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Subject: Newsletter - News from Molly Spearman

South Carolina Department of Education Newsletter

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to bring you an update from the South Carolina Department of Education. This week, I will be visiting schools in Calhoun County, speaking to students at the USC Honors College, and attending the inauguration of Dr. Richard E. Cosentino, the 12th President of Lander University.

The Safe Schools Taskforce I convened in the fall of 2015, issued its final report and recommendations. We brought together a diverse group of parents, law enforcement, and educators to review current school policies and educator and law enforcement training criteria. You can see my statement about the taskforce, learn more about its members, and read their report [here](#).

The Department has convened four Uniform Grade Policy subcommittees that are developing recommendations to shift the state from a seven-point to ten-point grading scale. More information will be provided as the workings groups continue their research and collaboration; a final proposal must be approved by the State Board of Education.

On April 20th, I am very excited to be announcing South Carolina's new Teacher of the Year. This newsletter has stories about all five finalists and I hope you will take a minute to read them all. I am grateful for the wonderful students, parents, teachers, and administrators who support our public education system. I will continue to work hard on your behalf.

Watch Molly's February Video Report

In Our State

State Superintendent Molly Spearman visited educators at Heath Springs Elementary School in Lancaster County School District and spoke on issues regarding the Arts in Basic Curriculum, encouraging them to “help foster students’ creative thinking and problem solving skills.”

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Student council members at Fort Mill Elementary School celebrate a ribbon cutting Friday for the Little Free Library at Harris Street Park.

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Spearman speaks about how churches can assist schools—Greenville News

State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman spoke at an educator’s appreciation luncheon in Simpsonville about how the faith-based community can connect with the education system.

“We as educators have been pretty nervous about working with church folks. We’re so afraid that we’re going to do something wrong and break the law,” Spearman said. “I truly believe we have to stop that. We can work together as partners, because what we want to do and have to do in this state to make every child ready, we can’t do this by ourselves. We have got to have help and what better partners than our friends in the faith community.” Read the article [here](#).

Student Spotlight

Teachers who oversee the Little Gents Club at Brunson-Dargan Elementary School in Darlington County School District are teaching young students life lessons to help them be successful.

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Teacher of the Year Gala–April 20

On April 20, Superintendent Spearman will announce the new South Carolina Teacher of the Year. Learn more about each of the finalists:

#1 Dr. Leah Barley

Florence One : Dr. Barley teaches language and writing in grades 1–6 at Royall Elementary School in Florence School District One. She is also an Education and Leadership Professor. Dr. Barley attributes her success in the classroom to building positive relationships with students, parents, and the school community.

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#2 Mr. Joey Trail

Horry County Schools : Trail is a seventh-grade English language arts teacher at Forestbrook Middle School in Horry County. Trail worked in the entertainment field for 16 years but recognized that he wanted to focus on his passion for youth advocacy. He decided to enter the teaching profession and use his skills in entertainment to engage his students.

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#3 Sabrina Williams

Lexington Two : Sabrina Williams teaches social studies and humanities in grades 6–8 at Fulmer Middle School in Lexington County School District Two. She developed a love for teaching after helping her young sister overcome academic challenges in school. Williams believes a passion for making a difference and care for students is the foundation of being an effective teacher.

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#4 Jennifer Wise

Richland One : Jennifer Wise is a seventh- and eighth-grade mathematics teacher at Hand Middle School in Richland School District One. Jennifer always wanted to help and work with children. She recognized her desire to become a math educator during her junior year in high school while tutoring her peers after-school.

She helps her students see the role math plays in their life by engaging in real world problems.

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#5 Sheryn Billue

Lexington One : Sheryn Billue teaches mathematics in grades 10–12 at Lexington High School in Lexington School District One. She worked as a staff meteorologist for the United States Army and discovered her love for teaching while volunteering at a local high school. Billue's experience in the military made her aware of the need for more women in technical fields.

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All students graduate prepared for success in college, careers, and citizenship. By 2018, at least one school in every district will have implemented personalized learning that supports students' meeting the [Profile of the South Carolina Graduate](#).

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