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Attachments: Gov. Nikki Haley - K-12 Education Reform Initiative 2014.pdf



Governor Nikki Haley Announces K-12 Education Reform Initiative *Fighting For The Promise Of An Equitable Education*

COLUMBIA, S.C. – After a year of meetings with 16 different groups of teachers, administrators, business leaders, education stakeholders, and Members of South Carolina’s General Assembly, Governor Nikki Haley today announced her K-12 Education Reform Initiative.

As announced in her 2013 State of the State address, and in recognition that real education reform would need to be driven from the bottom up instead of top down, the governor has spent the past year pursuing a bipartisan “Education Conversation” with the individuals, groups, and organizations from all corners of the state most closely involved in educating South Carolina’s children. These efforts and conversations sought to identify the challenges facing public schools and determine how to best overcome them.

The governor’s K-12 Education Reform Initiative is a direct product of these conversations and reflects the idea that it is time for South Carolina to take significant steps towards transforming its schools and educational system, ensuring all children are being equally prepared for college or careers.

The K-12 Education Reform Initiative includes the following highlights:

- \$97 million for children in poverty to provide a quality education for those living in our poorest communities. In recognition that current K-12 funding formula is inequitable and outdated and that it fails to target funding to the areas where it is truly needed, this initiative proposes a revised funding formula, recommended by the Education Oversight Committee, which will allow funds to be distributed to the schools where they are most needed.
- \$29.5 million reading coach program that offers funding for a reading coach in every public elementary school in South Carolina. Ensuring that students are proficient readers before advancing them beyond 3rd grade will improve their performance through middle and high school and reduce dropout rates.
- \$29.3 million to improving bandwidth to school facilities, bolstering wireless connectivity within school walls, and launching or enhancing the push to ensure that every student has a computer or tablet. Modernizing technology and improving bandwidth will give students greater access to educational content and also critical computer skills their future employers will demand. This includes an additional \$4 million in teacher technology training.

“Providing every child in South Carolina with the same educational opportunities isn’t just something we should talk about – it’s something we should be actively fighting to achieve and that is what we are doing today,” said Gov. Nikki Haley. “By reforming South Carolina’s antiquated funding formula, providing funding for reading coaches and new technology, we are taking a stand against the idea that where you are born

and raised should influence the quality of your education. We have an obligation, as good citizens, and as a government, to provide every child with the chance to reach their potential in the classroom – that is our obligation and that is my promise.”

“The Foundation for Excellence in Education is excited about Governor Haley’s proposal to improve the quality of education for South Carolina’s students,” said Patricia Levesque, CEO, Foundation for Excellence in Education. “The K-12 Education Reform Initiative’s emphasis on literacy and technology has potential for long-term positive results for schools and children. We applaud the governor’s action to build a foundation of infrastructure and resources for growth in these crucial areas for education.” The Foundation for Excellence in Education is a leader in the push for education reform and was founded by former Governor Jeb Bush in 2008.

“Based on input we have heard from teachers, increasing resources focused on reading and technology are critically necessary to teach children and help them be successful in today’s world,” said former S.C. House Majority Leader and Chairman of the House Ethics Committee Kenny Bingham. “The Governor’s commitment to a multi-year investment in early literacy programs, K-12 technology, and related teacher training is not only unprecedented, but will have one of the greatest impacts on educating South Carolina’s students and future workforce.”

“Well designed technology can play a critical role in meaningful, independent practice that optimizes the development of a confident, skillful, and motivated reader,” said Rachel Toole, South Carolina public school teacher. “However, without current professional development in technology and reading, the goal of creating these competent and progressive future leaders seems beyond reach.”

“We appreciate Governor Haley’s vision in recognizing the disparities between rural and urban school districts in South Carolina, and applaud her leadership in transitioning to a fairer education funding model,” said Phyllis Schwarting, superintendent, Bamberg School District 1.

“Reading coaches are the lifeline to a successful reading program and are the school-level experts on reading and literacy,” said David Mathis, superintendent, Saluda County Schools. “Coaches provide classroom teachers with unwavering support for helping struggling readers and enriching advanced readers. Together, the reading coach and teacher trump the barriers to literacy which include poverty, language acquisition, and learning disabilities.”

“It has been proven that children who are not reading on grade level by the end of their third grade year are four times less likely to graduate from high school on time than students who are reading on grade level in the third grade, said Jim Reynolds, chief executive officer of Total Comfort Solutions. “Governor Haley’s Reading Coach program to provide a coach in every public elementary school in South Carolina addresses this critical element of a successful education.”

A copy of the governor’s K-12 Education Reform Initiative is attached.

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