal agency audit function—representing a very small percentage of total education expenditures in the state. This focus on state level expenditures reduces the Department's capacity to monitor and assist local districts to ensure that local expenditures adhere to federal and state laws and regulations. The shift in resources will not necessarily result in a larger number of audits, but should result in improving technical assistance to districts to enable them to avoid audit exceptions in the future.

**4. SCDE should immediately conduct a systematic study of its transportation, including conditions of all vehicles and level and qualification of staff.**

**5. SCDE should immediately conduct a systematic study of the teacher certification function, with particular attention to the level of staffing and opportunities for automation.**

**6. SCDE should immediately conduct a systematic study of the school facilities management function, with particular attention to the level of staffing and the reliability of the facilities inventory.**

**7. SCDE should develop a district status report, detailing where each district is in the alignment of standards, curriculum, and instruction and the capacity of each for internal staff development.**

The Department and school districts are under intense pressure to meet the intent of the EAA. The public, business, and the legislature have made clear their expectations for improved student achievement. The education community feels the need to deliver. However, state and local educators must have the necessary resources and flexibility to address the critical pieces of such change in a reasonable sequence. One member of the Oversight Committee described the dilemma as follows, "The time lines are too tight. We are at least 3-5 years away from putting it all together; no curriculum alignment has taken place. The Department of Education and the state need a global connected strategy for putting it all in place. The standards haven't all even been adopted yet. The greatest danger is that no structure exists to link the Governor, the State School Superintendent, the State Board of Education, the Oversight Committee, and the legislature. There must be a link or we will all work in isolation and the time frame for success will expand."

A district status report would help those charged with developing a delivery strategy know the extent of the need for assistance in each school district. Care should be taken in the process of gathering this information to not unduly burden local educators. The process could be as informal and unobtrusive as a phone call to each district office.

**8. The Superintendent should consider forming a policy group to focus on the connections between K-12 and higher education in South Carolina. The group should be made up of the CEOs of each segment of education plus the Executive Director of the Commission on Higher Education as well as representatives of private colleges and universities.**

Effective education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will need to be a life-long enterprise, starting with pre-school and extending through college and beyond. The traditional barriers between levels of education and among institutions must be addressed if the total educational experience is to be successful. South Carolina can do a better job of connecting its K-12 general education policies and activities with postsecondary colleges and universities. The group should focus on specific policies aimed at improving high school preparation and removing barriers to access. One such policy would be to better inform high schools on how their graduates perform in the colleges in which they enroll—thereby identifying strengths and weakness of elementary and secondary school preparation. Another strategy might be to focus on making certain that early in their schooling experience, teachers and students understand what students will need to know and be able to do to succeed in higher education.

## CONCLUSION

In this last section we reemphasize several points we believe are critical to the success of the new administration. Superintendent Tenenbaum faces a formidable challenge. She must accomplish several complex tasks simultaneously. Internally, the superintendent must recreate the Department, establishing an effective organizational structure, improving employee morale and expertise, and increasing staff capacity to provide needed assistance to local districts. Externally, she must rebuild trust among all the Department's constituents from local superintendents to legislators; develop an effective plan for using the Department's scarce resources to meet diverse district needs, and create a climate in which increased achievement for all South Carolina students may be attained.

Several circumstances make these tasks all the more difficult: the human and fiscal resources currently available to the Department are inadequate; the Education Accountability Act establishes conflicting responsibilities and agendas between the Department and the Education Oversight Committee; and the time lines created in the legislation are unrealistic for such extensive reform.

However, MAP found overwhelming support and positive feelings toward the Superintendent, and her election has engendered new hope and optimism in both the Department and local school districts. She has the support of the new governor and strong connections to the business community. Such backing and connectivity make even difficult tasks attainable. But, goodwill does not last forever without visible results.

Systemic education reform is a complex task that requires team effort, adequate resources and perseverance. Elected officials, the Department, local educators, the Education Oversight Committee, and South Carolina citizens all have important roles to play. The State Superintendent and the South Carolina Department of Education have an essential and non-transferable role and mission. They provide the vision and the critical assistance (principally in the form of capacity building) to ensure that the desired results can be achieved. They will be successful only if they receive cooperation and support from the other stakeholders.

Superintendent Tenenbaum must consistently bring her own vision to the forefront. She must plan and establish priorities, creating a comprehensive, but flexible agenda to accomplish her mission. The plans must be feasible, not so grandiose as to over-promise or over-extend. The Superintendent must build the capacity of Department staff to provide real leadership in assisting local districts improve teaching and learning for all students through the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and through professional development.

Superintendent Tenenbaum has widespread support and has made a strong start in reestablishing positive relationships with both Department staff and local district educators. These initial steps evidence the beginnings of a vigorous, effective administration. MAP has been pleased to have had the opportunity to conduct this study for the Superintendent. We hope that the information contained in this report will contribute to her successful tenure and ultimately to an excellent education for every student in South Carolina.

**APPENDIX A**  
**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**APPENDIX B**  
**SURVEY QUESTIONS**

**APPENDIX C**  
**SURVEY RESPONSES**  
**DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS ONLY**