



from the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee
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Five South Carolina school districts awarded grants for innovation

Columbia – Five South Carolina school districts – Beaufort; Charleston; Clarendon 1; Colleton; and Jasper County School Districts, are the 2015 recipients of the South Carolina Community Block Grants for Education. The pilot program, which was only open to school districts in the state, is a matching grants program designed to encourage sustainable partnerships among school districts and community groups.

Proviso 1.94 of the 2014-15 General Appropriation Act created the program, which is focused on “state-of-the-art education initiatives and models to improve students learning.” The proviso allocated \$1 million in one-time funds for the program although school districts were required to provide matching financial support.

The five winning school districts were chosen from 37 applications received. A seven-member review committee, composed of representatives from the business and education committee appointed by the Executive Director of the SC Education Oversight Committee (EOC), made the final decision on grant recipients after meeting with eight finalists. The independent grants committee placed priority on districts with higher percentages of students living in poverty. The impact of the innovative programs will be measured and reported publicly so that lessons learned could be replicated in other districts in the state.

“We are so pleased to recognize these districts for their innovative projects focused on helping children learn,” said Dr. Allison Jacques, Assistant Dean for Assessment at the University of South Carolina School of Education and chair of the grants committee. “Our hope is that these projects become models of how schools and communities can unite to handle challenges and create positive outcomes for students and families.”

Summaries of the awarded projects:

Beaufort Community Learning Program Beaufort County School District

The Beaufort Community Learning Program is a neighborhood-based education and tutoring program focused on improving the academic achievement of at least 100 students in a high-poverty section of downtown Beaufort. The program, which operates outside of regular school hours during the afternoons, weekends, and during the summer, includes evidence-based practices aimed at improving achievement, attendance, family engagement, and behavior. An innovative part of the program is that

it takes place in the neighborhoods where the children and families live, alleviating the need for additional transportation costs. The school district was awarded \$163,500, the amount requested.

**Charleston Promise Neighborhood Learning Community
Charleston County School District**

The Charleston Promise Neighborhood Learning Community is a public-private partnership between Charleston County School District and The Charleston Promise Neighborhood, a non-profit organization that serves the needs of a 5.6 mile area in Charleston County that is one of the most impoverished, high-crime areas in the state. The Charleston Promise Neighborhood Learning Community will extend the school day by three hours for over 1,000 students at two of the four elementary schools in located within the Promise neighborhood zone. The expanded-day will be built on a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math) model that is currently being piloted in one Charleston school. The overall goals of the program are to improve student behavior, motivation, achievement, and increase community involvement in the implementation of school initiatives. The school district was awarded \$249,595, the amount requested.

STEM Initiative

Clarendon School District One

The STEM- (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) focused project establishes two academies within the school district focusing on environmental science and providing learning experiences in STEM. The goal of establishing the academies is to increase student achievement in science and math. The initiative is also designed to implement a high-quality professional development model that will prepare teachers to deliver a comprehensive, challenging STEM education to students. The school district was awarded \$242,237, a slight decrease from the requested amount of \$250,000.

First Lego League (FLL) ACEbotics program (ACEbotics)

Colleton County School District

The ACEbotics program, which involves approximately 150 fourth and fifth grade students in elementary schools in Colleton County School District, includes a summer camp and an afterschool program which will allow students to have fun while learning to design, build, test, and program robots with an emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). The goal of the program is to assist students in the district who are under-performing in math and science. The school district was awarded \$144,668, the amount requested.

STEM Afterschool and Summer Enrichment Program

Jasper County School District

This STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) program is designed to increase student learning in math and science by providing a trans-disciplinary approach to curricula that stresses hands-on learning, project-based lessons, exploration and collaborative efforts with real-world applications in STEM fields. The program, which utilizes *Project Lead the Way* curriculum, will involve approximately 150 students at Hardeeville-Ridgeland Middle School in Jasper County. The school district was awarded \$200,000 a decrease from the requested amount of \$250,000.

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.