

# WhatWorksSC

case study

## About WhatWorksSC

In 2005 and 2006, with a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Riley Institute at Furman conducted the largest ever study of public education in South Carolina. The study yielded key strategies for creating world-class schools in South Carolina, derived from 3000 focus group hours with more than 800 stakeholders.

**WhatWorksSC** ties those strategies to a number of initiatives to serve as a resource for educators, students, the community and policy makers in South Carolina. Products include case studies, which drill down on innovative initiatives from across the state; a series of expert papers that further explore the findings of the study; and an evolving clearinghouse of programs and initiatives that exemplify the study's essential key strategies for improving public schools.

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*"As an IOCL, it's not enough to just think 'outside the box' - we have to forget the 'box' ever existed! It has totally changed the way many of us look at our school. We now look towards preparing our children for their future, rather than concentrating on teaching the way we taught in the past."*

— John Young, Principal,  
Forts Pond Elementary

## Inside Out Centers for Learning: Transforming Public Schools



Forts Pond Elementary School, Lexington School District One, an Inside Out Center for Learning

Walk into Nevitt Forest Community School of Innovation, an elementary school in Anderson School District Five, and you will see something unusual. Instead of students arriving at the usual 8 a.m. and leaving at 2:30 p.m., many students are busy at work by 7:15 a.m. and stay at school until late in the afternoon. In fact, almost 93% of Nevitt Forest students participate in this extended day program, providing students and families with safe and nurturing learning environments before and after school.

In addition, teachers work on flexible schedules, some coming in to work early and others staying late. In the evening, you will see parents and community members in the school for regular community nights, many of which are seminars with technology as a focus. The traditional school day has been discarded and the traditional uses of the school have been expanded — some of the many innovations taking place to help students at Nevitt Forest and the surrounding community.

Similar innovations are occurring at Forts Pond Elementary School in Lexington School District One, where the school day has been similarly lengthened, and summer camps are available to help students retain what they learned during the year. The school also recently instituted multi-aged classrooms and a "looping" program, where teachers stay with the same students over a number of years. In terms of curriculum, the school is embracing "standards-based learning," where students direct their own learning opportunities and, instead of moving through grade levels, move at their own pace towards standards levels.

At Forts Pond, business partnerships are maximized for the benefit of the students and the larger community. For example, a team from Michelin North America, one of the school's business partners, recently spent a day at the school. The morning began with a two-hour session for parents focusing on the job market and the economy. The Michelin team then spent an hour in each of the fifth-grade classrooms talking to students about the importance of staying in school, studying hard, and preparing now for the job market of the future.

Both Nevitt Forest and Forts Pond serve a large population of students in poverty. As a result, initiatives have been put in place to serve the whole child and increase these students' chances of academic success. At Forts Pond, since there are no doctors or dentists in the immediate area, the school district has worked with an outside group to secure land for a doctor's office. This space will eventually house a nurse practitioner and dental hygienist on the school's campus to serve the students and their families.

[riley.furman.edu/education](http://riley.furman.edu/education)

*Working at the intersection of education research and practice in South Carolina*

What do Forts Pond and Nevitt Forest have in common, other than the fact that they are elementary schools with high concentrations of students in poverty? Both have integrated the “Inside Out Center for Learning”, or IOCL, model into their schools. Forts Pond and Nevitt Forest are operating as pilot schools to test the IOCL model with the goal that it will be perfected and integrated into other schools across the state.

The IOCL model targets schools that are unsatisfactory or below average in terms of their report card rating and seeks to transform them into personalized learning and service centers. Teachers work in teams to create innovative, standards-based, individualized instruction, allowing students to engage in education experiences tailored to their individual learning needs. Learners benefit from team-teaching, looping, community schooling, and extended learning time. In addition, medical, mental, and dental services are provided to children and their families.

The goal of IOCL is to create cost-effective educational services that lead to higher student achievement; higher teacher quality, recruitment, and retention; and increased community/parental satisfaction. According to the executive summary of the South Carolina IOCL proposal, ultimately IOCLs “will create centers where teachers want to teach, students want to learn, and parents and community members want to be involved.”

The price tag associated with becoming an IOCL varies according to the services provided and increases with each IOCL component added. The more costly components include the addition of whole child services, wellness facilities, extended hours, and the addition of an “instructional guide” and “life coaches.”

Funding sources also vary. At the school and district levels, Forts Ponds’ and Nevitt Forest’s principals and district officials have committed to reallocating resources from local, state, and federal funds to support the initiative. Some of these funds include Title I allocations and funds provided through the No Child Left Behind Act. In addition, a grant award of \$49,000 from KnowledgeWorks Foundation and a \$25,000 donation from Michelin North America was received.



Nevitt Forest Community School of Innovation, Anderson School District 5, an Inside Out Center for Learning

Since the IOCL model was instituted in these schools in 2009, immediate results have been seen, although test scores and other data will not be available until early summer. Principal John Young of Forts Pond said: “We have seen an increase in parents’ participation in activities. For example, over 300 parents and children attended both the Family Math Night and the Family Literacy Night. Student behavior has improved as we develop trust among families. We measure academic growth through MAP assessments three times a year, in fall, winter, and spring. We fully expect our Spring MAP test to show marked improvement.”

Similar results are expected at Nevitt Forest, according to principal Kelly Elrod. In addition to rising test scores from students, Elrod reports that the total number of suspensions has decreased this year compared to last year, and the number of parents attending open house events at the school has increased significantly. “Our school has grown as a total part of the community. I have been at the school for three years and our school population has grown from 370 to 415 students this year. We were a declining school and now we are on the rise again!”

In terms of overall program evaluation, a state-level advisory board will meet quarterly to provide a consistent platform for ongoing, systematic review and continuous improvement of the IOCL. Topics will include recruitment and retention results and plans, implementation status, school report card data, adequate yearly progress, working conditions, stakeholder perceptions about how well community needs are met, business support levels, and overall satisfaction of community agencies. Based on the board’s findings, changes will be made in the program’s implementation to ensure all of the program’s objectives will be met.

## Forts Pond and Nevitt Forest IOCLs At a Glance

**Nevitt Forest** is a community school that serves 400 students in grades K-5. It sits in an established neighborhood of homes built in the 1960s. Approximately 94% of students receive free/reduced meals and 83% of the population is African American, with a growing number of students who speak English as a second language.

**Forts Pond** has approximately 530 students in grades K-5 and serves the Pelion and Edmund communities. The poverty index of the school is 80% and approximately 74% of students receive free/reduced meals.

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