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Regional Education Report Finds Gaps in Educational Outcomes

The Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative (TCCC) released its first Regional Education Report today at a meeting of the TCCC Community Leadership Council. The report provides a comprehensive overview of key educational outcomes for public school students in the tri-county area (Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties) at eight assessment points ranging across the continuum from kindergarten readiness to postsecondary completion.

“This report signals an important turning point for our community and an opportunity to work together to make significant changes to our education system,” said TCCC Board Chair and CEO of The InterTech Group Anita Zucker. “Not only do we have a moral obligation to the children and families in this region, we also have a responsibility to the entire community to improve education as a means of building a stronger and more capable workforce for the future.”

The report provides regional data on kindergarten readiness, reading and math proficiency scores for third and eighth grades, high school graduation rates, and postsecondary enrollment and completion. Key findings include:

- One in five third graders are not proficient in reading, and one in five students do not graduate high school on time. These findings, consistent with national research, indicate that children who start behind tend to stay behind.
- One in four third graders do not meet proficiency standards in math. This rate is the same among 8th graders.

The report also provides evidence of a widening achievement gap that separates the performance of higher income and/or White students from that of lower income and/or Black or Hispanic students.

- 27% of lower income students do not meet reading proficiency standards in 3rd grade; 26% don't graduate from high school on time. Among higher income students, these rates are 7% and 12% respectively.
- From 2009 to 2014, the increase in average 3rd grade reading scores was 7 times higher for White students (+15.8 points) than for Black students (+2.2 points.)
- From 2009 to 2014, the increase in average 8th grade reading scores was 8 times higher for higher income students (+16.8 points) than for lower income students (+2.0 points.)

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The report also includes commentary regarding many of the factors that impact a child's ability to learn that are found outside the classroom and exist well before a child reaches school age. Ranging from prenatal care to relationships with adult role models, these factors are included in TCCC's efforts to improve education, as the organization is rooted in the belief that education is not solely the responsibility of schools.

"This report marks the beginning of the deeper, collaborative work we intend to facilitate," said John Read, TCCC CEO. "Using these and other more in-depth data sources, our partners will work together to identify what's working well, where improvement is needed, and what gaps need to be closed." Read indicated TCCC's work will be guided by networks of experts and practitioners from the region, including partners representing various stakeholder groups. The first two networks will convene in March and will concentrate on Kindergarten Readiness and High School Graduation.

This first report serves as a baseline for future efforts by TCCC and its partners, which include the public school districts and non-profit institutions of higher education serving the tri-county region, as well as businesses, non-profit and civic organizations, philanthropists, government agencies, elected officials and community volunteers.

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About the Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative

The Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative (TCCC) is a community-wide movement in Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties, South Carolina focused on improving the quality of life of its citizens and its workforce through education by collectively aligning resources and working toward common goals. Using data and focused community collaboration across a continuum from "cradle-to-career," TCCC works to build and implement strategies that will facilitate widespread systemic change, with the ultimate goal of increased student success and economic prosperity for all.