

Verdict Handed Down in Abbeville School Funding Case

COLUMBIA, S.C. (Dec. 29, 2005) — Students in South Carolina school districts cannot receive a minimally adequate education because childhood intervention programs are not funded effectively, a Circuit Court judge ruled Thursday.

Students in plaintiff South Carolina school districts “are denied the opportunity to receive a minimally adequate education because of the lack of effective and adequately funded early childhood intervention programs designed to address the impact of poverty on their educational abilities and achievements,” according to Circuit Judge Thomas W. Cooper Jr.’s ruling.

“We are ecstatic on behalf of our clients and the children of South Carolina,” said Laura Hart, a partner with Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough, which represented the school districts. “We hope the General Assembly will not appeal this but will choose to go ahead and meet its obligation to the children of this state to provide them with an adequate education. We’ve already lost one generation while they contested this and we can’t afford to lose another.”

The school districts asked the General Assembly of South Carolina to live up to their constitutionally-mandated obligation to provide each child in South Carolina the opportunity to receive a minimally adequate education.

Education, business and civic leaders testified in the case, which has been the subject of regional and national stories. Among those who took the stand in the trial, which lasted many months, were: Roche Carolina President Don Herriott, former Mynd Chief Executive Larry Wilson, Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum and University of South Carolina professor Walter Edgar.

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