

# Tenenbaum says education shortcomings come from negative test score perception

Marjorie Riddle  
FOR THE GAMECOCK

Inez M. Tenenbaum spoke Thursday evening on "Education as a Social Justice Issue" for the Heyward E. McDonald lecture series.

"South Carolina's children are still our most valued possessions, and education and economic development are inextricably intertwined," Tenenbaum, speaking in Gambrell auditorium, said.

During her current tenure as state superintendent of education, Tenenbaum attempted to raise the sales tax in South Carolina by one cent to provide education funding.

This increase would have provided \$500 million to the state's base student cost, which Tenenbaum says is the foundation for education.

"We need more revenue for education," she said.

South Carolina faces many challenges in improving education, Tenenbaum said, but the outcome of the pending equity lawsuit and its subsequent legislation will greatly affect South Carolina schools.

Testifying for the plaintiffs, Tenenbaum said it is unlikely there will be a solution to the equity lawsuit this year.

Inadequate salaries and the financial struggles of poor rural districts are two considerations tied into the lawsuit.

Tenenbaum said early childhood education deserves more attention and especially more funding. She is in favor of full-day 4-year-old kindergarten because at-risk 4-year-olds in homes of low income or poverty levels get left behind before their formal education even begins, she said.

"Research shows this age to be



Nick Eaves / THE GAMECOCK

State Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum speaks in a previous speech. Tenenbaum spoke Thursday in Gambrell Hall.

the most important for brain development," Tenenbaum said.

South Carolina high schools are another prevalent concern for Tenenbaum.

Quoting Bill Gates, Tenenbaum said high schools need to focus on three things: rigor, relevance and relationships.

"We certainly have rigor in our standards," she said. "I think everyone would agree we don't have a light curriculum. Six research studies have shown we have some of the highest standards in the country. Relevance — is the material relevant to what the student wants to do with his or her life? And is it relevant to what they think they need to be prepared?"

Recounting her own

experiences from her small Georgia high school, Tenenbaum said, "We had relationships. We had a sense of community, expecting you to do well, go to college and make something of yourself."

She said South Carolina has too many students dropping out of high school and not graduating on time.

"Only 58 percent of high school students graduate on time, yet almost 80 percent of South Carolinians have high school diplomas," Tenenbaum said.

Addressing a question from the audience, Tenenbaum explained problems in judging South Carolina schools solely from standardized testing's point of view.

The goal for (the) No-Child-Left-Behind (Act) was for every student to score proficient on their state test," she said. "Every state got to pick what they considered proficient. South Carolina already had standards where you could score advanced, proficient, basic or below basic.

"We decided that proficient in South Carolina would be the same score as proficient on the national assessment of education progress. So we pegged our terms for proficient to a national level. We are named as the highest standard for what it takes to score proficient."

Touching on why South Carolina's reputation for education is often seen as dismal, Tenenbaum said South Carolina's SAT scores are lower than the national average, but more students in South Carolina take the SAT than in other states because it is an elective test. She said an encouraging indication is that South Carolina has raised its average score 42 points in the last seven years.

Another factor in South Carolina education's reputation is the state's graduation rate, but Tenenbaum said the rate can be calculated nine ways, making it difficult to objectively compare the percentage to that of other states.

She added that South Carolina must be more competitive in teachers' salaries since it is \$5,000 below the national average.

Tenenbaum presented the lecture in honor of the late Heyward E. McDonald. McDonald was a well-known advocate in the Columbia community, striving to improve South Carolina through his endeavors in the state Senate and

TENENBAUM • 2

# Student pursues passion for gospel's godly sound

After 6 years,  
Traci Norwood  
still feels music's joy

Kelly Cavanaugh  
FOR THE GAMECOCK

On Christmas Day when Traci Norwood was 14 years old, her brother unwrapped a present that would change her life forever. He received a Southern gospel CD, and as the two of them listened to it, her love for the music began.

"We listened to it like it was going out of style," said Norwood, a third-year Spanish student. "We were just blown away by that type of sound."

Since that morning six years ago, Norwood has attended nearly a thousand Southern gospel concerts and events.

"I fell in love with the vocals and the musical-styling of the music, and I'm a singing snob myself," she said.

Norwood said that although both sides of her family listened to that type of music, she was never interested in it. At 14, she was into "teeny-bopper" music, such as the Backstreet Boys and Hanson.

For generations, most everyone on both sides of Norwood's family, including herself, have been singers, she said.

Norwood, who sings with the University Chorus, said Southern gospel appeals to her because it is focused on vocal four-part harmony rather than instruments.

Southern gospel songs "focus the faithful and enlighten the lost," Norwood said, adding that the music is "twangy" but the singers are

"very proper sounding." Norwood said Southern gospel singers are neither opera nor country singers. She describes the music as almost bluegrass, "but not quite." Banjos, fiddles and harmonicas are instruments sometimes used in Southern gospel.

"I wake up in the morning, and the first thing I do is put on a CD," she said.

Norwood said she frequents message boards about Southern gospel, including [www.southerngospelnuts.com](http://www.southerngospelnuts.com).

Norwood's calendar is filled with concert dates, and she regularly travels around the state to see her favorite groups.

"I love to go to concerts and hear that music live and meet my favorite singers and hang out with them," she said.

Norwood spends a couple hours a week on the phone calling local churches to promote the Southern gospel group Chapter IV.

Her boyfriend, Karl Rice, is a member of the group. This allows Norwood to spread the word about Chapter IV and "to help spread God's word."

Norwood follows groups around, particularly if she knows someone in the group. She attended every concert of The Kingsmen because her brother had a friend in the group. When her boyfriend sang with the group Holy City, she went to all of their concerts, which averaged 80 to 100 dates a year.

Norwood estimates she knows at least 10 part-time and three full-time Southern gospel groups personally. A group that is part time, or "regional," means that the members have jobs outside of the group, but

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