



from the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee
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For Immediate Release

December 15, 2014

EOC policy and budget recommendations focused on technology upgrades and instructional materials

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The EOC held a full meeting today at 1:00 p.m. at the Blatt Building in Columbia. Recommendations to the budget were made at this meeting.*

Columbia – Today, South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) members adopted budget recommendations for the 2015-16 fiscal year. The programmatic and funding recommendations were designed to accelerate improvements in student and school performance by better preparing students for success in careers or in postsecondary education.

Committee members annually make recommendations for the spending of Education Improvement Act (EIA) funds, which are generated by the penny sales tax. In November, the Board of Economic Advisors projected that the EIA will generate \$677 million in total revenues in fiscal year 2015-16, an increase of \$29.2 million from the current base funding.

“These public funds should be targeted to help ensure that students and teachers have what is necessary for students to be college and career ready,” said Alex Martin, chairman of the subcommittee that brought initial recommendations to the full committee Monday. “The ultimate goal of the system is for all children to be college, career, and life ready, and these recommendations consider the long-term academic success of each child in the public school system.”

Highlights of the recommendations, which now head to the General Assembly and the Governor for consideration during next year’s legislative session, include:

- **Technology: Increase funding for the K-12 Technology Initiative**
The committee recommended continued funding of \$29.3 million for technology, currently funded with lottery monies, as well as an increase of \$2.1 million for the K-12 Technology Initiative. The recommended increase is due to the increased bandwidth requirements in school districts and county libraries as well as changes in federal technology funding. There continues to be a need to provide high-capacity wireless access points in schools to handle the expansion of wireless devices currently used to instruct and assess students.
- **Student College and Career Readiness: Funding for new assessments as well as print and digital instructional materials.**
The committee recommended an increase of \$4.2 million to cover the cost of the ACT, the college and career readiness test, and WorkKeys, assessments which will be given to all

11th graders beginning this school year. The increase will also cover the cost of ACT Aspire, an assessment that will be given to students in grades 3-8. The committee agreed that any balance of EIA recurring and non-recurring funds should be allocated to fund instructional materials, both print and digital.

Additionally, the EOC recommended an increase of \$2.0 million for modernization of vocational equipment, a recommendation which came forward from the SC Department of Education.

- **Early Childhood Support: Funding additional students in full-day 4K programs as well as appropriate \$500,000 to Reach Out and Read Carolinas.**

The committee found that an increase of \$4.0 million will be necessary to fund additional districts for the full-day, 4K program for students at risk for school failure, districts that now have a poverty index of 70% or higher.

“With the release of the 2014 school and district report card, Anderson 2, Anderson 5, Greenwood 52, and Kershaw School Districts now qualify to serve students using money from the state-supported 4K program” said Martin. “Districts that have a poverty index of 70 percent or greater now have an opportunity to serve students in this capacity according to state law.”

Additionally, the committee was supportive of a new, one-time appropriation of \$500,000 to the Reach Out and Read Carolinas program for early literacy. The program, which provides literacy training to medical professionals who treat families of young children, will match the one-time appropriation and focus their efforts on high-poverty, rural areas of SC.

- **Educator Support: Increase funding for teacher supplies**

Recognizing that many teachers use personal funds to provide supplies for their classrooms and students, the committee recommended an increase of \$1.3 million to increase the teacher supply allocation to \$300 per eligible teacher, an increase from the current \$250 allocation.

According to Martin, supporting teaching and learning experiences for all children should be the top priority of the education 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.

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