

# High School Task Force Report



**SC EDUCATION  
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**



PO Box 11867 | 227 Blatt Building | Columbia SC 29211 | [WWW.SCEOC.ORG](http://WWW.SCEOC.ORG)



**High School Task Force Report  
to the  
South Carolina Education Oversight Committee  
June 13, 2016**



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Resources made available and used by Task Force Members (available online at <http://www.eoc.sc.gov/Pages/HSTaskForce.aspx>):

- *Meandering Toward Graduation: Transcript Outcomes of High School Graduates.* Marni Bromberg and Christina Theokas. (April 5, 2016). Education Trust (edtrust.org)
- *Closing the Expectations Gap.* (February, 2014). Achieve (Achieve.org)
- Information from the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) staff regarding (a) the state and district results of the 2015 administration of ACT and WorkKeys assessments; and (b) data on the percentage of students who retain LIFE, Palmetto Fellows and HOPE lottery scholarships.
- *Increasing Student Access and Success in Dual Enrollment Programs: 13 Model State-Level Policy Components* (February, 2014). Education Commission of the States (ECS.org)
- *Using Assessments to Inform 12th-grade Interventions and Accelerations.* (March 2015). Education Commission of the States (ECS.org)
- *State Approaches to Funding Dual Enrollment by Education.* (May 2015). Education Commission of the States (ECS.org).
- *High School to College and Careers – Aligning State Policies* (2002, 2012 electronic version 2014). Southern Regional Education Board (SREB.org)

- *Credentials for All: An Imperative for SREB States.* (July 14, 2015). Southern Regional Education Board (SREB.org) – available online
- *The Unprepared Student and Community Colleges.* (2016). Center for Community College and Student Engagement. (CCSE.org)
- *South Carolina College and Career Readiness Toolkit.* (2016). Center of Excellence for College and Career, Francis Marion University, SC. (screadiness.org).

## Introduction

The High School Task Force was chaired by Dr. Lee D'Andrea, a retired public school educator, who served most recently as district superintendent of Anderson 4, and included the following 17 individuals representing public education, higher education and business and industry:

Dr. Sean Alford, Superintendent, Aiken County School District

Ms. Cynthia Bennett, SC Chamber of Commerce

Dr. James Couch, Director of Center for Advanced Technical Studies, Lexington 5 and Member of the EOC

Dr. Johnny Hilton, SC School Boards Association

Dr. Darrell Johnson, Superintendent, Greenwood School District 50

Dr. John Lane, Director of Academic Affairs, SC Commission on Higher Education

Rep. Dwight Loftis, SC House of Representatives and Member of the EOC

Drs. Meredith Love and Matt Nelson, Center of Excellence for College and Career Readiness, Francis Marion University

Dr. Frank Morgan, Superintendent, Kershaw County School District

Dr. Darryl Owings, Superintendent, Spartanburg School District 6

Dr. George Petersen, Dean, Moore School of Education, Clemson University

Dr. Kelly Pew, Superintendent, York School District 3

Dr. Hope Rivers, SC Technical College System

Ms. Ann-Marie Stieritz, SC Council on Competitiveness

Dr. Helena Tillar, Superintendent, Marlboro County School District

Dr. Fran Welch, Dean, School of Education, Health, and Human Performance, College of Charleston

Dr. "Jimmie" C. Williamson, President and Executive Director, SC Technical College System

The Task Force met between December 9, 2015 and April 22, 2016 on five different occasions. Copies of the meeting agendas are in the Appendix.

The Task Force focused on the following questions:

1. What is the current high school experience?
2. How well is the current system preparing students for college and careers?
3. What are the current barriers or system roadblocks?

At its meetings, the Task Force discussed the following topics:

1. Career and Technical Education Course Offerings were presented by Dr. Bob Couch.
2. Dr. John Lane, Director of Academic Affairs at the SC Commission on Higher Education and Vice President of Academic Affairs at the SC Technical College System, Dr. Hope Rivers presented information on the state's current dual credit policies and remedial coursework.
3. Dr. John Hughes and Mr. Kevin Smith of the Regional Education Laboratory at Florida State University provided information on college readiness policies implemented in Florida and other states and research on the impact of those policies.
4. Mr. John Squires, of Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) provided information on measuring college readiness and on initiatives to prepare students for being college ready, including *Ready for College* courses in *Literacy Ready* and *Math Ready*. These senior-year courses were designed by SREB to assist underprepared students to have the foundation needed to pursue and succeed in postsecondary studies.

The Task Force members also received the following data and reports that informed the discussion and recommendations. These documents are included in the Appendix as well:

1. *Using Assessments to Inform 12<sup>th</sup>-grade Interventions and Accelerations* by Education Commission of the States

2. Information from the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) staff regarding (a) the state and district results of the 2015 administration of ACT and WorkKeys assessments; and (b) data on the percentage of students who retain LIFE, Palmetto Fellows and HOPE lottery scholarships.
3. *Increasing Student Access and Success in Dual Enrollment Programs: 13 Model State-Level Policy Components* by Education Commission of the States.
4. *State Approaches to Funding Dual Enrollment* by Education Commission of the States.
5. *High School to College and Careers – Aligning State Policies*, by Southern Regional Education Board.
6. *Credentials for All: An Imperative for SREB States* – Southern Regional Education Board.
7. *The Unprepared Student and Community Colleges* – Center for Community College and Student Engagement (CCSE).
8. College Foundation of NC website – <https://www.cfnc.org/index.jsp>

## Executive Summary

Pursuant to action and directions at the October 2015 meeting of the Education Oversight Committee (EOC), the High School Task Force is hereby providing findings and recommendations following an examination and evaluation of the design of the high school experience in South Carolina. The investigation is based on the desired outcomes as articulated in the South Carolina Superintendents' Roundtable document, *South Carolina Profile of the Graduate*, described in the *South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards*, and espoused by the Education Oversight Committee, South Carolina Department of Education, South Carolina State Board of Education, Commission on Higher Education, South Carolina School Administrators Association, South Carolina Arts in Basic Steering Committee, South Carolina Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, South Carolina Chamber of Commerce, and TransformSC schools and districts, and *South Carolina Council on Competitiveness*. Since the investigation is based on established desired outcomes, multiple perspectives were analyzed for process understanding, efficacy and efficiency.

The need for the work of the Task Force is clearly demonstrated in data reviewed from both the state and national level.

- Between 2013 and 2030, 553,884 new jobs will be created in South Carolina. Fifty-two percent of the new jobs created will require higher education.
- Between 2013 and 2030, the percent of all jobs requiring higher education will increase from 61.5percent to 66.7 percent.
- From Fall 2013, percentage of freshman who retained scholarship in same institution in Fall of 2014:
  - 89.0 percent Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Recipients
  - 51.4 percent LIFE Scholarship Recipients
  - 24.6 percent HOPE Scholarship Recipients
- In 2014-2015, 11<sup>th</sup> graders in South Carolina taking The ACT, a college readiness exam, scored as follows:

Subject Test	ACT Benchmarks	SC Average Score	% Students in SC Meeting Benchmarks
English	18	16.5	38.7%
Math	22	18.1	21.6%
Reading	22	18.3	25.8%
Science	23	18.1	17.9%
Composite	Not Specified	17.9	Not Specified

- In 2014-2015, 11<sup>th</sup> graders in South Carolina taking ACT WorkKeys, scored as follows:

Level	Examinee has necessary foundations skills for:	Percentage Students in SC Earning
Platinum	99% of jobs	1%
Gold	93% of jobs	22%
Silver	67% of jobs	40%
Bronze	16% of jobs	25%
TOTAL:		88%

The current learning design is not working *systemically*. There are currently examples of high achievement and successful preparation for the South Carolina workforce; these examples are most often where there is strong and innovative leadership at the school and/or district level. In many of these schools/districts, the system requirements have been waived, challenged or circumvented to yield the results. The South Carolina learning design for college and career readiness is in critical need of *systemic renovation*.

The process of preparing students for careers in South Carolina is, in fact, a continuum of learning experiences with multiple possible exit points to college or career. Multiple entities in South Carolina, such as school districts, South Carolina Department of Education, South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, and the South Carolina Technical College System have a responsibility for the total process of college and career readiness. The design of the process, including rigorous and relevant learning experiences, aligned assessments and

smooth transitions for students and families exiting high school, is the critical first step in ensuring *systemic* opportunities for achievement and success. In this report, the process is identified as the **learning design for college and career readiness**; not simply high school design, in order to capture all the steps/phases experienced by students and families. (See graphic below.)

### Learning Design for College and Career Readiness

Continuum of Education for Career Preparation	Careers with HS Diploma and Specialized Training or Certifications	Careers with HS Diploma and Specialized Training or Certifications	Careers Certifications or Associates Degree	Careers with Degrees from 4-year College/University	
	HS Diploma (ready to enter workforce from here)	HS Diploma (ready to enter 2-4 college/university without need for remediation)	Technical College Certificate or Degree	College or University Degrees (Bachelors, Masters, Terminal)	

The design of a new college and career readiness system must focus on the desired outcomes while including two additional parameters necessary for systemic success: (1) the system allows for flexibility and diversity at both the district level and the student navigation level, and (2) the system is broadly communicated and entrenched as the new landscape for college and career preparation and engagement.

The Task Force review included the following elements of the current high school design:

- Content/course work
- Assessments
- Transition to High School
- Communications
- Data

The Findings and Recommendations center on these elements. For the Executive Summary, descriptions and background information are as follows:

## **Content/course work**

College and Career Ready Standards are the basic knowledge set required for the workforce of today. Whether the student exits the continuum of learning experiences after grade twelve or the sixteenth year, the body of knowledge necessary for jobs at the respective exit levels is demanding, rigorous, and most often integrated technologically. In multiple studies, the knowledge is both most engaging and enduring for the student when the content/knowledge is learned in real world applications, projects and/or relevant experiences.

The 24 units currently required for graduation are distributed as follows:

- English/Language Arts: 4 units
- U.S. History and Constitution: 1 unit
- Economics (1/2 unit) & US Government (1/2 unit): 1 unit
- Other Social Studies: 1 unit
- Math: 4 units
- Natural Science: 3 units
- Computer Science (includes keyboarding): 1 unit
- Physical Education or JROTC: 1 unit
- Electives: 7 units
- (Other )\*1 unit

\* For students in a college preparatory course of study, one additional unit must be earned in a foreign language (as defined by the SC Board of Education), or

\* For students in a course of study designed to enter the workforce, one additional vocational unit must be earned (as defined by the SC Board of Education).

Currently, the courses identified to fulfill the core requirements for English/Language Arts, Math and Science do not include courses in Career and Technical Education.

## **Assessments**

The learning design for college and career readiness relies heavily on assessments which accurately reflect the intended outcome – the College and Career Readiness of an individual student. The current learning design is focused on four groups: (1) careers immediately after high school, (2) two year colleges, (3) four year colleges, or the (4) military. Assessments for each group cannot be random and must give a student and/or the student's family an accurate indication of readiness or proficiencies. The assessments must be specifically aligned and carefully selected for the purpose of identifying a student's proficiency level as appropriate for the workforce, military, two-year college or four-year college.

The effectiveness of the learning system is also dependent on assessment alignment. Measuring something other than the intended outcome skews all future decisions in addition to wasting time and resources.

In addition to summative assessments that measure a student's preparedness for desired outcomes, high school experiences shall include formative assessments which are vertically calibrated to predict summative results. Random choices of assessments in a learning system provide no data on growth/progress and little meaningful data about the student and his/her college and career plan.

## **Transition from High School**

By definition, a learning system has intentional, coherent and well-communicated transitions from one phase/step to the next phase/step. High school staff and students must clearly understand the respective expectations for two-year and four-year colleges, business and industry, and the military. Students and their families making decisions without clear understanding of transitions often eliminate choices, incur extra expense, miss deadlines, and may perhaps choose an inappropriate pathway. High school staff without clear information and understanding may provide limited choices, erroneous information and weaker guidance services. It is essential for high school, college, business/industry and military administrators and planners to develop a framework with defined, desired results, such as a seamless entry (without remediation) and content/course identifications for general admission and specific majors. Teachers, professors, human resource staff and other staff must operationalize the framework.

In the most effective learning systems, the transition offers multiple pathways to the student based on his/her desired graduation plan. High school credits, dual credit, articulated agreements, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate courses are examples. The success of these opportunities is rooted in systemic communication to students, parents, teachers, guidance counselors as well as college admissions and higher education advising. Further, the successful learning design system minimizes and/or eliminates barriers, such as access and costs.

### **Communications**

There are many stakeholders and participants involved and engaged in a well-designed, effective learning system for college and career readiness. It is easy for each entity or group to operate in isolation with minimal communication. This closed environment makes navigation in the system from the student and family perspective difficult at best, and dysfunctional in many incidences. Students often drop out and often fail to reach their potential or find the most rigorous and rewarding careers. The state workforce and citizenry suffer this loss as well.

The ultimate success of the well-planned learning system for college and career readiness depends on the extent of implementation statewide. A critical element of the communications plan includes building understanding by sharing clear and accurate communication and creating demand from students and families by demonstrating the positive impact of a well-planned learning system for young people and their families.

### **Data**

During the examination of the current high school design, data to answer questions was often not available. While databases exist for students enrolled in public schools, certified teachers in South Carolina, and students enrolled in public colleges and universities, these are most often silos of information and research on disaggregated or synthesized results are not available. A longitudinal data system from state 4K to four-year college is a necessary tool and is nonexistent in South Carolina. One member of the Task Force from a public South Carolina university reported the need for information to meet the standards of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The data is currently not available and reportedly the state is unwilling to collect and aggregate the data. This lack of data for decision

making and transparency serves no student, school district or institution of higher learning favorably in the long term, regardless of how difficult the current information is to see in print. In a systemic learning design for college and career readiness, collective and specific results as well as return on investment (ROI) are necessary for accountability, transparency and system corrections. Failure to use data tools is a wasteful use of taxpayers' funds and human resources.

## Findings

A. The current South Carolina high school diploma requirements reflect 20<sup>th</sup> Century thinking and planning. Twenty four Carnegie units across math, science, social studies, English and elective courses may or may not prepare the student for college and/or career. The options available to students vary greatly across the state. The 120 hours of seat time limit the delivery of instruction and engagement time for the student. The academic and career-specific courses are not fully integrated to allow students to earn core course requirements or encourage rigorous career preparation. This fact, combined with the current Uniform Grading Policy, discourages the pursuit of career courses for many students. South Carolina is one of only a few states that require twenty four units for graduation; this is the maximum number required in any state. The design of the current system does not ensure the best opportunity for desired results. In fact, the unintended consequences of parts of the current system *negatively* impact the desired results. To protect scholarship opportunities, students often avoid rigorous course choices in the senior year. Many students do not take a math course in the senior year as a result of earning high school credit in middle school. Nearly all of the high schools in South Carolina, schedule a seven or eight period day (and often a hybrid of the two). These schedules provide every student with 28-32 course opportunities. This part of the design is neither the most effective in terms of student preparedness nor efficient in terms of funding.

The Education and Economic Development Act of 2005 (EEDA) clearly outlines a plan for students to explore and engage in career readiness. There are examples of excellence in implementation, and yet, there remains a lack of systemic integration in the majority of the state. The fact that most of the students have an Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) does *not* signify understanding of the workforce preparedness landscape and opportunities. Career and Technical Education (CATE) courses are systemic to the core choices for fulfilling high school requirements for a diploma. CATE courses are often seen as add-ons, in schools or centers where the choices are more systemic and where local leadership has facilitated this environment.

B. The current assessments in South Carolina do not provide an aligned metric of learning progress of a student. The student, or the student's parents, can not document his/her

progress on the current sequence of state assessments. Transitions, to two- and four-year colleges or to the workplace lack alignment and well-defined goals. In some incidences, a career major has a national exam; however, this is the exception. State achievement tests for other career completer courses are not necessarily aligned to business and industry standards, not connected to a student's grade in a course, and sometimes not even reported. Students and families describe an ambiguity in understanding the goals/meanings of the assessments and their uses.

*Of significant concern linked to this finding is accountability. Students, teachers, schools and districts can not be held accountable for growth and development of learning content and skills, when the continuum of assessment is random and not vertically aligned.*

At the time of this report, a high school assessment to measure college readiness has not been approved. However, in order to determine if students are college ready, an assessment must be in place for 11th grade high school students. One Task Force member reported, in his district, 9<sup>th</sup> grade students are taking an assessment for college preparedness; this provides students and parents with meaningful assistance in planning the next steps in the Individual Graduation Plan (IGP).

WorkKeys, a nationally recognized career readiness assessment, is in statue for use with high school students. This assessment provides students and employers with information about a student's career readiness that is meaningful and recognized across disciplines and fields of works. Currently, this assessment is the one given in South Carolina most aligned with career readiness and providing meaningful feedback to students, districts and business/industry.

- C. The work on seamless transitions from high school to higher education has slowed significantly in the immediate past. In its report, *Sixth Annual Report on the Implementation of the Education and Economic Development Act of 2005*, the Education and Economic Development Coordinating Council, "included in this report recommendations to the SCDE that we believe are critical to the future sustainability of this all-important legislation." Later, the implementation of Regional Education Councils (REC) was moved to the South Carolina Department of Commerce. The implementation of EEDA remained at the SC Department of Education. The Task Force finds that implementation, understanding and coordination of all parts of the EEDA has diminished

without the Coordinating Council (sunset in June 2012). Superintendents on the Task Force and representatives from higher education reported gaps in knowledge and practice across the state.

Task Force superintendents reported inconsistent practices among technical schools regarding tuition (waivers, lottery use and location requirements for dual credit). For example, it may be helpful for admissions officers/counselors to meet on a regular basis with guidance services in K-12 was a suggestion made to increase communication.

- D. A significant void in communication regarding college and career readiness and the South Carolina workforce needs/demands exists at many levels. There are several outstanding examples creating awareness and the need for college and career readiness as well as workforce demands in South Carolina. The South Carolina Council on Competitiveness, TransformSC, some Regional Education Advisory Boards, Ready SC and Apprenticeship Carolina (both parts of the South Carolina Technical College System) have very positive communication plans and initiatives in place. However, School District Superintendents report this information is not systemically reaching teachers, guidance counselors and, most importantly, students and families. This failure in the system may explain some of the information collected from human resources and the South Carolina Chamber regarding lack of enough workers in high demand jobs in South Carolina.

The South Carolina workforce has changed significantly over the last two generations: from agriculture and textiles to manufacturing and industry. Many parents and grandparents do not have this information and are therefore, are unlikely to encourage their students in one of these directions, or even to discuss the workforce landscape. The paradigm shift in the South Carolina workforce is evident in economic development, the Governor's Office and even education institutions. To have the needed workforce and fulfill the demands, the paradigm shift must also happen at the grassroots level among families, students, teachers and guidance counselors. Currently, no statewide entity or plan exists to coordinate communication and ensure the engagement of students and families.

- E. A significant lack of available data is evident when simple questions and requests are made regarding progress, correlations, disaggregated situations. Funding was appropriated and some work done in the area of building information databases;

however, implementation and follow-up are not evident. The frustration with this element appears across Pre-K – 12 and higher education. The sharing of databases takes place on a limited basis at the commission on Higher Education. Given the capacities of databases, the teacher certification, higher education and pre-K – 12 databases are stocked with information that is not being analyzed or synthesized for decision making. One such example is the request to disaggregate by high school the percent of students retaining HOPE scholarships after the first year of college. The data exists for all students but is not disaggregated by high school; yet each high school has a unique BEDS code and each student a unique number identifier. When funds are limited as they are and should be at the government level, making accurate, timely assumptions and, hence, decisions, depend on data quality and access.

It must be clear that this information is not to track individual students or teachers. Appropriated funds for programs, initiatives, schools, colleges, or other entities should show return on the taxpayers' investment. Collective data is necessary for these kinds of decisions.

There simply is no one place in South Carolina for the data to reside or coordinate the information and make it available to the legislature, higher education or even PK4 - grade 12.

## Recommendations

- A. ***The content/coursework requirements for a high school diploma must be updated to reflect the needs of workforce readiness in the current environment.*** This must include Career and Technical Education (CATE) courses as options for core requirements. South Carolina high school requirements must reflect the need for skills beyond the acquisition of knowledge; through apprenticeships, extensive projects, work experiences, or internships students must demonstrate the application of knowledge. A thorough study of the list of course options must take place and should include courses such as the SREB Literacy Readiness and SREB Math Ready options. In addition to the wider range and more relevant courses, research-based and demonstrated delivery methods should be identified; every district should have some options for students. One Task Force member reported success with STEM Premier. Other Task Force members shared examples of project-based learning, senior projects, cross curricular courses as well as online and distance learning. All of the examples shared included extensive professional development for teachers and staff. This is an integral part of implementation and student success.

The rubric will outline multiple possible combinations, all of which maintain academic rigor based on the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards. The possibilities include online courses, proficiency exams, and distance learning courses as well as traditional high school courses and/or Career and Technical Education (CATE) courses.

The discussion to change the number of units required for the diploma must be addressed as the evidence from SREB, REL and other studies indicates, the paths of study, course offerings and learning experiences are the essential determinants in successful preparation for college and/or career. Additionally, once the content/course work/experiences in the learning design for college and career readiness is framed, then weightings can be assigned.

Below is a sample rubric on courses and experiences which prepare students for multiple options beyond high school. The rubric also demonstrates flexibility or students while maintaining rigor. The next steps help to determine the preparations for entering the next step, i.e. business human resource leaders, college admissions and faculty, etc.

Sample Learning Design High School Requirements					
Content/ Course Work	Step After High School				
		Workforce	2 Year College	4 Year College	Military
	English (4)	Req. one of the following courses: technical writing, public speaking, meetings and presentations	Req. one of the following courses: technical writing, public speaking, meetings and presentations	Current requirements and senior year course required	Req. one of the following courses: technical writing, public speaking, meetings and presentations
	Math (4)	Req. one of the following courses: personal finance or a CATE completer with math focus, i.e. accounting	Req. one of the following courses: personal finance, SREB math ready or a CATE completer with math focus, i.e. accounting	Current requirements and senior year course required	Req. one of the following courses: personal finance or a CATE completer with math focus, i.e. accounting
	Science (3)	Current requirements and senior year recommended	Current requirements and senior year recommended	Current requirements and senior year recommended	Current requirements and senior year recommended
	Technology (1)	Career Completer course level 3 or 4 in identified pathways or general programming course or general media course			
	PE (1)	Course options: traditional PE, nutrition/wellness, DNR course, ROTC, exercise, weightlifting, dance			
	Social Studies (3)	US History & Constitution, Government/Economics, one option from some CATE courses, current courses, courses in conflict resolution and team building			
	Electives (6)	One elective may be exempted with Gold Score on WorkKeys	One elective may be exempted with ACT score of ?	One elective may be exempted with SAT score of ?	One elective may be exempted with ASVAB score of ?
Total 22 units					
Career Readiness	Plus 2 of the choices (on the transcript but not calculated for state scholarship purposes)	Apprenticeship, Approved Work Experience, Approved Independent Study, Senior Project, AP or Dual credit course (these are beyond the AP and dual credit courses taken to meet the requirements above; the student must pass course to meet this requirement but not calculated in state scholarship determination)			
Assessment Scores	Bronze/Silver WorkKeys and Career Completer proficiency exam	Silver WorkKeys and Readiness Exam to 2-year college	Gold Work Keys and ACT/SAT score of ??	Bronze/Silver WorkKeys and ASVAB exam	

In the design of a learning system, the desired results are weighted more heavily. Generally, this higher weighting is designated to the most rigorous courses and capstone courses in career majors and courses which bridge transitions such as dual credit. Following the decisions for requirements to graduate, the Uniform Grading Policy (UGP) must be revised. The highest weighted courses must be assigned to the most rigorous courses in all pathways and used as incentives for students and families in the pursuit of scholarships at both the two- and four-year colleges. Careful consideration must be given to creating a new rubric which offers flexibility and accessibility for students in earning the South Carolina diploma.

The SREB document, *High School to College and Careers, Aligning State Policies: A Useful Policy Tool*, is an excellent source of sample rubrics in the other SREB states. The website described in the document provides an interactive comparison of South Carolina and other states in areas such as content/courses required, academic/course assessments mandated and career readiness assessment. (The document is included in the appendix). During the Task Force meetings, rubrics from Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky and North Carolina were discussed. Of note, these states are all competitors of South Carolina when economic development options are being pursued. The following questions are outlined as guiding tools in the development of policy and practice:

- Are state policies on high school standards, assessments and college readiness in my state aligned and do they promote smooth transitions from secondary to postsecondary education?
- Do the high school standards, courses and assessments in my state prepare students for success in college courses when they enroll as freshmen?
- Are high school assessment results in my state used to make postsecondary placement decisions in state college and universities?
- Do state policies encourage high school students in my state to use the senior year productively, or do these policies allow many seniors to waste the last year of high school?
- Does my state recognize more than one path to graduation, including an option for students who plan to pursue careers after high school?
- How does my state compare in the way it provides financial aid to students?

This recommendation is an extensive undertaking that must be accomplished in collaboration and concert because time is of the essence; students' lives and the preparation of the South Carolina workforce is at stake.

**B. *A coherent continuum of assessments must be established. The assessments must reliably measure content/knowledge as well as college and career readiness.*** Colleges and business and industry must be a part of the choices of assessments in order to accurately predict readiness. South Carolina has used self-made tests as exit exams (BSAP and HSAP) with little evidence that either of these indicated a readiness for college and/or career. In fact, in recent legislation, students who did not pass the test are now eligible for a South Carolina High School Diploma. The next high school assessment chosen to evaluate a student's high school content proficiency should be reliable, valid, rigorous and of merit in other states. The WorkKeys assessment provides employers nationally information about the student's work readiness. In addition, a "soft skills" assessment should be included in the high school experience. One Task Force member reports a few districts are implementing this at the local level. These three assessments, if chosen correctly, will provide students, families, colleges and employers an accurate picture of the student's preparedness in the college and career readiness. When baseline scores are decided, flexibility, without loss of rigor, must be available to students. In its recent report, the National Governors Association, *Creating a College and Career Readiness Model for High Schools*, three principles serve as the base of a system that is reasonable and accountable:

- 1. Use multiple measures to determine school and district performance.*
- 2. Provide incentives for preparing the hardest-to-serve students for college and careers.*
- 3. Set realistic targets for accountability measures.*

A rubric with variable combinations of the three assessments allows for differentiated strengths while also establishing baseline college and career readiness. Once the assessments are decided, this rubric should be established with colleges and business and industry defining the minimum baselines. The continuum of assessments must be clearly communicated to students and parents. Extensive professional development must be provided to teachers and guidance counselors on expectations, content and use of the results.

C. ***A Coordinating Council or P-20 Council should be re-established and directed to fully implement the Education and Economic Development Act.*** Legislation with wholesale systemic change and multiple transitions takes long periods of time to fully implement. One body must be responsible for the coordination of transitions to ensure seamlessness, effectiveness and efficiency. The Task Force frequently noted that the comprehensiveness of its composition was unique; in fact, this should be the norm as it represents the students' and families' perspective of a learning system for college and career readiness.

D. ***An extensive communication initiative should be developed and implemented.***

The degree of success of the previous three (3) recommendations depends on this recommendation. Too often, in the findings, information was reported for one part of the state or one district. This is not to disallow local and regional collaborations, but rather to enhance these successes through communication. The changes in the South Carolina workforce landscape and its needed skills and demands must be communicated to all of South Carolina citizens, especially parents and families of students. The reasons for the changes observed in the recommendations regarding **Content/coursework requirements** and a **Coherent Continuum of Assessments** must be not only understood but expected and even demanded by parents.

The communication plan must employ multiple strategies to ensure effectiveness, including but not limited to social media, web links for all districts and schools, and traditional media (television, billboards and newspapers). The state should develop the plan and provide umbrella structure. One example of a tool that would help parents and students in providing information for high school planning, college planning and career planning is the following website operated by the College Foundation of North Carolina – [www.CFNC.org](http://www.CFNC.org)

The state should provide multiple resources to use as most appropriate to the local demographics. These ideas and resources do not have to be costly. One Task Force member reported implementing an inexpensive, yet visible display of the equal importance of graduating career ready, the school district is recognizing high school seniors who earn a Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum WorkKeys certificate with graduation cords.

Another aspect of a communication is the creation of meaningful professional development for teachers and administrators. As the model changes radically, a new and systemic understanding by educators must be incorporated into implementation. Higher education and the South Carolina Department of Education must work in concert to create and provide multiple pathways to building this knowledge and understanding. In addition, a review of current teacher certification requirements must closely align content and real world work. For districts to provide multiple pathways to college and career readiness, districts must have multiple options to staff and/or deliver the learning experiences.

- E. **A comprehensive design for data must be established.** The plan should include the collection and reporting (manipulation) of information necessary for policy makers and practioners in K-12 and higher education to make prudent decisions *without comprising individual student privacy*. The systemic review of taxpayer investments is essential to creating the most effective and efficient learning design for college and career readiness. Other states have implemented such data systems. For example, the state of Washington has created a robust longitudinal data system that links from year to year and allows educators, decision-makers, students and parents to understand education and workforce outcomes for students in a school, district or program. “ERDC works to protect student privacy while providing data and information to promote a seamless, coordinated preschool-to-career experience for all learners.”

In a review of adequate data and needed information, funds may be redirected for more effective use or a more efficient design.

## Recommended Next Steps and Suggested Timelines

Three of the Recommendations should be addressed in concert:

- A. The content/coursework requirements for a high school diploma must be updated to reflect the needs of workforce readiness in the current environment.
- B. A coherent continuum of assessments must be established. The assessments must reliably measure content/knowledge as well as college and career readiness.
- C. A Coordinating Council or P-20 Council should be re-established and directed to fully implement the Education and Economic Development Act.
  1. Convene the Coordinating Council or P-20 Council to make recommendations for updating/revising or fully implementing the EEDA. Include in the recommendations an evaluation of the various components, i.e. regional centers. (Due December 2016; statute changes in 2017)
  2. Convene across function team/task force (including state and district decision makers in K-12, 2 and 4 year colleges, as well as business/industry) to determine the course work/content rubric with multiple pathways to high school graduation. Include changes in statute needed. (Due December 2016; the new rubric plan to be implemented with incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders in 2017-2018 - first graduates in 2021; some changes for existing high school students could be offered/encouraged to change/explore through scholarship opportunities and/or dual credit paid tuition)
  3. Delegate to the state entities responsible for steps in the Learning Design the task of establishing a continuum of assessments that provide growth information and summative results for students, families and state/district decision makers. (Continuum of assessments due December 2016; implementation school year 2017-2018)
- D. An extensive communication initiative should be developed and implemented.
  1. Delegate to appropriate state entity/group for design and implementation of the plan. (Begin January 2017 and ongoing) Option for development of the graphics, writings, etc. could be to offer a competition between South Carolina public colleges and university departments or teams of student.

Host a charrette and provide all finalists and overall winner scholarships or the department some funds.

2. Develop one-stop resource for students and families to use in planning for college and career after high school graduation. This electronic resource would include information from South Carolina public and private colleges and universities, SC Ready, Economic Development, and SC Department of Commerce.

E. A comprehensive design for data must be established.

1. The South Carolina Department of Education and Commission on Higher Education must convene a committee/task force to identify needed data for decision making by educators, legislators, accreditation bodies, and significant grantors. Standard reports identified as well as a process of securing other information.
2. A database system should be chosen to house the data. A data quality manual should be developed and provided to everyone entering the data. Extensive communication and professional development must be provided to ensure data quality.

## Conclusion

The work of the Task Force initially sounded simple: examine the high school experience and make recommendations for change, give attention to funding and college and career readiness. The results of the work **strongly** indicate, as one superintendent on the Task Force said, “we need a revolution in the high school experience!” At the same time, the Task Force members agreed, the meetings *were revolutionary* in that all entities on the continuum of the learning design were included and at the table.

The **Findings** are concerning because South Carolina is behind other states in the establishment of a college and career ready system. The data to make decisions is not available. The needed assessments are not aligned. Millions of dollars have been spent in these areas with negligible return on the investments. The opportunities are here and many of the resources. The challenge is to design the system with purposeful intention and implement the system with relentless passion. Edward Deming wrote, “A bad system will beat a good person every time.”

The five **Recommendations** should be considered in collaboration as each has dependency on the other; without one in the design, success is doubtful. Many resource articles and models currently exist; this wealth of information should be used to design the new **Learning Design for College and Career Readiness in South Carolina**. The members of the Task Force are grateful for the opportunity to invest in South Carolina’s future.

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## **Appendix A**

### High School Task Force Meeting Agendas

## High School Task Force Meeting

### Agenda

**Wednesday, December 9, 2015**

**10:00 a.m.**

**305 Blatt Building**

I.	Welcome and Introductions	Lee D'Andrea
II.	Outline Purpose and Work of the Task Force	Melanie Barton
III.	Share Draft Format for Report to EOC	Lee D'Andrea
IV.	Discuss Reasons/Needs for the Work (College and Career Readiness data)	Lee D'Andrea
V.	Create a List of Current Barriers/Issues	Lee D'Andrea
VI.	Identify Additional Needed Information	Lee D'Andrea
VII.	Identify Any Additional Resources (in-state or out-of-state)	Lee D'Andrea
VIII.	Finalize Meeting Schedule for January-April/May	Lee D'Andrea

#### Questions to Answer

- What is the current preparation system? How do we know it is not working?
- What results will insure we have a prepared workforce and a system that has choices for students and families? What are the current barriers or system roadblocks?
- Where are there redundancies or gaps? Where are the opportunities?

## **High School Task Force Meeting**

### **Agenda**

**Friday, February 12, 2016**

**9:30 a.m.**

**305 Blatt Building**

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Review Purpose, Discuss Updated Continuum of Learning and Career Preparation
- III. Review Barriers Discussed and Outline Workgroup Process
- IV. Update on Uniform Grading Policy Work at SDE – Lee D'Andrea
- V. Update on Career and Technical Course Sequences - Dr. Bob Couch
- VI. Update on Dual Credit Opportunities and Process - Dr. Jimmie Williamson
- VII. Establish Workgroups and Plans for Next Meeting
- VII. Discussion and identification of data needed

## High School Task Force Meeting

### Agenda

**Thursday, February 25, 2016**

**1:00 p.m.**

**305 Blatt Building**

- I. Welcome and Summary of prior meeting Dr. Lee D'Andrea
  
- II. Measuring College Readiness Dr. John Hughes  
(1:15 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.) Deputy Director  
Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) - Southeast  
Florida State University  
  
Kevin Smith  
Research Alliance Manager  
Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) - Southeast  
Florida State University
  
- Break (3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.)
  
- III. Credentials for All: An Imperative for SREB States Dr. Gene Bottoms  
(3:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.) Senior Vice President  
Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)

## **High School Task Force Meeting**

### **Agenda**

**Friday, March 11, 2016**

**10:00 a.m.**

**305 Blatt Building**

- I. Welcome and Review of Past Meeting Dr. Lee D'Andrea
  
- II. Presentation from the Commission on Higher Education Dr. John Lane  
Director of Academic Affairs  
SC Commission on Higher Education
  
- III. Presentation from Technical Schools Dr. Hope Rivers  
Executive Vice President  
State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education
  
- IV. Small Group Work (barriers, recommendations, findings, data)
  
- V. Determine Next Meeting Date
  
- VI. Adjourn

## **High School Task Force Meeting**

### **Agenda**

**Friday, April 22, 2016  
10:00 a.m.**

**The Center for Advanced Technical Studies  
916 Mount Vernon Church Road  
Chapin, SC 29036**

- |      |  |                  |
|------|--|------------------|
| I.   | Welcome and Overview of Draft High School Report | Dr. Lee D'Andrea |
| II.  | Small Group Work Session I                       |                  |
| III. | Small Group Work Session II                      |                  |
| IV.  | Small Group Work Session III                     |                  |
| V.   | Consensus Discussion on Content of Report        | Dr. Lee D'Andrea |
| VI.  | Adjourn and lunch                                |                  |

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