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## **SC not meeting education goals**

***Innovation and transformation of system necessary if SC students and schools are to meet education goals***

**Columbia** – The South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) today presented its annual report on the state’s effort to ensure every student receives a high-quality education that will prepare them for future success. The report shows that on measures of reading proficiency, on-time graduation, workforce readiness, and schools rated *At Risk*, South Carolina and its students are still lagging behind.

EOC Chairman Neil C. Robinson, Jr., presented South Carolina’s progress and rankings on national measures. He pointed to the incremental progress students and schools are making but stated that the path forward needs to look different than it does today if we are to see incremental progress.

“We can’t continue to operate our schools the same way and expect different results. Innovation and transformation need to occur at the system level all the way down to the classroom level,” stated Robinson.

The 2020 Vision, established by the EOC in 2009, states that “by the year 2020, all students in South Carolina will graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to compete successfully in the global economy, participate in a democratic society, and contribute positively as members of families and communities.” Progress toward the 2020 Vision is measured using four key education indicators: student reading proficiency, on-time graduation rates, workforce readiness of high school graduates, and schools rated *At Risk*.

### **Reading proficiency**

An early foundation in reading is one of the highest predictors for individual success. The 2020 Vision targets 95 percent of students scoring on grade level at grades 3 and 8 on Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) Reading and 95 percent scoring *Basic and above* on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) at grades 4 and 8.

- On the 2011 NAEP reading assessment, **only 61 percent of SC 4th graders scored *Basic and Above*.**
- **Only 72 percent of SC 8th graders scored *Basic and Above*** in 2011.
- 2012 PASS results show **only 80 percent of 3rd graders and 70 percent of 8th graders reading on grade level.**

“We must provide teachers with the training and tools they need to provide intervention to these struggling readers at every grade level,” stated Robinson. Interventions need to be earlier, according to Robinson, who pushed the need for a mandatory diagnostic assessment in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade to identify and assist struggling readers early on.

### **On-time graduation and career and college readiness**

As part of the 2020 Vision, the EOC established a goal that 88.3 percent of students graduate from high school on time. Currently, only 74.9 percent of students achieve the goal of graduating within four years. Additionally, 34 percent of high school graduates on South Carolina are not enrolling in two- or four-year colleges or technical schools.

“We know the workforce of today demands skilled workers and the demand for low-skilled labor is weakening,” said Robinson. “The manufacturing and high-tech jobs of today require skilled workers who can communicate, collaborate, think, and question. Are we educating our students to be successful in this global economy whether they enter a career or a two- or four-year college upon graduation?”

Herb Johnson, Michelin North America’s Director of Community Relations, spoke at the news conference about the instrumental role the education community plays in preparing students for the workforce of the future.

“Michelin is committed to education in the state of South Carolina,” said Johnson. “Our employees demand good schools to send their children to and today’s students are our future workforce.”

Michelin North America, one of the largest manufacturing employers in the state, sponsors education initiatives like the Challenge Education Program and Dream Connectors, to prepare SC students for the workforce of the future.

“This is not just about writing checks, it is about investing human capital and time, and we hope that other businesses throughout the state will join us in this important social endeavor,” said Johnson.

### **Underperforming schools**

The 2020 Vision addresses underperforming schools by stating that no schools will be rated *At Risk* by 2020. While acknowledging success in the decline of the number of schools receiving the lowest ranking in the state school accountability system, Robinson urged a transformation within these schools.

“Quality education for our children must become everyone’s job – educators, business leaders, elected officials, concerned citizens, parents and students,” stated Robinson. “Many of these schools are chronically underperforming, and none of us should become complacent about this.”

### **Path Forward**

Robinson challenged all stakeholders, asking for a renewed commitment to the 2020 Vision. Achieving the goal “is possible” if we build on previous successes and recognize the need for change.

“We owe it to students to prepare them for the world and the careers of their dreams,” said Robinson. “We can achieve these goals, but it will take hard work and the willingness to innovate and transform the system.”

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

A pdf copy of “The World is Within Our Reach: 2013 Report on Education in SC” is available online at [www.eoc.sc.gov](http://www.eoc.sc.gov).