

Education Task Force Meeting Notes

Greenville Forward Vision 2025 Education Task Force Minutes of the Meeting on Wednesday, April 18, 2007

Participating in the April 18th meeting of the Vision 2025 Education Task Force:

Brian Carruthers, Director of Student Teaching, Bob Jones University
Bill Ellis, Communication Works, LLC
Beverly James, Executive Director, Greenville County Library System
Herb Johnson, Director, Community Relations, Michelin
David Johnstone, Principal, Charles Townes Center, Sterling School, Greenville County School District
Curtis Harkness, Vice President for Administration and Diversity, Greenville Technical College
Brock Koonce, Program Director, Greenville Forward
Lonnie Luce, Deputy Superintendent, Greenville County School District
Judith Prince, Vice Chancellor, Greenville Campus, USC Upstate
Kent Snyder, 2005/06 President, Learning in Retirement, Furman University
Russell Stall, Executive Director, Greenville Forward

Welcome and Sharing of Information on Education in Greenville

Judith Prince welcomed everyone. She noted that several task force members were out of town. She informed the group that Jennifer Powell from the Greenville Chamber of Commerce would be joining the task force. Jennifer has been given a new assignment of working with education legislation at the Chamber. Jennifer will be an outstanding addition to the task force.

Prince indicated that once again she has asked Anne Ellefson, Chair of the Higher Education Committee at the Chamber of Commerce, to brief the task force on the work of that committee. She stated that Anne felt that the committee has not reached a point from which she could provide information that would be valuable to the task force.

Prince asked for announcements from task force members on their sector of education. She reiterated that one purpose of the task force was that the different sectors of education in Greenville had an opportunity to share information with each other through the task force.

Beverly James passed around condolence books for Virginia Tech for task members to sign. James stated that the library was contacted by the IBM Corporation in Charlotte to demo some reading-readiness software and e-mail translation software. The library is considering an

application for a grant to use this software. In conjunction with Artisphere, the library is also hosting the senior art show for the School District of Greenville County.

Curtis Harkness attended the annual conference of the American Association of Community Colleges, an organization which focuses on education from 4K-20. The American Association of Community Colleges aims not be competitive with school districts or higher education. Instead, their desire is to work together with all levels of education.

There were discussions at the conference on the report *Tough Choices or Tough Times*, which, among other things, focuses on the issue of keeping students in school past the age of 16 when many of them become bored and could be taking college courses. Members of the task force have been provided with an executive summary of *Tough Choices or Tough Times*.

Harkness shared information on a visit to a college that was ten miles from Mexico. The college was established in 1993 with 1,000 students. Today, the enrollment is about 18,700 students, and the student population is 95% Hispanic. He reported that this college learned that advising as well as community outreach programs is the key to getting and keeping students in college.

Prince reported that she attended the Global Forum sponsored by Bank of America and Clemson University. Bill Harris, former Vice Present of Research at the University of South Carolina, spoke about his experience of establishing a science foundation in Ireland. Harris said that we have fallen behind in education and in other areas in this country because we are not willing to work together. Everyone is protecting their own turf; everyone is competing instead of working together. Harris concluded that we will never be where we need to be in the global market place unless we work together. The education task force brings together all educational sectors to work together for a better educational future for all citizens in Greenville.

David Johnstone discussed the progress on building the Sterling School. The Sterling School will house the Charles Towne Center, a school for gifted children from grades 3-8. Charles Towne Center is for third grade students in the top percentile in aptitude. Sterling School will include a 4K-5th grade school, with about 40 students per grade level, an ideal size for an elementary school. The school district is excited about what is happening in the Beck neighborhood. Johnstone is looking forward to working with Donna Coleman, the new director at the Phillis Wheatley Center.

Beverly James also mentioned that the library is distressed that the school district is no longer requiring a mandatory summer reading program. The justification for this decision was that students are not being tested, so they cannot be required to read books in the summer. Johnstone responded that the school district is starting to get a negative response to summer reading because reading is emphasized so much. He also said that if a student is not reading at least two grade levels higher, that student will have a very little chance of scoring proficient or excellent on PACT. Beverly said that the Library will still continue to encourage summer reading.

Review of Minutes from March meeting of the Vision 2025 Education Task Force

Judith Prince asked if anyone had any questions regarding the minutes from the last meeting. She said that the Reach Out to Dropouts Program will be renamed. One name being considered is Graduate Greenville: Opening the Doors to Success. The date for this program of visiting students who did not return to school is August 25, 2007.

Review of Vision and Mission Statements for the Greenville Forward Education Task Force

The task force turned their attention to the vision and mission statements which the task force developed for education in Greenville for 2025. The document which is being distributed to the public with the education vision statements has an error on the mission statement. The mission statement on the document should be corrected to state the following: The mission of the Vision 2025 Education Task Force is to promote continuous learning.

Action Item 1: Russell Stall will correct the mission statement on the Vision 2025 document to state that the mission of the Vision 2025 Education Task Force is to promote continuous learning.

Prince asked the task force specifically to discuss the measures and strategies for the vision statements. In examining the measures and strategies, the task force should consider its future work plans. Prince asked the task force to consider a five-year plan focused on the vision statements for 2025.

Action Item 2: The Vision 2025 Education Task Force will consider developing a five year plan of work for moving Greenville Forward on the education vision statements for Vision 2025.

Prince mentioned that the task force has the following specific projects: Reach Out to Dropouts, The Amazing Read, Teaching as a Valuable Profession, and a Legislative Breakfast to be held in the fall.

Regarding the legislative breakfast, Judith mentioned that she attended the Legislative Delegation Dinner held in Columbia hosted by the Greenville Chamber of Commerce. She said there was interest expressed by some of the legislators in attending a breakfast focused on solutions to the shortage of teachers. She did learn, however, that there are some legislators who feel that the new alternative teacher certification is going to solve the teacher shortage problems.

Prince commented that she was surprised at the extent of the belief that the alternative certification program would solve the teacher shortage problem. The alternative teacher certification program requires those with a bachelor's degree to take a test in the content area which they are considering teaching, and, if the test is passed, certification is possible. As these teachers begin to teach, the State of South Carolina will monitor them. The alternative teacher

certification program applies at this time only to teaching in secondary education. Teachers of special education and elementary education are excluded.

Prince asked that the task force consider spending some time at another point talking about the alternative certification process. Her concern is that this legislation will create two tiers of teachers - those who have been through a 130 – 135 credit degree program with over 100 hours of practicum experiences versus those who passed a test. Prince said that one legislator told her that one good aspect of alternative certification is that schools would know within the first 15 days whether these teachers will make it. That is a problem we don't want to have. Brian said that the State Department of Education is not for this, but knows it is going to happen.

Action Item 3: A future agenda item for the Vision 2025 Education Task Force is the alternative teacher certification program that will soon be passed by the South Carolina legislature.

Continuing to examine the vision statements, attention was called to the fact that some vision statements have measures and some have strategies and some have both. Russell Stall stated that the Health Task Force had begun work on specific outcomes and indicators for each of their vision statements. He thinks that is the next step for the Vision 2025 Education Task Force. For example, the Health Task Force will have some measures on which the task force has a direct impact, but there may also be areas where the task force will be merely recording a measurement.

Stall felt that the same would apply to the education task force. There would be areas where the task force might be directly responsible for an outcome and have a direct impact as a task force. However, there would be others areas where there the task force is merely taking a measurement like graduation rates. That measurement would not only include the graduation rate at this time but would also include projections about what we want Greenville's graduation rate to be in five years.

Stall recommended that establishing measures for the vision statement should be the work of a sub-committee of the education task force. However, he offered to begin the process.

Action Item 4: Russell Stall will begin work on specific measures for the vision statements which he will bring to the task force for discussion.

Task force members discussed a survey on the value of education, a joint project between Greenville Forward and the Alliance for Quality Education. Information from the survey would be used as a baseline for tracking growth in educational resources and in the value of education in the community. With survey information, the task force can look back two to three years from now and determine if progress had been made in education.

Lonnie Luce asked if the task force will use graduation rates from the School District of Greenville County or graduation ranks produced by Graduate Greenville. Luce says that the School District of Greenville County has been using the state's graduation measures; however, the Board of Trustees for the School District of Greenville County is beginning to use the term, *success rate*, not graduation rate. The decision was made to focus on *success rate* because that would allow the district to include some measures that are not included in the current method of measuring graduation rates.

Action Item 5: The task force should discuss a survey about the value of education in Greenville which would be a joint project of Greenville Forward, the Vision 2025 Education Task Force, and the Alliance for Quality Education.

Task force members discussed the role of strategies in the document with the Vision 2025 Education Task Force Vision statements. Beverly James said that the strategies show what the task force is doing to support a particular vision statement.

The task force will continue discussion of these issues at the next meeting.

Next meeting of the Vision 2025 Education Task force will be a dinner, Monday, May 21st, 6:00 – 8:00 pm, Hampton Inn Boardroom, Downtown Greenville.

Prepared by Judith S. Prince, Chair
Vision 2025 Education Task Force
Greenville Forward