**A** **JOINT RESOLUTION**

TO ESTABLISH BEGINNING WITH THE 2016‑2017 SCHOOL YEAR A SIX‑YEAR PILOT PROGRAM IN NINE SPECIFIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR CONTINUOUS PRIMARY MODULES FOR USE INSTEAD OF GRADES ONE THROUGH THREE, TO REQUIRE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO DEVELOP A CONTINUOUS PRIMARY MODULE, TO PROVIDE ELEMENTS OF A CONTINUOUS PRIMARY MODULE, TO PROVIDE THE DEPARTMENT SHALL MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING STATEWIDE EXPANSION OF THE PROGRAM BASED ON THE OUTCOMES ACHIEVED BY THE SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN THE PILOT PROGRAM, TO PROVIDE SCHOOLS USING A CONTINUOUS PRIMARY MODULE IN THE PILOT PROGRAM MAY CONTINUE USE OF THE MODULE FOR ONE ACADEMIC YEAR AFTER THE SIX‑YEAR PILOT PERIOD ENDS, TO PROVIDE THE DEPARTMENT MAY MODIFY AND WAIVE PROVISIONS OF THE READ TO SUCCEED ACT TO ACCOMMODATE THE STRUCTURE OF CONTINUOUS PRIMARY MODULES IN SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN THE PILOT PROGRAM, AND TO PROVIDE THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CREATE POLICIES TO IMPLEMENT THE PROVISIONS OF THIS JOINT RESOLUTION.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. (A) Effective beginning with the 2016‑2017 school year, the State Department of Education shall establish a six‑year pilot program to be known as the Continuous Primary Module Pilot Program, which must develop, implement, and monitor continuous primary modules for pilot‑testing in the following nine school districts:

(1) Allendale;

(2) Charleston;

(3) Hampton 2;

(4) Marion;

(5) Marlboro;

(6) McCormick;

(7) Richland 2;

(8) Saluda; and

(9) Union.

(B) A continuous primary module provides an alternate to the traditional first grade, second grade, and third grade model by combining the three grades into one seamless module in which students engage in a three‑year course of study allowing the student to achieve academic benchmarks at their own pace during this three‑year period, culminating in advancement to fourth grade. Although the course of study is designed to be completed in three years, an academically gifted student may complete the program in less time in exceptional circumstances while some students may need additional time to complete the course of study. Typically, a student who meets all prescribed benchmarks before three academic years have lapsed will receive advanced or elective studies designed to broaden and enrich the student’s learning experience while sustaining the level of proficiency required to achieve all prescribed benchmarks, rather than advance to the fourth grade, even if the child meets all prescribed benchmarks in two academic years. A gifted student who completed all benchmarks in two years may advance to the fourth grade and forgo the third year of the three‑year module, but only at the recommendation of the student’s teacher and principal, with consent from the parent or guardian of the child. The maturity level of a child should be considered when determining readiness for fourth grade, notwithstanding academic performance.

(C) Based on the outcomes achieved by the schools participating in the pilot program, the department shall make recommendations regarding statewide expansion of the program to the General Assembly before January 1, 2022. A school participating in a pilot program at the end of the six‑year period may continue to elect to use the continuous primary module for one academic year following the conclusion of this six‑year pilot program on July 1, 2022.

(D) The Department of Education may modify provisions of the Read to Succeed Program to accommodate the structure of the continuous primary module in schools participating in this pilot program during the pilot period and for one additional year for schools that elect to continue use of the module for one year after the pilot period ends.

(E) The State Department of Education shall create policies to implement the provisions of this joint resolution.

SECTION 2. This joint resolution takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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