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To:
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Subject: K-12 Education Reform Initiative - Promoting Student Success by Emphasizing Reading



Promoting Student Success By Emphasizing Reading

Ensuring That Students Are Proficient Readers Before Advancing Them Beyond Third Grade Will Improve Their Performance Through Middle And High School And Reduce Drop-Out Rates

The Challenge

Too many of South Carolina's students are being promoted through the 3rd grade without having sufficiently developed their reading skills, setting them up for failure later in school and in life.

- South Carolina placed 42nd among the states for the percentage of 4th graders scoring at or above basic on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 2013. (U.S. Department of Education, 2013)
- Children who are not reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade are four times less likely to graduate from high school on time than students who meet the standard. (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011)
- Reading levels in 3rd grade are a significant predictor of later performance in middle school and high school, even after accounting for demographic characteristics and school influences. (University of Chicago, 2010)

The Response

Gov. Haley proposes to adopt a 3rd grade retention policy and dramatically increase the state's investment in early literacy programs including reading coaches, summer reading camps, and expanded reading-related professional development for teachers.

- The FY 2014-15 Executive Budget establishes a new \$29.5 million Reading Coach program that offers funding for a reading coach in every public elementary school in South Carolina. The 300 elementary schools in which 20% or more of students failed to meet the basic state standards in reading will receive a fully state-funded coach; the other 340 schools will be offered half-funding, if the school district agrees to match.
- The RAND Corporation's researchers found "that receiving a state-funded coach was associated with statistically significant improvements in average annual reading achievement gains" *and that coaching likely had a greater impact in the lowest performing schools.*
- A recent four-year longitudinal study of a specific form of the reading coach model found "substantial effects" of improved student literacy for kindergartners through 2nd graders, and that these positive impacts were sustained through the intervening summers. (The Elementary School Journal, 2010)

- Governor Haley's budget for the upcoming year also quadruples the state's investment in summer reading camps, from \$1.5 million to \$6 million.
- Florida's 3rd grade reading policies – including summer camps and retention – were found to “increase reading proficiency quite substantially after only two years.” (Education Finance and Policy, 2007)
- Gov. Haley's budget offers up to \$5 million in state funding for reading-related professional development for South Carolina's teachers in FY 2014-15.

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