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Accelerating
innovation in
our schools

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Providing
more choice,
within public
education

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Elevating and
reinvigorating
the teaching
profession

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Reforming
accountability
to ensure its
success

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Creating a fair
and equitable
system for
funding every
school

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South Carolina's Covenant with Our Children:

*A comprehensive plan
for reforming,
supporting,
and improving
our public schools*

Presented by
Jim Rex
State Superintendent of Education

February 2007

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Report of the Transition Leadership Team

"I believe that within four years, South Carolina can be known as the most fairly funded, innovative, and choice-driven public school system in the nation. It's time to roll up our sleeves and get to work."

—Jim Rex

Introduction

On November 20, 2006, just three days after he was certified as South Carolina's sixteenth State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Jim Rex began working to implement the comprehensive vision for education reform outlined during his successful campaign. Marshalling the talent and expertise of seventy-eight South Carolinians from all walks of life, guided by distinguished former Governor and U.S. Secretary of Education Dick Riley, Dr. Rex's transition leadership team began the task of recommending reforms in five areas crucial in improving South Carolina's schools:

- Accelerating innovation;
- Reforming accountability to ensure success;
- Expanding choices for parents and students;
- Promoting fair and equitable school funding; and
- Elevating and reinvigorating the teaching profession.

The Transition Leadership Team completed its work on January 9, 2007, developing a total of ninety-seven recommendations for state action to promote achievement of Dr. Rex's vision. The team's recommendations will be the catalyst for a statewide discussion of comprehensive school reform, furthering Dr. Rex's goal of creating "the most fairly funded, innovative, choice-driven public school system in the nation."

Committee on Accelerating Innovation

Charge: Develop recommendations to increase sustainable innovation leading to improved student achievement in the South Carolina public school system.

"Incremental improvements made while everyone else is getting better are not taking us where we want to be in this state. We are still doing way too many things that don't work for way too many kids."

—Jim Rex

The Committee on Accelerating Innovation agreed strongly with Dr. Rex's conviction that school innovation is critical if South Carolina is to move beyond the incremental gains of recent years toward dramatic and sustainable improvement in student achievement.

The Committee also felt strongly that to be successful, South Carolina must focus not on developing a "laundry list of possible innovations" but on creating a statewide culture of innovation – a permanent new system that fosters and supports educational innovations proven to work. The Committee wrote, "We encourage Dr. Rex to do everything in his power to create enduring systems that 1) jump-start sustainable innovation; 2) identify and recognize the most effective and sustainable innovations; 3) disseminate information on those innovations that work; and 4) support the replication of sustainable innovation with resources."

Ten principles guided the Committee's recommendations:

Innovation must be focused on student achievement. While innovations in school support areas such as transportation and food service should be encouraged, the state should emphasize innovations in the core business of student achievement.

Innovation must be sustainable. Schools and districts must take responsibility both for implementing specific innovations that work for them, and for creating the infrastructure to support innovations beyond the implementation stage.

Innovation must be research-based and relevant to school needs. Rather than continuing its pattern of adopting short-term, untried innovations, South Carolina should emphasize sustained innovation that springs from research and is relevant to the needs of specific school settings.

Innovation requires outstanding leadership. South Carolina must address the shortage of leaders with the skills and training to design, plan, and implement innovative ideas by developing a strong pool of talented teachers, administrators, and school board leaders.

Innovation must be disseminated. Innovative education programs exist in South Carolina, but in isolation and without a mechanism for identification, recognition, and

replication. South Carolina must develop a system of network supports that matches innovative approaches to local needs.

Innovation must be supported. South Carolina needs structures and systems to encourage, recognize, disseminate, and implement school innovations.

Innovation must be collaborative, with many partners working together toward a common goal.

Innovation must be funded, requiring a revised system of educational funding.

Innovation requires new organizational structures focused on fostering new approaches to education.

Innovation is not optional, because educating children to a high standard can no longer be optional.

Recommendations

The Committee on Accelerating Innovation agreed on seven recommendations addressing system-wide changes needed to support a culture of innovation and six recommendations outlining specific innovations with significant potential to improve student achievement.

Systemic Recommendations

1. To embolden South Carolina schools, to outline the direction innovation will take, and to develop the language to communicate the importance of innovation, Dr. Rex, in collaboration with diverse partners, should develop and communicate regularly a compelling vision of the ideal state of twenty-first century education in South Carolina.
2. Dr. Rex should make the State Department of Education (SDE) a model of sustainable innovation in South Carolina by reorganizing the agency around a culture of sustainable innovation. Reorganization should emphasize the following:
 - a) a shift in the SDE's mission from oversight and regulation to support, facilitation, assistance, and promotion;
 - b) realignment of responsibilities to enable SDE staff to work as facilitators and consultants at the school and district level;
 - c) an emphasis on leadership development for continuous improvement; and
 - d) assessment of SDE functions unrelated to student achievement to determine the costs and benefits of keeping versus divesting or sub-contracting such functions.
3. The regulatory policies of the SDE should be reviewed and revised to eliminate those that inhibit and strengthen those that enhance flexibility and sustainable innovation. Dr. Rex should take the steps necessary, unilaterally or in concert with the State Board of

Education and the General Assembly, to deregulate public education to the extent possible.

4. Dr. Rex should create and fund a Center for Sustainable Innovation within the SDE to identify and promote effective and sustainable innovations, help match innovations to local needs, and provide specialized consulting expertise in a variety of innovative educational approaches.
5. Dr. Rex should create The South Carolina Public Education Trust as an external 501(c)(3) resource organization to provide advice on and generate funding for innovative initiatives and to serve as an advocate for public education.
6. Dr. Rex should work to remove dedicated funding requirements that stifle innovation and should encourage more flexible and equitable funding and resource allocation.
7. Dr. Rex should develop collaborative systems that promote community involvement in education.

Strategic Focus Recommendations

8. The SDE should create a continuum of service programs for parents, including adult literacy programs, in coordination with the technical college system, faith-based communities, and other education stakeholders. Parent involvement should be redefined to focus not on how often parents come to school, but on the skills parents use to help students achieve and on developing parenting skills that improve student achievement.
9. The SDE should promote redesigned flexible teaching environments focused on student learning, including:
 - a) teaching teams, in which a group of teachers work with specific student cohorts over a period of years;
 - b) increased emphasis on student engagement in active learning, creative and innovative thinking, and critical thinking;
 - c) elimination of "seat time" requirements in favor of individual progress as students are ready;
 - d) integration of learning from elementary to middle to high school, and on to postsecondary education; and
 - e) blurring of boundaries between schools.
10. South Carolina should provide incentives to promote effective teaching, including:
 - a) incentives for good teachers to stay in education;
 - b) incentives for strong teachers to work in under-performing schools;
 - c) professional development opportunities relevant to individual teacher, counselor, and staff needs;

- d) re-examination of the system for encouraging qualified individuals without specific licensure to teach, especially in teams; and
 - e) support for teacher “boot camps” and mentoring as intensive learning environments for experienced teachers who want to be reinvigorated.
11. South Carolina should upgrade and redesign superintendent and principal leadership training to focus specifically on supporting a culture of sustainable innovation. The state also should develop an alternate principal certification process for innovative state leaders with strong business expertise and a community background in education.
 12. To identify sustainable improvements in use of technology for student learning, Dr. Rex should create a Technology Innovation Team in partnership with technology companies, foundations, teachers, students, and others with technology expertise.
 13. South Carolina should create district-to-district, school-to-school, and classroom-to-classroom sustainable innovation design teams to facilitate development and implementation of education innovations.

Committee on Accountability

Charge: Develop recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the state accountability system.

"I am all for accountability, but I believe we are testing our children too much. Tests are only tools. They shouldn't dominate the lives of students, parents, and teachers."

—Jim Rex

During his campaign for State Superintendent, Dr. Rex affirmed his commitment to accountability and to maintaining the rigor of South Carolina's academic standards, considered among the strongest in the nation. However, he also called for revisions to the state's 1998 Accountability Act to reduce the excessive testing required under the law and to make state tests more useful to teachers in guiding and improving instruction.

The Committee on Accountability agreed that the law should be revised. "As with any program initiative, the system must be periodically reviewed and updated to reflect the changes in testing, testing procedures, and availability of testing instruments that better meet the intent of the law and the relationship between the state accountability system and federal legislation," the Committee wrote.

The Committee issued recommendations addressing five individual components of the accountability system: standards, assessment, professional development and technical assistance, reporting, and rewards and interventions.

The Committee felt strongly that South Carolina should preserve the rigor of its academic standards, but address several issues that make them difficult for teachers and administrators to use. Specifically, the committee agreed that South Carolina should revise its standards to increase focus, set priorities, and reduce intersections, overlaps, omissions and redundancies across content areas.

Addressing assessment, the Committee recommended reducing state testing to the minimum necessary to track progress and draw comparisons. Its members also felt strongly that South Carolina should revise state assessments to provide quick results and better diagnostic information for teachers in gauging student progress and improving instruction.

The Committee expressed a number of concerns about state report cards, questioning the accuracy of the data and the usefulness of the information included. It concluded, however, that most problems with the report card would be resolved by revisions to state assessments.

Although it focused primarily on improving specific elements of South Carolina's accountability system, the Committee also expressed the concern that flaws in the system overall may contribute unfairly to a negative perception of public schools, especially among the

vast majority of citizens who lack first-hand information. Specifically, the group noted that under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law, South Carolina's schools falsely appear to fall short because our standards are much more rigorous than those set by other states. In any case, the group added, all schools, here and around the nation, will eventually be identified as "failing" under NCLB because of the law's flawed premise that 100 percent of students will score proficient on state assessments. The Committee's first recommendation addresses this concern, emphasizing the need for South Carolina to communicate more effectively about accountability and our state's progress.

Recommendations

Overall

1. South Carolina should support increased parent and general public awareness about and involvement in public schools. Schools should be inviting and open to all members of the community.

Standards

2. South Carolina should focus and benchmark academic standards within and across content areas so that every teacher can identify and address those standards most critical for student success at each grade level.

Assessment

3. South Carolina should immediately implement the recommendations developed by the Education Oversight Committee's Testing Task Force to reduce the testing burden and give timely, useful data to teachers. Those recommendations call for the SDE to:
 - a) Provide a formative assessment system that allows educators to monitor student progress during the school year;
 - b) Computerize assessment to allow rapid reporting;
 - c) Develop and release better information about state standards and assessments, including sample test items and released test forms;
 - d) Provide assistance in developing classroom assessments aligned with state assessments;
 - e) Assign teams of curriculum and testing experts to thoroughly analyze test results each year, including item-by-item performance;
 - f) Reduce the amount of testing required overall;
 - g) Establish a differentiated assessment plan to provide better information on certain subjects at particular grades. Most importantly, the grade three assessment should be re-envisioned as primarily a reading test, since reading is the most important outcome of the primary grades and is critical to success in all other subjects;
 - h) Vertically equate reading and math tests to allow for meaningful measure of growth;

- i) Equate Algebra I and English I end-of-course assessments to grade-level Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) assessments, so that middle school students are not required to take both tests;
- j) Improve the construction of the test at cut scores (Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced), and change the cut scores to reflect changes in the test.

Professional Development

- 4. South Carolina should develop and ensure statewide implementation of a focused professional development program centered on the critical objectives of the state accountability system. The program should be guided by the following goals:
 - a) Teacher preparation within higher education should be grounded in current practice and related more directly to classroom expectations.
 - b) Teacher recruitment and professional development at the district level should be designed with student needs more in mind.
 - c) Professional development programs for school principals should be redesigned to emphasize management and personnel development skills.
 - d) Current funding for professional development should be redirected to create demonstration sites for effective practice, allowing effective practices to be transferred to schools and districts statewide.

Rewards and Incentives

- 5. The SDE should explore approaches to provide more effective and efficient technical assistance to underperforming schools and districts.

Other Issues

6. South Carolina should focus resources on ensuring that by third grade, students have the reading skills to succeed at subsequent grade levels.
7. South Carolina should support expansion of early childhood education and parenting programs that ensure students enter school prepared for learning and that provide appropriate accountability for all stakeholders.
8. The SDE should be organized and operated in a way that emphasizes its role as a service provider to educators.

Committee on Choice

Charge: Develop recommendations to enhance educational options available to South Carolina's students and parents.

"I believe that Americans expect choice in their lives, and I don't think they should make an exception for public schools. South Carolina will have to get behind giving parents more choices within public education"

—Jim Rex

The report issued by the Committee on Choice supports Dr. Rex's vision of making public education in South Carolina "choice-driven," based on two primary considerations: first, matching educational programs to individual student needs and interests can lead to higher achievement; and second, the public wants and expects expanded choices. The Committee summarized its views this way: "Every family in South Carolina should have viable and substantive choices for their children within the public education school system."

The Committee felt strongly that South Carolina should provide state-level leadership to schools and districts to support expanded choice within public education. Its members identified two additional factors critical to the success of school choice initiatives:

School choice options must be substantive and viable. For any option to succeed, teachers implementing the option will need significant professional development.

School choice will require different strategies in different areas. Some districts will need to focus on "in school" options, while others may be able to implement options between and among schools.

Recommendations

1. Dr. Rex should establish an Office of School Choice within the SDE to provide leadership to local districts in planning, implementing, and evaluating choice programs that meet the needs of all students.
2. The Office of School Choice should develop strategies to involve parents in creating viable and substantive choice options and to educate parents about the merits of available options.
3. The Office of School Choice should document successful, research-based choice models and catalog "best practices" and "lessons learned."

4. The SDE should identify easily implemented choice options that could be established statewide beginning as quickly as the 2007–2008 school year.
5. The SDE should promote options that include alternative routes to high school completion, productive work, and success in life.
6. The SDE should assess all laws and regulations (federal, state, and local) that prevent or restrict choice and should make changes as appropriate to encourage choice.
7. The SDE should articulate that choice options can be internal or external to the school, cross district lines, or include charter schools, vocational schools, and schools with Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA) “clusters of study.”
8. Virtual school offerings should be used to expand choice options for parents and students.
9. The SDE should pursue partnerships between public schools and private entities, ensuring that the state curriculum and state assessments are used.
10. The SDE should work with the General Assembly to identify funding sources to support planning and implementation of choice options.
11. Where circumstances warrant state-funded assistance, the SDE should study the possibilities for funding transportation costs for school choice options. If universal funding cannot be provided, the highest priority for funding should be given to geographically isolated schools or districts and those with Unsatisfactory report card ratings.

Committee on the Teaching Profession

Charge: Identify recommendations to elevate and reinvigorate the teaching profession in South Carolina.

"In the next four or five years, we are going to be losing a large percentage of our most experienced, highly trained educators, and there is nothing that comes close to quantitatively or qualitatively replacing those people. We have got to find ways to attract better and brighter people into this profession and keep them."

—Jim Rex

Education research makes clear that the major determinant of student achievement in any school is the quality and performance of the teaching staff. Funding, support services, and parent involvement are always important, but good teachers make the major difference.

Yet today, as large numbers of experienced educators retire and too few candidates emerge to replace them, South Carolina and the nation as a whole are facing a critical shortage of qualified teachers. The shortage is especially acute in math, physical sciences, foreign languages, and special education; among teachers of color; and in inner-city and rural areas.

The Transition Leadership Team's Committee on the Teaching Profession reviewed a host of factors contributing to the shortage of qualified teachers. Too few qualified candidates are attracted to the teaching profession in the first place, primarily because of its low status and relatively low compensation. Too many who do choose to teach are inadequately prepared for real-world classrooms. And far too many good teachers abandon their profession within a few years for higher pay, more professional working conditions, and better opportunities for professional growth.

The Committee on the Teaching Profession issued seventeen recommendations in four areas that contribute to the development of a caring and qualified teaching workforce: teacher preparation, recruitment and retention, professional development, and leadership.

Recommendations

Preparation

1. Dr. Rex should establish a statewide Teacher Preparation Committee, including representatives from schools and districts, the SDE, and state colleges and universities, to ensure that students graduating from South Carolina's teacher preparation programs are well prepared to meet the requirements of our public schools.

Recruitment and Retention

2. The SDE should create an overarching marketing strategy to attract high school students, undergraduates, career-changers, and out-of-state educators to South Carolina schools.
3. South Carolina should continue to support effective recruitment programs, including the Teaching Fellows program, the Teacher Loan program, and the Teacher Cadet program.
4. South Carolina should create compensation packages that make teaching attractive. Specifically, the state should:
 - Raise the annual teacher salary to the average salary of North Carolina and Georgia to enhance the state's competitiveness in attracting high-quality teachers;
 - Raise the cap on increments within the state salary schedule from 22 years to 28 years to reward veteran teachers;
 - Maintain the \$7,500 salary supplement for teachers with national board certification;
 - Increase the base pay for teachers in critical needs subject areas and in hard-to-staff, high-poverty schools;
 - Repay student loans for math and science teachers.
5. South Carolina should reduce the paperwork burden by providing clerical assistance to teachers.
6. South Carolina should fund comprehensive induction programs for new teachers, providing for networking, release time, and full-time mentor coaching.

Professional Development

7. Regional Centers should be created, possibly at colleges and universities, to foster collaboration between K–12 and postsecondary institutions, provide professional development opportunities, and assist local districts in developing their own high-quality professional development infrastructure.
8. The SDE should provide hands-on technical assistance to help schools develop creative ways of providing effective professional development within the school day.
9. The SDE should recommend tested and proven professional development approaches and create a model for evaluating professional development opportunities that emphasizes transformation of learning into practice, opportunity for reflection and analysis, and impact on student learning and professional growth.
10. The SDE should pursue additional funding for the Teacher Advancement Program.
11. The SDE should create an annual Superintendent's Award for effective professional development.

12. The SDE should establish a standing committee of educators, researchers, and community members to assess and recommend improvements in professional development.
13. The SDE should develop a process through which teachers can earn credit toward recertification by demonstrating an impact of their professional growth on student achievement.

Leadership

14. South Carolina should create a system that rewards effective teacher performance and establishes a teacher career progression system that includes leadership positions.
15. The SDE should establish and pilot a statewide teacher exchange program.
16. The SDE should create an enduring leadership development and growth continuum that delivers practical, rigorous, and relevant training to all school and district leaders. Educators should be encouraged to participate in the continuum of programs and services provided by the SDE's Office of School Leadership.
17. All schools should implement the Professional Learning Community model, with resources and training provided through virtual or demonstration centers.
18. Teachers should be encouraged to participate in a range of leadership activities, including school reform, professional development, research, and state and local governance.

Committee on Fair Funding

Charge: Identify recommendations to increase adequacy and equity in education funding.

"The bottom line is that 'minimally adequate' is not an acceptable standard for our schools. Things you care about, things you put a value on—you just don't talk about them that way. It's time to take a hard look at how we fund public education in South Carolina."

--Jim Rex

The compelling and impassioned report of the Transition Leadership Team's Committee on Fair Funding lists forty-seven recommendations to begin a statewide discussion on creating a comprehensive system of fair funding for education in South Carolina.

The current system, the Committee noted, is "fragmented, unfair, uneven, and inadequate":

Sources of revenue and allocation mechanisms lack transparency, are overly complex, and are filled with uncertainty, unintended consequences, and unfunded mandates. The laws funding education are a patchwork of often well-meaning "reforms" which are outdated and inconsistent.

The result is a current education funding system that fails to align resources with clear principles and a compelling vision of the future.... Worse, South Carolina's current piece-meal funding approach perpetuates a consistent failure to provide each child in South Carolina with an opportunity to acquire the education necessary to become a productive worker in the competitive global economy of the twenty-first century.

The Committee defined "fair funding" as a system that "would result in each child in South Carolina receiving the opportunity to acquire the education necessary to give that child a fair chance in life, regardless of race, national origin, gender, geography, or socio-economic status."

Twelve principles guided the Committee's recommendations:

Education funding should be simple, fair, adequate, and transparent. "Simple" means understandable by the citizens of South Carolina; "fair" means that resources are greater where needs are greater; "adequate" means sufficient to meet the needs of the child regardless of race, national origin, gender, geography, or socio-economic status; and "transparent" means visible to the citizens of South Carolina, so leaders can be held accountable.

The greatest teachers must be attracted and retained for the children with the greatest needs.

To have an adequate, fair educational opportunity, children in poverty need more resources. When children in poverty are aggregated in a school or district, the need for resources is multiplied.

An adequate, fair educational opportunity for poor children in South Carolina requires professional early childhood education.

Facility, infrastructure, and technology needs must be addressed. Geographic location should not determine the quality of school facilities, infrastructure, or technology experienced by a child.

Education is the key to economic development in South Carolina.

Local community governance and accountability are critical to producing excellence.

A total assessment of the state tax structure and revenue sources should be undertaken, and those systems should be rebalanced to support education and better align the state's resources with the education of our children.

Fair funding should involve "leveling up," not "leveling down," and should encourage excellence and innovation.

Fair funding may involve choice within the public schools and must not divert funds away from public schools.

South Carolina must maintain high standards of achievement for all students.

Once achieved, fair funding must be regularly reviewed, updated, and adjusted to be maintained as fair.

Recommendations

1. Teacher salaries in the areas of greatest need must be allowed to rise to the levels necessary to attract great teachers to serve children with the greatest needs.
2. Significant incentives such as retirement benefits, insurance benefits, salary supplements, and/or significant bonuses for length of service and effectiveness should be considered to attract and retain skilled teachers to high-poverty rural areas or other areas where students from poverty are aggregated.
3. South Carolina must continue to consistently raise average teacher salaries until we reach the national average.

4. Factors such as growth of population, inflation, aggregation of poverty, aggregation of special needs students, etc. must be studied to assure that basic costs are covered to support teachers in the conditions in which they are teaching.
5. Class size, principal leadership, collaborative teacher environments, etc. should be structured in ways that create a nurturing and supportive environment for teachers.
6. Education-friendly communities should be created and supported to increase teacher retention and satisfaction.
7. South Carolina should review and update the base student cost to reflect the funding necessary to educate all students; determine the funding needed above the base student cost to educate a poor child to achieve state standards; and determine the funding needed above the base student cost to educate a poor child where poverty in the school or district is overwhelming. The state should design and implement a funding allocation system that delivers the resources necessary to lift children with the greatest needs to achievement of state standards.
8. South Carolina should consider designing a system that increases the poverty weighting factor and the aggregation of poverty weighting factors.
9. South Carolina should consider mechanisms that account for community wealth, social capital, ability to raise capital for infrastructure, etc.
10. Birth through third grade early childhood education and health services should be provided to every child in need.
11. Early childhood interventions and opportunities should be coordinated with health service providers, logically through the schools.
12. Universal four-year-old kindergarten should be provided for all South Carolina children.
13. Three-year-old kindergarten should be provided for all South Carolina children in poverty.
14. A state infrastructure bank for schools should be considered.
15. More state capital should be available to upgrade and maintain facilities, infrastructure, and technology in communities where local capital is not available.
16. Mechanisms should be developed to assist schools in poverty in addressing infrastructure needs.
17. Facilities needs in "Corridor of Shame" schools should be addressed immediately.

18. South Carolina should raise debt limits and develop additional financing techniques in appropriate circumstances.
19. South Carolina should review state standards to assure efficiency and effectiveness in capital spending.
20. Education initiatives and innovation must be linked to economic strategies such as clusters, higher average income goals, etc.
21. Education in the visual arts, humanities, music, and the performing arts is vital to the quality of life and economic development in South Carolina, and should be fully funded.
22. An increasing focus on math and science achievement and continuing education must be a part of education and economic development strategies.
23. Statewide capital and other investments in higher education should be considered when aligning K-12 system resources with opportunities for higher education in South Carolina.
24. Fair funding means local communities must be able to foster excellence and respond to local needs.
25. Fair funding must enable, not supplant, local accountability and governance.
26. Where local community governance and accountability are poor, resources must be allocated to design, implement, and upgrade management improvements and school board quality.
27. Act 388 must be reformed and revised.
28. A comprehensive study of funding mechanisms, seeking the best systems in the U.S. and the world for raising and allocating funds, should be undertaken immediately.
29. A Blue Ribbon Committee to develop school funding legislation for introduction in 2008 should be named.
30. A system of statewide resource capture, allocation, and local control should be considered.
31. Weighted pupil systems should be revisited for fairness.
32. Systems of aggregating certain types of property tax wealth should be considered.
33. Revenue sources other than property tax should be considered.
34. No part of the tax structure should be omitted from consideration.

35. Fair funding should not deprive school districts of opportunities for excellence or innovation.
36. Local opportunities for innovation and excellence should be built into any fair funding proposal.
37. South Carolina should consider establishing demonstration schools as laboratories for excellence.
38. Choice within public schools should consider the transportation and scheduling needs of poor children and families.
39. A study of choice within public schools in other states and systems should be conducted with a focus on avoiding isolation of children by race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or other factors.
40. Any system of choice with the public schools should promote, not diminish, achievement.
41. Systems of choice that undermine public schools by diverting resources from the public schools should be opposed.
42. High standards of achievement linked directly to global competitiveness are an integral element of fair funding and must result in the opportunity for each child to acquire the vocational and academic skills needed for productive citizenship.
43. Without high standards there is not "fairness" in "fair funding" because children will not be prepared to compete in the global economy of the twenty-first century.
44. Reducing standards for any of our children sells our children short. The suggestion that poor children cannot achieve the state's standards must be resisted.
45. Fair funding must be regularly adjusted to maintain fairness, specifically considering population growth, inflation, capital needs, changing markets, and other conditions.
46. Legislation or other initiatives should be aligned with overall goals and, particularly, the Education Accountability Act and No Child Left Behind standards.
47. Fair funding should be continuously aligned with market needs for education workers and with preparation for higher education opportunities.