



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, March 19, 2009 / Palmetto Gold and Silver Awards

South Carolina recognizes 403 schools for outstanding academic performance

COLUMBIA - More than 400 public schools have earned cash awards recognizing academic achievement, student academic improvement and closing achievement gaps in 2008.

In its eighth year, the Palmetto Gold and Palmetto Silver awards program was created by the Education Accountability Act of 1998. The program now includes two parts – recognition for general school performance as well as progress in closing achievement gaps between groups of students.

“A school that wins one of these awards is focused on kids and dedicated to their success,” said State Superintendent of Education Jim Rex. “It shows what can happen when educators have high expectations for students, and when parents and community members support those educators and students.”

Schools received general awards for overall performance based on their 2008 state report card’s absolute and improvement ratings. These ratings are determined by PACT scores for elementary and middle schools. For high schools, the ratings are based on Exit Exam results, graduation rate and percentage of students passing end-of-course tests.

General performance Gold and Silver awards are based on the school’s following report card rating combinations:

Absolute Performance Rating	Improvement Rating	Award Designation
Excellent	Excellent	Gold
Excellent	Good	Gold
Excellent	Average	Gold
Good	Excellent	Gold
Good	Good	Silver
Average	Excellent	Gold
Average	Good	Silver
Below Average	Excellent	Gold
Below Average	Good	Silver

A total of 311 schools received awards for general performance, 162 Gold and 149 Silver. Among elementary schools, 32 won Gold awards and 73 won Silver. For middle schools, two won Gold and 30 won Silver. Among high schools, 85 won Gold and 44 won Silver. Thirty-three career centers won Gold and two received Silver awards. Six special schools won Gold awards.

Schools recognized for general performance receive an award flag, a certificate, a congratulatory letter from Dr. Rex and a portion of state funds earmarked for the program. The financial award is determined by factors including the type of award received, student enrollment, student attendance and teacher attendance. This year's awards are being reduced because of state budget cuts. Schools will receive notice of awards totals in the near future.

Closing the Achievement Gap Awards

Schools received closing the achievement gap awards based on academic gains made by students who fall into four subgroups -- African American students, Hispanic students, students participating in federal free- or reduced-price lunch programs and students with non-speech disabilities. The state's Education Oversight Committee set awards criteria.

Elementary or middle schools qualify for a Gold award if at least one of these subgroups meets or exceeds high-achieving student scores in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. A Silver award is given if at least one subgroup meets end-of-year high performance in ELA or mathematics or shows exceptional achievement growth.

High schools may receive a Gold closing the gap award if the graduation rate of at least one subgroup meets or exceeds the statewide graduation rate of historically high-achieving students. A Silver award means at least one subgroup's graduation rate meets or exceeds the rate needed to meet the state's graduation goal of 88.3 per cent by 2014.

A total of 242 schools received closing the achievement gap awards, 78 Gold and 164 Silver. Among elementary schools, 30 won Gold awards and 79 won Silver. For middle schools, five won Gold and eight won Silver. Among high schools, 43 won Gold and 77 won Silver.

Schools recognized for closing achievement gaps receive an award certificate, a congratulatory letter from Dr. Rex and \$1,200 for the Gold award and \$1,000 for a Silver.

A total of 403 schools received Gold and/or Silver awards for general performance or closing achievement gaps. One hundred and fifty schools received awards in both categories. One hundred and sixty-one schools were recognized for general performance only, while 92 received awards for closing achievement gaps only.