



STREAMLINING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS AND ENSURING FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR EDUCATION

**South Carolina Chamber of Commerce
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Objective

To foster a commitment to develop a highly skilled, well-educated population who will have more opportunities, more job choices and more security with prosperous companies in South Carolina. A partnership of action and cooperation between the public and private will help ensure accountability and success.

Background

The business community has expressed concerns that many students coming out of South Carolina public schools are not ready to meet the employment demands of an increasingly knowledge-based private sector. Furthermore, many children in elementary schools are not as proficient in the math and reading skills of their grade level as their peers nationwide, a pattern that continues into high school and beyond.

Over the past decade, South Carolina's Unemployment Trust Fund has been in steady decline and is now insolvent. The South Carolina Chamber of Commerce has continuously advocated for the restructuring of unemployment benefits, better matching of people and jobs and stronger management of the overall fund. South Carolina's unemployment rate is currently 11.5 percent and one of the highest in the nation. At the same time, many businesses are saying they cannot find appropriately skilled workers. In addition, between 2010 and 2030, it is estimated South Carolina's employment demand (based on U.S. projections) will increase by approximately 16.3 percent while the traditional labor pool available to fill these jobs will only increase by approximately 7 percent.

The South Carolina General Assembly has passed legislation establishing a two-year pilot four-year-old kindergarten program for at-risk children in selected school districts.

Legislation to reauthorize the Endowed Chairs program that is helping build South Carolina's knowledge-based economy and create higher paying jobs in the state was achieved in 2008.

The South Carolina General Assembly passed the Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA), now called Personal Pathways to Success, in 2005 and approved needed implementation funding in 2009. The primary goals of Personal Pathways are to increase high school completion rates, better prepare students for work and college, increase parental involvement and increase options for students at risk of dropping out of school.

Situation

The current structure of South Carolina's Employment Security Commission (ESC) must be fixed to ensure taxes businesses pay into the system are used responsibly. Just as important, better

coordination of workforce functions in the state must be achieved. More than eight state agencies currently receive federal and state funding for workforce development initiatives, with little coordination on how those dollars are spent. South Carolina must have a centralized system that will result in enhanced statewide workforce data collection.

It is time to develop South Carolina's education goals for the next decade, and it is imperative the business community provide its input and support. Towards that endeavor, the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce's Excellence in Education Council has developed 10 overarching Education Goals it believes should be met or exceeded by 2020. The achievement of these goals will require many sub-goals and the continued concerted action between business and education.

- 99 percent of all high school students will have electronic Individual Graduation Plans (eIGP).
- 85 percent of all high school students will graduate on time as measured by the U.S. Department of Education's Uniform Graduation Rate formula.
- 80 percent of South Carolina four-year-old at-risk youth (free and reduced lunch) will complete 4-K.
- South Carolina will rank in the top five among states in average 4th and 8th grade student NAEP score improvements.
- South Carolina will achieve a 50 percent reduction of the student achievement gap on PASS testing from 2009 results.
- All high school seniors will have a WorkKeys certificate, including soft skills.
- 15,000 GED's (including WorkKeys certification) will be awarded annually.
- The state will have 10 times more businesses offering registered apprenticeships versus the 2009 baseline.
- South Carolina will exceed the national average for adults holding two or four-year degrees.
- The state will have a clear, coherent standardized pathway for adults to further their education.

As South Carolina's children mature, Personal Pathways allows electives and classes to be tailored to each student's career interests. Employers believe it gives students leverage to become better educated in fields that best suit their interests, ultimately decreasing the drop-out rate, improving a student's chance for economic prosperity and increasing competitiveness for existing and new business. Simply stated, if students can translate the applicability of what they are learning into more earning potential and a better quality of life, then more students will buy into South Carolina's educational system and prosper.

Adult education in South Carolina also continues to present enormous challenges. Often those who lack reading skills are parents raising children and attempting to prepare them for future careers. Programs to retool and reeducate must be enhanced and readily accessible to citizens in all 46 counties in South Carolina.

In addition, skill levels of many graduates do not meet workforce standards, and job candidates continue to lack "soft skills," such as integrity and team commitment. Support for students, from the time they enter educational programs until the time they graduate from a post-secondary institution, is critical to increasing the state's per capita income.

As we continue to strive to make South Carolina as attractive as possible to global industry, we must remember that, without skilled and well-educated citizens, we will never compete fully in the worldwide economy.

S.C. Chamber Position

A partnership of action and cooperation between the public and private sectors is needed to ensure accountability and success related to education and workforce development. The South Carolina Chamber supports:

- Centralization of the state's workforce development efforts, including creating a state Department of Workforce;
- Funding for key education initiatives, including Personal Pathways to Success (EEDA) and the endowed chairs program;
- Legislation to help achieve the business community's 2020 Education Goals;
- Full funding for ReadySC (formerly the Center for Accelerated Technology Training-CATT);
- Expanding the piloted 4-K program statewide; and,
- Continuing regulatory relief for education, including higher education.