

Executive Order 1999-39

(September 8, 1999)

WHEREAS, one-quarter to one-third of middle grades students are not currently achieving academically at minimum standards; and

WHEREAS, the people of South Carolina have expressed their insistence that all students achieve at high standards competitive with national and world expectations; and

WHEREAS, the middle grades are the last opportunity to prepare students for the academic standards of high school; and

WHEREAS, the middle grades are a critical time regarding development of good character, strong work habits, and personal responsibility; and

WHEREAS, many middle grades students initiate risk-taking behaviors.

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the powers conferred upon me by the Constitution and Statutes for the State, I hereby create the South Carolina Middle Grades Task Force to address quality teacher training and professional development, academic rigor in curriculum and instruction, effective organization of middle grade schools, parent involvement, and prevention of risk-taking behaviors.

The Middle Grades Task Force shall be charged with analyzing current shortcomings and recommending ways to:

Enhance the pre-service and continuing preparation of teachers to promote academic rigor, personal development, and responsible behavior among students.

Strengthen the cadre of middle school principals through recruitment, training, licensure, and other measures.

Achieve academic rigor in middle grades schools and promote academic success for all middle grades students with special attention to effective curriculum and instruction in the core subjects assessed through the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT).

Organize middle grades schools to enhance faculty teamwork and overall effectiveness in promoting academic rigor, personal development, and responsible behavior among middle grades students.

Engage families as full partners in the educational and personal development of their children.

Prevent risk-taking behaviors through family-school-community partnerships.

It is further ordered that the Middle Grades Task Force shall provide a preliminary report on its findings and recommendations to the Governor for his consideration and review no later than December 1, 1999, and a final report no later than September 1, 2000. To assist in the implementation of its charge pursuant to his Order, the Commission may create such advisory committees or subcommittees as it deems necessary and shall appoint a staff working group of persons with expertise from all organizations whose contributions are necessary to develop excellent middle grades schools.