

Public Testimony to the House Education Policy
Review and Reform Task Force

Given By

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Thank you Madame Chair and Ladies and Gentlemen of this Task Force. I am here on behalf of all of the students in the public schools of South Carolina, especially the school districts that are densely populated with students of poverty. We learned in our

Mathematics class on Fractions in elementary school that the whole is equal to the sum of its parts. Consequently, these comments are inclusive, with particular emphasis on the challenges of the students, teachers, support staff and administrators in the school districts with a high population of students of poverty.

Thirty-six years ago, Dr. Ronald Edmonds, an expert consultant on Effective Schools, wrote a discussion paper entitled "Effective Schools For The Urban Poor". The following are his summary statements.

"Two final points: First, how many effective schools would you have to see to be persuaded of the educability of poor children? If your answer is more than one, then I submit that you have reasons of your own for preferring to

believe that basic pupil performance derives from family background instead of school response to family background. Second, whether or not we will ever effectively teach the children of the poor is probably far more a matter of politics than of social science, and that is as it should be. It seems to me, therefore, that what is left of this discussion are three declarative statements: (a) We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us; (b) We already know more than we need to do that; (c) Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far."

Thus, our tax base variances for our school districts must be addressed in this process. The present status adversely affects staffing, facilities, the attraction and retention of the

best teachers and administrators, and instructional equipment. It is a .com shame that excellence in instructional technology is a function of accessibility and building capacities (band width) rather than student and teacher initiative and achievement. All of our 46 counties have school districts that have need of Instructional Intensive Care Units (IICUs) for the purpose of helping students, K-12, who have serious academic deficiencies in the basic skills and /or inappropriate social behaviors. For the sake of all of our students, a full court press is needed towards the achievement of equitable funding in all of the school districts of South Carolina, rather than a four-corner offense.