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New Tech Grant Promotes New Teaching Methods to Local High Schools

by Zoheb Hassanali

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SUMMERTON, SC -- Education officials from across the Palmetto State met in Summerton Tuesday to announce a major milestone.

The New Tech Network is a non-profit organization that helps students nationwide gain knowledge to succeed in life. Unlike traditional schools, New Tech focuses on three principles: a project based on curriculum; where

students team up on projects that require critical thinking. They also use technology instead of relying primarily on textbooks and teachers. A positive culture that promotes respect and responsibility is also a major focus.

The two schools are a part of the I-95 corridor area that is struggling with low test scores.

New Tech President Lydia Dobyns said that is one advantage they have over other schools who only give standardized tests.

"One of the things we talk about is having an equal emphasis on content acquisition, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration. Not very many tests measure those skills yet."

New Tech is coming to Scott's Branch High School in Summerton and Colleton County High School in Walterboro. It is part of a nearly \$3 million grant to improve the schools: the first of its kind in South Carolina.



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Dobyns said the national average for high school graduation rates is 64%. But New Tech schools in the nation average 84%.

"There is overwhelming evidence that we are failing students to prepare them for the real world. It's time to really take what we know works. That means changing the role of the teacher, student, parent, and the administrator to have high school reflect the world they are going to emerge into."

Current New Tech students said they enjoy the transition; while future students like Scott's Branch student India McBride said they cannot wait.

"I think it is going to be exciting with the new way of learning; besides being in textbooks all day and more of the hands on activity and working in teams."

Both schools will begin using the new program during the 2013-2014 school year. For more information, visit www.newtechnetwork.org.

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