

New Riley Institute site offers teachers, legislators ideas for improving K-12 education

BY **RON BARNETT** • STAFF WRITER • APRIL 16, 2010

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Furman University's Riley Institute today unveils a new portal that offers educators, legislators, business and nonprofit organizations information on ways to improve K-12 education in South Carolina.

The program, called "WhatWorksSC," aims to help bring to fruition some of the ideas that business leaders, parents, students, school board members, teachers, superintendents, and principals from across the state identified during a study that Furman calls the largest ever done of K-12 education in the state.

The consensus was that expanded early childhood education, high quality teachers in every classroom and schools being used as centers of communities were the most important goals.

In this phase of the project, funded by a \$400,000 grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the institute's Center for Education Policy and Leadership sought out programs, research and schools that had accomplished those goals in ways that have been proven effective.

"The combination of knowing what the people want and how to get there is going to be incredibly useful for policy makers, legislators, newspapers, educators, the whole community, because it's real stuff and it's proven," said Don Gordon, director of the Riley Institute.

Experts were called in to write reports on a variety of these strategies, which are posted today on the project's Web site, riley.furman.edu/education.

Information on seven "key action areas" will be released on the site on a monthly basis, according to Courtenay Williams, project director.

"Transforming public schools into community learning centers" is the first entry.

The site will include case studies and a clearinghouse of information on how to reach the goals of the project.

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