



State of South Carolina

Office of the Governor

MARK SANFORD
GOVERNOR

PO BOX 12267
COLUMBIA, SC 29211

Addressing Early Childhood Education

Background:

In light of the recent ruling in the school equity lawsuit, it's clear that South Carolina must do more in providing early childhood education, particularly for children from our state's lower-income families. We believe funding early childhood education begins -- but does not end -- with examining activities that currently aren't making the best use of existing dollars. Between state, federal and local sources, nearly \$100 million is already being spent on 4-K programs statewide. Once we are maximizing the use of current education dollars, and effectively targeting them at the early childhood education needs cited by the court, we can then examine the need for additional resources.

Summary:

At least \$38 million in General Funds could be re-allocated to early childhood education:

- National Board Certified Teacher program (at least \$1.5 million)
- Required school district consolidation (\$26 million)
- Efficient student assessment (\$3.8 million)
- Eliminating programs that are marginally relevant to goals area (\$6.6 million)

Teacher Certification:

We've proposed that teachers certified after December 2006 will be subject to receive a two-tiered bonus. Teachers in critical needs areas and subjects will be eligible for an annual bonus of \$7,500 while teachers in non-critical subjects and regions will receive an annual bonus of \$3,000. This move would both improve teacher quality in underperforming districts and would likely result in significant cost-savings. Approximately \$1.5 million in savings can also be realized by reducing the application assistance provided to new applicants from its current level of \$2,500 to \$1,250.

District Consolidation:

In a recent report, the Education Oversight Committee said that requiring districts to have a minimum of 2,500 students will lead to \$26 million in administrative cost savings that can be accrued to the general fund and redirected to early childhood education.

Assessments:

The Education Oversight Committee and the Legislative Audit Council have made several short-term recommendations that can increase the efficiency with which students are tested while reducing the costs associated with PACT testing, totaling more than \$3.8 million.

Non-core Activities:

There are a number of programs that do not closely align with the state's goal of improving K-12 Education -- such as School Leadership Executive Institute and the 4-H Agricultural and Natural Resources Program -- that could be better spent funding early childhood education. At least \$6.6 million could be re-directed from these and other programs.