



SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Fred R. Sheheen, Commissioner

FROM: Dr. Marilyn Scannell, Coordinator of Academic Programs

SUBJECT: South Carolina's Statewide Initiatives
for K-12 Education and Higher Education

As you know, a number of major initiatives are underway or proposed that have tremendous potential for significantly improving curriculum, instruction and assessment of K-12 education in the State. These include proposals affiliated with:

- (1) The South Carolina Curriculum Congress (Curriculum Frameworks)
- (2) The Governor's Task Force for Educational Accountability
- (3) The Goodlad/Education Commission of the States National Network for Educational Renewal
- (4) The South Carolina Universities Research and Education Foundation (SCUREF) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)
- (5) The National Science Foundation (NSF) (State Systemic Initiatives Proposal)

While these initiatives do hold great potential for benefitting K-12 education in South Carolina, if great care is not taken to plan carefully and implement them such that they complement and enhance each other, their accomplishments will be at best significantly reduced, at worst duplicative and confusing. Much of the failure of past reform efforts for K-12 education has been attributed to lack of coordination among the various stakeholder groups in K-12 education and the lack of coordination between reform efforts for teacher education with those focusing on K-12 education. South Carolina now can serve as a model state in the coordination of K-12 reform efforts and collaboration between K-12 schools and higher education institutions to implement these efforts.

The following includes a summary of the initiatives cited above, including the major players in each, and how these efforts interrelate. The memorandum includes a recommendation for next steps to be taken to ensure coordination and cooperation among the projects and players and avoid duplication and inefficient use of limited resources.

Curriculum Congress

The broadest of the initiatives is that proposed by the Curriculum Congress, spearheaded by the State Department of Education. This all-encompassing effort focuses on the development of Curriculum Frameworks--"the core understanding in each subject area that each student is expected to learn." Curriculum Framework development teams are to be appointed by Dr. Neilsen for the subjects areas of Arts, English/Language Arts, Foreign Language, Health/Physical Education, Mathematics, Science, and History/Social Sciences. Ultimately, teams will also address how the frameworks relate to student performance assessment, school restructuring efforts, professional development opportunities, preservice and teacher licensure, and instructional materials. The first meeting of the Congress took place on August 12, 1991.

The Governor's Task Force for Educational Accountability

This task force, created by Governor Campbell under Executive Order No. 90-18 on July 27, 1990, was charged with reviewing issues concerning testing, assessment and measurement as related to public school accountability, including: examining the scope and nature of South Carolina's existing testing programs; reviewing national techniques and innovations as well as steps taken by other states in testing and assessment; reviewing a strategy to align accountability efforts with the National Education Goals; and developing recommendations for guiding policy decisions concerning testing, assessment and measurement as related to public school accountability.

The task force has 24 members appointed by the Governor, including members of the General Assembly, business and community leaders, experts in the field of educational testing, representatives of teachers' associations, State and local boards of education, school district and school administrators, parents and the Commissioner of Higher Education.

There are obvious links between the Curriculum Congress initiative and the work of the Governor's Task Force for Educational Accountability. One of the Curriculum Frameworks task groups will focus on assessment, and both groups will be addressing many of the same subject areas. Critics of current assessment policies charge that the tests currently in use are not closely tied to curriculum and instruction in the classroom. Developers of new assessment programs, therefore, are attempting to design assessments that encompass what teachers should be teaching in the classroom.

The Goodlad/Education Commission of the States (ECS) National Network for Educational Renewal

Coordinated by Dr. Barbara Gottesman, director of the South Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching and School Leadership, this project, one of eight nationally, centers on the premise that "real advances in education will take place only if we work to transform both our teacher preparation programs and our public schools." The project will promote closer cooperation between teacher education programs and the K-12 public schools through such efforts as revising the teacher education curriculum to align more closely with classroom needs,

arranging internships for teacher candidates in public schools and promoting "exchange programs" between college and K-12 faculty. The higher education institutions involved initially are Benedict College, Columbia College, Furman University, the University of South Carolina-Columbia and Winthrop College.

To participate in this national network, South Carolina was asked to commit to the following: a thorough examination of state policies related to the preparation of teachers; an identification process by which waivers of state policy may be granted to the pilot site; a link to prepare teachers to restructure the public schools; and a public commitment to improve teacher education. Representatives from the eight projects, and the Goodlad/ECS Network will meet for the first time August 17-18.

While their specific foci differ (curriculum, assessment, teacher preparation), all of the above projects will have an impact on how instruction takes place in K-12 schools. Thus it becomes extremely important that the three not have different expectations of teacher preparation programs or of practicing teachers and that curriculum and assessment requirements that practicing teachers will face be reflected in programs preparing those teachers.

The Pre-College Science and Math Education Initiative

One of two statewide science and mathematics initiatives, this project is sponsored by the South Carolina Universities Research and Education Foundation (SCUREF) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Still in the proposal writing stage for submission in September, this project was initiated to address one of the National Goals by improving student performance and teacher preparation in the mathematics and science areas.

Participants in this endeavor have included representatives from the South Carolina Improvement Council, business and industry, mathematics, science and engineering faculty, deans of education, SC Educational Television, principals and teachers, the South Carolina Superintendent of Education, and the Commissioner of Higher Education.

Thus far, four themes have been selected for incorporation into the final proposal:

- o creating a network of science and mathematics education service regions;
- o creating teacher specialists in elementary science and mathematics education;
- o creating new curricula in science and mathematics for grades K-6; and

- o bringing scientists into the schools through multimedia technology, a statewide scientist's visitation program and a statewide Science Scouts program.

The SCUREF proposal has a curriculum focus as does the Curriculum Frameworks project, a teacher focus as does the Goodlad project, and a National Goal focus as does the Educational Accountability Task Force. The "service region" concept could serve as an organizing mechanism for all of the statewide K-12 education initiatives, and the "scientists in the schools" idea would correspond nicely with the Goodlad "faculty exchange" endeavor.

The State Systemic Initiatives (SSI) Proposal

A preliminary proposal was submitted to the National Science Foundation (NSF) on June 16 to undertake a major statewide effort to reform mathematics and science education in the State. The five individuals representing South Carolina at the NSF meeting were Paul Huray (SCUREF), Janice Traywick (Governor's Office), Edna Crews (SDE), Dorris Helms (Clemson) and J.T. McLawhorn (Columbia Urban League).

Still to be finalized for submission in October, the content for the proposal will be drawn from the SCUREF concept papers (noted above) and Barbara Neilsen's "vision" of mathematics and science, to include the Curriculum Congress and her goals and objectives with respect to assessment of same. A meeting is to be held on August 21 to decide who should write the final proposal and what its content should be. Joining those who attended the preliminary meeting in Washington at the 21st meeting will be John Carpenter, John Luedeman, DeWitt Stone and other SDE staff members.

The proposal will have obvious implications for science and mathematics curriculum, teacher preparation and retraining, student instruction and assessment and the like. The intent of the NSF proposal is to complement and enhance the other major statewide initiatives by focusing on grade levels, types of schools or students, or other aspects not currently addressed by other ongoing or proposed initiatives.

Recommendation

To avoid duplication, confusion and inefficient use of resources, it is proposed that key representatives from agencies and organizations, K-12 education, higher education, business and industry, who are integral to the planning and implementation of the above projects meet on a regular basis to coordinate plans and activities. The first order of business would be to design SCUREF and NSF proposals that are complementary in scope and function. The ongoing task of the group would be to coordinate and integrate the activities of each as appropriate. The group could be convened jointly by the State Superintendent of Education and the Commissioner of Higher Education. Thereafter, it could meet at the call of an elected or designated chair.