



from the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee
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“Urgent, systemic renovation” of the high school experience necessary to better prepare students for college and careers

Columbia – Today, South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) members received a report presented by the High School Task Force, a group of 17 public education, higher education, and business leaders. Using the *South Carolina Profile of the Graduate* as the desired outcome and education and economic development data which indicate that many SC students are not prepared for success in college and careers, the task force outlined five substantive recommendations leading to a new continuum of learning for students.

According to Dr. Lee D’Andrea, a retired public school educator and former SC school superintendent who chaired the task force, there is a disconnect between education and economic development in South Carolina and a need for “urgent systemic renovation” which provides for more relevant and rigorous experiences for high school students as well as flexible preparation options that allow for multiple “exit points” where a student can enter postsecondary education or a career.

“We have a system in place that has served generations in South Carolina while the workplace, the economy, and technology have evolved to a new level, said D’Andrea. “It is time for the high school preparation process to mirror the workplace and level of technology.”

The task force, which worked from December 2015 to April 2016, outlined five recommendations after reviewing elements from the current system, hearing from numerous in-state and out-of-state experts, and reviewing state and national reports and data sets. The recommendations, which should be considered in total to be effective, are:

- 1. The content/coursework requirements for a high school diploma must be updated to reflect the needs of workforce readiness in the current environment.**

The current 24-unit Carnegie unit seat-time requirement for students to earn a high school diploma “limits the delivery of instruction and engagement time” for students, according to the task force report. Rigorous Career and Technical Education (CATE) courses should be considered as options for core requirements and the application of skills should be valued. According to D’Andrea, the current system does not allow for students to participate fully in internships, apprenticeships, or work experiences.

- 2. A coherent continuum of assessments must be established. The assessments must reliably measure content/knowledge as well as college and career readiness.**

According to the task force report, the current assessments in South Carolina, with the

exception of WorkKeys which measures career readiness, do not provide an aligned metric of learning, measuring the progress of students. According to the report, “the next high school assessment chosen to measure a students’ high school content proficiency should be reliable, valid, and rigorous and of merit in other states.” Furthermore, a “soft-skills” assessment should be considered in the high school experience since the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate* contains many of these skills and employers often point out these ability deficiencies in recent hires.

3. A Coordinating Council or P-20 Council should be re-established and directed to fully implement the Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA).

The task force noted that work on establishing seamless transitions from high school to postsecondary education has slowed down recently, most notably when the Coordinating Council established by the EEDA was dissolved in 2012. The task force recommended that a Coordinating Council or P-20 Council be re-established and directed to fully implement the EEDA. *(Note: The General Assembly considered H.4937 that would have created the SC Education and Economic Development Coordinating Council to link workforce needs with college and career preparedness. The legislation did not pass.)*

4. An extensive communication initiative should be developed and implemented.

D’Andrea stressed that this recommendation is of paramount importance since the changes that must occur must be understood and expected by students and families. The South Carolina workforce has changed significantly in the last two decades, stated D’Andrea. In order for the demands of the workforce to be met, students and families must understand what the needs and expectations of the current workforce look like. The task force reviewed multiple resources and tools such as www.CFNC.org, a website operated by the College Foundation of NC which provides information in high school, college, and career planning.

5. A comprehensive design for data must be established.

Citing a significant void in necessary data and information, the task force report stressed the need for a robust, longitudinal data system that allows educators, decision-makers, students, and parent to understand education and workforce outcomes to make prudent decisions. D’Andrea pointed out that maintaining student privacy should continue to be of paramount concern when establishing such a system.

D’Andrea stressed the urgency of these recommendations to members of the EOC, thanking the task force for their shared passion. She stated that one of the task force meetings with officials from the Southern Regional Education Board resulted in three school districts and 100 educators committing to transitional coursework that helps students in need of remediation because of a college-readiness gap.

“The opportunities are here and many of the resources, stated D’Andrea. The challenge is to design the system with purposeful intention and implement the system with relentless passion.”

Neil Robinson, Chairman of the EOC, expressed his appreciation to the Task Force.

“The collaboration of higher education and business with these respected education leaders is critical to the future education and economic development of our state,” stated Robinson. “Consequently, the report will help guide the EOC in making its budget and policy recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly for Fiscal Year 2017-18.”

Members of the High School Task Force included:

- Dr. Sean Alford, Superintendent, *Aiken County School District*
- Ms. Cynthia Bennett, *SC Chamber of Commerce*
- Dr. James Couch, *Director of Center for Advanced Technical Studies, Lexington 5 and Member of the EOC*
- Dr. Johnny Hilton, *SC School Boards Association*
- Dr. Darrell Johnson, *Superintendent, Greenwood School District 50*
- Dr. John Lane, *Director of Academic Affairs, SC Commission on Higher Education*
- Rep. Dwight Loftis, *SC House of Representatives and Member of the EOC*
- Drs. Meredith Love and Matt Nelson, *Center of Excellence for College and Career Readiness, Francis Marion University*
- Dr. Frank Morgan, *Superintendent, Kershaw County School District*
- Dr. Darryl Owings, *Superintendent, Spartanburg School District 6*
- Dr. George Petersen, *Dean, Moore School of Education, Clemson University*
- Dr. Kelly Pew, *Superintendent, York School District 3*
- Dr. Hope Rivers, *SC Technical College System*
- Ms. Ann-Marie Stieritz, *SC Council on Competitiveness*
- Dr. Helena Tillar, *Superintendent, Marlboro County School District*
- Dr. Fran Welch, *Dean, School of Education, Health, and Human Performance, College of Charleston*
- Dr. "Jimmie" C. Williamson, *President and Executive Director, SC Technical College 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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