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SBHS to become STEM School

ARTICLE | MARCH 15, 2012 | BY KONSTANTIN VENGEROWSKY



Sam Levy/Clarendon Citizen - Former U.S. Secretary of Education and former South Carolina Governor Richard W. Riley, a leader and advocate for improving education, was the keynote speaker at Scott's Branch High School's celebratory announcement that it will become a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math School for the 2013-2014 school-year.

Students at Scott's Branch High School will have the opportunity to be better prepared for the workforce and higher education starting with the 2013-2014 school year.

Clarendon School District 1 Superintendent Dr. Rose Wilder announced on Tuesday, March 12, that Scott's Branch High School would become a Science, Technology, Engineering and Math School (STEM) in less than two years.

The school's curriculum for students in grades 9-12 will change to focus on a project-based learning approach that will combine various subjects, and change teachers' roles in the classroom, said Lydia Dobyns president of the New Tech Network, an organization that works with schools, districts and communities to develop innovative public high schools across the nation.

The key areas of focus will be collaboration, problem-solving and critical thinking, with the integration of technology in the classroom.

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SBHS will implement a STEM teaching approach with the help of three organizations: New Tech Network, KnowledgeWorks Foundation and the Riley Institute at Furman University.

The transition will be funded by a \$2.9 million "Investing in Innovation" grant awarded to KnowledgeWorks in December of last year by the U.S. Department of Education.

Teachers will take on more of a facilitator role, with students working on more project-based learning concepts that combine various subject areas, said Dobyns. She noted that there are specific ways that local businesses could influence the classroom as well, for example being involved and even judging various projects.

The project background involves a key literacy component.

"With a strong base in literacy, all things are possible," she added.

CSD1 became a recipient of the grant in November, but had to get \$50,000 in matching funds. Wilder went to various businesses throughout the county who donated funds.

A year will be used to prepare for implementation, teachers and administrators trained, Wilder said.

She said that she was excited for SBHS to become a STEM school.

"Our goal is to enable students to gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life, college and the careers of tomorrow," Wilder said.

Today there are more than 86 public New Tech Network high schools in 16 states, and SBHS will be one of the two in South Carolina.

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