EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CONTENTS

AGENDA

SOUTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY & LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Education and Cultural Affairs Subcommittee

Chairman Tim McGinnis

The Honorable Phillip Bowers
The Honorable Michael F. Rivers, Sr.
The Honorable Paul B. Wickensimer
The Honorable Robert Q. Williams

AMENDED AGENDA

Wednesday, August 27, 2025
10:30 A.M.
Room 110 – Blatt Building

I. Approval of Minutes of May 6, 2025 Meeting

II. Discussion of the Executive Summary of the Tuition Grants Commission

III. Discussion of the study of the SC Department of Education

IV. Adjournment

MINUTES

SOUTH CAROLINA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY &
LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Chair Jeffrey E. "Jeff" Johnson   **Vice-Chair Chris Wooten**

Lucas Atkinson	Wendell K. Jones	Scott Montgomery
William H. Bailey	Kathy Landing	Michael Rivers
Phillip Bowers	John R. McCravy III	Richard B. "Blake" Sanders
Gary S. Brewer Jr.	Annie E. McDaniel	Marvin "Mark" Smith
Kambrell H. Garvin	Timothy A. "Tim" McGinnis	Robert Williams
Leon Douglas "Doug" Gilliam	Travis A. Moore	Paul B. Wickensimer

Lewis Carter
Research Director

Cathy Greer
Administrative Coordinator

Roland Franklin
Legal Counsel

Charlie LaRosa
Research Analyst

Riley McCullough
Research Analyst

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Columbia, South Carolina 29211
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Room 228 Blatt Building

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, May 6, 2025
9:00am
Room 110 – Blatt Building

Archived Video Available

I.   Pursuant to House Legislative Oversight Committee Rule 6.7, South Carolina ETV was allowed access for streaming the meeting. You may access an archived video of this meeting by visiting the South Carolina General Assembly's website (http://www.scstatehouse.gov) and clicking on Committee Postings and Reports, then under House Standing Committees click on Legislative Oversight. Then, click on Video Archives for a listing of archived videos for the Committee.

Attendance

I.   The Education and Cultural Subcommittee meeting was called to order by Chair Timothy A. "Tim" McGinnis on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, in Room 110 of the Blatt Building. All subcommittee members (Chair McGinnis; Representative Phillip Bowers; Representative Michael Rivers; Representative Paul Wickensimer; Representative Robert Williams) were present for all or a portion of the meeting.

Minutes

I.   House Rule 4.5 requires standing committees to prepare and make available to the public the minutes of committee meetings, but the minutes do not have to be verbatim accounts of meetings.

Approval of Minutes

I. Representative Wickensimer made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from prior meeting. A roll call vote was held, and the motion passed.

Rep. Wickensimer's motion to approve meeting minutes.	Yea	Nay	Not Voting
Rep. Bowers	✓		
Rep. McGinnis	✓		
Rep. Rivers			✓·
Rep. Wickensimer	✓		
Rep. Williams			✓

Discussion of Commission on Higher Education, Findings and Recommendations

I. Chair McGinnis acknowledges that, Executive Director Harrison and Deputy Director Christian, of the Tuition Grants Program were sworn in at previous meetings and that they both remain under oath.

II. Executive Director Harrison then continues presenting the overview of the agency with Deputy Director Christian presenting on specific information.

III. Topics of Discussion include:

   a. Financial Aid
   b. Secondary School Counselors
   c. Marketing
   d. Workforce Development
   e. Strategic Planning
   f. Law Recommendations

   Throughout the testimony, members ask Executive Director Harrison questions and Deputy Director Christian, and they respond accordingly.

Adjournment

I. There being no further business, the meeting is adjourned.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF TUITION GRANTS COMMISSION STUDY

South Carolina
House of Representatives
Government Efficiency &
Legislative Oversight Committee

2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
of the
**SC HIGHER EDUCATION
TUITION GRANTS COMMISSION STUDY**

FINDINGS

During the study of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission (Commission), the Education and Cultural Affairs Subcommittee (Subcommittee) of the House Legislative Oversight Committee (Committee) adopts 15 findings.

Findings note information a member of the public or General Assembly may seek to know or on which they may desire to act.

FINDING 1
The South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission's purpose is to help offset the cost of attending a state independent college or university.[1]

FINDING 2
The Commission currently has four FTE's but has an authorization total of five FTE's. Since the early 2000s the agency has maintained four FTE's, with a fifth authorized FTE position vacant since 2001.[2]

FINDING 3
The Commission is governed by eight representatives of the 21 qualifying independent colleges and universities. These representatives serve terms of three years, with membership of the commission rotating among the participating institutions. In addition, one ex officio member serves on the Commission: the chief executive officer of the State Commission on Higher Education or his designee.[3]

FINDING 4
Since its founding in 1970, the Commission has had four agency directors. With the exception of the second director, each director has been promoted from within the agency.[4]

FINDING 5
The Commission currently has 21 participating independent colleges and universities. To qualify, a college must be a non-profit, independent institution with its main campus and headquarters in South Carolina, and be either SACS-accredited or a bachelor's-level school chartered before 1962.[5]

FINDING 6
The value of the tuition grant has declined as the average tuition and fees of the independent colleges and universities have increased. In the 1973-1974 academic year, the grant covered approximately 81% of tuition and fees.[6] By the 2023-2024 academic year, that percentage dropped to 16.06%.[7]

FINDING 7
The Commission has three primary funding sources: General Fund appropriations; South Carolina State Education Lottery allocations; and Children's Endowment Fund allocations.[9] Funding from these sources totaled $62.2 million in FY 2024.[10]

FINDING 8
The Commission adopted a strategic plan in 2020, which aims to maintain program integrity, expand its impact, advocate for recipients, modernize processes, and ensure top-level data security.[11]

FINDING 9
The Commission has key partnerships with federal and state entities, which ensures students in South Carolina have adequate access to grants. Counterparts include, the U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid Office, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, the South Carolina Department of Education, and high schools across the state.[12]

FINDING 10
The award amounts for the state's merit-based scholarship programs (i.e., Palmetto Fellows Scholarship[13]; LIFE Scholarship; and HOPE Scholarship), are established by statute and have not been changed in approximately 20 years. Although not administered by the Commission, stagnant scholarship awards directly affect Tuition Grant recipients at independent colleges.

FINDING 11
Since the 1994-1995 academic year, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) has been used as the official application for students applying for grants through the South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission. Any South Carolina resident that completes a FAFSA form, and lists at least one of the participating colleges and universities, is automatically reviewed for eligibility for Tuition Grants.[14]

FINDING 12

Grant award recipients represent all forty-six counties within the State.[15]

FINDING 13

Agency staff spend over 40 hours annually assisting with or hosting financial aid sessions.[16]

FINDING 14

The Commission markets its grant program through the following methods: (1) sharing digital flyers with high schools and supporting events organized by the Commission on Higher Education; and (2) by providing program information at the South Carolina Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SCASFAA[17]) Annual Conference[18], program updates to high school counselors by participating in workshops hosted by Carolinas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (CACRAO[19]) and South Carolina Independent School Association (SCISA[20]).

FINDING 15

As part of the state's annual budget process, each agency must identify a 3% General Fund reduction in case strategic budget cuts are required. For the Commission, a 3% reduction in FY25-26 amounts to $847,570.

Recommendations

During the study of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission (Commission), the Education and Cultural Affairs Subcommittee (Subcommittee) of the House Legislative Oversight Committee (Committee) adopts 8 recommendations.

With any study, the Committee recognizes these recommendations (e.g., continue, curtail, improve areas potentially, and/or eliminate agency programs, etc.) will not satisfy everyone nor address every issue or potential area of improvement at the agency. Recommendations are based on the agency's self-analysis requested by the Committee, discussions with agency personnel during multiple meetings, and analysis of the information obtained by the Committee. This information, including, but not limited to, the Initial Request for Information, Accountability Report, Restructuring Report, and videos of meetings with agency personnel, is available on the Committee's website.

RECOMMENDATION 1
The Committee recommends that the General Assembly consider establishing a study committee to evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of developing a comprehensive longitudinal data system to collect, store, and track information on South Carolina students during and after their progression through the K-12 system.

RECOMMENDATION 2
The Committee recommends the General Assembly consider implementing a legislative mandate requiring all South Carolina high school seniors to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

RECOMMENDATION 3
The Committee recommends the General Assembly consider increasing the state's merit-based scholarship award amounts to account for historical increases in tuition and include an indexing metric to adjust for future inflation (e.g., Higher Education Price Index (HEPI), etc.).

RECOMMENDATION 4
The Committee recommends the agency develop a strategic marketing plan to inform non-traditional students (e.g., adult learners, GED recipients, working professionals, and re-entry students) of the Tuition Grants program.[21]

RECOMMENDATION 5
The Committee recommends the agency review and update the agency strategic plan initiatives every 3-5 years, or as agency leadership deems necessary within that time frame.

Modernization of Laws

RECOMMENDATION 6
The Committee recommends that the General Assembly amend S.C. Code Sections 59-143-10 and 59-143-30 to clarify the allocation of Higher Education Scholarship Grant funds to the Commission on Higher Education and the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission.

RECOMMENDATION 7
The Committee recommends the General Assembly consider amending the S.C. Code Section 59-113-20[22], by deleting Subsection (f) and to permit students in good standing with a participating institution, and meeting all other requirements, to qualify for a tuition grant award.

RECOMMENDATION 8
The Committee recommends the General Assembly consider amending S.C. Code Section 59-113-50, to update the definition of an independent institution of higher learning, specific to the independent institution being defined as must having been chartered before 1962.[23]

ENDNOTES

[1] https://sctuitiongrants.org/about-us/

[2] Feb 27, 2025 Video Presentation (00:13:47- 00:13:58).

[3] Section 59-113-10.Higher Education Tuition Grant Commission

[4] Meeting Packet ONLINE 5.6.2025.pdf (Pg, 36)

[5] Meeting Packet ONLINE 5.6.2025.pdf (Pg, 42)

[6] Meeting Packet ONLINE 5.6.2025.pdf (Pg, 53)

[7] SCHETGC_ANNUAL_REPORT_2324.pdf (Pg, 7)

[9] Meeting Packet ONLINE 5.6.2025.pdf (Pg, 61)

[10] SCHETGC_ANNUAL_REPORT_2324.pdf (Pg, 6)

[11] South Carolina

[12] Meeting Packet ONLINE 5.6.2025.pdf (Pg, 40)

[13] Code of Laws - Title 59 - Chapter 104 - Initiatives For Research And Academic Excellence
SC Code Section 59-104-20

[14] Meeting Packet ONLINE 5.6.2025.pdf (Pg, 91)

[15] Meeting Packet ONLINE 5.6.2025.pdf (Pg, 48)

[16] Meeting Packet ONLINE 5.6.2025.pdf (Pg, 105)

[17] South Carolina Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators - SCASFAA Detailed History

[18] Meeting Packet ONLINE 5.6.2025.pdf (Pg, 107)

[19] South Carolina

[20] Home - South Carolina Independent School Association (SCISA)

[21] FY23_Accountability_Report_Final.pdf (Pg, 4)

[22] Code of Laws - Title 59 - Chapter 113 - Tuition Grants

[23] Feb 27, 2025 Video Presentation at (00:39:15- 00:40:29)

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OVERVIEW

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION OVERVIEW

MISSION

The mission of the South Carolina Department of Education is to serve students, support teachers, empower parents, and engage the community so that every student graduates prepared to reach their full potential.

VISION

Ensure every South Carolina graduate is college, career, and/or military ready. By 2030, the goal is to have at least 75% of students at or above grade level in reading and math.

STATE SUPERINTENDENT of EDUCATION

Ellen E. Weaver

- Earned B.A. in Political Science, as well as a Master's in Educational Leadership, from Bob Jones University
- Worked in Senator Jim DeMint's office for 12 years
- Founded Palmetto Promise Institute
- Chaired Education Oversight Committee
- Sworn in as South Carolina's 19th State Superintendent of Education on January 11, 2023

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION GOALS

1. Develop and implement systems and supports to ensure a safe and a healthy school culture.
2. Align state standards, curriculum, assessment, and professional development for maximum learning impact as evidenced by student achievement outcomes.
3. Recruit and retain the highest quality teachers and administrators.
4. Develop and deploy HOPE Network infrastructure and support for districts currently or recently under state takeover state.

STATE BOARD of EDUCATION

The State Board of Education is established in Article XI § 1 of South Carolina Constitution. The Board consists of 17 members, one appointed from each of the state's 16 judicial circuits by the legislators representing the various circuits, and a 17th member appointed by the governor. Members are appointed for four-year terms.

EMPLOYEES
AS OF JULY 2025

893

## TOTAL FUNDING
FY 25-26

$7,611,068,522

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- Superintendent's Division
  - Office of Audit Services
  - Office of the Chief Information Officer
  - Office of the Chief Information Security Officer
  - Office of Human Resources
  - Office of Finance
- Division of College, Career, and Military Readiness
  - Office of Assessment and Standards
  - Office of Career and Technical Education
  - Office of Educator Effectiveness and Leadership Development
  - Office of Instructional Materials
  - Office of Instructional Supports
  - Office of Adult Education
  - Office of Educator Services
  - Office of Federal and State Accountability
  - Office of School Transformation
  - Office of Special Education Services
  - Research and Data Analysis
  - Office of Virtual Education
- Division of District Operations and Support
  - Office of Health and Nutrition
  - Office of Medicaid Services
  - Office of School Facilities
  - Office of Transportation
- Division for Legal Affairs
  - Office of Emergency Programs
  - Office of Governmental Affairs
  - Office of General Counsel
  - Grants Program
  - Office of Procurement
- Division of Strategic Engagement
  - Office of Communications
  - Office of Community Engagement
  - Office of Education Choice and Family Engagement
  - Office of Safe Schools
  - Office of Student Support

AGENCY PRESENTATION
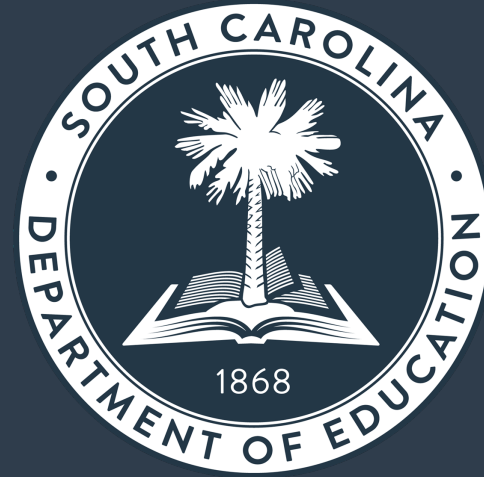
Governance

South Carolina Governance 101

1,226
Public & Charter Schools

81
Districts (Traditional, Charter, & Special Schools)

796,000+
Students

59,000+
Certified Educators

Governance Stakeholders

o Federal Government

o General Assembly

o State Superintendent + SCDE

o State Board of Education

o Education Oversight Committee

o District Boards of Trustees

o Governor

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Governance Stakeholders

Federal Government

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA - 1965)
  - → Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA - 2015) = Title Funds
- Office of Civil Rights (USED)
- School Lunch Program (USDA)
- Discretionary Grants (academic, transportation, etc...)

General Assembly

- Appoint SBE, specify powers and duties
- Specify powers and duties of State Superintendent
- Provide for the maintenance and support of a public schools and establish, organize, and support such other public institutions of learning as may be desirable.

Governance Stakeholders

State Superintendent + SCDE

- The State Superintendent is a state-wide, elected official and serves as the administrative officer to the State Board of Education.
- The State Superintendent organizes, staffs, and administers the SCDE and is responsible for managing the SCDE's budget and ensuring that the schools and districts are abiding by state and federal laws or mandates from the SCDE.

State Board of Education

- Composed of 16 members, appointed by the legislative delegation of each judicial circuit; and one member appointed by the Governor;
- General powers determined by S.C. Code 59-5-60.

Governance Stakeholders

Education Oversight Committee

- Legislative agency, works closely with members of the SC General Assembly, providing data and recommendations regarding programs, policies and funding based upon the level of achievement for students, schools, and programs.

District Boards of Trustees

- Elected at the local level
- Primarily responsible for approving the budget and setting policies to manage local school districts
- General powers provided in S.C. Code 59-19-90

Governor

- Appoints one SBE member and two members of the EOC
- May request a SIG investigation and remove local school board members for cause
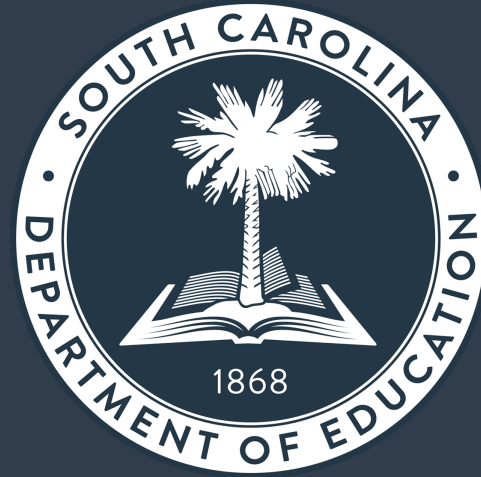
Local and Federal Counterparts

Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

- South Carolina's LEAs include public school districts, charter sponsors, Governor's Schools, the School for the Deaf and Blind, Palmetto Unified, and SCDJJ. They hold legal authority over local school operations.
- SCDE and LEAs work together to serve students, follow state and federal funding rules, and ensure compliance through program monitoring.
- SCDE manages statewide education responsibilities, while LEAs handle local school operations.
- SCDE supports LEAs with technical assistance, standards, assessments, transportation, professional development, and educator certification.

United States Department of Education (USDE)

- USDE provides funding to SCDE for statewide use or subgrants to LEAs and ensures compliance with federal laws.
- SCDE monitors LEAs to ensure federal funds are used according to requirements, similar to how USDE monitors SCDE.
- The State Superintendent and SCDE oversee public education in South Carolina, while USDE funds and monitors specific federal programs.
- USDE conducts required oversight, and SCDE regularly works with them for guidance on federal program implementation.

Agency Overview

South Carolina State Superintendent of Education

Ellen E. Weaver

Ellen Weaver was elected as South Carolina's 19th State Superintendent of Education on November 9th, 2022. Born in Greenville, Ellen has spent her career as a passionate advocate for educational excellence and opportunity for every student in her beloved home state, because she knows first-hand that a great education is the front door of the American Dream.

Ellen graduated from a great public school and earned her B.A. in Political Science, as well as a Master's in Educational Leadership, from Bob Jones University. After graduation, she worked in Senator Jim DeMint's office for 12 years in a variety of roles, finishing her time as his State Director. She founded Palmetto Promise Institute, a leading state public policy organization, in 2013. As President of Palmetto Promise, she worked tirelessly to improve the lives of her fellow-South Carolinians, with a specialized focus on education policy.

Between her research at Palmetto Promise and her work as a member and chair of the SC Education Oversight Committee, Ellen's deep experience in education policy in South Carolina gave her a relentless passion for ensuring every child the hope and freedom found in an excellent education.

Ellen is focused on prioritizing the instruction of foundational skills, recruiting and retaining the best educators, and partnering with parents—as well as business and other community leaders—to prepare students for their personal path to success.

Agency Head Qualifications and Duties

- Article XI, Section 2 of the South Carolina Constitution. State Superintendent of Education
- S.C. Code Ann. §59-3-10. Appointment, compensation, and qualifications of State Superintendent of Education
- S.C. Code Ann. §59-3-20. Vacancy in Office
- S.C. Code Ann. §59-3-30. General Duties
  - Secretary to the State Board of Education
  - Management of all public school funds provided by the State or Federal Government
  - Organize, staff, and administer a State Department of Education
  - Keep public informed as to problems and needs of the public schools
  - Provide professional improvement opportunities for teachers
  - Administer all policies and procedures adopted by the State Board of Education
  - Other responsibilities as prescribed in law

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Agency Purpose per Statute

- S.C. Code §59-3-30 (3) and (6)
- The State Superintendent of Education is directed to:
    - (3) Organize, staff and administer a State Department of Education which shall include such division and departments as are necessary to render the maximum service to public education in the State; and
    - (6) Administer, through the State Department of Education, all policies and procedures adopted by the State Board of Education

FY 2024-25 Budget Report

$1.95 Billion in NEW State-only K-12 Investment Since 2018-19

SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs (RFA) estimates that SC will have invested **$14.5 Billion** in total K-12 education spending (federal/state/local) in FY 2024-25. The FY 2025-26 budget includes at least **$354 Million** in **new state** education spending (SCDE lines only).

Minimum Teacher Pay up 52% since 2018-19

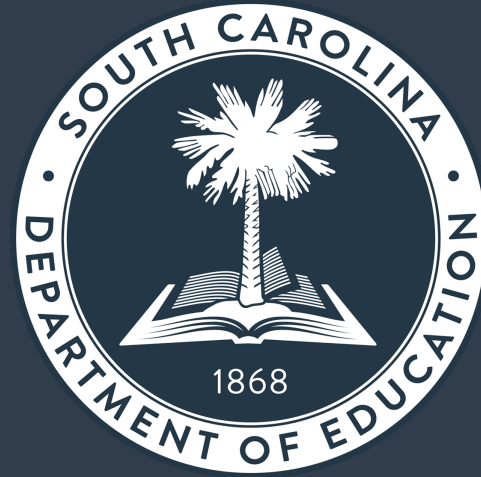Starting teacher pay has increased from **$32,000** in 2018-19 to **$48,500** in 2025-26.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Organizational Chart

As of August 2025

State Superintendent
Ellen E. Weaver

Chief of Staff
Rebecca Gunnlaugsson

Superintendent's Office
Ian Headley

- **Government Relations & Policy**
  Phillip Cease

Legal Affairs
Todd Atwater

- **General Counsel**
  Todd Atwater

College, Career, & Military Readiness
Abbey Duggins

- **Teaching & Learning**
  Allana Prosser
  - **Instructional Materials**
    Allana Prosser
  - **Assessment & Standards**
    Kristi Austin
  - **Career Readiness**
    Kayce Cook
  - **Instructional Supports (OELL)**
    Alisha Green
  - **Special Education**
    Peter Keup
  - **VirtualSC**
    Bradley Mitchell

- **Talent & Continuous Improvement**
  Lilla Toal Mandsager
  - **Federal & State Accountability**
    Jewell Stanley
  - **Educator Services**
    Mary Hipp
  - **Leadership Effectiveness**
    Kimberly Mack

Financial Services
Kendra Hunt

- **Finance**
  Melanie Cooper
- **Grant Services**
  Audrey Shifflett
- **Auditing Services**
  Hershula Davis
- **Procurement**
  Kathy Santandreu

Agency Operations
Rebecca Gunnlaugsson

- **Information Technology**
  Dan Ralyea
- **Implementation & Support**
  Alex Farquharson
- **Facilities Operations**
  Jered Wooten
- **Human Resources**
  Lisa McCloud

Strategic Engagement
Laura Bayne

- **Communications**
  Christy Cox
- **Safe Schools**
  James Rawl
- **Education Choice & Family Engagement**
  Meka Childs
- **Student Support**
  Tonia Mallett Smith
- **Student & Community Engagement**
  Dwayne Gatson

District Operations & Support
Virgie Chambers

- **Health & Nutrition**
  Ellen Mason - *Interim*
- **Transportation**
  Mike Bullman
- **Medicaid Services**
  Vanesha Perrin
- **School Facilities**
  Wayne Stokes

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Division Overview

Division	Purpose	Division Head
Superintendent's Office	The Superintendent's Office provides executive leadership and oversight across all divisions of the South Carolina Department of Education. It ensures alignment of all agency functions—policy, academic programs, operations, finance, legislation, and strategic initiatives—with the State Superintendent's vision and the agency's strategic goals. The office directs cross-agency coordination, manages responses to legislative and public inquiries, and ensures accountability for performance and impact across every division.	Ian Headley
Division of Legal Affairs	The Division of Legal Affairs provides legal guidance, regulatory support, and policy interpretation to ensure the South Carolina Department of Education operates within state and federal laws. The division encompasses the offices of General Counsel and Government Affairs and oversees administrative hearings, legislative and regulatory review, ethics and compliance matters, and the development and enforcement of education regulations. By advising agency leadership and supporting districts on complex legal issues, the division safeguards the integrity and legality of the agency's programs and operation.	Todd Atwater
Division of College, Career, and Military Readiness	The Division of College, Career, and Military Readiness leads statewide efforts to ensure every student is prepared for success after high school—whether in college, a career, or military service. The division is organized into two primary areas: Teaching and Learning, which oversees the development and support of high-quality K–12 academic programs, and Talent and Continuous Improvement, which supports educator development and school improvement efforts. Through these functions, the division advances the agency's strategic priorities, including early literacy, mathematics achievement, expanded access to dual enrollment and advanced coursework, and the deployment of aligned curriculum and instructional materials. In collaboration with school districts, higher education, and community partners, the division helps build rigorous, coherent learning experiences and the educator capacity needed to ensure all students graduate ready for their next step.	Abbey Duggins

Division Overview

Division	Purpose	Division Head
Division of Financial Services	The Division of Financial Services ensures the responsible stewardship of public funds by overseeing finance, audit, procurement, and grant services for the agency. Committed to transparency, accountability, and compliance, the division manages budgeting, financial reporting, internal controls, and resource allocation to support educational initiatives. By providing fiscal guidance to agency leadership and school districts, the division ensures financial integrity and efficiency in advancing the agency's mission.	Kendra Hunt
Division of Agency Operations	The Division of Agency Operations ensures the efficiency, effectiveness, and alignment of key administrative functions that support the agency's mission. Overseeing human resources, information technology, facilities, research and data analysis, and project management, the division streamlines operations, enhances strategic planning, and provides essential support to agency leadership and school districts.	Rebecca Gunnlaugsson
Division of Strategic Engagement	The Division of Strategic Engagement works to educate the public, connect with the community, ensures student safety in partnership with law enforcement, promote student engagement and character, and encourage and support parent involvement in educational decisions. The division includes the Office of Communications, the Office of Community and Student Engagement, the Office of Student Support, the Office of Safe Schools, and the Office of Education Choice and Family Engagement.	Laura Bayne
Division of District Operations and Support	The Division of District Operations and Support provides essential services that ensure safe, healthy, and well-equipped learning environments for South Carolina's students. Overseeing school transportation, facilities, health and nutrition programs, and Medicaid services, the division works to enhance district operations, ensure compliance with state and federal regulations, and support the well-being of students. Through strategic planning and collaboration, the division strengthens the infrastructure and resources that enable schools to focus on student success.	Virgie Chambers

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

South Carolina's K-12 Ecosystem

South Carolina's Growing Education Ecosystem

What educational setting best fits the unique needs of my child?

- Traditional Schools
- Magnet Schools
- Charter Schools
- Education Scholarship Trust Fund
- Independent Schools
- Home School Options

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

SC K-12 Education Funding Fast Facts

Traditional Districts: 741,996 Students

Federal	$905M
State	$6.1B
Local	$6.5B
	$13.5 Billion

Statewide Charter Districts: 54,784 Students

Federal	$26M
State	$597M
Local	$37M
	$660.1 Million

Approximate Total Dollars under SCDE Management: $8 Billion

Statewide Average* Revenue Per Pupil: $18,842 Traditional & $12,926 Charter

* Lowest Revenue Per Pupil District = $12,562 (Dillon 3), 2nd Highest Revenue Per Pupil District = $29,042 (Fairfield) Sources: Revenue & Fiscal Affairs FY 2024-25 Revenue Per Pupil Estimates (figures do not include bond revenue) and SCDE 45th Day Count for 2024-25

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

South Carolina's Growing Education Ecosystem

South Carolina Student Enrollment - By Enrollment Option

Legend:
- Charter District - Brick & Mortar Charter
- Charter District - Virtual Charter
- Homeschool Student Estimation
- Private Schools
- Special Schools
- Traditional District - Charter School
- Traditional District - Traditional School

2019-20: Total 839,629 — 19,060 / 36,703 / 741,623
2020-21: Total 824,709 — 22,088 / 33,492 / 714,360
2021-22: Total 845,618 — 24,311 / 37,258 / 728,228
2022-23: Total 865,951 — 25,954 / 49,016 / 734,974
2023-24: Total 863,886 — 30,041 / 42,254 / 733,677
2024-25: Total 879,118 — 36,779 / 39,767 / 48,933 / 727,653

By the Numbers

Statewide Charter Students – 78% ⬆
(brick & mortar + virtual)

Home School Students – 93% ⬆

Independent School Students – 33% ⬆

Traditional School Students – 2% ⬇

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Our North Star
Student Achievement

At least **75%** of students at or above grade level by **2030**

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

54% of SC Students were proficient in ELA

2024-25 Data Coming Soon!
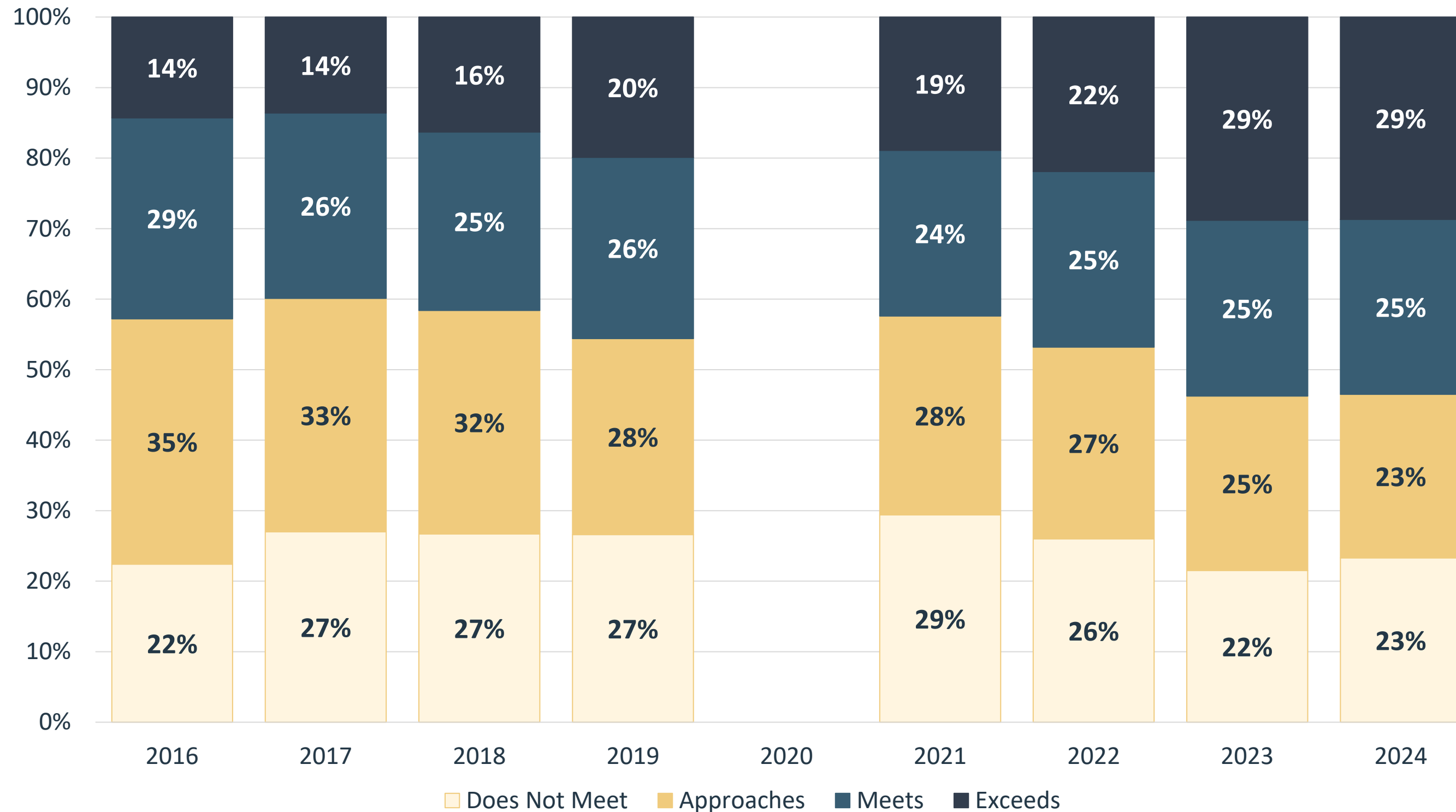
Year		
2016	42.8	57.2
2017	39.9	60.1
2018	41.6	58.4
2019	45.6	54.4
2020	-	
2021	42.4	57.6
2022	46.8	53.3
2023	53.7	45.5
2024	53.5	46.5

Chart data (stacked bar, Does Not Meet / Approaches / Meets / Exceeds):

Year	Does Not Meet	Approaches	Meets	Exceeds
2016	22%	35%	29%	14%
2017	27%	33%	26%	14%
2018	27%	32%	25%	16%
2019	27%	28%	26%	20%
2020				
2021	29%	28%	24%	19%
2022	26%	27%	25%	22%
2023	22%	25%	25%	29%
2024	23%	23%	25%	29%

Legend: Does Not Meet · Approaches · Meets · Exceeds

42% of SC Students were proficient in Math
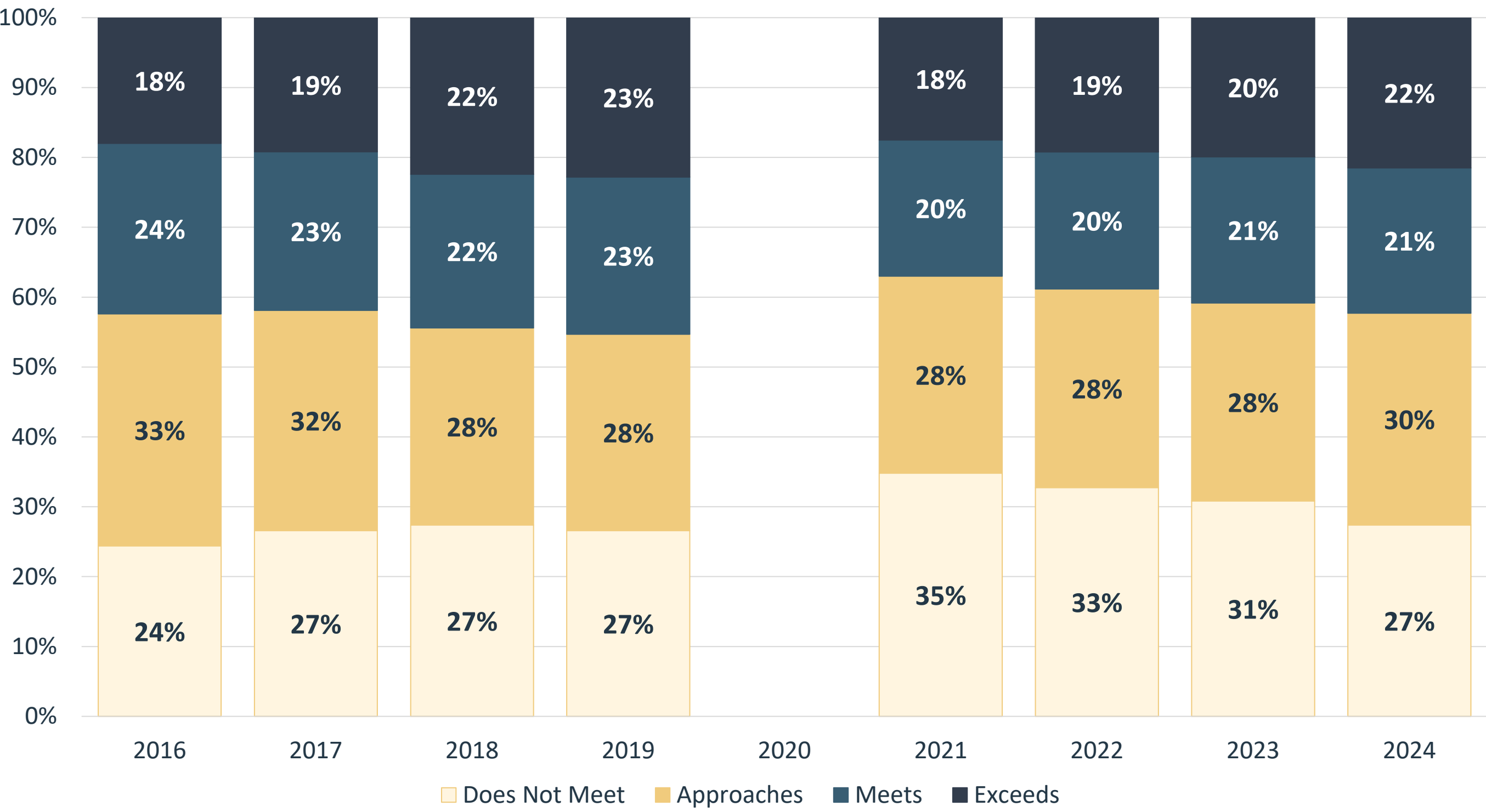
Year	Proficient	Not Proficient
2016	42.5	57.6
2017	41.9	58.1
2018	44.5	55.6
2019	45.3	54.7
2020	-	
2021	37	63
2022	38.8	61.1
2023	40.8	58.6
2024	42.3	58.6

Legend: Does Not Meet · Approaches · Meets · Exceeds

Chart values by year:

Year	Exceeds	Meets	Approaches	Does Not Meet
2016	18%	24%	33%	24%
2017	19%	23%	32%	27%
2018	22%	22%	28%	27%
2019	23%	23%	28%	27%
2020				
2021	18%	20%	28%	35%
2022	19%	20%	28%	33%
2023	20%	21%	28%	31%
2024	22%	21%	30%	27%

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

College/Career Readiness & Graduation Rate (2021-2024)

College Ready	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	34.1%	32%	32.6%	32.5%	Coming Soon

Career Ready	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	55.7%	62.8%	61.4%	69.6%	Coming Soon

College & Career Ready	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	28.7%	29%	29.4%	30.6%	Coming Soon

High School Graduation	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	83.3%	83.8%	83.8%	85.4%	Coming Soon

STRATEGIC PLAN

What we want...

Every child to graduate **college, career,** or **military ready**

BY **2030,** AT LEAST **75%** OF STUDENTS AT OR ABOVE GRADE LEVEL

How do we get there?

3 Year Objectives

Advance evidence-based instruction of foundational skills (Science of Reading and Palmetto Math Project)

Expand access to employment-aligned career pathways, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning opportunities

Deploy new civics and Character and Resilience Education (CARE) resources to develop informed citizens equipped with vital life skills

Build a statewide network of business, faith, and non-profit volunteers to support students, teachers, and families

1 Year Objective

Align Department structure, processes, internal and external communication, and leadership development around shared responsibility for the Strategic Plan

An exceptional education for **every** South Carolina child

SOUTH CAROLINA · DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION · 1868

Our Strategic Plan

SOUTH CAROLINA **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

The whole world opened to me when I learned to read.

— DR. MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE (1875-1955)

EDUCATION PIONEER & ENTREPRENEUR

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Strategy #1

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S STRATEGIC 1-4-1-4

Advance evidence-based instruction of foundational skills (Science of Reading & Palmetto Math Project)

High-Quality Professional Learning (HQPL)

ELA: Nearly **20,000** teachers served to-date.
Goal: Every K-3 teacher LETRS trained by the end of the 2025-26 school year.

High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)

Math: New curriculum currently in adoption process. ELA was fully funded and deployed for the 2024-25 school year.
Goal: Ongoing, high-quality standards-aligned professional development to support use of HQIM with fidelity.

Policy: Read to Succeed 2.0

Rebooted to ensure all literacy instruction fully aligns with the Science of Reading.
Goal: Implement with high level of support, especially for early reading interventions in K-2.

SC's Science of Reading Timeline

2014

Act 284: Original Read to Succeed Legislation Becomes Law

2018

Act 213: Statewide Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Framework (MTSS)

2019

Proviso 1.59: Palmetto Literacy Project Introduced (250 Schools)

2021-22

Palmetto Literacy Project LETRS Training Initial Cohort

2023

Proviso 1A.73: Statewide K-3 LETRS Funding & Rollout + New ELA Standards

2024

Act 114: Read to Succeed 2.0 + EC LETRS For CERDEP 4K + New ELA HQIM

SOUTH CAROLINA **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

The Science of Reading

Empowering Teachers & Students

Learn More:

ed.sc.gov/literacy
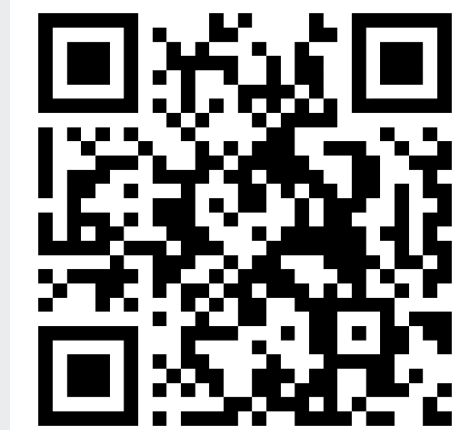
SC's Science of Reading Impact

2023-24

- **16,238** 3rd Graders Scoring "Does Not Meet"
- **28%** of **57,249** Total 3rd Graders Tested

2024-25

- **9,281** 3rd Graders Scoring "Does Not Meet"
- **16%** of **58,797** Total 3rd Graders Tested

43% year-over-year decrease!

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Palmetto Math Project

High-Quality Instructional Materials

High-Dose Tutoring

one-half or more fifth-grade or eighth-grade students scoring at the lowest achievement level on the statewide summative mathematics assessment

High-Quality Professional Learning

Instructional Coaching

Strategy #2

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S STRATEGIC 1-4-1-4

Expand access to employment-aligned career pathways, apprenticeships, & other work-based learning opportunities

Aligning CTE Credentials with the Workforce

Goal: To enhance the quality and impact of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs by increasing the attainment of high-value credentials that are recognized and valued by employers, industry, and post-secondary institutions.

Supporting a CTE Rural Renaissance

Goal: To launch and advance the CTE Rural Renaissance project by investing in and modernizing Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs in identified rural school districts, ensuring alignment with the state's current and future workforce needs.

Developing Cutting Edge Pathways

Goal: To develop and implement adaptive K-12 career pathways in emerging and cutting-edge fields, including Computer Science, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cyber Security, Electric Vehicles (EV), and Advanced Manufacturing.

Career Clusters

Caring for Communities

Education
- Early Childhood Development
- Education Administration & Leadership
- Learner Support & Community Engagement
- Teaching, Training, & Facilitation

Healthcare & Human Services
- Behavioral & Mental Health
- Biotechnology Research & Development
- Community & Social Services
- Health Data & Administration
- Personal Care Services
- Physical Health

Public Service & Safety
- Emergency Response
- Judicial Systems
- Local, State, & Federal Services
- Military & National Security
- Public Safety

Building & Moving

Advanced Manufacturing
- Engineering
- Industrial Machinery
- Production & Automation
- Robotics
- Safety & Quality Assurance

Construction
- Architecture & Civil Engineering
- Construction Planning & Development
- Equipment Operation & Maintenance
- Skilled Trades

Supply Chain & Transportation
- Air & Space Transportation
- Ground & Rail Transportation
- Maintenance & Repair
- Marine Transportation
- Planning & Logistics
- Purchasing & Warehousing

Connecting & Supporting Success**

Digital Technology**
- Data Science & AI
- IT Support & Services
- Network Systems & Cybersecurity
- Software Solutions
- Unmanned Vehicle Technology
- Web & Cloud

Management & Entrepreneurship**
- Business Information Management
- Entrepreneurship & Small Business
- Leadership & Operations
- Project Management
- Regulation

Marketing & Sales**
- Market Research, Analytics, & Ethics
- Marketing & Advertising
- Retail & Customer Experience
- Strategic Sales

Creating & Experiencing

Arts, Entertainment, & Design
- Design & Digital Arts
- Fashion & Interiors
- Fine Arts
- Lighting & Sound Technology
- Media Production & Broadcasting
- Performing Arts

Hospitality, Events, & Tourism
- Accommodations
- Conferences & Events
- Culinary & Food Services
- Travel & Leisure

Cultivating Resources

Agriculture
- Agribusiness
- Agricultural Technology & Automation
- Animal Systems
- Food Science & Processing
- Plant Systems
- Water Systems

Energy & Natural Resources
- Clean & Alternative Energy
- Conservation & Land Management
- Ecological Research & Development
- Environmental Protection
- Resource Extraction
- Utilities

Investing in the Future

Financial Services
- Accounting
- Banking & Credit
- Financial Strategy & Investments
- Insurance
- Real Estate

**Cross-Cutting Clusters
Denote careers that overlap in **all** industries, highlighting the versatile and interconnected nature of today's workforce. These careers can stand on their own or be contextualized in each Cluster and emphasize the need for adaptability in navigating the modern economy.

Notes:
Clusters are listed in alphabetical order. Clusters and Sub-Clusters represent the entire world of work (see definitions).

SCDE & Partners Launch Statewide Plan to Connect Classrooms to High-Demand Careers

June 19, 2025

WEST COLUMBIA, S.C. – As part of its ongoing commitment for every student to graduate college-, career-, or military-ready, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) has unveiled a new statewide framework for stackable career credentials. This effort provides a clear path to a good job, college, or training opportunity after graduation.

✓ Career and Technical Education (CTE) in South Carolina has surged. In **2018-19**, just over **19,000** students earned a nationally or state-recognized credential. By **2023-24**, that number more than doubled to over **48,000** students statewide.

✓ **80%** of students taking a college preparatory academic curriculum with rigorous CTE met college and career readiness goals, **compared to only 63%** of students taking the same academic core who did not experience rigorous CTE. *(Southern Regional Education Board, High Schools That Work 2012 Assessment)*

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Strategy #3

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S STRATEGIC 1-4-1-4

Deploy civics & CARE resources to empower local leaders to build positive, orderly school culture and develop informed citizens equipped with durable life skills

Character And Resilience Education (CARE)

Goal: To create an easy-to-navigate compendium of high-quality resources, aligned to SC's existing character education law, to support student success.

Cell Phone Free School Day

State Board of Education developed a model policy for local districts to adopt, implemented statewide in January 2025.
Goal: Work collaboratively with districts to implement a commonsense policy that sets high expectations for students, supports teachers, and refocuses the learning environment for all.

SC African American History Calendar, iLead, Leader in Me, Medal of Honor, etc.

Goal: Continue to support and expand access to aligned instructional materials, as well as leadership development and professional learning to support their implementation.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

SC'S iLEAD IMPACT (2020-2025)

iLead is a values-based leadership content for K-12 students where peer-to-peer learning takes place through roundtable discussions that create environments rich with values-based leadership growth.

We're bringing students, educators, parents, and community leaders to the table!

Presented in Partnership with:

MAXWELL LEADERSHIP® FOUNDATION

207
Schools enrolled in iLead

209,578
Students' engagements with the iLead curriculum

6,425
Participants in Educator Leadership Development Transformation Tables

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

iLEAD
TESTIMONIALS

What Students Say…

"…All the choices that we make influence our character.."
– *HS Student*

"…iLead has helped me to communicate more and talk about things like relationships and forgiveness…talking in front of my classmates makes me feel like I'm held more accountable to make better choices." – *HS Student*

What Teachers Say…

"With iLead, I've noticed that they (students) are able to communicate a lot better. Also, they are able to stop, pause and think about what they are about to say or what they are about to do. So, we are not only talking about emotions, we are also fostering critical thinking skills in students." – *HS Teacher*

"…Participating in Leadership Transformation truly inspired me as an educator to take my commitment to educating and changing kids' lives to the next level." – *HS Teacher*

Medal of Honor Character Development Program

"This was one of the most meaningful PD workshops I have ever attended. I deeply appreciated having teachers presenting and guiding how they implemented in their own classrooms. 10/10 please bring them back, South Carolina Department of Education!"

General James E. Livingston
Medal of Honor Recipient
Charleston, SC

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

PALMETTO CIVICS PROJECT
AN INITIATIVE OF THE SC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

SC 250 ANNIVERSARY
American Revolution

AMERICAN BATTLEFIELD TRUST ★ ★ ★

WOODSONCENTER

The Woodson Center Curriculum

A peaceful, prosperous American future is built on a shared understanding of our past that is sometimes painfully truthful, but also celebratory and aspirational. Students need hard facts, but they also need heroes to admire and follow. Our supplementary Black history and excellence curriculum nourishes developing minds with true stories of struggle, triumph, hope, and resilience.

The Woodson Center's *curriculum includes:*

- Katherine Johnson, the NASA mathematician who helped put men on the moon.
- Laurence C. Jones, pioneering educator who built a life-changing school for the poor.
- The Golden 13, barrier-breaking patriots who became the first Black naval officers.
- Covert, Michigan, the small frontier town that rejected racial segregation.
- Bessie Coleman, daredevil aviator whose tragically short life blazed new trails.

Rather than view American history through a lens that emphasizes racial grievance and discourages lower-income children of color, the Woodson Center's free high school and K-8 lessons center on compelling stories of Black excellence, inspiring students to take charge of their futures and find their place in the American story.

Woodson Center lessons received high marks in a review by the Johns Hopkins University Institute for Education Policy. Since 2020, the lessons have been downloaded nearly 200,000 times for use in public, private, and charter schools; home schools; community and church-based programs; adult education courses; and much more.

Each lesson package includes educator-designed presentation decks, discussion activities, assessments, learning standards, and other supporting documents. Our material can be used to supplement history, civics, English, and social/emotional learning curricula.

BLACK HISTORY AND EXCELLENCE

Scan the QR code to download the curriculum today.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Expanding
Our Founding
Promise

"Hope" lesson from *Civil Rights: A Global Perspective*

MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE

July 10, 1875 – May 18, 1955

"The whole world opened to me when I learned to read."

Background

Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune was born in Mayesville, South Carolina. The daughter of former slaves, Mary was one of seventeen children. She worked hard to help support her family and fought with determination to get an education while living in a segregated society.

Life's Work

Determined to succeed, Mary went on to pursue higher education and graduate from college. She became a teacher and dedicated her life to providing rigorous education for African American girls like herself, whom she lovingly called her "Black Roses." With very limited resources, Mary founded a school that eventually grew into what is now known as Bethune–Cookman University, to help them achieve university degrees. Her Black Roses would often sing, "Who built the school? Sister Mary built the school!"

Virtue

Perseverance
"A determined and proactive attitude that drives steady, sustained effort toward a goal, even in the face of difficulties, obstacles, or failure."

Accomplishments

Mary became a renowned national leader, advising U.S. Presidents and First Ladies, holding an important government position, and leading the National Association of Colored Women. She worked tirelessly to improve educational and employment opportunities for her community.

Lasting Impact

Mary's relentless commitment to education changed lives and advanced civil rights. Today, her marble statue stands in the United States Capitol, the first African American to be thus honored. Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune teaches us that determination can overcome obstacles and create a brighter future for all.

PALMETTO CIVICS PROJECT
AN INITIATIVE OF THE SC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Palmetto Pioneers
Mary McLeod Bethune

Palmetto Pioneers

2025

South Carolina

AFRICAN AMERICAN
HISTORY CALENDAR

In remembrance of the Emanuel Nine

From *The Anxious Generation* by Dr. Jonathan Haidt

Suicide Rates for Younger Adolescents

Boys
91% increase since 2010

Girls
167% increase since 2010
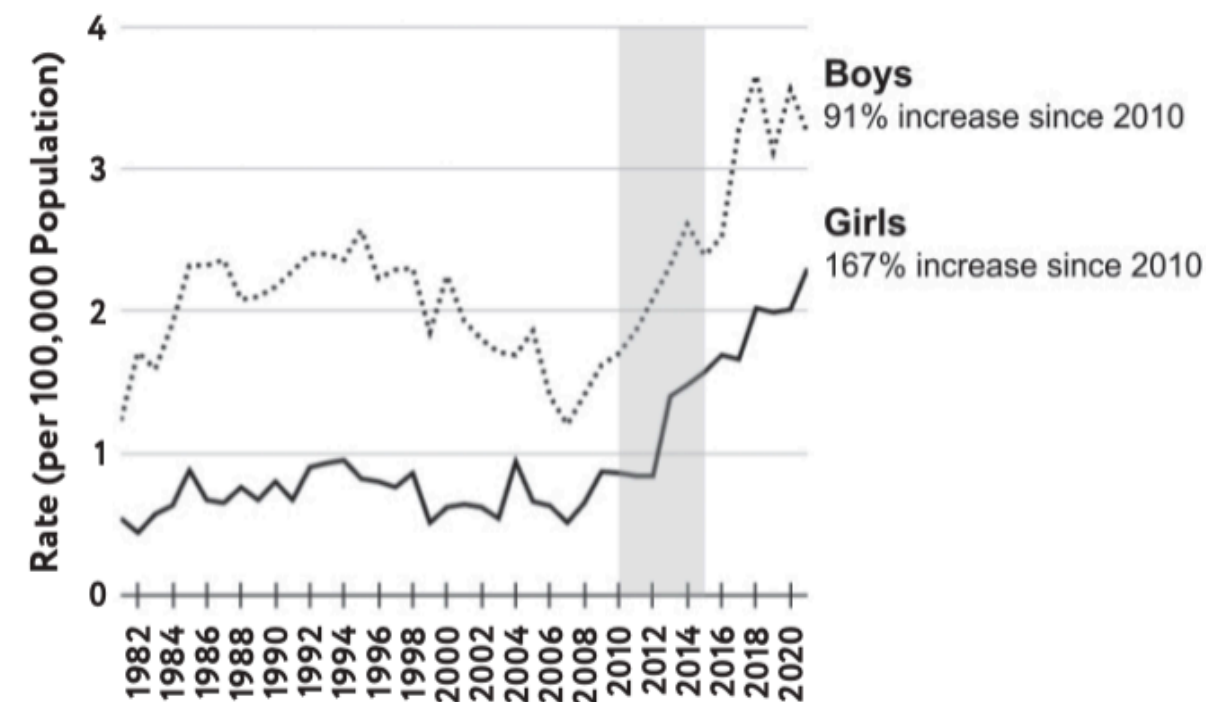
Figure 1.5. Suicide rates for U.S. adolescents, ages 10–14. (Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.)[22]

Major Depression Among Teens

Girls
145% increase since 2010

Boys
161% increase since 2010
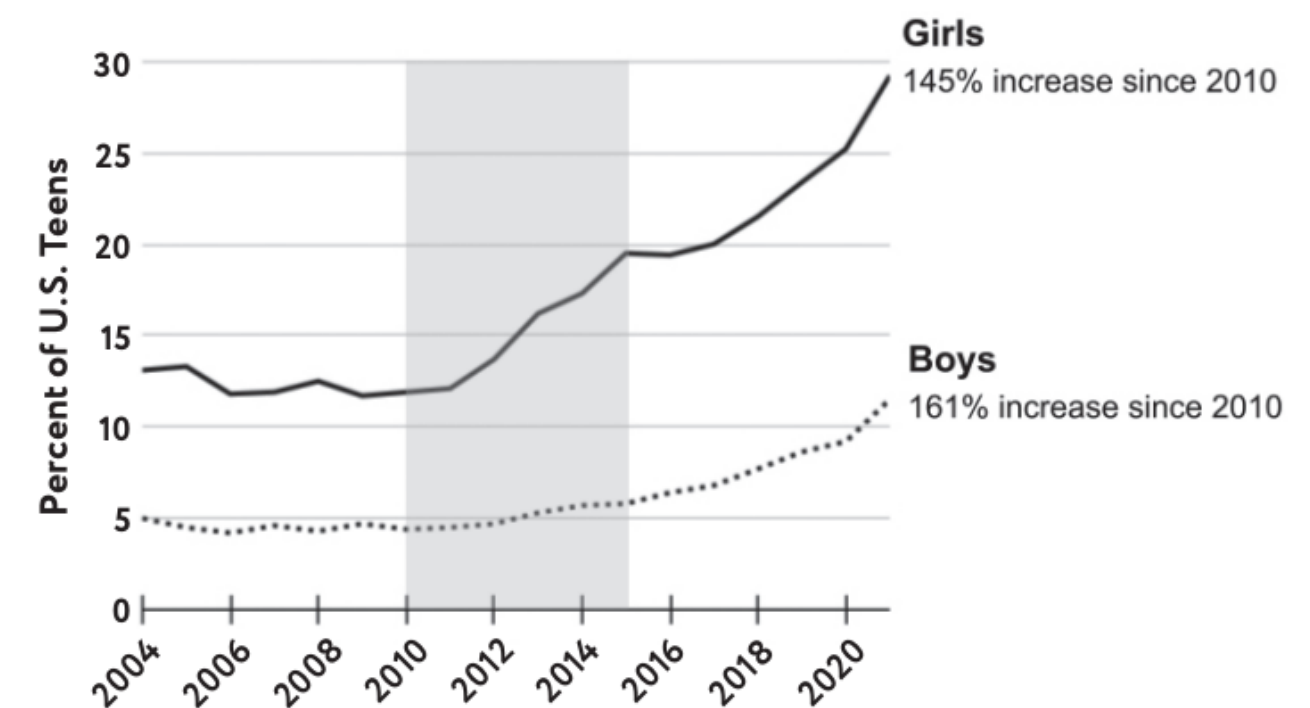
Figure 1.1. Percent of U.S. teens (ages 12–17) who had at least one major depressive episode in the past year, by self-report based on a symptom checklist. This was figure 7.1 in *The Coddling of the American Mind*, now updated with data beyond 2016. (Source: U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health.)[3]

Introducing

SOUTH CAROLINA
FREE TO FOCUS
A PROJECT OF YOUR S.C. DEPT. OF EDUCATION
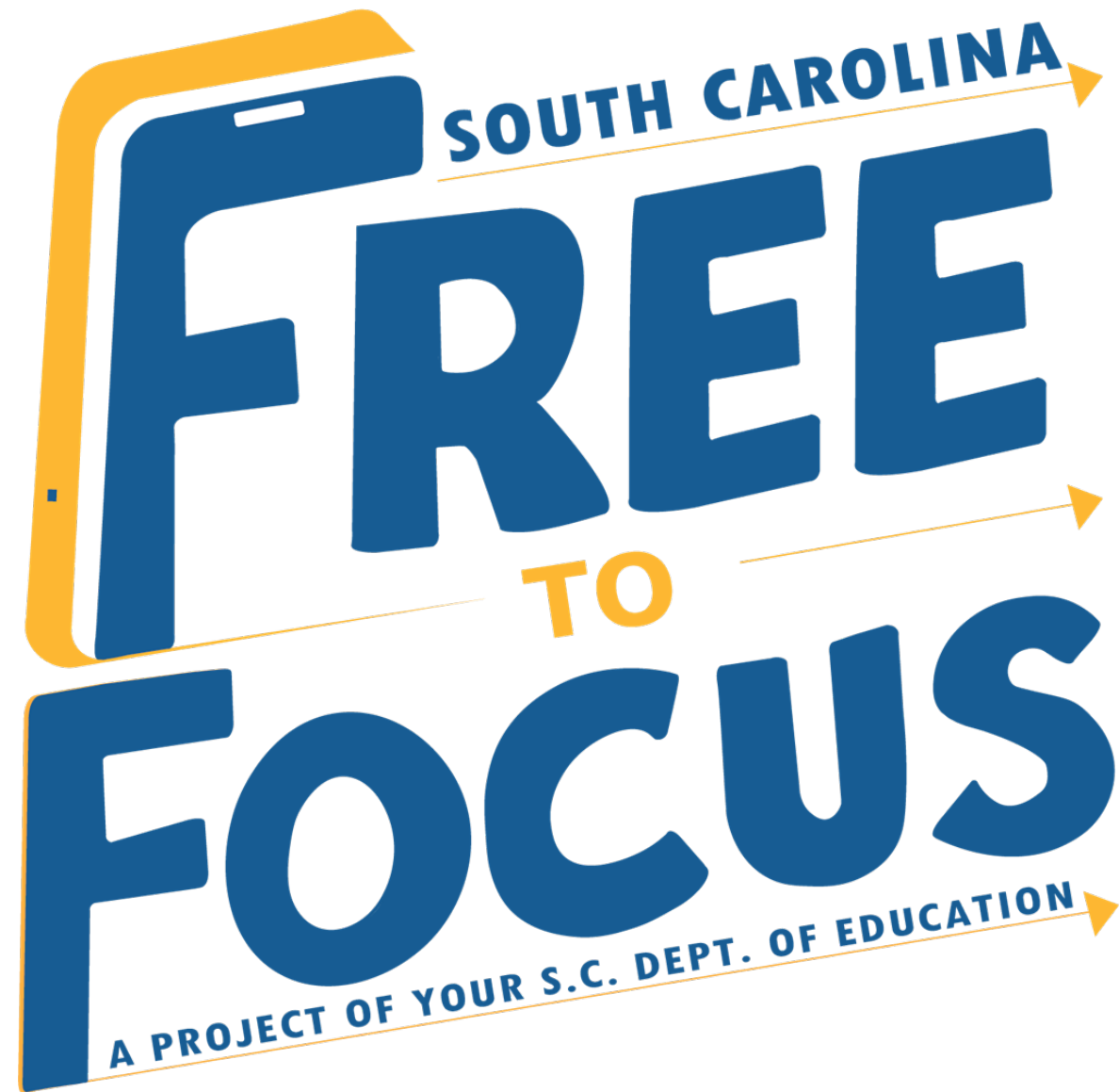
ed.sc.gov/freetofocus

"Free to Focus" means:

- Free to Focus on **LEARNING**

- Free to Focus on **FRIENDS**

- Free to Focus on **SAFETY**

- Free to focus on **INSTRUCTION**

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Saving Our Kids From Screen Addiction

CRAVING

DOPAMINE ADDICTION PATHWAY

Dopamine Too High

Dopamine Crash

Novelty Wears Off

LOW

DOPAMINE REWARD PATHWAY
@screenstrong.org

Dopamine Increases

Dopamine Increases
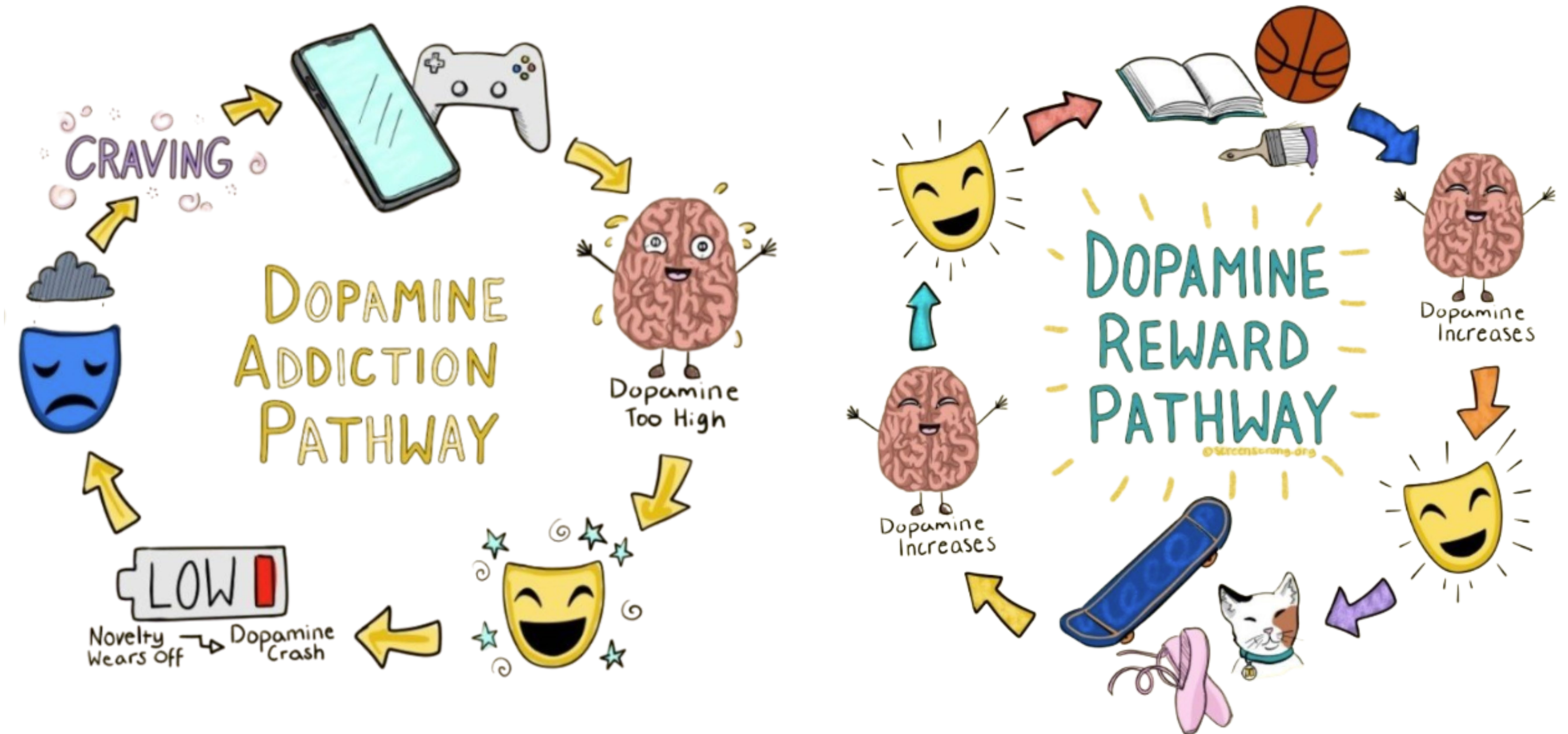
ScreenStrong Strong Kids. Strong Families.

KID-FRIENDLY EXPLANATIONS OF THE LATEST BRAIN SCIENCE

SIMPLE LANGUAGE & ENGAGING ILLUSTRATIONS

EMPOWERS KIDS TO MAKE BETTER CHOICES

INCLUDES CHALLENGES TO HELP KIDS BEGIN REGAINING THEIR TIME—AND THEIR CHILDHOOD

WINDING UP, NOT DOWN

Screen time is very much like a stimulant cocaine. It disrupts our nervous system, in and body. While scrolling, posting, fightin weapons, and running for our lives, our shuts down, and the emotion center (lim are winding down, but the reality is th and exhausted.

... nicotine, or even

SECTION 2
HOW DO I AVOID MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS?

"Are you FELINE sad? Try getting off your screen and going outside more. Outside is my favorite place!"
Skippy, The ScreenStrong Cat

AMAZING AMYGDALA CAN GET ANGRY IN 2 SECONDS FLAT!

The amygdala gets activated by the follow
- Dangerous, violent, painful, or deadly
- Unfamiliar, novel (new or unusual), o
- Emotionally charged or exciting activ

Spending just 20 minutes playing a viole cause a stress response.

THE STRESS RESPONSE

When something scary happens, the amygdala gets ready to protect us. Thus, it quickly revs up the body to fight or run away—hence the term **fight-flight**.

This physical reaction occurs in response to a perceived harmful a a virtual threat, or an actual phys threat to survival.

When a threat happens, the amy —to release stress hormones to t

... d self-perception, often ... reen world our primary ... ces, it's easy to ... depression, and

... onfidence in our social

58 | WHAT IS THE BIG PHYSICAL PROBL...

"Kids' Brains and Screens is an extraordinary book!"
-Jonathan Haidt, Author of The Anxious Generation

KBS | KIDS' BRAINS & SCREENS
Empowering Kids to Overcome Screen Addiction

HOME EDITION

MELANIE HEMPE, BSN

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

LET GROW + SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION 1868

"Lighthouse State" Partnership

"Leading the movement for childhood independence"

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Strategy #4

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S STRATEGIC 1-4-1-4

Launch statewide community engagement program.

Project Raise Your Hand

A strategic support pilot partnership between SCDE staff and Richland One schools.
Goal: To expand beyond SCDE to other state agencies, business, faith, and community partners.

Matching Supply & Demand

We need an army of volunteers and wrap around services to grow students and support educators.
Goal: Launch statewide portal to connect helping hands with student and educator needs, provide engagement toolkits and volunteer straining resources, and celebrate success stories that come from an "Our Schools, Our Responsibility" mindset.

District Survey Results
57 Responses (out of 84 total districts)

Student Needs
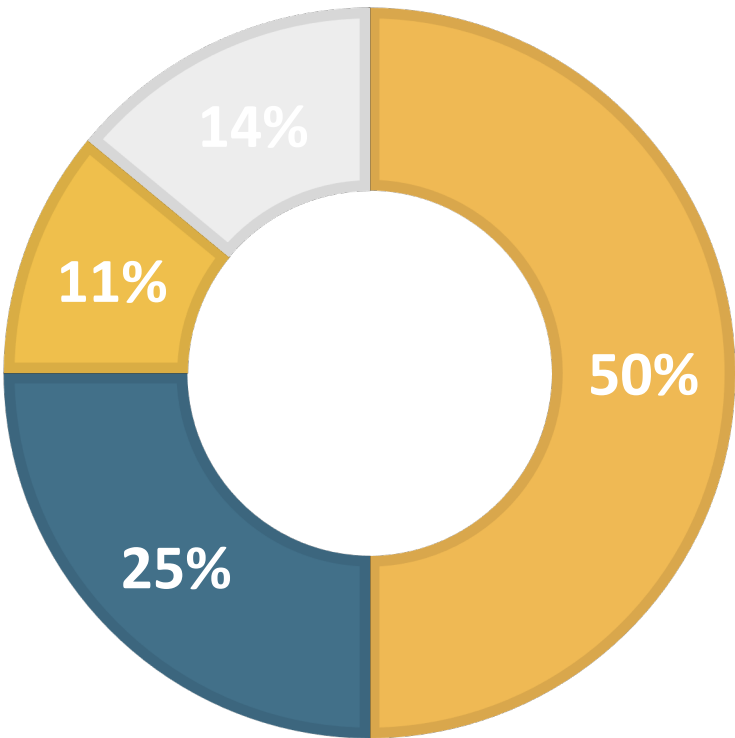
Mentoring: 50%
Tutoring: 25%
Reading: 11%
Other: 14%

Teacher Needs
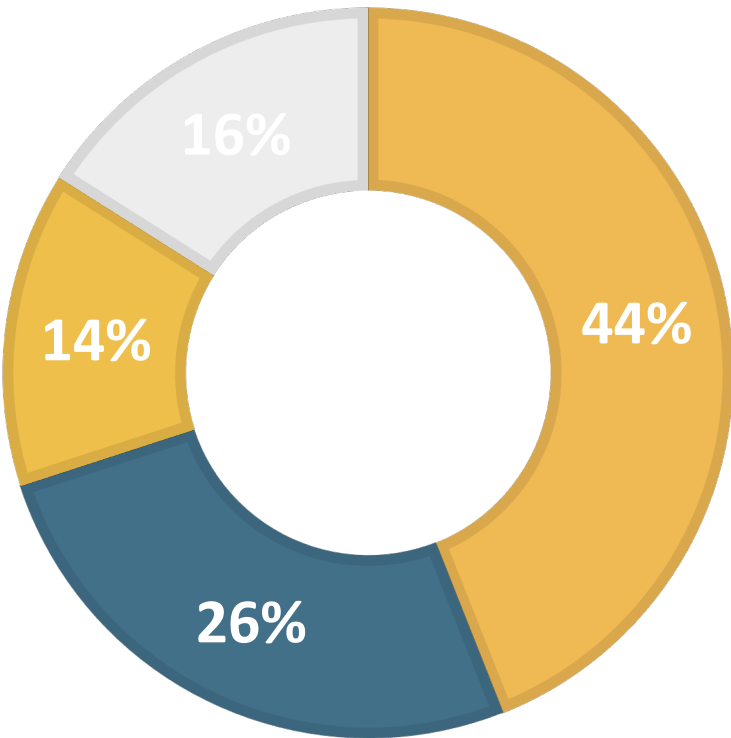
Class Help: 44%
Duty Help: 26%
Materials & Donations: 14%
Other: 16%

Family Needs
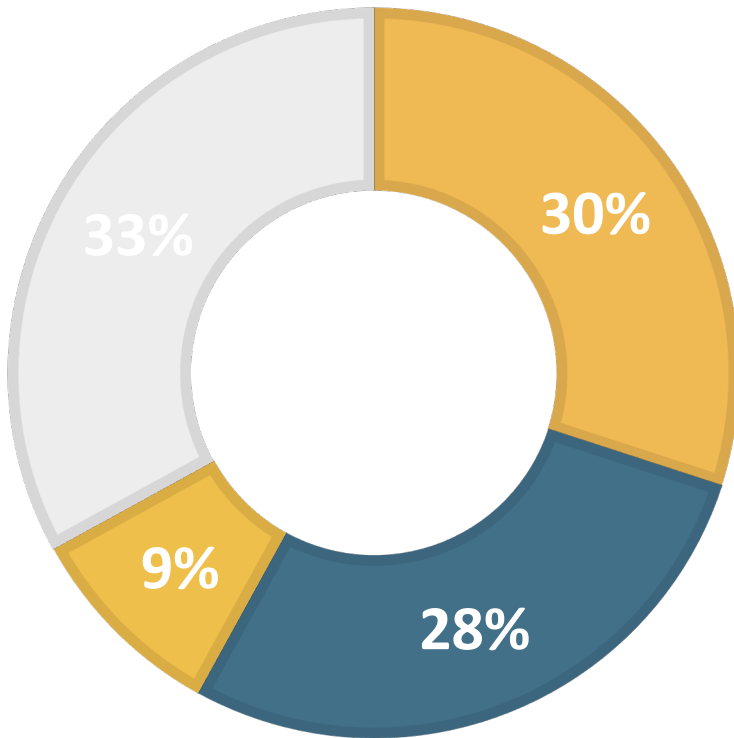
Family Engagement: 30%
Basic Needs: 28%
Language Translation: 9%
Other: 33%
(Transportation, Afterschool Care, etc.)

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Project Raise Your Hand

**SERVE STUDENTS. SUPPORT TEACHERS.
EMPOWER PARENTS. ENGAGE COMMUNITIES.**

We connect districts with community partners to create sustainable solutions to some of our schools' biggest needs. Our goal is to prepare and equip every student for a successful future.

One Purpose

Every South Carolina student is precious and full of potential. We hold high expectations for them because we believe in their resilience and capability. But high expectations require high support. And that requires effort from each of us: our schools, our responsibility. Project Raise Your Hand seeks to build sustainable partnerships to maximize the efforts of educators, parents, and community leaders working together to support our students' success. Working together, we can build a vibrant, hope-filled future for our students and state.

✓ OUR SCHOOLS, OUR RESPONSIBILITY

✓ HIGH EXPECTATIONS, HIGH SUPPORT

✓ A HOPE-FILLED FUTURE FOR EVERY STUDENT

ProjectRaiseYourHand.com

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
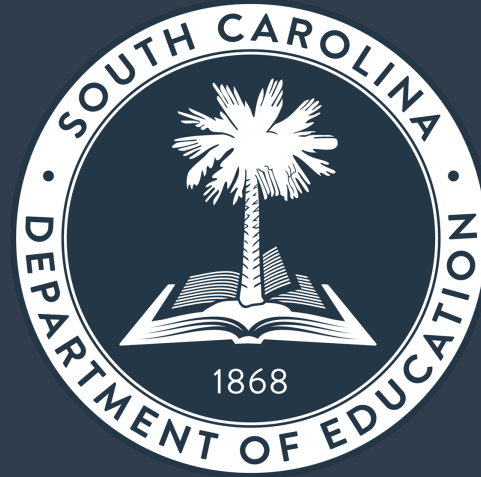
Issues in K-12 Education

STRATEGIC

TALENT

ACQUISITION &

RETENTION

TASKFORCE

RECOMMENDATIONS

MARCH 2025

ExcelinEd

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Strategy #1

COMPENSATION & EVALUATION

Develop an opt-in teacher Career Ladder Program (CLP) and provide the guidelines for funding

Program Structure

Create a **district application process** and select districts to participate.

Provide districts with a process to **review teacher applications** & grant advanced license designations.

Work with a third party to **validate consistency, fairness, and quality** of district-granted advanced licenses.

Publish annually a list of "Targeted Career Ladder Program" schools.

Funding

Allocate funds to **pay CLP teachers a stipend** above their salary.

Of the funds given to districts for this program, **90% must be spent on teacher stipends.**

Evaluation

Require **participating districts to annually report** on number of teachers receiving advanced designations by category, evidence they met criteria, performance of educators with an advanced designation, etc.

Develop **annual report for General Assembly** with recommendations for improving, expanding, or continuing the program.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Strategy #2

STRATEGIC TALENT ACQUISITION AND RETENTION TASKFORCE REPORT

RECRUITMENT & SELECTION

Identified as essential to addressing workforce shortages, improving student outcomes, and making teaching an attractive career option.

Temporary Local Eligibility Certificate for Non-Certified Teachers

Can be granted when a vacancy can't be filled for up to 10% of schools staff upon approval by superintendent and local board majority. Only valid in the issuing school district. Cannot teach Special Education.

Permanent Educator Certificate

Must have at least 28-years experience and would not require renewal credits.

Count Prior Years of Work Experience for Years of Service

Allow candidates/current educators to earn up to 10 years of service credit. 1 year of service credit = 2 years of relevant work experience.

Join the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact

The Taskforce recommends legislation to join the Compact to gain reciprocity for the transfer of valid teaching certificates.

Strategy #3

STRATEGIC TALENT ACQUISITION AND RETENTION TASKFORCE REPORT

PREPARATION

Establish a shared understanding of what it means to be a prepared educator and create high-quality pathways for candidates to acquire skills and experience.

Profile of a Prepared South Carolina Educator

Adopt the suggested "Profile of a Prepared South Carolina Educator."
Use the profile to **guide teacher-related practices and policy**, including aligning it to:

- Accreditation processes for educator preparation providers
- Teacher professional development, certification, and evaluation standards.

Expand Registered Apprenticeships

Federally **registering and codifying teacher apprenticeship programs** in state legislation to provide coordinated support, accountability, and funding, which will allow more EPPs and districts to participate.
Increasing apprenticeship opportunities for paraprofessionals, teaching aides, and other aspiring teachers who do not have bachelor's degrees.

Profile of a Prepared South Carolina Educator

A South Carolina Educator's role is to **prepare students for academic achievement, informed citizenship, and durable life skills** as outlined in the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*.

KNOWLEDGE

Demonstrates **subject matter expertise**

Understands how to **align** rigorous, standards-based **instruction with meaningful assessment** of student work

Displays understanding of learning **pedagogy, learning differences, and child/adolescent development.**

Aligns instruction and high-quality materials with evidence-based **practices**

Knows and follows all **legal obligations**

SKILLS

Executes purposeful, student-centered, and **rigorous instruction**.

Engages students through class management

Uses **multiple types of data to inform** and differentiate instruction.

Encourages knowledge building, critical thinking, creativity, and innovation

Communicates and collaborates effectively with students, families, and colleagues

Embraces role of **life-long learner**

VALUES

Belief in **inherent dignity & potential** of every student

Sets **clear & rigorous** academic expectations

Exhibits the highest level of **integrity & professionalism**

Displays a **growth mindset** & active desire to improve teaching practice

Models **good citizenship** through community and school involvement

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Strategy #4

STRATEGIC TALENT ACQUISITION AND RETENTION TASKFORCE REPORT

DATA COLLECTION & REPORTING

Reliable data collection and reporting can help to fill job vacancies, create efficiencies, and reduce costs.

Consolidate Data Governance and Reporting in the SCDE

Replace the CHE with the **SCDE as the agency responsible for leading the Commission** that publishes the EPP Report Card.
Codify additional data governance and collection responsibilities
Create a preparation and certification **review committee**.

Informative and Reliable Data Tools

Pursue legislation and/or Department action to create consolidated, easy-to-navigate, and publicly available data tools and reports, including:

- A real-time and interactive educator supply and demand data dashboard containing both longitudinal educator pipeline data and current vacancies by district and subject.
- A statewide educator job board which integrates into the educator supply and demand data dashboard and allows prospective educators to find and apply for real-time openings.

Unify Local Education Agencies' Data Systems

Explore unifying LEA enterprise resource data collection standards and systems to lower comprehensive costs, streamline reporting, and improve efficiency.

Student Success Across South Carolina

Waterloo Elementary

Westcliff Elementary

Kelly Edwards Elementary

Reuben Elementary

Pinecrest Elementary School

Black: 49%
Hispanic: 31%
White: 17%
Other: 3%
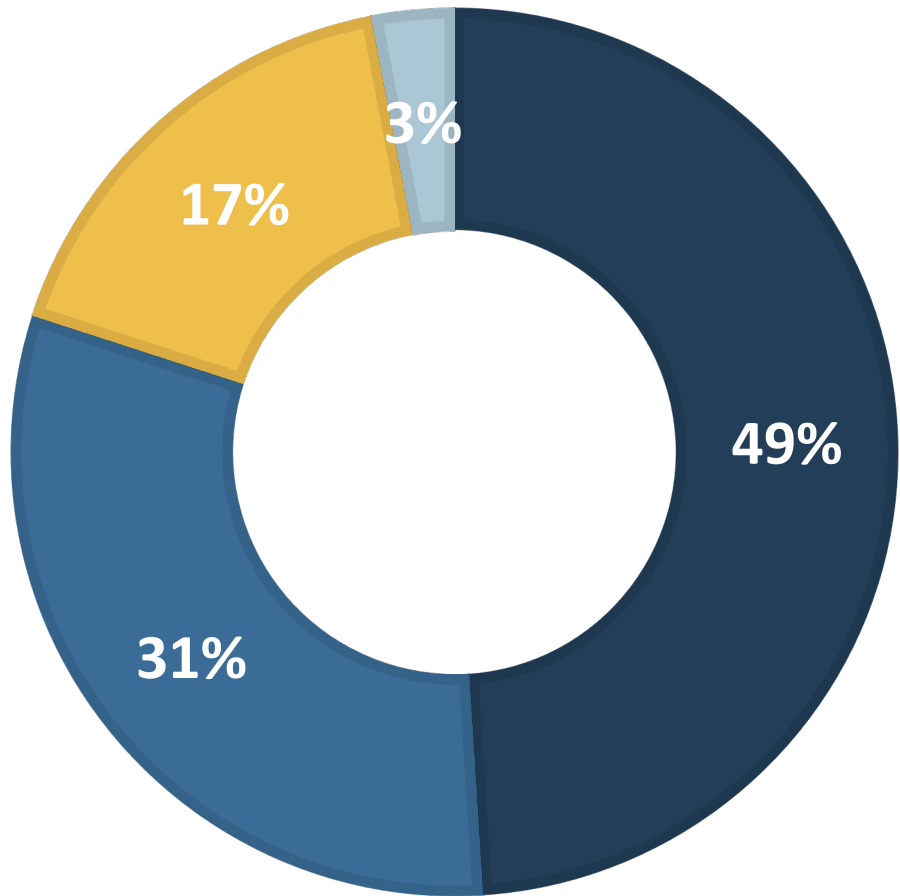
3rd-5th Grade Student Population

87% Pupils in Poverty
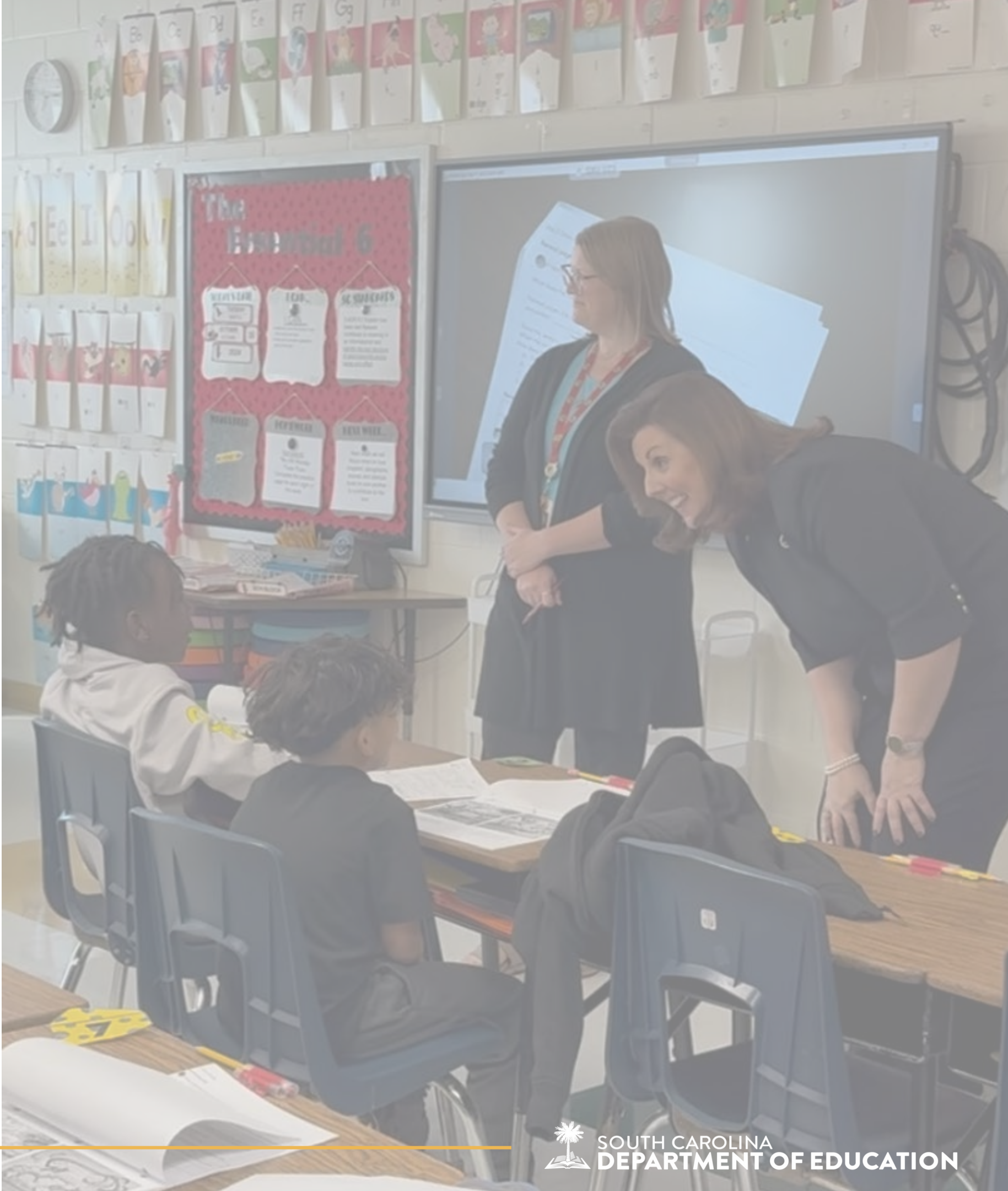
Pinecrest Elementary SC Ready Scores
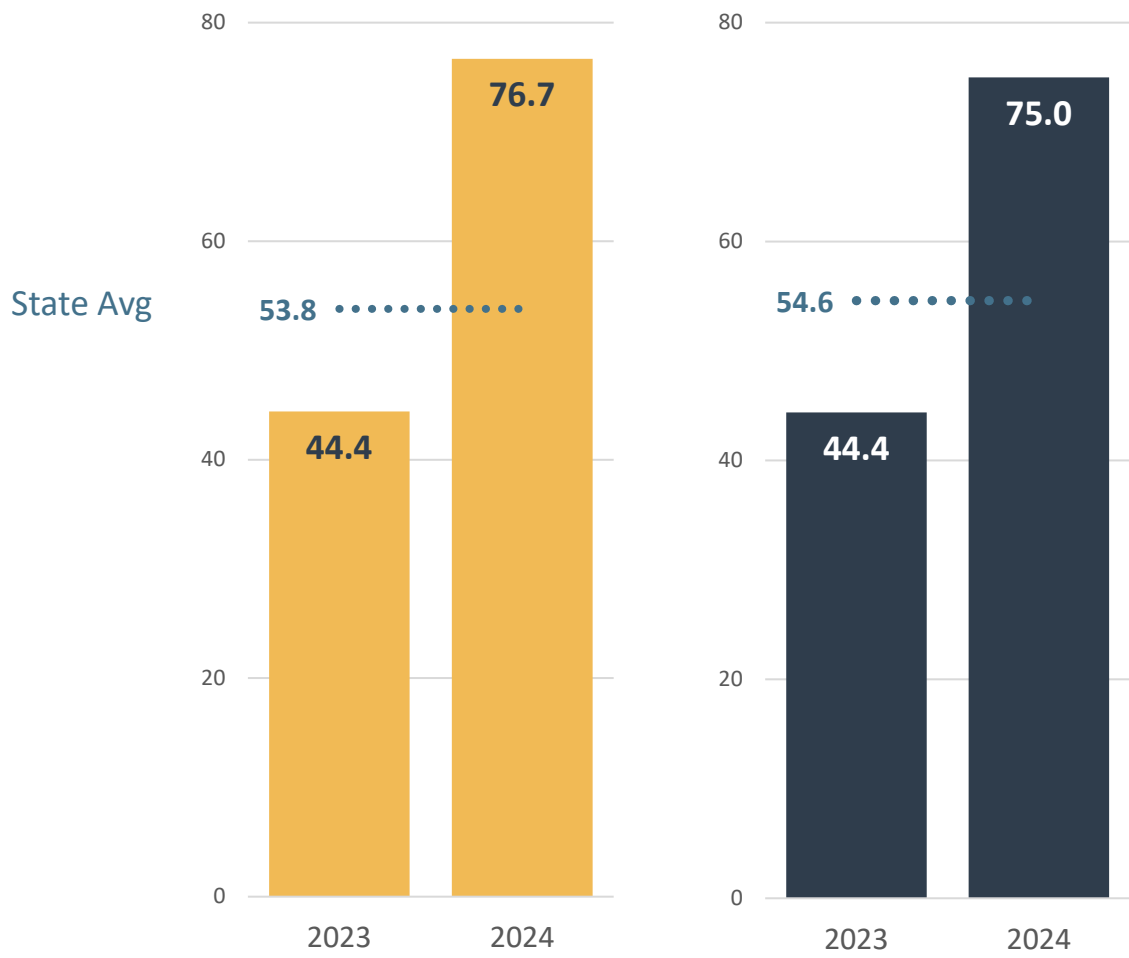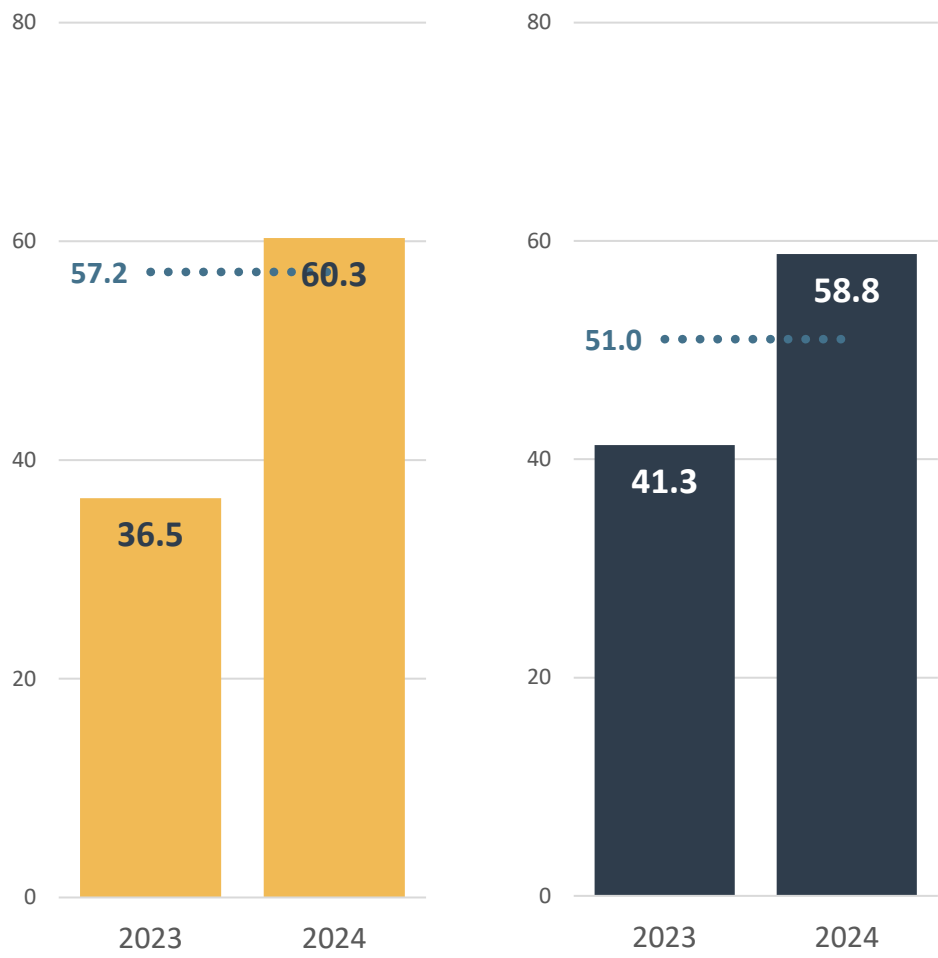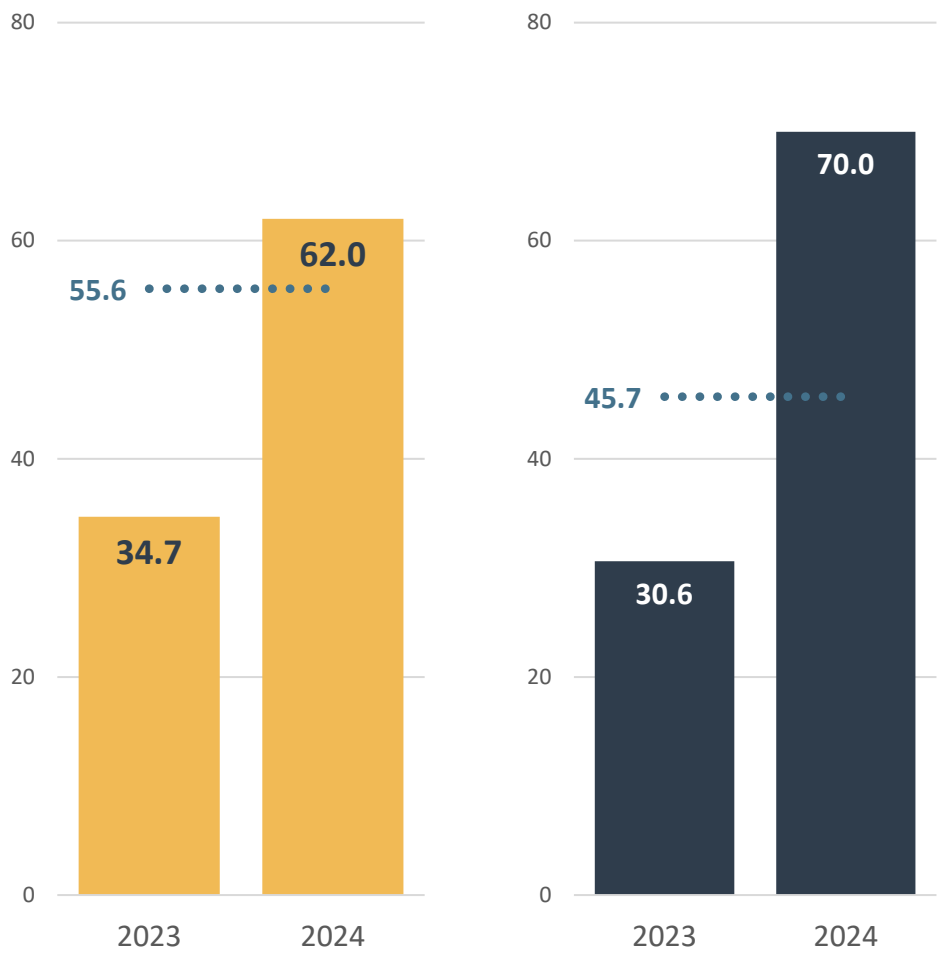
Principals of **Excellence** Award
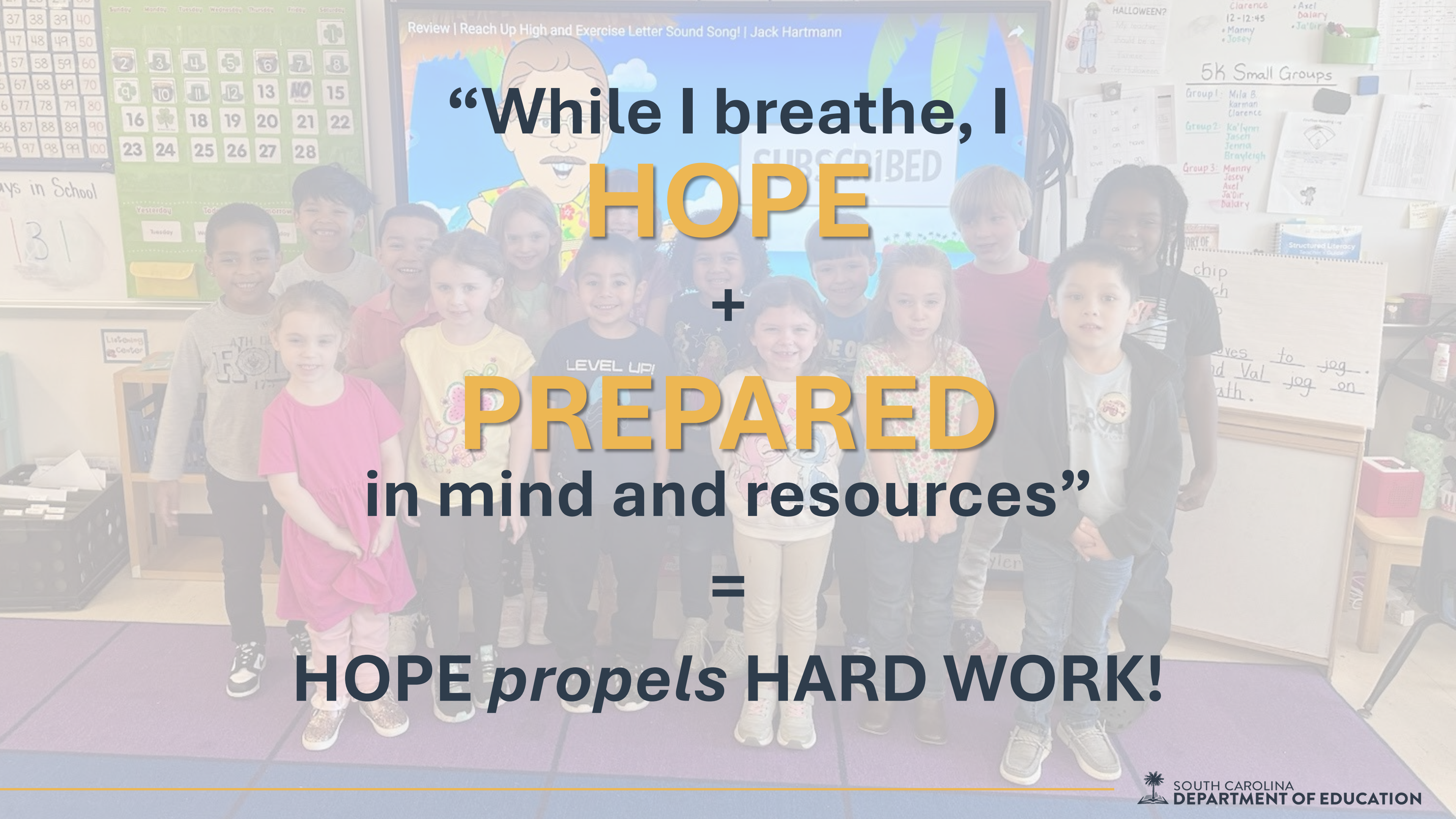
$25,000
to a principal recognized for exceptional leadership skills and academic results.

A partnership between

Principal Barry Jacks - *Pinecrest Elementary – Greenwood 50*

"While I breathe, I **HOPE** + **PREPARED** in mind and resources" = HOPE *propels* HARD WORK!

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Agency Divisions

Superintendent's Office
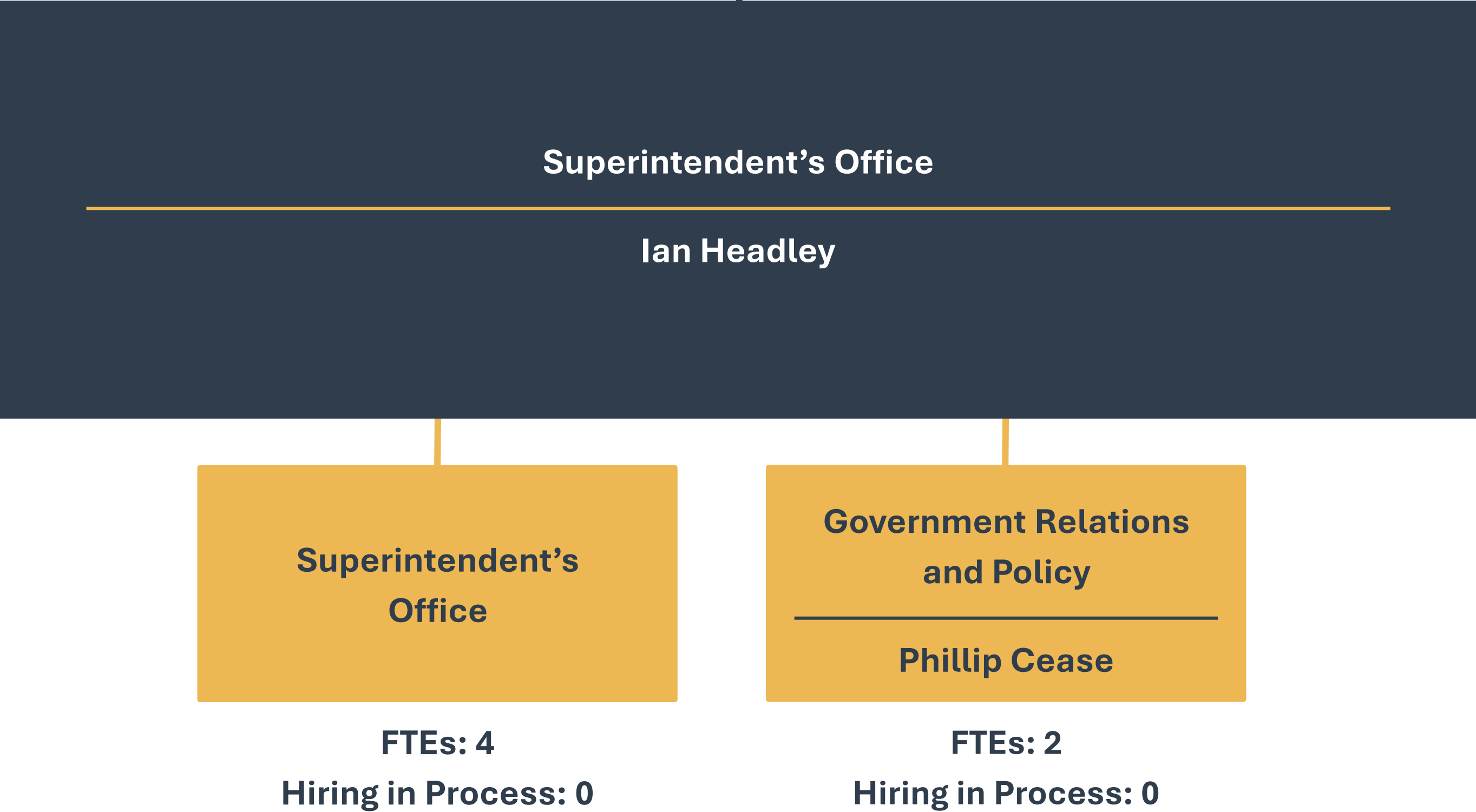
Superintendent's Office

Ian Headley

Responsibility: *The Superintendent's Office provides executive leadership, oversight, and support across divisions of the South Carolina Department of Education. It supports alignment of agency functions—policy, academic programs, operations, finance, legislation, and strategic initiatives—with the State Superintendent's vision and the agency's strategic goals. The office directs cross-agency coordination, manages responses to legislative and public inquiries, and ensures accountability for performance and impact across every division.*

Services:

- Set agency-wide vision and strategic direction in alignment with state law and the Superintendent's priorities.
- Coordinate legislative policy, external requests, and cross-office collaboration.
- Oversee statewide academic, operational, and administrative initiatives.
- Support leadership development, agency alignment, and strategic communication.

Customers:

Students | Families | Educators | Taxpayers All Agency Offices | General Assembly | Governor's Office | State Board of Education | Education Oversight Committee | School Districts | Business & Industry | Community-based Organizations

Accomplishments:

- Launched and aligned the agency vision: ensuring every child is college, career, or military ready; 2030 Goal: at least 75% of students at or above grade level; and supporting strategies, objectives, and processes.
- Oversaw the development and implementation of a cohesive strategic plan across all divisions.
- Streamlined executive communication and coordination across 25+ offices to enhance clarity and responsiveness.
- Supported agency-wide leadership development aligned to core goals and accountability structures.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Supporting implementation of all four strategic plan objectives through targeted leadership development, shared accountability structures, and cross-office alignment.
- Streamlining communication and response processes across multiple offices to ensure consistent, timely engagement with districts, legislators, and all stakeholders.
- Advancing internal reporting and coordination tools to monitor progress toward strategic goals and inform decision-making at the executive level.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Superintendent's Statewide Engagement

Engaging with Communities
The Superintendent regularly engages directly with local leaders, teachers, parents, and students through school visits; presentations to community, business, and faith groups; and meetings with educational support organizations.

Highlighting Issues and Successes
Visits focus on identifying key issues, celebrating achievements, fostering collaboration between the SCDE and school districts, and encouraging local communities to support the academic growth of students.

Informing Agency Priorities
Feedback and insights from these visits directly shape agency priorities, showing a commitment to transparency and partnership.

Superintendent's Agency Assessment & Strategic Plan

Agency Assessment
Supported the Superintendent's early efforts to meet with every office and employee in the Department to assess their areas of responsibility and work.

Strategic Planning
Using these initial assessments and data on current student academic achievement assisted in the creation of a department strategic plan and planning process.

Ongoing Improvements
Working with key leaders in the Department, created an ongoing planning process that both supports office level leadership and establishes a feedback loop to connect each office's work with the ultimate goal: student academic achievement.

CRM System Empowers Agency Engagement

SCDE is in the planning stages of deploying a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to unify stakeholder engagement, streamline operations, and build a scalable foundation to modernize how the agency tracks, responds to, and learns from its interactions with districts and constituents.

Purpose & Vision

- **Purpose**:
  Launching a CRM across key offices to centralize external communications, requests, and follow-up.

- **Functionality**:
  Tracks inquiries, concerns, and resolutions across multiple channels (email, phone, web, social media).

- **Initial Offices Included**:
  Government Affairs, Superintendent, State Board, and Communications.

- **Use Cases**:
  Legislative coordination, constituent services, board correspondence, media inquiries, and public engagement tracking.

Key Benefits

1. **Unified Engagement Tracking:** The CRM system will consolidate all external communications and stakeholder requests, simplifying follow-up and record-keeping for greater transparency.

2. **Enhanced Responsiveness and Transparency:** Automated tracking and follow-ups in the CRM will increase responsiveness and ensure stakeholders experience transparent, consistent interactions.

3. **Proactive Trend Analysis and Outreach:** The system will enable analysis of engagement trends and support proactive outreach, helping anticipate needs and improve stakeholder relationships.

4. **Model for Digital Transformation:** The CRM system will serve as a best-practice example for other divisions, supporting platform expansion.

Government Relations and Policy

Phillip Cease

Responsibility: The Office of Government Affairs manages the agency's relationships with the South Carolina General Assembly, Governor's Office, and other government entities. It monitors legislation, develops policy options, and coordinates the agency's response to proposed laws and regulations. Serving as the primary liaison between the Department and policymakers, the office provides timely information to support informed decision-making on education policy.

Services:

- Legislative Outreach and Coordination: Communicates with members of the South Carolina General Assembly and their staff to provide updates on education policy, budget proposals, and pending legislation.
- State Reporting Compliance: Ensures all reports required by law or legislative mandate are submitted by SCDE to the appropriate recipients, including the General Assembly and oversight bodies.

Customers:

Members of the General Assembly | Legislative staff | Internal SCDE leadership | External agencies requiring legislatively mandated data

Accomplishments:

- Delivered 20+ formal briefings and bill analyses in the 2024–25 session, directly informing budget decisions and policy debates.
- Established regular "legislative update" newsletters, increasing open-rate engagement with lawmakers by 40%.
- On-time submission of all legislatively mandated reports for the past three fiscal years.
- Realigned the Office of Government Affairs under the Superintendent's Office to ensure tighter coordination of legislative priorities

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Preparing the 2025–26 Legislative Session Briefing Book, including impact analyses for proposed K–12 education bills
- Reviewing statutory reporting requirements to streamline internal timelines and improve submission efficiency
- Enhancing two-way communication between SCDE and House/Senate education committees
- Supporting drafting and impact analysis of potential legislation affecting K-12 education.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Proviso 1.103 - Cell Phone Free Schools

SOUTH CAROLINA FREE TO FOCUS
A PROJECT OF YOUR SC DEPT. OF EDUCATION
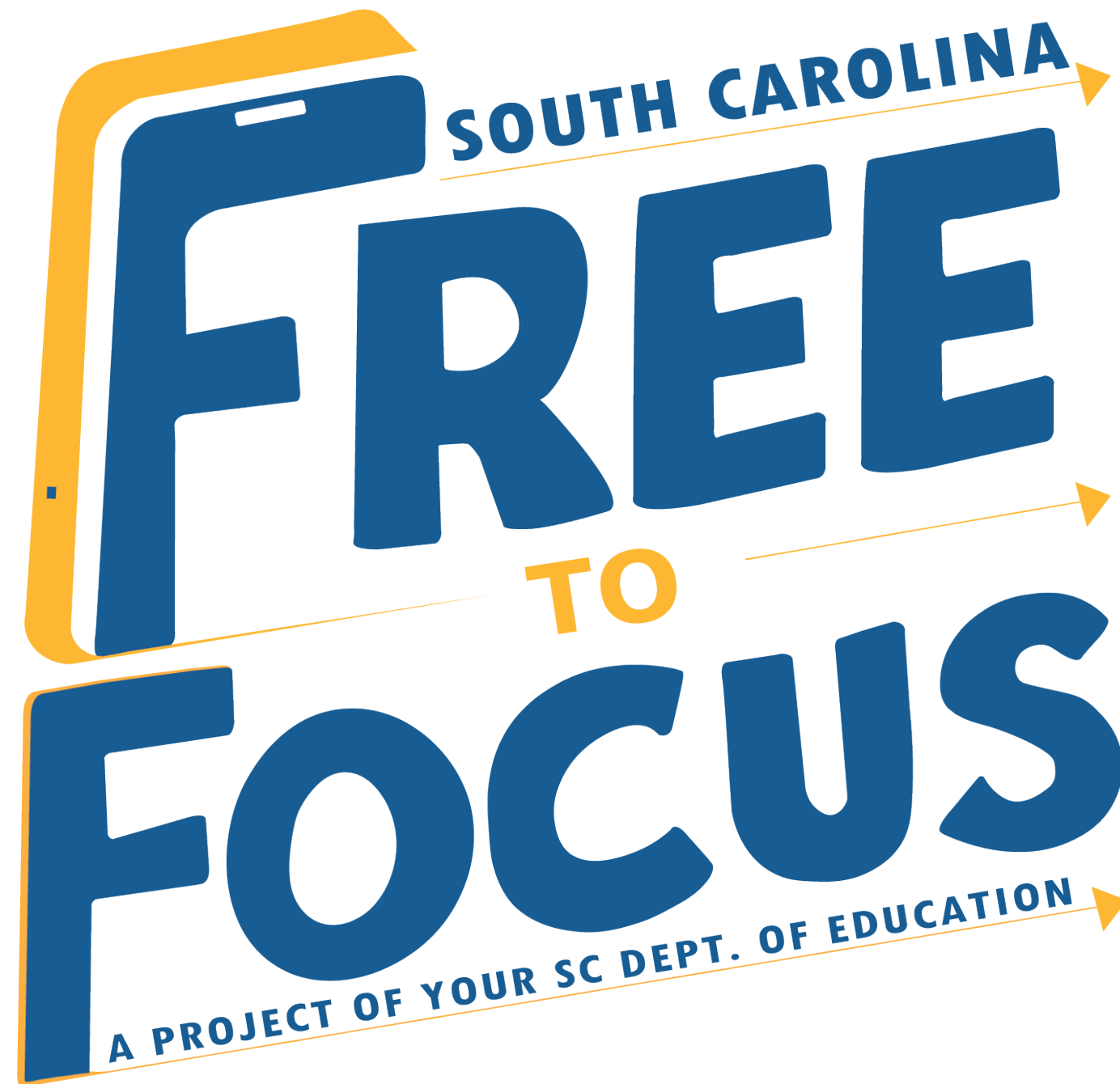
Proviso to Policy
Engaged parents, teachers, and school district leaders to assist the State Board of Education in gathering feedback and recommendations for policy language aligned with the General Assembly's direction to eliminate use of personal electronic devices during the school day.

Policy to Implementation
Supported the SCDE Communications Office in reaching out to school districts, community organizations, and parents regarding the importance and positive impact of the policy.

Assessing Impact
Assisted SCDE Office of Research & Data Analysis in reviewing impacts of the policy.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Instructional Materials – R. 43-170

Bringing Clear Guidelines
Effectively reviewed laws and requirements on instructional material reviews, responding to broad parental and community concerns with practical solutions. Unanimous passage by State Board of Education after extensive public input and revision.

Implementing Compliance Frameworks
Established protocols that meet constitutional standards while maintaining educational integrity in schools.

Supporting School Districts
Provided districts with clear review protocols and resources, recognized for promoting transparency for parents and uniform procedures for districts.
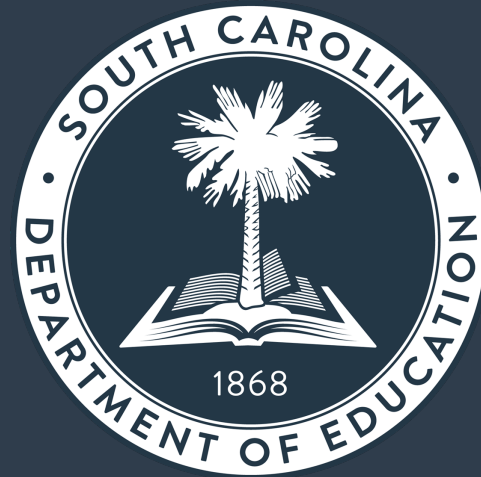
Agency Divisions

College, Career, and Military Readiness

College, Career, and Military Readiness

Abbey Duggins

The Division of College, Career, and Military Readiness leads efforts to ensure all students are prepared for success after high school through strong K–12 academic programs, educator development, and aligned postsecondary pathways.

Teaching and Learning
Allana Prosser

Talent & Continuous Improvement
Lilla Toal Mandsager

Turnover Rate:* 12.4%

*Turnover rate calculated for FY23-24.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Teaching and Learning

Hiring in Process

The Teaching and Learning branch of the CCMR division is responsible for advancing high-quality academic programming across South Carolina's K–12 system. It leads the development, review, and implementation of rigorous academic standards, instructional materials, and curriculum resources in core content areas. The team supports statewide priorities such as the Science of Reading, the Palmetto Math Project, and expanded access to dual enrollment, advanced coursework, and graduation pathways. Through technical assistance, professional development, and collaboration with districts, Teaching and Learning ensures students engage in coherent, evidence-based instruction that prepares them for success in college, careers, and beyond.

Instructional Materials	Assessment & Standards	Career Readiness	Instructional Supports (OELL)	Special Education	VirtualSC
Allana Prosser	Kristi Austin	Kayce Cook	Alisha Green	Peter Keup	Bradley Mitchell
FTEs: 6 Hiring in Process: 0	FTEs: 39 Hiring in Process: 5	FTEs: 35 Hiring in Process: 0	FTEs: 13 Hiring in Process: 1	FTEs: 26 Hiring in Process: 0	FTEs: 44 Hiring in Process: 0

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Instructional Materials

Allana Prosser

Responsibility: The Office of Instructional Materials oversees the state's review, adoption, procurement, and distribution of print and digital instructional materials.

Services:

- Procure, receive, inventory, and distribute state-adopted instructional materials to school districts.
- Maintain statewide system for tracking and replenishing instructional materials aligned to approved curriculum.

Customers:

School Districts | Instructional Leaders | Curriculum Coordinators

Accomplishments:

- Fulfilled textbook and instructional material needs for all 82 districts in FY24, maintaining 100% service coverage.
- Created rigorous process for vetting math materials aligned with new standards.
- Streamlined distribution processes to improve delivery timelines and reduce inventory errors.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Enhancing digital tracking systems to improve accountability and reduce surplus across district warehouses.
- Supporting districts as they transition to digital and hybrid instructional materials aligned to new standards.

Advancing HQIM Implementation
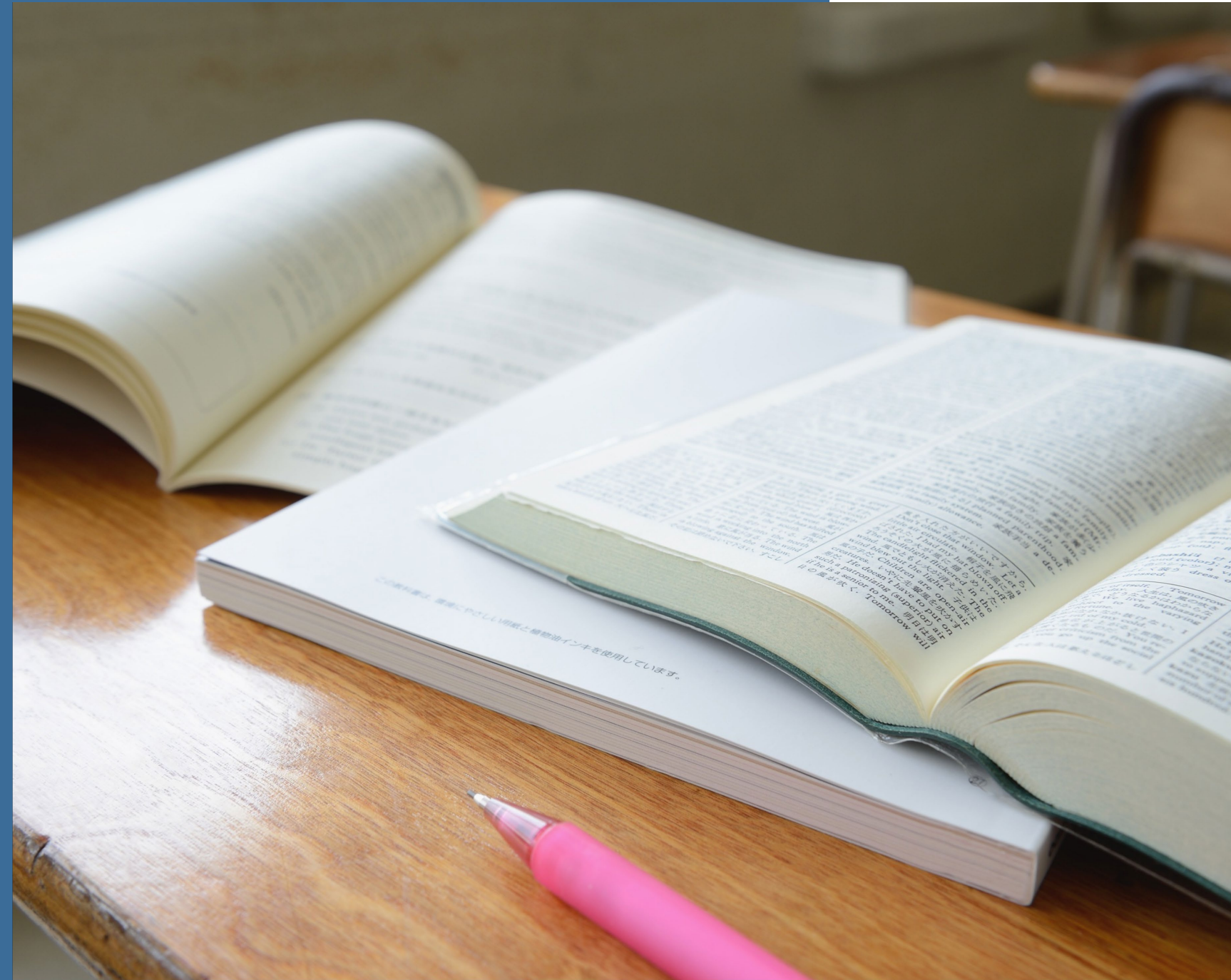
Statewide Standards Alignment
The initiative unified academic standards with High-Quality Instructional Materials, promoting classroom rigor and coherent instruction across the state.

Support and Professional Development
- SCDE coaches trained in adopted materials
- District access to and training from adopted publishers
- Ongoing implementation support for district Chief Academic Officers

Assessment and Standards

Kristi Austin

Responsibility: *The Office of Assessment & Standards (a merger of the former Offices of Assessment and Standards & Learning) develops and implements rigorous academic standards for all K-12 subjects and oversees statewide assessments to help educators measure student learning and guide instruction.*

Services:

- Develop and revise South Carolina's academic standards in all content areas.
- Monitor district compliance with laws and regulations related to standards and assessment.
- Create and share resources to support standards implementation.
- Develop, manage, and reimburse for state assessments, including training, scoring, and reporting.
- Oversee the administration and final reporting of all state-mandated assessments.

Customers:

School Districts | Assessment Coordinators | Instructional Leaders | Students

Accomplishments:

- Supported 82 districts in the administration and reporting of assessments in FY24.
- Maintained high levels of service for assessment reimbursement and test development support.
- Continued timely delivery of assessment results to inform state report cards and district planning.
- Provided technical assistance and professional development to all districts.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Aligning adopted materials to new standards and assessments.
- Expanding access to professional development for district testing coordinators and instructional staff.
- Enhancing digital delivery and score reporting systems for more efficient turnaround and district use.

Career Readiness

Kayce Cook

Responsibility: *The Office of Career Readiness (a merger of the former Offices of Career and Technical Education and Adult Education) prepares students for high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand careers by advancing high-quality Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Adult Education programs.*

Services:

- Support districts, industry, and partners to increase access to career and technical education (CTE); monitor Perkins/EIA funding, credentialing, and compliance.

- Deliver professional learning, distribute instructional materials and software, and manage site visits, meetings, and events.

- Oversee Adult Education programs, grants, and data reporting through monitoring, training, and technical assistance.

- Verify and reissue high school equivalency diplomas and transcripts.

Customers:

School districts | Adult education centers | Students | Adults | Community Partners | SC Business and Industry Partners

Accomplishments:

- EOC-approved Tiered Credential system for implementation in 25-26.

- Transitioned JROTC under CTE to offer completer status within a government-related career pathway.

- Supported all districts, multi-district career centers, and partnerships through CTE related funding and services.

- Managed adult education grants across 48 award recipients.

- Expanded college and career success through dual enrollment, industry-recognized credentials, and advanced coursework

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Enhancing cross-sector engagement in regional and statewide workforce development.

- Expanding LEA access to rigorous, high-demand, and high-quality industry-recognized credentials.

- Streamlining coordination between CTE and adult education programs, including engagement of disconnected youth.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Instructional Supports

Alisha Green

Responsibility: The Office Instructional Supports (formerly Early Learning and Literacy) supports high-quality early education, literacy instruction, and math instruction by building educator capacity, implementing Read to Succeed and Palmetto Math Project (PMP) initiatives, overseeing 4K programs, and supporting MTSS Intervention Frameworks.

Services:

- Provide professional development opportunities to districts on Act 114, Read to Succeed Legislation and Act 213, MTSS Legislation, including summer reading camps.

- Offer support and coaching to districts for Palmetto Math Project, LETRS professional development, and MTSS tiered intervention.

- Monitor and support CERDEP and EIA 4K programs in all school districts.

- Offer training to district leaders to become Local Certified Facilitators in LETRS to support program sustainability.

Customers:

Students | Educators | School Districts

Accomplishments:

- Implemented statewide LETRS professional learning aligned to the Science of Reading; Over 12,000 educators completed LETRS professional learning Volume 1.

- More than 600 CERDEP educators completed EC LETRS professional learning.

- Partnered with The Modern Classrooms Project to develop K–12 math supports aligned with high-quality instructional materials (HQIM).

- Expanded the Palmetto Math team from 5 to 17 specialists to provide regional support.

- Supported literacy and early learning initiatives across all 82 districts, including CERDEP expansion in Horry and Beaufort counties.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Expanding professional learning to align CERDEP and K–3 instruction with Read to Succeed goals.

- Ensuring full implementation of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) with fidelity across all identified PMP schools.

- Strengthening monitoring systems to enhance support for 4K programs, literacy, and math.

- Managing honorarium distribution for approximately 20,000 educators completing LETRS and EC LETRS.

Special Education

Peter Keup

Responsibility: *The Office of Special Education Services ensures that students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education by providing oversight, guidance, and support for districts in implementing IDEA requirements.*

Services:

- Monitor LEA compliance with federal and state special education laws, manage federal grant funding and reporting, and collect and analyze data to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.
- Provide statewide support for preschool, curriculum, transition, assistive technology, behavioral supports, and students with sensory impairments.
- Deliver policy guidance, respond to parent concerns, and engage stakeholders on IDEA implementation and outcomes.

Customers:

Students | Parents | School Districts

Accomplishments:

- Assisted districts in transitioning to a new state-supported IEP data system.
- Strengthened the technical assistance system that supports districts in providing special education services to students.
- Provided targeted support for specialized student populations, including visually impaired and deaf/hard-of-hearing students.
- Updated state-level guidance, engaged regularly with the Special Education Advisory Council, and submitted all required reports to the U.S. Department of Education.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Enhancing cross-office collaboration to align special education supports with state accountability and instructional initiatives.
- Expanding technical assistance to address increased mental and behavioral health needs among students with disabilities.
- Increasing academic outcomes for students with disabilities.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Special Education Growth

EdPlan Rollout Modernizes IEPs
EdPlan replaced legacy IEP systems across the state, ensuring compliance and streamlined data management for educators.

Special Education Growth
The number of students receiving special education services grew by 7% this year, reflecting both better identification and increased service availability.

Dropout Rate Decrease
Simultaneously, the dropout rate among students with disabilities decreased by 9%, demonstrating the impact of targeted supports and inclusive practices.

VirtualSC

Bradley Mitchell

Responsibility: *The Office of Virtual Education (VirtualSC) delivers state-sponsored, high-quality online courses for students in grades 6-12, including AP and credit recovery, and provides professional development and virtual learning resources for educators statewide.*

Services:

- Partner with districts to implement virtual programs and resources.
- Design and update virtual K–12 courses and instructional content.
- Deliver virtual coursework statewide to meet diverse student needs.
- Offer online professional development for educators.

Customers:

Students | School Districts | Teachers

Accomplishments:

- Maintained partnerships with all 82 districts for three consecutive years.
- Delivered full-scale K–12 virtual instruction statewide, supporting both core and elective subjects.
- Provided consistent online professional learning to thousands of educators across South Carolina.
- Continued to expand course offerings and instructional support aligned to state standards.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Enhancing course accessibility and flexibility through new delivery models.
- Strengthening collaboration with districts to tailor virtual solutions for local needs.
- Expanding micro-credentialing and asynchronous training options for educators.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

VirtualSC Summer Demand Surges

VirtualSC saw **record-breaking** demand for summer courses, with **over 28,000 students enrolled**— exceeding available capacity.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Talent and Continuous Improvement

Lilla Toal Mandsager

Talent and Continuous Improvement supports the professional growth of South Carolina's educators and drives efforts to improve school quality statewide. It oversees initiatives related to educator preparation, certification, and professional development, as well as systems for school accountability, improvement planning, and program evaluation. Through a focus on instructional leadership, data-informed improvement cycles, and educator pipelines, this branch helps build the capacity of schools and educators to meet the state's academic and workforce goals. By integrating continuous improvement strategies with talent development, the team ensures sustained progress in student outcomes and school effectiveness.

Federal and State Accountability

Jewell Stanley

FTEs: 22

Hiring in Process: 0

Educator Services

Mary Hipp

FTEs: 34

Hiring in Process: 2

Leadership Effectiveness

Kimberly Mack

FTEs: 16

Hiring in Process: 1

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Federal and State Accountability

Jewell Stanley

Responsibility: *The Office of Federal & State Accountability provides leadership, technical assistance, and resources to help districts and schools administer federal and state educational programs that prepare every student for success in college, careers, and citizenship.*

Services:

- Oversee and support federal programs under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Titles I—IX, including LEA plan approval, programmatic and fiscal monitoring, and technical assistance.
- Administer and monitor state-required programs including Accreditation and District and School Strategic Plans.

Customers:

School Districts (including charter and special schools/agencies)

Accomplishments:

- Supported all 82 districts in maintaining compliance with ESSA and submitting required LEA plans.
- Provided consistent guidance and oversight for accreditation and district and school strategic planning statewide.
- Completed technical assistance and monitoring for both federal and state education programs.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Refining monitoring tools and technical assistance protocols to streamline ESSA and accreditation reviews.
- Supporting alignment and consolidation of different district planning tools to decrease burden and increase consistency in district submissions.
- Coordinating with data teams to improve use of report card metrics in oversight and planning.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Educator Services

Mary Hipp

Responsibility: *The Office of Educator Services assists applicant educators with certification, renewal, and related requests via telephone, email, and the My SC Educator Portal, ensuring timely and efficient processing to maintain the educator workforce in South Carolina.*

Services:

- Support districts, applicants, and educators on certification, employment, and assignment matters, including issuing, renewing, and advancing educator certificates for applicants statewide.
- Maintain and enhance the statewide electronic certification and educator information system.
- Deliver the PACE program, an alternative route to teacher certification.
- Provide technical assistance and oversight for traditional and alternative educator preparation programs.

Customers:

Educators and Applicants | School Districts | Educator Preparation Providers

Accomplishments:

- Processed over 91,000 educator certification requests in FY24, maintaining consistent turnaround times.
- Maintained 88,251 valid educator certificates through the new web-based certification system launched in 2022.
- Delivered PACE alternative certification training to 268 Year 1 participants in FY24.
- Oversaw and supported 41 approved preparation providers.
- Provided direct support for educator certification to all 82 districts.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Expanding functionality and user experience of the online certification platform, including alignment of data systems.
- Improving outreach and support to alternative preparation programs to grow the teacher pipeline and monitoring program effectiveness.
- Building a statewide Educator Pipeline System through the SLDS23 grant, integrating preparation, certification, and employment data to support strategic recruitment, retention, and workforce planning efforts.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Educator Services
Supporting Implementation of Legislation

Read to Succeed (Amended 2024)

Updated Certification Endorsement Requirements & Options

Realignment of literacy instruction for preservice teachers

Educator Assistance Act(2025)

Lifetime Retired Educator Certificate

Streamlined Certificate Renewal for Employed Educators

Educator Experience Credit (2025)

Educator Experience for Nonteaching Occupational Experience Related to the Teaching Field

Noncertified Teacher Pilot Program (2025)

5-Year Pilot Participating Schools May Hire up to 10% of Teachers Who are Noncertified— Move to Enrollment in a Preparation Program within 3 Years

30-Day Processing Time Sustained in Educator Services

Consistent 30-Day Turnaround
Applications and updates are processed within 30 days, ensuring timely placement of educators and minimizing delays.

Efficiency Through Automation
First implemented in 2022, the certification and finance data system allows for automation, checklists, and systematic tracking. This investment has streamlined the certification process and reduced uncertainty for applicants.

Critical During Peak Demand
The online system allows the team to monitor resources to ensure 30-day processing standards even during periods of peak hiring and high certification requests.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Leadership Effectiveness

Kimberly Mack

Responsibility: *The Office of Leadership Effectiveness (a merger of the previous Offices of School Transformation and Educator Effectiveness & Leadership Development) provides a technical assistance and professional development to support school and district improvement and the development and retention highly effective instructional leaders.*

Services:

- Deliver training, support, and coaching in low performing schools and districts.
- Monitor evidence-based interventions, practices, and strategies by conducting progress monitoring reviews of low-performing schools and districts.
- Support teacher retention, principal induction, and educator effectiveness through leadership development initiatives.
- Provide training, guidance, data, and monitoring for implementation of educator evaluation systems across all districts and Educator Preparation Programs.

Customers:

School districts | Educators | Administrators | Educator Preparation Providers | SCDE Offices using educator data

Accomplishments:

- 23 of 25 2nd cycle CSI schools (bottom 5%) and 58 2nd cycle schools ATSI schools (bottom 5% for a subgroup) met exit criteria in 2025.
- All 5 underperforming districts from 2024 exited underperforming status.
- Supported all 82 school districts with instructional leadership and school improvement professional learning in FY24.
- Shared district-specific educator workforce data to support educator preparation program and district planning through statewide educator effectiveness data system.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Partnering with select districts to pilot the HOPE Network, a professional learning and support model for district and school leaders driving turnaround and improvement in underperforming schools.
- Enhancing educator effectiveness systems to streamline processes and align evaluation data with workforce initiatives.
- Expanding statewide principal pipeline supports, in coordination with SCDE talent efforts.

HOPE Network

Theory of Action
If the offices within the SCDE **cross-collaborate**, then the SCDE can provide **seamless and aligned** support to districts and schools.

Belief
Continuous improvement in service of student achievement is **the most important** work of schools, districts, and the SCDE.
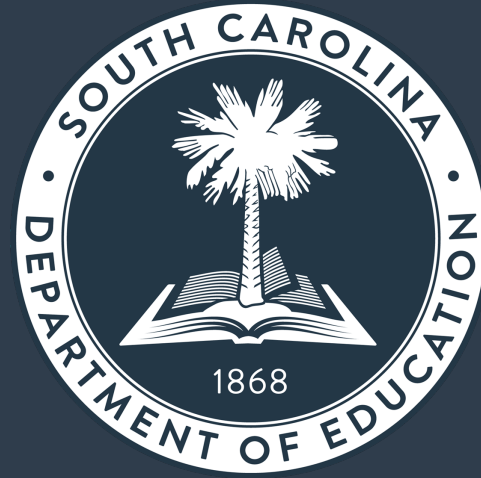
Agency Divisions

District Operations and Support

District Operations and Support

Virgie R. Chambers

The Division of District Operations and Support assists districts in creating safe, healthy, and well-equipped learning environments by providing statewide leadership, service delivery, monitoring, and training in student transportation, school facilities, student health and nutrition, and Medicaid services. Through strategic planning and collaboration, the division strengthens the infrastructure and resources that enable schools to focus on student success.

Health and Nutrition

Ellen Mason – *Interim*

FTEs: 37

Hiring in Process: 3

Transportation

Mike Bullman

FTEs: 484

Hiring in Process: 65

Medicaid Services

Vanesha Perrin

FTEs: 13

Hiring in Process: 0

School Facilities

Wayne Stokes

FTEs: 11

Hiring in Process: 0

Turnover Rate:* 20.5%

*Turnover rate calculated for FY23-24.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Health and Nutrition

Ellen Mason - *Interim*

Responsibility: The Office of Health & Nutrition administers the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs to ensure students have access to nutritious meals that support their health and academic success. Furthermore, the office oversees South Carolina's Farm to School, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable, and Buy Local Buy Fresh initiatives, which aim to connect students with fresh, locally sourced foods and nutrition education. It also coordinates summer food service programs (Summer Break Café) to combat food insecurity when school is not in session. Through training, compliance support, and innovation, the office helps districts deliver high-quality, student-centered nutrition services year-round.

Services:

- Conduct Administrative Reviews of child nutrition programs to ensure USDA compliance.
- Approve and support sponsors for summer feeding sites.
- Monitor School Nutrition Programs through annual site visits.
- Oversee distribution and compliance for USDA Foods to School Food Authorities.
- Distribute and monitor Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) and equipment grants.

Customers:

SC School Districts | Charter schools | Private Schools | Residential Child-care Centers | Summer Feeding Site Operators

Accomplishments:

- Completed 33 Administrative Reviews in FY24, up from 30 in FY23.
- Maintained support for 45 summer feeding site sponsors in FY24.
- Conducted 97 site visits for school nutrition monitoring in FY24.
- Oversaw the distribution of over 8.3 million units of USDA Foods to SFAs.
- Awarded 185 FFVP site grants and 34 equipment grants to support healthy meals and kitchen upgrades.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Expanding participation in summer nutrition programs through improved outreach and sponsor support.
- Enhancing internal tracking and analytics tools to strengthen nutrition program compliance.
- Advancing Farm to School initiatives to incorporate more fresh, local foods into school meals.
- Increasing capacity for technical assistance and training across all federally supported nutrition programs.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

"Buy Local - Buy Fresh" . . . It's the South Carolina Way!

Vision
This program is being rolled out across the state to boost purchases of products from South Carolina farmers, producers, and growers by local school districts, charter schools, and residential child-care institutions. It represents a collaborative effort between the South Carolina Departments of Education and Agriculture.

Desired Outcomes
Healthier school meals featuring fresh, locally sourced produce and proteins. Increased retention of local, state, and federal funds within South Carolina's economy.

Approach
- Engage key stakeholders, raise awareness, and highlight the importance and benefits of buying locally for both students and farmers.
- Tackle supply chain challenges, streamline procurement procedures, and raise small purchase spending limits.
- Utilize technology and communication strategies to eliminate obstacles, support purchases, and fill service delivery gaps.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Transportation

Mike Bullman

Responsibility: The Office of Transportation manages South Carolina's school bus fleet and transportation systems, ensuring hundreds of thousands of students are transported to and from school safely and efficiently each day. It oversees driver training, fleet maintenance, routing, and district coordination, while also supporting upgrades to vehicle technology, safety, and sustainability.

Services:

- Maintain and inspect the state's school bus fleet through county bus shops.
- Procure new buses to meet the 15-year replacement cycle.
- Supply fuel and parts for school buses to district shops.
- Train school bus drivers and provide operational support to districts.

Customers:

SC Students | School Districts

Accomplishments:

- Completed 28,000 bus inspections annually.
- Procured 455 new buses in FY 2023–24, up from 212 the previous year.
- Supplied over 13.45 million gallons of diesel to county shops in FY 2023–24.
- Trained 2,000 bus drivers in FY 2023–24.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Implementing a phased bus replacement plan to modernize the aging fleet.
- Launching a compensation and performance management system for bus shop mechanics, including job classification updates, career ladders, and data-driven salary adjustments.
- Exploring telematics and route optimization tools to increase operational efficiency.
- Reviewing training protocols to improve driver safety and recruitment.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Workforce & Compensation Plan for Transportation Staff

To address staffing shortages and modernize operations, SCDE is implementing a three-year plan to strengthen recruitment, retention, and career development in school bus maintenance.

Addressing Workforce Challenges

- Staffing shortages and noncompetitive pay have made it difficult to attract and retain qualified transportation technicians, disrupting maintenance operations statewide.

- SCDE is implementing a three-year strategic plan to modernize compensation, strengthen workforce retention, and build career pathways.

*Together, these efforts create a transparent, competitive system that supports **long-term career growth**, professional development, and **operational excellence** across all bus shops.*

Building a Structured, Competitive System

1. **Modernized Job Classifications**: Defined clear roles, responsibilities, and salary structures using benchmark data from the state, school districts, and private industry.

2. **Career Progression Framework**: Developing structured career ladders tied to training, certifications, and performance, with defined milestones for promotion and pay advancement.

3. **Performance-Based Pay**: Rolling out a performance management system to align salary increases with job performance and skill development

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Medicaid Services

Vanesha Perrin

Responsibility: The Office of Medicaid Services helps school districts access healthcare services and maximize reimbursement for eligible health-related services provided to students that support student health and academic success. It ensures compliance with Medicaid billing requirements, provides training and technical assistance, and works with districts to expand health supports for students through sustainable funding.

Services:

- Monitor, train, and support districts in complying with Medicaid billing requirements for school-based services.
- Manage the School District Administrative Claiming (SDAC) program to help districts receive Medicaid reimbursement for administrative activities.
- Oversee Medicaid reimbursement claims for Special Needs Transportation (SNT).

Customers:

SC Students | School Districts

Accomplishments:

- Conducted 75 Medicaid Quality Assurance Reviews annually across three fiscal years.
- Processed 288 SDAC reimbursement invoices in FY 2023–24.
- Facilitated 242,815 Special Needs Transportation reimbursement claims in FY 2023–24, nearly a tenfold increase from FY 2022–23.
- Successfully advocated for increased SNT rate ($29.06 vs $13.39).
- Successfully advocated for service expansion (i.e., behavioral/mental health services, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) services, telehealth).
- Successfully educating and advocating for third-party liability (TPL) exclusion.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Enhancing technical assistance to support accurate billing and audit readiness.
- Upgrading data tracking tools to improve claim documentation and processing speed.
- Exploring new guidance and training resources in partnership with SCDHHS to support evolving Medicaid requirements.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

School Facilities

Wayne Stokes

Responsibility: The Office of School Facilities oversees the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of public school buildings. It reviews capital improvement plans, provides technical support to districts, ensures compliance with health and safety standards, and helps accelerate project timelines to create safe and modern learning environments.

Services:

- Review school building plans for compliance with code standards.
- Issue permits for new construction and renovations.
- Conduct building inspections for schools statewide.
- Issue Certificates of Approval for school occupancy.

Customers:

SC Students | School Districts | Charter Schools

Accomplishments:

- Reviewed 4,047 building plans in FY 2023–24, maintaining high volume while improving timelines.
- Streamlined internal approval processes, reducing turnaround times for permits and occupancy certificates.
- Issued 388 permits and 494 occupancy approvals in FY 2023–24, reflecting continued demand and efficiency.
- Increased inspections year-over-year, improving safety oversight across districts.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Updating internal procedures to better serve the unique needs of charter school facilities.
- Enhancing system tools and submission processes to simplify district-user experience and reduce review backlog.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OSF Process & Procedure Improvements

1. Plan Reviews & Inspections

- ***OSF dramatically improved review and inspection timelines despite increased project volume, thanks to targeted reforms and delegation.***

1. Set 90–110 day target for plan reviews. 75% now meet it (down from 149 to 97 days).

2. Clarified which maintenance projects require OSF review. Delegated some to Local Building Officials (LBOs).

3. Delegated fire system inspections to the State Fire Marshal. Created a list of preferred third-party inspectors.

4. Introduced "mock-up" inspections, cutting overhead inspection time from weeks to days.

2. Support for Charter Schools

OSF is streamlining support for charter schools through clear jurisdictional options and dedicated engineering resources.

1. Charter schools may now use local building departments as Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJs) for commercial spaces.

2. Assigned two full-time engineers to charter projects.

3. Enhanced collaboration with charter authorizers, SCDOT, and local building officials.

4. Engaged directly with charters via conferences and feedback sessions.

5. Charter-related activity doubled from 2023 to 2024: 41 projects and 40 property acquisitions in 2024.

OSF Process & Procedure Improvements

3. Web Portal Upgrades

- ***The OSF Portal is becoming more user-friendly and adaptable to better serve school districts and charter authorizers.***

1. Completed enhancements: searchable project list, new fields for property type, required charter property details.

2. Upcoming updates: restrict charter visibility within districts, streamline plan revisions, and improve transfer processes.

3. Improvements support both transparency and internal tracking.

4. Other Key Updates

Policy modernization and stakeholder engagement are driving a more agile and accountable facilities approval process.

1. Streamlined 2025 Facilities Construction Guide. Aligned to latest codes.

2. Created OSF Policy & Procedure Manual for timely process updates.

3. Expanded Facilities Construction Committee to include more diverse representation.

4. Clarified scope of OSF authority and definition of "public school building."

5. Specified DSS approval requirements for non-CERDEP 4K and sub-4-year-old programs.

Strategic Engagement

Laura Bayne

The Division of Strategic Engagement works to educate the public, connect with the community, ensures student safety, promote student engagement, and encourage parent involvement in educational decisions. The division includes several offices: the Office of Communications, the Office of Community and Student Engagement, the Office of Student Support, the Office of Safe Schools, and the Office of Education Choice and Family Engagement.

Communications

Christy Cox

FTEs: 5
Hiring in Process: 0

Safe Schools

James Rawl

FTEs: 1
Hiring in Process: 0

Education Choice & Family Engagement

Meka Childs

FTEs: 4
Hiring in Process: 1

Student Support

Tonia Smith

FTEs: 8.5
Hiring in Process: 0

Student and Community Engagement

Dwayne Gatson

FTEs: 3
Hiring in Process: 0

Turnover Rate:* 0%

*Turnover rate calculated for FY23-24.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Communications

Christy Cox

Responsibility: The Office of Communications serves as the central hub for the agency's media relations, public information, and school-district outreach. It manages press inquiries, SCDE's web and social media presence, and produces newsletters and memoranda to keep stakeholders informed. In addition to its communications work, the office coordinates major statewide events and recognition programs—including the South Carolina Teacher of the Year celebration, the Military Honor Cord ceremony, and other initiatives that highlight excellence in education and honor the service of students, families, and educators.

Services:

- Engages students, families, educators, and the public on education issues, policy changes, and agency initiatives through proactive communication and responsive outreach.
- Manages all media relations, including the development and distribution of press releases, media advisories, and official statements.
- Coordinates and promotes key agency events such as Teacher of the Year Gala, Military Honor Cord ceremony, and major statewide education announcements.

Customers:

SC Students, Parents, Educators, and Citizens | SCDE Leadership and Offices

Accomplishments:

- Issued 33 press releases in FY 2023–24, keeping stakeholders informed of agency priorities, achievements, and changes.
- Initiated statewide "Free to Focus" public relations campaign, with district integration in messaging.
- Maintained strong media engagement, responding to local and national education inquiries and supporting accurate public reporting.
- Led communications for high-visibility initiatives and recognition programs, including Teacher of the Year and Military Honor Cord.
- Supported consistent messaging across divisions, helping ensure clarity and alignment in agency communications to the public.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Enhancing digital platforms and tools to improve the reach and accessibility of SCDE communications.
- Developing media toolkits and internal guidance to support consistent messaging across offices.
- Coordinating agency-wide communications for new legislative initiatives and strategic plan milestones.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Safe Schools

James Rawl

Responsibility: The Office of Safe Schools leads school safety efforts by developing resources, training, and compliance supports to reduce violence and emergency risks. It administers intruder and threat assessment guides, emergency operations planning, and manages federal/state safety grants and school safety checklists that districts use to improve safety measures.

Services:

- Partners with SLED to deliver local, regional, and statewide training on school safety and emergency response, including active shooter drills, reunification protocols, and school security exercises.
- Conducts site surveys to assess potential safety risks in school facilities and provides recommendations to improve physical security and preparedness.

Customers:

School Districts | School Administrators, Safety Officers, and Transportation Staff | Emergency Response Partners (e.g., SLED)

Accomplishments:

- Delivered 117 safety and emergency response trainings in FY 2023–24, up from 64 in FY 2021–22, reaching nearly every district.
- Completed 100 school site safety surveys in FY 2023–24, up from just 10 two years prior—dramatically expanding district access to expert risk assessments.
- Expanded support for specialized trainings, including sessions for SPED environments and bus drivers.
- Strengthened collaboration with law enforcement to ensure statewide consistency in school safety training.
- Distributed $40 million (FY 2023-24 and 2024-25) in school safety upgrade funding for high-priority district safety improvements.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Developing updated training modules and survey tools aligned to evolving safety threats and federal guidelines.
- Building a centralized data system to track safety trends and school responses.
- Increasing support for rural and high-need districts through targeted on-site training and follow-up services.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Education Choice and Family Engagement

Meka Childs

Responsibility: The Office of Education Choice and Family Engagement oversees a range of public-school choice options and provides families with the information and support needed to navigate educational pathways. The office also administers the Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF), managing its implementation and compliance to ensure eligible families can access approved educational services. In addition, the office oversees charter school authorizers, accreditation processes, and family engagement initiatives related to educational options across the state.

Services:

- Monitors sub-grant recipients of the Charter School Planning and Implementation (P&I) Grant through phone calls, desk audits, and on-site visits to ensure compliance and support successful school development.
- Serves as convening point with the school authorizers to seek ways to improve and strengthen legislation and policy.
- Oversees the implementation and management of the Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF), providing eligible families with funding to support approved educational expenses.

Customers:

Charter School subrecipients of P&I Grants | Students and Families Participating in ESTF | Charter School Authorizers | Education Service Providers | Military-connected Families and Students

Accomplishments:

- Maintained oversight of P&I subgrants through tailored support and monitoring, ensuring compliance with federal guidelines.
- Successfully launched the ESTF program, with over 5,000 students awarded scholarships in its first year of implementation.
- Built statewide infrastructure to support family participation in school choice, including application systems, eligibility verification, and payment processing.
- Provided clear communication and technical assistance to families navigating new education options under ESTF.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Expanding technical assistance and compliance tools for charter subgrantees.
- Monitoring and refining ESTF operations to ensure fiscal accountability and fair access for eligible families.
- Collaborating with program administrators and vendors to improve the user experience for families and education providers.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Strengthened Charter Partnerships

Enhanced Collaboration
Stronger relationships with charter authorizers, operators, and legislators foster improved partnership and educational outcomes.

Clear Operational Framework
The creation of a clearer framework strengthens oversight, accountability, and resource alignment for charter schools.

Support for Parent Choice
Initiatives ensure parents have fair access to a variety of high-quality educational opportunities for their children.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Implementing ESA/ESTF Legislation

Legislation Leadership
The Education Choice and Family Engagement Office led the passage and initial implementation of ESA and ESTF legislation.

Collaborative Program Design
Collaboration with legislators, boards, and partners ensured efficient program design and a smooth launch process.

New Guidelines and Systems
The division created communications, eligibility guidelines, and streamlined application systems for education choice and funding.

Student Support

Tonia Mallett Smith

Responsibility: The Office of Student Support oversees programs that strengthen student well-being and school connectedness. It manages initiatives like Stronger Connections, anti-bullying efforts, chronic absenteeism interventions, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, alternative school models, and analyzing trends in discipline data to provide behavioral, mental health, and academic support across districts.

Services:

- Administers the federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, including training, support, and monitoring of recipients delivering after-school programming.
- Administers the federally funded Stronger Connections program meant to reduce bullying and discipline instances in schools.
- Provides training, technical assistance, and monitoring related to student behavior, discipline, and alternative education.
- Administers state and federal sexual risk avoidance funds to organizations that deliver that education directly to students.

Customers:

Community-Based Organizations | Students | Families | School Districts administering initiatives

Accomplishments:

- Distributed over $21.2 million in 21st CCLC after-school funding in FY 2023–24 to support academic enrichment and family engagement.
- Maintained consistent alternative school training delivery (5 annually) over the past three years to improve district approaches to student behavior and discipline.
- Provided direct oversight and technical assistance for grant compliance and program quality in extended learning and alternative education efforts.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Expanding support resources and monitoring protocols for 21st CCLC subgrantees.
- Updating guidance and training related to behavioral interventions and alternative education strategies.
- Strengthening program alignment with district needs and state priorities in student engagement and dropout prevention.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Student and Community Engagement

Dwayne Gatson

Responsibility: The Office of Student and Community Engagement fosters strong partnerships among families, schools, and community organizations to support student success. It leads implementation of the CARE (Character and Resilience Education) framework, which promotes civic responsibility, life skills, and personal development. The office works to strengthen communication between schools and families, encourage meaningful engagement, and connect communities with resources that help students thrive both in and out of the classroom.

Services:

- Supports districts with training and resources on effective character/resiliency education.
- Facilitates regional partnership development between schools, districts, and community-based organizations, including faith-based institutions.
- Coordinates "Project Raise Your Hand," which gives community and faith organizations an easy mechanism through which to volunteer in schools
- Publishes the annual South Carolina African American History Calendar.
- Spearheads the "Let Grow" initiative in schools.

Customers:

School Districts | Community and faith-based Organizations | Teachers

Accomplishments:

- Convened three Community Partner Strikeforce meetings in FY 2023–24 to strengthen cross-sector collaboration.
- Re-established statewide engagement infrastructure following a period of limited activity in prior years.
- Provided district-level guidance to improve family-school partnerships and connect families with local supports.
- Published the South Carolina African American History Calendar featuring family members and friends of the Emanuel Nine.
- Developed the "Hope Tour" and conducted several regional stops to share curriculum and resources.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Expanding regional training opportunities and toolkits for community engagement.
- Building systems to track engagement activities and measure impact.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Agency Divisions

Financial Services

Financial Services

Kendra Hunt, CFO

The Division of Financial Services oversees finance, auditing, procurement, and grants to ensure the transparent and effective use of public education funds. It supports agency operations and provides financial guidance to school districts, helping them meet compliance requirements and manage resources efficiently in support of student success.

Finance

Melanie Cooper

FTEs: 27

Hiring in Process: 1

Grant Services

Audrey Shifflett

FTEs: 2

Hiring in Process: 0

Auditing Services

Hershula Davis

FTEs: 10

Hiring in Process: 0

Procurement

Kathy Santandreu

FTEs: 5

Hiring in Process: 0

Turnover Rate:* 21.1%

*Turnover rate calculated for FY23-24.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Finance

Melanie Cooper

Responsibility: The Office of Finance manages the agency's budgeting, accounting, and financial reporting functions. It ensures compliance with state and federal financial regulations, supports internal resource allocation, and provides fiscal oversight to help agency leaders and school districts make sound financial decisions.

Services:

- Disbursements Management: Processes state funding disbursements to school districts, state agencies, and local governments based on formulas.
- Financial Reporting and Transparency: Submits year-end, debt, and travel expenditure reports as required by the CG's Office and legislative bodies.
- Guidance Development: Publishes key documents (Funding Manuals, School District Budget Projections, etc.)

Customers:

School districts | State agencies receiving pass-through education funds | SC General Assembly | Oversight entities (e.g., Comptroller General's Office)

Accomplishments:

- Successfully processed over $4.86 billion in funding disbursements to school districts in FY 2023–24.
- Maintained consistent and timely payments to state agencies and local governments.
- Delivered all required financial transparency reports to the legislature and state fiscal offices in alignment with state deadlines.
- Completed and published key financial resources, and federal finance reports for clear fiscal guidance.
- Transitioned school district budget projections from static PDF format to an interactive online Power BI dashboard, improving accessibility, transparency, and real-time data analysis.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Supporting the DASBP Committee's 3-year plan to launch a statewide financial reporting platform for increased transparency and oversight.
- Modernizing the Fiscal Practices unit to improve district support and streamline compliance.
- Leveraging Business Intelligence platform to provide tailored insights for district leaders, identify trends more quickly, and support more data-driven decision-making.
- Enhancing funding systems for better tracking, automation, and audit readiness.
- Implementing Annual Finance Boot Camp which builds foundational knowledge, promotes consistency in financial practices, and strengthens statewide collaboration.
- Developing internal dashboard for SCDE offices to track budgets and expenditures in detail in real time.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Enhancing Agency Budget Oversight and Transparency

SCDE has implemented a comprehensive, office-level budgeting and reporting process to increase financial transparency, improve decision-making, and align spending with operational priorities across the agency.

Annual Budget Review Meetings

- The CFO leads structured budget reviews with Office Directors to align financial planning with operational needs, including ongoing evaluation of vendors, subscriptions, travel, and conference expenditures.

Monthly Budget Monitoring Tools

- Offices receive monthly budget updates to evaluate progress toward their annual spending plans and identify adjustments early.
- Office-level dashboards are being finalized in Power BI to give directors real-time, visual access to their financial data—improving readability and transparency.

Office-Level Budget vs. Actuals Dashboard

	Financials	Revenue	Financials by Fund	Admin Tool

Division	Budget	YTD Actual	Encumbered	Remaining
District Operations and Support	$1,226,903,342.88	$889,312,607.60	$6,856,955.75	$330,733,779.53
District Ops Leadership	$236,593,169.94	$110,708,928.52	$0.00	$125,884,241.42
Health & Nutrition	$614,955,013.54	$484,757,214.31	$30,864.60	$130,166,934.63
Health & Nutrition - H630JC00	$614,750,933.30	$0.00	$0.00	$614,750,933.30
Health & Nutrition - H630JC0010	$204,080.24	$484,757,214.31	$30,864.60	($484,583,998.67)
Personal Services	$136,405.88	$1,962,846.18	$0.00	($1,826,440.30)
Fringe Benefits	$52,674.36	$864,774.27	$0.00	($812,099.91)
Operating	$15,000.00	$1,602,169.75	$30,864.60	($1,618,034.35)
Contractual Services - 502000	($0.00)	$1,305,420.66	$30,495.00	($1,335,915.66)
Supply And Materials - 503000	$0.00	$79,123.06	$0.00	($79,123.06)
Supply And Materials - 503000	$0.00	--	--	$0.00
Office Supplies - 5030010000	--	$22,128.47	--	($22,128.47)
Printed Items - 5030030000	--	$401.76	--	($401.76)
Equipment & Supplies - Computers & Laptop Accessories - 5030067130	--	$39,782.60	--	($39,782.60)
Equipment & Supplies - Paper, Toner & Repair Parts - 5030067170	--	$1,321.60	--	($1,321.60)
Gasoline - 5031530000	--	$7,748.02	--	($7,748.02)
Educational Supplies - 5032810000	--	$190.33	--	($190.33)
Food Supplies - Food - 5033010000	--	--	--	--
Promotional Supplies - 5033030000	--	$7,301.24	--	($7,301.24)
Other Supplies - 5033990000	--	$249.04	--	($249.04)
Fixed Charges, Fees & Memberships - 504000	($0.00)	$3,025.00	$0.00	($3,025.00)

Improving School Finance: The DASBP Committee

The District Accounting Systems and Best Practices (DASBP) Committee was established under Proviso 1.104 (FY24–25) to evaluate and recommend reforms to improve school district accounting systems and financial reporting statewide.

Committee Work

- The committee included appointees from the Governor, General Assembly, SCDE, RFA, and professional associations (e.g., SCASBO, SCSBA), with broad representation across financial oversight stakeholders.

- Over four structured meetings from November 2024 to April 2025, the committee examined challenges including inconsistent coding, duplicative reports, burdensome audit procedures, and outdated fiscal guidance.

- Activities included software demonstrations, national best practice reviews, CFO feedback sessions (SCASBO), and analysis of current financial reporting laws and processes.

Final Report

- The final May 2025 report outlines a three-year implementation plan grounded in six driving goals:
  - **Increase transparency** for district personnel, stakeholders, and policymakers
  - **Align accounting standards** across all districts
  - **Simplify reporting processes** and reduce duplication
  - **Consolidate reports** into a unified submission system
  - **Promote consistency** of data across districts
  - **Increase efficiency** for school district finance staff through training and support

- This work provides the roadmap for statewide modernization of school finance systems, improving both compliance and decision-making.

Year 1 Workplan: Building the Foundation

Year 1 tasks (2025–26) focus on foundational work in four core areas: standards, reporting, training, and system design.

Major Tasks

1. **Handbook Revision**: Launch major update of the Financial Accounting Handbook with input from district CFOs, auditors, and state finance staff.

2. **Reporting Calendar & Redundancy Review**: Create a consolidated calendar of state/federal reporting requirements and identify redundant reports to eliminate.

3. **Platform Vendor Selection**: Begin development of an RFP to develop a unified financial reporting platform, with emphasis on automation, data validation, and compatibility with district accounting systems.

4. **Training & Support**: Develop a new "District Finance 101" bootcamp, targeted CFO/auditor training, and pilot a mentorship program for new district finance staff. **DONE!**

5. **Governance**: Convene a Financial Best Practices Advisory Group to guide implementation and ensure statewide representation.

Task	DASBP Recs	Lead	Due Date	Key Actions	Deliverable
Revise the Financial Accounting Handbook	5	Hershula	November December	1. Collect feedback (district CFOs, finance staff, external auditors); 2. Draft revisions; 3. Release working draft for feedback (November) 4. Finalize and distribute	1. Financial Accounting Handbook
Clarify Key Financial Definitions and Align Codes	8	Melanie		1. Develop inventory of definitions (e.g.-per-pupil, fund balance) 2. Draft standard definitions 3. Release working draft of definitions for feedback 4. Finalize and distribute 1. Develop inventory codes used in report (e.g.-In$ite, ESSA) 2. Draft object/function code alignment with official guidance 3. Release working draft of codes for feedback 4. Finalize and distribute	1. Standardized Financial Definitions Guide 2. State and Federal Object and Function Codes Crosswalk
Create Consolidated Financial Reporting Calendar	9	Melanie	November December	1. Catalog all state/federal reports and requirements 2. Design unified calendar and timeline by report and audience 3. Release working draft at SCASBO Nov 10 Meeting 4. Finalize and distribute	1. Presentation at SCASBO Nov 10 Meeting 2. Statewide Financial Reporting Calendar
Identify Redundant Reports and Unused Data Fields	10	Melanie (Dawn and IT)		1. Audit existing reporting systems and forms 2. Recommend eliminations or consolidations - What to eliminate NOW vs when state data platform is in place 3. Release working draft for feedback 4. Implement report consolidation/elimination for 26-27.	1. Report streamlining Recommendations 2. Implemented consolidations & eliminations
Initiate Vendor Procurement for Reporting Platform	13, 14	Rebecca (Dan)	December December January June	1. Draft Scope of Work 2. Release working draft for feedback 3. Issue RFP 4. Select vendor	1. Scope of Work (December 2025) 2. Vendor selected (May 2026)
Create Statewide Financial Data Standards and Crosswalks	16	Rebecca (Dan)	November April	1. Define core standards and formats 2. Map district software to standards	1. Documented standards 2. Mapped district software crosswalks
Convene Financial Best Practices Advisory Group	17	Kendra	December	1. Finalize membership (districts of varying size, audit firms) 2. Draft advisory group scope and deliverables 3. Host initial meeting 4. Create annual meeting schedule with planned topics and goals	1. Operational advisory group 2. Scheduled meeting cadence and goals
Launch 'District Finance 101' Bootcamp	20	Melanie	August 21	1. Develop curriculum and select trainers (June–July) 2. Host first bootcamp 3. Design and disseminate feedback survey	1. Bootcamp curriculum 2. Completed bootcamp (Fall 2025) 3. Participant evaluations
Develop Targeted CFO and Auditor Training	21	Melanie Hershula		1. Identify content aligned to new Handbook and audit findings 2. Develop draft curriculum for feedback 3. Schedule and conduct sessions	1. Training materials 2. Session schedule 3. Completed sessions
Pilot Mentorship Program for New CFOs and Staff	22	Mellanie Jinnette /SCASBO		1. Identify pilot participants and mentors (CFOs, district staff roles) 2. Identify methods to tracking feedback and success 3. Launch limited mentorship pilot with tracking tools	Pilot mentorship program launched

Building Capacity for District Financial Success

The Fiscal Practices function is critical in supporting districts by delivering targeted support, strengthening oversight, and implementing key DASBP reforms across districts.

Fiscal Practice Expansion

- To effectively implement DASBP recommendations and better support district fiscal health, SCDE is expanding the scope and capabilities of its Fiscal Practices function.
- This expansion is designed to strengthen technical assistance, enhance data validation processes, and increase proactive monitoring and guidance for districts.
- This evolution aligns with the legislative intent of S.C. Code § 59-20-90 and ensures districts have access to timely, high-quality fiscal guidance and support.

Key Enhancements

- **New Specialized Roles:** Staff dedicated to early warning systems, statewide training coordination, data reporting, and mentorship programming for district finance teams.
- **Improved Cross-Office Collaboration**: Formalized protocols to align Fiscal Practices with Grants, Auditing, and Program Offices for better issue detection and response.
- **Guideline Modernization**: Updating the 2018 Fiscal Integrity Guidelines to reflect current law, audit criteria, and expectations for district compliance and support.
- **Expanded Oversight Tools**: Committee recommendations include authorizing SCDE to initiate performance or forensic audits when warranted, enabling timely intervention.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Modern Budget Planning Dashboard for Districts

SCDE's Finance Office launched a new interactive dashboard to support districts in budget forecasting and financial planning for the upcoming school year.

- This tool replaces outdated PDF-based projections with a dynamic, user-friendly interface that allows districts to model funding scenarios in real time.

- The dashboard improves accuracy, saves time, and gives district finance teams a clearer view of expected revenues, allocations, and planning variables.

- Built with end-users in mind, the tool enhances transparency, supports local decision-making, and aligns with SCDE's broader efforts to modernize financial operations.

Grant Services

Audrey Shifflett

Responsibility: The Office of Grants Services provides specialized technical assistance and resources to offices administering state and federal grant programs. It provides guidance to agency offices on grant management and compliance and maintains grant-related resources for use by the SCDE and districts to help maximize impact and minimize risk.

Services:

- Provides pre-award technical assistance to offices, including grant application planning and submission.
- Maintains agency's Grant Opportunities webpage of current funding opportunities.
- Assists agency programs with administering grant and subgrant competitions.
- Administers quarterly federal grant meetings and provides guidance on grant management.
- Reviews agency's state grant and federal subgrant awards for compliance.
- Maintains agency's Grants Policy, Grants Manual, and other resources.

Customers:

SCDE Offices | Public seeking grants | School Districts | Other Grant Recipients | Federal Agencies awarding grants to SCDE

Accomplishments:

- Delivered more than 60 technical assistance sessions annually.
- Supported administration of more than $2 billion in emergency federal grants to districts from 2020-24.
- Provided regular updates and training to SCDE staff on grant management.
- Assisted 10 SCDE program offices in conducting 29 distinct agency grant competitions in 2024-25.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Staffing to meet ever growing need for services
- Updating agency resources and tools to align with regulatory requirements
- Using technology to enhance grant compliance support tools for SCDE offices
- Improving internal planning systems for grant and subgrant competitions
- Enhancing external communication to districts and other grant recipients on grant management.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Audit Services

Hershula Davis

Responsibility: The Office of Audit Services conducts financial and compliance audits to ensure accountability and transparency in the use of public education funds. It monitors both internal agency operations and school district expenditures, offering guidance on internal controls, risk mitigation, and corrective action planning.

Services:

- Conducts internal audits of SCDE offices for compliance and inventory control.
- Performs external audits of federal fund subrecipients to ensure compliance.
- Performs external audits of school districts' use of state funds to ensure compliance
- Calculates annual risk scores for all school districts to guide monitoring priorities.
- Provides technical assistance to school districts and other subrecipients.
- Offers guidance and training for external auditors on SCDE audit requirements.

Customers:

SCDE Offices | School Districts | Subrecipients of Federal Funds | External Auditors

Accomplishments:

- Completed 3 internal audits in FY 2023–24, maintaining oversight of SCDE and bus shop operations.
- Completed 12 external audits of federal fund subrecipients to ensure compliance with ESSER and other funding requirements.
- Calculated risk assessment scores for all school districts annually to inform monitoring strategies.
- Calculated indirect cost rates for all school districts and for other subrecipients of federal funding.
- Delivered technical assistance to school districts, other subrecipients, and SCDE offices.
- Provided guidance to external auditors, supporting a consistent understanding of SCDE audit expectations.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Expanding use of risk scoring to better prioritize audits and support services.
- Developing tools to track audit findings and district responses over time.
- Strengthening collaboration with the Office of Finance on shared fiscal oversight.
- Preparing protocols to streamline future recovery plan reviews and follow-ups.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Procurement

Kathy Santandreu

Responsibility: *The Office of Procurement oversees the acquisition of goods and services in accordance with the South Carolina Procurement Code. It manages vendor contracts, purchasing processes, and competitive solicitations, ensuring that agency and district procurement practices are cost-effective, transparent, and compliant.*

Services:

- Procures requested items and provides guidance on procurement rules and processes for both SCDE offices and school districts.
- Assists vendors and staff with questions and concerns related to bidding, contracts, and state procurement compliance.

Customers:

SCDE Offices | School Districts

Accomplishments:

- Responded to 156 procurement requests or inquiries in each of the past three fiscal years, providing consistent support to all districts.
- Maintained year-over-year responsiveness to ensure timely purchasing and vendor coordination.
- Supported districts in navigating state procurement rules and resolving vendor issues.
- Completed the SC Fiscal Accountability Authority's comprehensive agency audit.
- Played an important role of the major relocation effort to SCDE's new location.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Reviewing and streamlining internal procurement procedures to improve efficiency and consistency across SCDE offices.
- Implementing an automated workflow system to manage procurement requests and approvals more effectively.
- Enhancing guidance and communication tools to support SCDE staff in navigating procurement processes.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Streamlining Procurement: Intake, Tracking, and Workflow

Initiated a full-scale reorganization of internal procurement workflows to streamline intake, reduce bottlenecks, and improve transparency across agency purchasing activities.

Workflow Mapping and Optimization

- Mapped key procurement processes (e.g., sole source, change order, P-card) to identify and resolve bottlenecks.
- Simplifying procedures to align with state requirements and eliminate unnecessary steps.
- Building internal KPIs to track turnaround time, workload, and pain points.

Intake and Project Tracking

- Centralized tracking of project status, deadlines, and ownership to improve visibility and accountability.
- Standardizing intake with built-in guidance and assigned workflows.

Team Coordination

- Launched weekly team stand-ups to triage requests, adjust priorities, and resolve blockers.
- Improved collaboration across reviewers to support faster decisions and better workload management.

Training, Resources, and Communication

- Developing "Procurement 101" resources, including cheat sheets and how-to guides for common tasks.
- Embedding reference materials into workflows for self-service support.
- Planning development of a shared license and contract renewal tracker to streamline compliance across offices.

Agency Divisions

Agency Operations

Agency Operations

Rebecca Gunnlaugsson

The Division of Agency Operations supports the agency's mission by overseeing key administrative functions—including Information Technology, Human Resources, Facilities Operations, and Project Implementation & Support—to ensure efficient, aligned, and responsive operations across the agency and in service to school districts.

Information Technology	Implementation & Support	Facilities Operations	Human Resources
Dan Ralyea	**Alex Farquharson**	**Jered Wooten**	**Lisa McCloud**
FTEs: 58	FTEs: 7	FTEs: 3	FTEs: 8
Hiring in Process: 3	Hiring in Process: 2	Hiring in Process: 0	Hiring in Process: 0

Turnover Rate:* 13.3%

*Turnover rate calculated for FY23-24.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Information Technology

Dan Ralyea

Responsibility: The Office of Information Technology oversees the agency's technology infrastructure, cybersecurity, and internal systems, while also leading research, data management, and district technology support. In addition to maintaining secure and reliable operations for SCDE staff, the office provides districts with guidance and tools related to data systems and reporting. It also supports research and analytics functions that inform policy, track progress on strategic goals, and promote data-driven decision-making across the agency.

Services:

- Maintain and support agency and district IT infrastructure, hardware, and software.
- Protect agency systems and data through secure network access and cybersecurity tools.
- Support student information systems, including PowerSchool, Ed-Fi Data Collection, and SUNS.
- Collect, analyze, and report education data for state and federal compliance.
- Publish annual state and federal school report cards.
- Assist other SCDE programs with data access, reporting, and analytics.

Customers:

SCDE Staff | School Districts

Accomplishments:

- Maintained uninterrupted IT operations and cybersecurity for all SCDE systems.
- Supported 1,300 school, district, and state report card publications annually.
- Processed more than 300 public data requests and published reports.
- Ensured federal and state data reporting compliance across 83 school districts.
- Expanded support for unique student identifiers across 98 entities including DSS, First Steps, and RFA.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Implementing the Growing Pathways for Students (GPS) platform, a modern statewide education data ecosystem using Ed-Fi standards to unify data, improve reporting, and support career and postsecondary pathway planning.
- Advancing the SAFE K-12 cybersecurity initiative by strengthening district protections and monitoring systems.
- Streamlining agency-wide access to data dashboards and automating internal reporting tools.
- Enhancing infrastructure support for new applications, cloud services, and AI-enabled analytics.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Building a Unified Data and Technology Office

SCDE merged the Information Technology and Research & Data Analysis offices into a unified team to eliminate duplication, improve coordination, and deliver faster, more effective technology solutions for the agency and districts.

Duplicative and Split Responsibilities

Previously, IT and ORDA split duties for key systems—some functions siloed, others overlapped—resulting in inefficiencies and duplicate work. Examples are:

- **Data Systems**: Managed separate platforms but shared datasets, creating confusion and redundant handling.
- **Dashboards**: Built separate tools for similar data—IT for internal use, ORDA for districts—without coordination.
- **SIS Data (PowerSchool):** IT managed systems and vendors; ORDA handled reporting—misaligned timelines and validations.
- **Governance & Reporting**: Both handled data definitions and external requests, resulting in inconsistent outputs and duplicated efforts.

Benefits Already Realized

1. **Faster Project Execution**: Co-located developers, analysts, and infrastructure staff have accelerated project delivery.

2. **Streamlined Reporting**: Aligned SIS, Power BI, and other systems efforts enable faster application, dashboard and report development.

3. **Improved Data Security**: Unified data governance and monitoring has reduced gaps and improved compliance.

4. **Enhanced District Support**: Shared tools, aligned workflows, and cross-trained teams have strengthened frontline assistance.

Building Research Capacity to Inform Policy & Practice

Leadership

Appointed SCDE's first Chief Research Officer to lead internal research and connect data, policy, and operations.

Research Function

Developed a structured research agenda focused on:

- Evidence-Based Instruction (Reading & Math)
- High-Quality Instructional Materials
- Effective Character Education Programs
- Attendance & Absenteeism Impacts
- PK–12 Career Readiness & Post-secondary Outcomes
- State Policy Impacts (e.g., Free to Focus, Strategic Compensation)
- School/System Improvement Initiatives
- Educational Technology Use & Impact

Strategic Partnerships

Collaborations with:

- University of Pennsylvania & Stanford University – analyzing Free to Focus policy outcomes
- University of Rochester – linking cell phone data to policy implementation and student outcomes
- USC Darla Moore School of Business – studying attendance practices and post-secondary impacts (e.g., wages, health, crime)

GPS

Growing Pathways for Students

GUIDING PROGRESS, UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Revolutionizing K-12 Education in South Carolina

Overview

GPS serves as South Carolina's modern, data-driven K-12 decision-support system, aimed at enhancing student outcomes. By seamlessly integrating data from various educational facets—such as academic performance, teacher preparation quality, and financial resources—**GPS** streamlines analyses and visualizations. This enables informed timely decision-making, promotes transparency, and facilitates collaborative efforts among educators, policymakers, and parents. Ultimately, it supports South Carolina's goal of achieving 75% of students at or above grade level by 2030 and preparing every child to be college, career, or military ready.

Data Analytics Engine
Connects previously siloed data from multiple systems (such as Student Information Systems (SIS), assessment platforms, and financial systems).

Visualization & Reporting Platform
- Supports strategic planning and accountability for superintendents and principals.
- Provides student and classroom-level insights for teachers with real-time alerts.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

GPS In Action

Skill Analysis and Differentiation

Student-level and class-level data enable teachers to tailor small group instruction based on demonstrated academic needs.
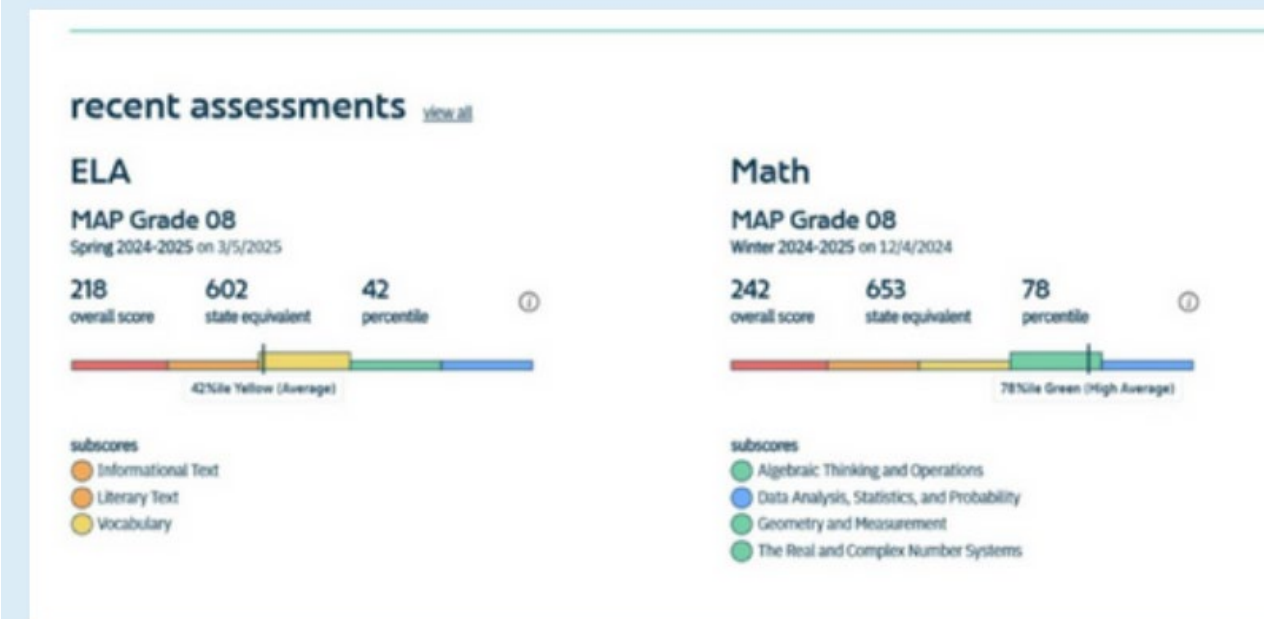
Educators' Access

Identifying Chronic Absenteeism

Early identification of trends can mitigate long-term effects of poor attendance.

EX: Ms. Smith, a dedicated teacher, utilizes **GPS** to view her students' attendance records, identifying trends in absenteeism that require administrative intervention. This proactive approach ensures timely support for students, fostering academic success.
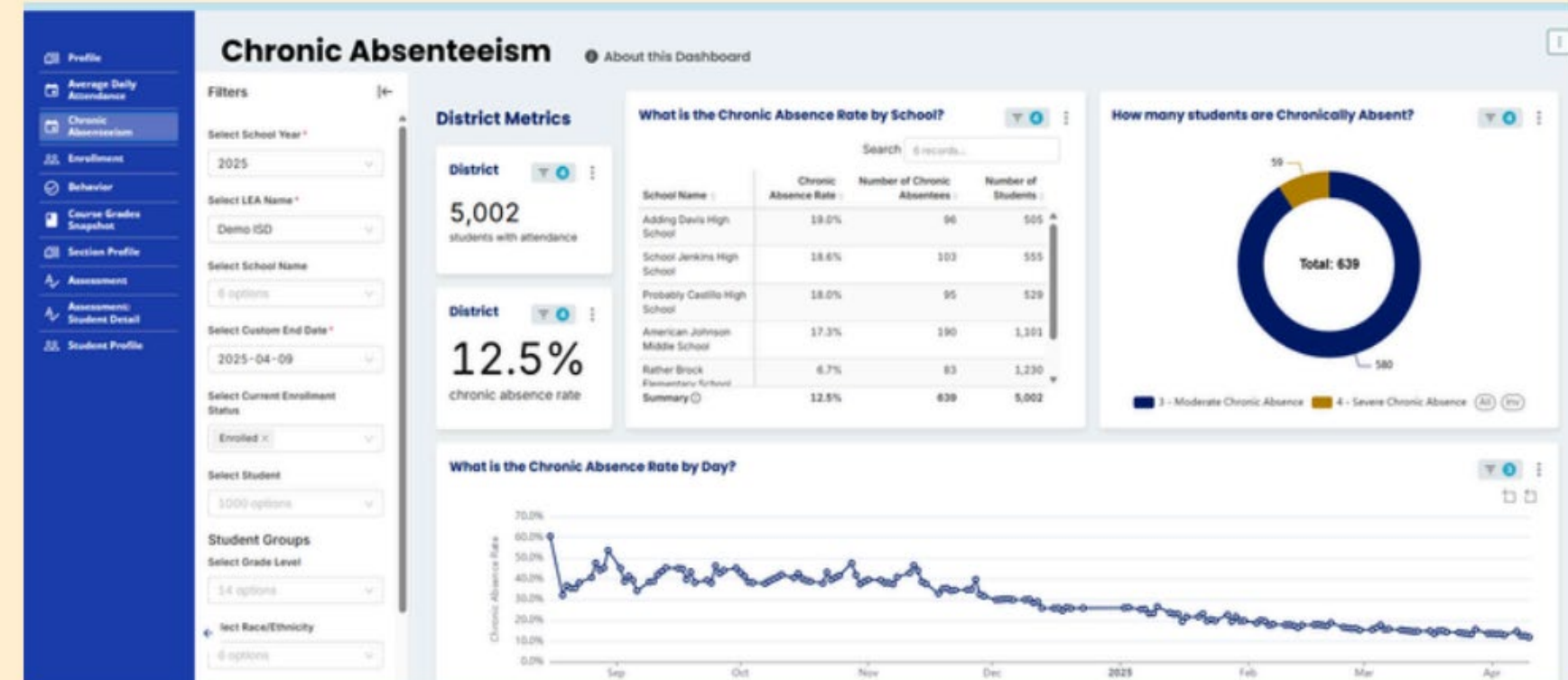
District Leaders' Access

Recovering Funding Through Accuracy

Data visualization capabilities help administrators quickly identify financial trends and effectively deploy resources for student support.

EX: Spero School District utilizes **GPS** to verify student data uploads essential for securing funding. By identifying an issue with their fourth-grade data submission, they recovered $150,000 in funding critical for student support.

SAFE K-12

South Carolina's Assurance Framework for Education Cybersecurity

Helping school districts plan and implement cybersecurity effectively and efficiently.

What is SAFE K-12

SAFE K-12 is a statewide cybersecurity support program led by the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) to help public school districts implement foundational cybersecurity protections, effectively, affordably, and with local control.

How it Works

SAFE K-12 offers a menu of vetted services negotiated by SCDE at discounted rates to reduce costs. Districts can:

1. Use their own systems and tools;
2. Adopt all tools from the SAFE K-12 vendor catalog;
3. Combine both in a tailored hybrid approach.

All districts must meet minimum cybersecurity requirements under S.C. Code §59-1-490(G).

What SAFE K-12 Provides

Category	What Districts Receive
Statewide Cybersecurity Framework	Standardized cybersecurity base using CIS Controls (v8 IG1), overseen by SCDE/DDGG.
Expert Support & Shared Resources	Guidance, templates, training, and assessment tools to support local implementation.
Affordable, Scalable Solutions	Affordable, scalable cybersecurity services at discounted state rates.
Ongoing Monitoring & Compliance Support	Affordable, scalable cybersecurity services at discounted state rates.

SAFE K-12

🛡 Affordability & Cost Savings

SAFE K-12 offers lower costs through statewide participation, with SCDE covering onboarding expenses.

Many districts currently pay up to **$15 per endpoint**, but SAFE K-12 reduces that to **$2.76**, saving a district with **15,000 students** about **$550,000 annually**. Statewide, savings could exceed **$7 million**.

Recommended Budgeting Model:
$45,000 + $15 per student over 3,000.

Example: a district with 20,000 students should plan for around $300,000 annually.

🛡 Implementation Schedule

Implementation Timeline		Year
Phase 1 Foundation	Launch assessments, tools, governance, and MOUs	**2025–26**
Phase 2 Expansion	Broaden implementation, expand services and training	**2026–27**
Phase 3 Maturity	Sustain IG1 controls, audit and refine practices	**2027–28**

Data Access & Modernization

School Directory
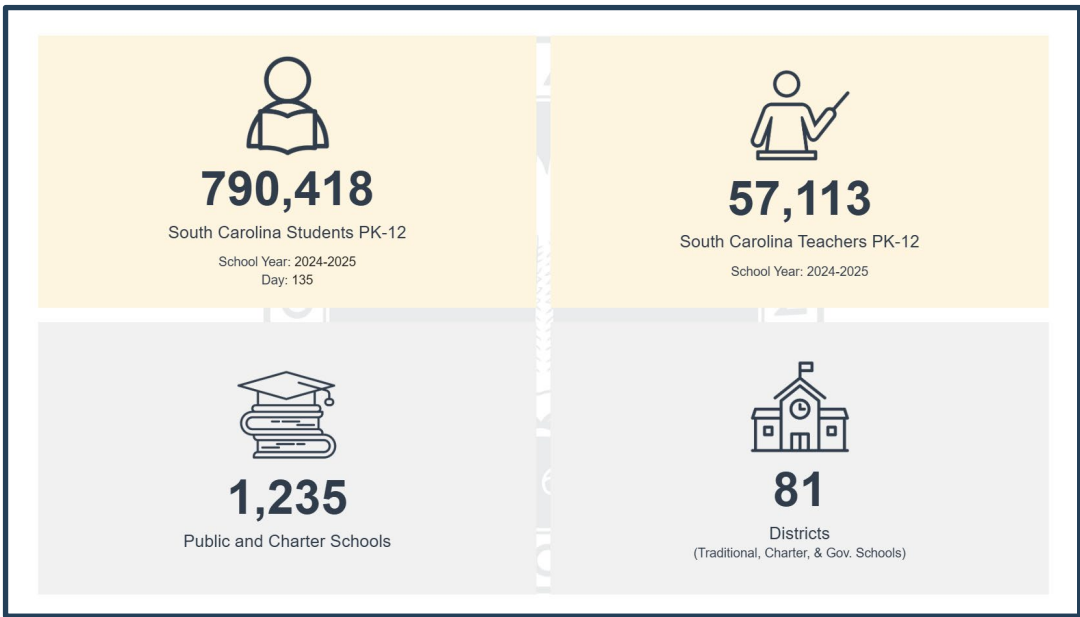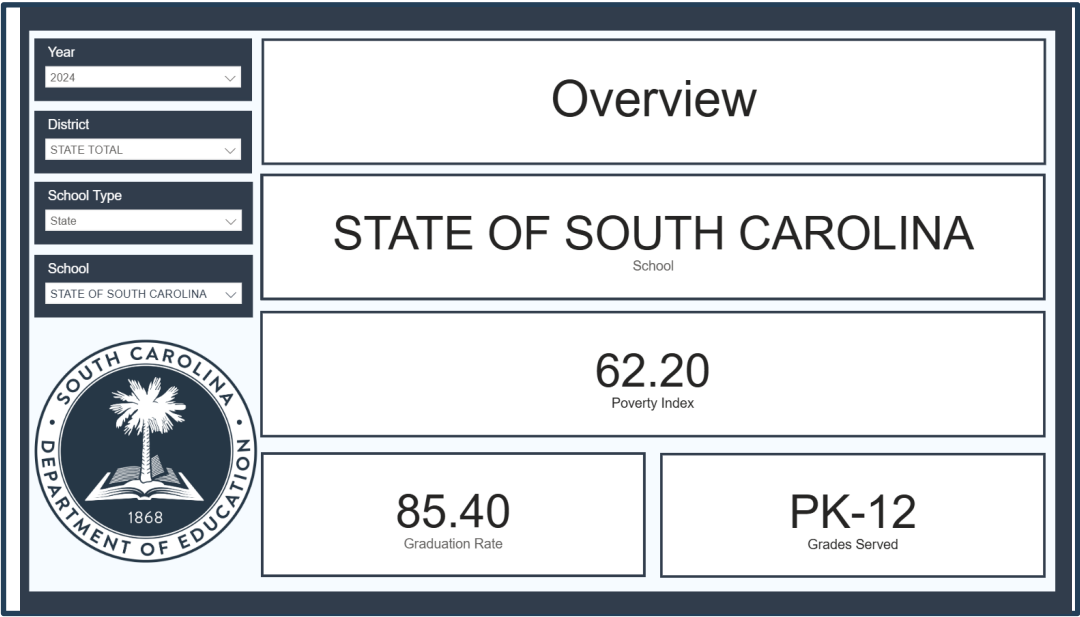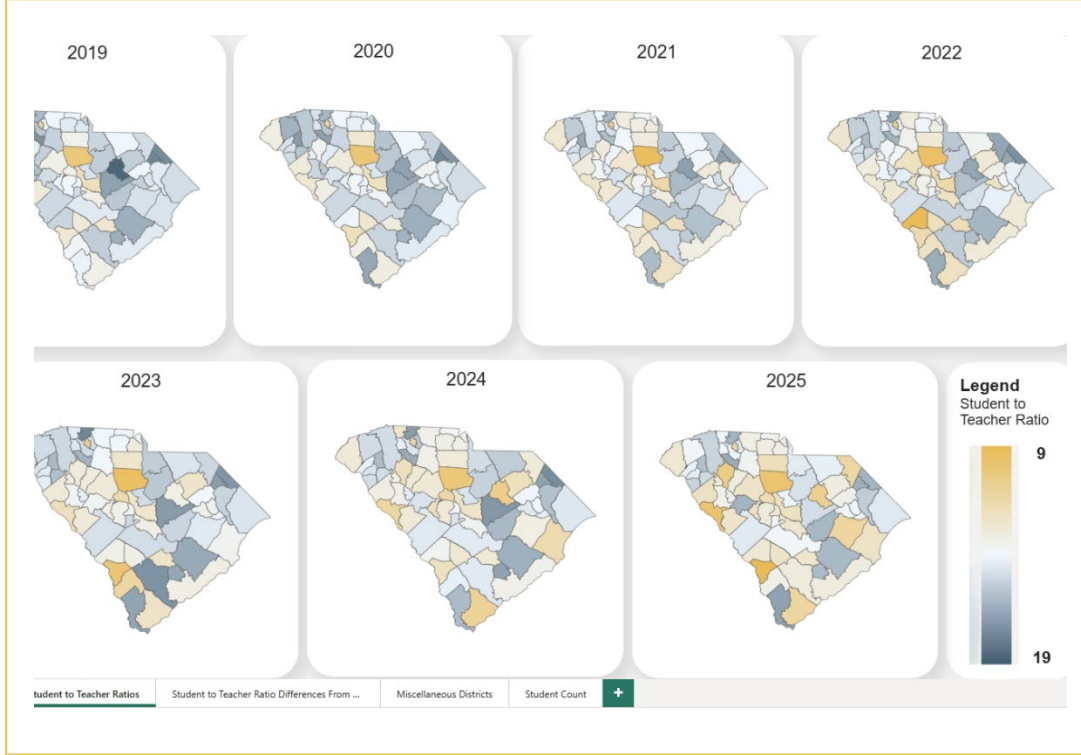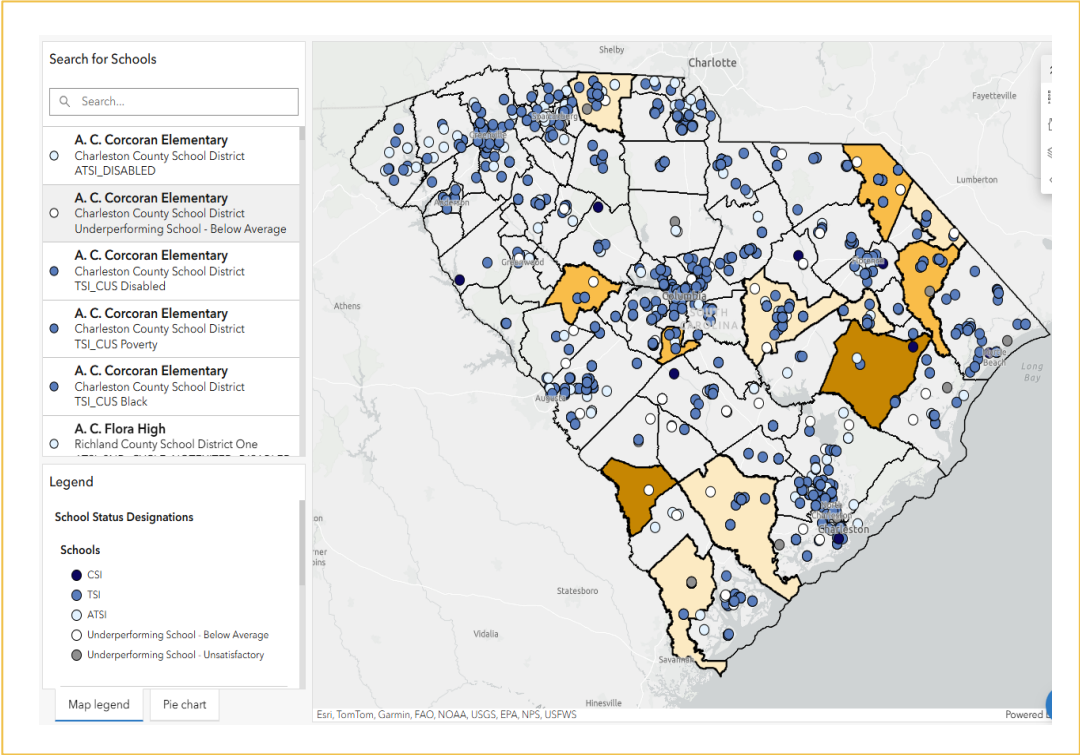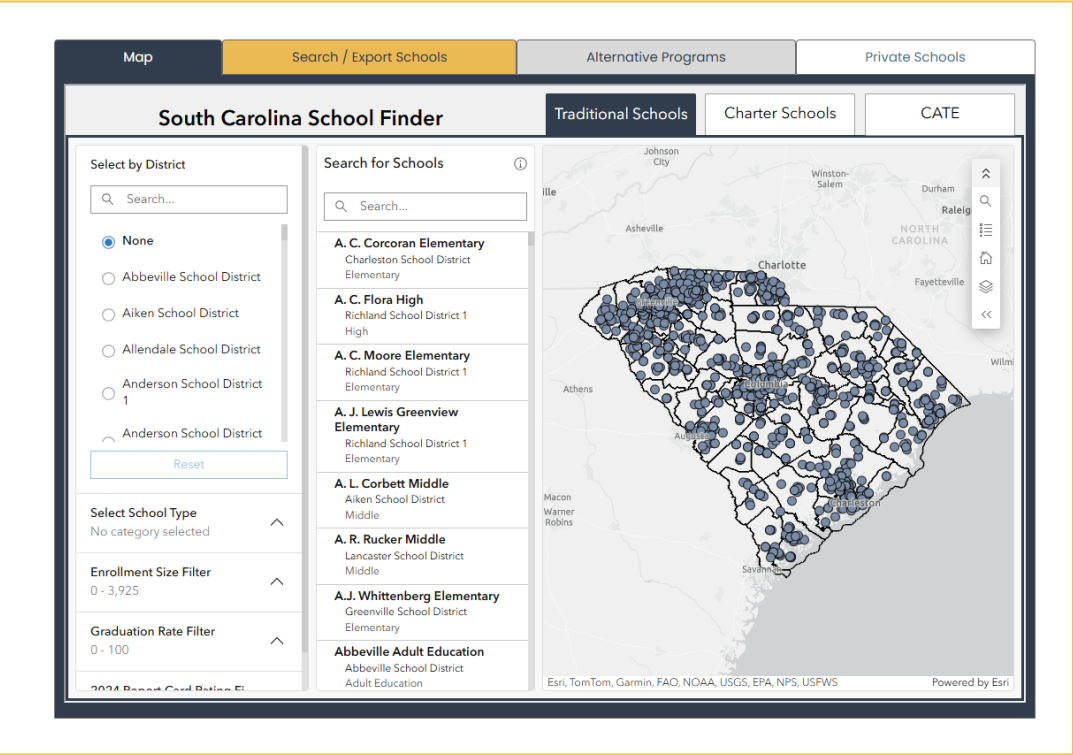
Implementation & Support

Alex Farquharson

Responsibility: *The Office of Implementation & Support leads cross-agency project execution, providing structure, tools, and capacity to translate strategic priorities into action. It supports the successful rollout of major initiatives by coordinating timelines, aligning resources, and maintaining project accountability across divisions.*

Services:
- Facilitates agency-wide and office-level project planning aligned with the SCDE Strategic Plan.
- Brings together cross-functional teams to drive collaboration, remove roadblocks, and ensure progress.
- Builds capacity in project management by coaching office teams and providing tools, templates, and support.
- Develops and maintains processes for consistent tracking and communication of objectives, milestones, and outcomes.

Customers:
SCDE Offices

Accomplishments:
- Established the agency's first formal project management office and defined its mission and operating structure.
- Supported multiple SCDE offices in developing and aligning their individual strategic plans to the agency's 3-year goals.
- Led recurring implementation meetings to ensure cross-office follow-through and performance tracking.
- Created processes, templates and workflows for task planning, goal alignment, risk management, and status reporting.

Challenges and Opportunities:
- Implementing the Asana project management platform to track agency-wide strategic goals, office-level plans, and individual project tasks.
- Expanding support and education to additional offices and programs to scale effective project planning and execution tools.
- Upskilling team members in using new process, procedures and tools

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Aligning Action with Strategy: 1-4-1-4 Rollout Across Offices

SCDE launched a department-wide rollout of the 1-4-1-4 strategic planning framework to align daily work across all offices with the agency's long-term goals.

1-4-1-4 Process Adoption

- All SCDE offices now use the 1-4-1-4 framework to create work plans grounded in the agency's strategic goals—anchored in one vision, four strategic goals, one-year priorities, and four quarterly milestones.

Collaborative Rollout in FY25

- Facilitated planning workshops and leadership coaching promoted shared ownership and consistent understanding across teams.

- The Implementation & Support team provides one-on-one facilitation, coaching, and documentation tools to help offices clarify roles, goals, and measurable deliverables.

Integrated Tracking and Reporting

- The Implementation & Support Office is in the process of rolling out new tools and systems to ensure real-time tracking, cross-office visibility, and clear connection between daily work and agency-wide outcomes.

This unified approach creates visibility across the agency, strengthens collaboration, and ensures every team contributes meaningfully to SCDE's 2030 goal.

Facilities Operations

Jered Wooten

Responsibility: The Office of Facilities Operations manages the agency's physical workspace and maintenance needs. It ensures that SCDE offices are safe, accessible, and equipped to support staff and public service. The office also provides logistical and operational support for events, building services, and office relocations.

Services:

- Oversee building operations for SCDE headquarters, including maintenance, safety, janitorial, and security services.
- Manage day-to-day functions of the mailroom and print shop, ensuring timely agency-wide distribution and production support.
- Develop and enforce fire, safety, and emergency protocols for staff and visitors.
- Coordinate facility setup and improvements, including space planning, signage, and vendor management.

Customers:

SCDE staff | Agency visitors

Accomplishments:

- Successfully planned and executed the agency's relocation to a new building, including coordinated build-out and phased staff move-in.
- Established and documented fire and safety protocols to meet compliance standards.
- Developed consistent internal procedures for facility requests and vendor coordination.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Implementing an agency-wide online maintenance request platform to streamline service delivery and response times.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Facilities Operations Office: Modernizing Agency Infrastructure

SCDE created a new Facilities Operations Office to unify oversight of agency-wide facilities, security, and maintenance, repurposing existing FTEs from former mail and print services without increasing headcount.

Security and Safety Upgrades

- Implemented critical infrastructure improvements, including digital badge access, enhanced camera systems, and updated internal safety protocols to protect staff, assets, and operations.

Tech-Ready Conference Environment

- Modernized conference rooms with integrated AV technology and seamless video conferencing to support collaboration and boost team productivity.

- These rooms also serve as in-house training hubs, eliminating the need to lease external facilities and enabling more cost-effective professional development for programs that serve districts.

Scalable, Efficient Operations Model

- This office reflects a shift toward a digitally enabled, centralized, and forward-looking model for facilities management—leveraging tools like Limble CMMS for maintenance tracking, QR-coded asset inventory, and integrated security systems to streamline service delivery and improve operational agility agency-wide.

Print Services Redesign

- Currently overhauling in-house printing to deliver higher-quality, cost-effective support across the agency using reallocated internal resources.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Tech-Powered Facility Management

The Office of Facilities Operations launched the agency's maintenance management system to automate and enhance processes, aiding in the conservation of time and resources while ensuring all new systems and contracts at the SCDE facility are managed efficiently.
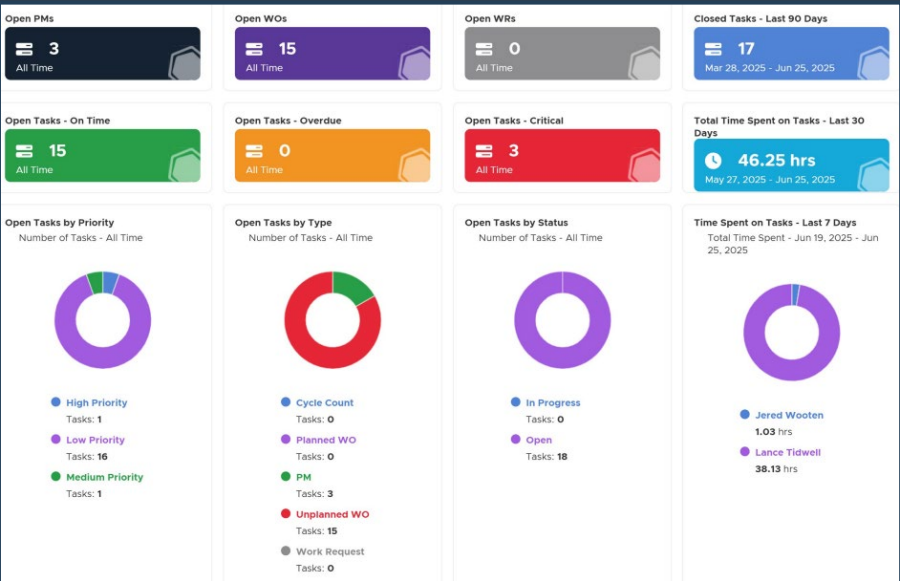
Streamlined Processes
SCDE's Maintenance Management System helps streamline processes, providing an organized platform for work order and asset management, enhancing workplace efficiency.

User-Friendly Work Request Portal
The system features a user-friendly work request portal for occupants, allowing easy submission and management of maintenance requests.

Customizable Preventive Maintenance
Customizable preventive maintenance schedules help extend the life of building components and reduce unexpected failures.

Robust Reporting Tools
The system offers robust reporting tools that ensure effective resource management and data-driven decision-making in facility operations.

Human Resources

Lisa McCloud

Responsibility: The Office of Human Resources oversees all personnel functions, including recruitment, hiring, benefits, employee relations, professional development, and performance management. It supports a strong agency workforce and helps foster a positive, productive workplace aligned with the agency's mission.

Services:

- Manage all human resources functions for SCDE, including recruitment, onboarding, classification, employee relations, benefits, and performance management.
- Support agency leadership in workforce planning, organizational development, and succession planning.
- Oversee employee training programs, professional development, and policy compliance.
- Advise SCDE offices and statewide partners on HR procedures, staffing models, and employment best practices.

Customers:

SCDE employees and leadership

Accomplishments:

- Supported agency-wide reorganization and succession planning strategies.
- Implemented a centralized system for telecommuting and hybrid work requests, balancing operational needs with flexibility.
- Deployed online workforce profile dashboard to monitor agency vacancies and workforce trends.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Leading multi-year initiative to modernize the classification and compensation system for state-maintained school bus shop personnel.
- Enhancing internal HR processes to support strategic plan alignment, leadership growth, and workforce retention.
- Streamlined the employee onboarding experience, aligning processes across divisions and launching a new orientation framework with a focus on mission alignment and compliance.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Hiring 101: Modernizing Recruitment

The Hiring 101 initiative streamlines and strengthens the agency's hiring process by providing standardized tools, guidance, and training to help offices recruit, interview, and onboard staff more effectively and consistently.

Standardized Recruitment Tools

- The toolkit includes job posting templates, interview question banks, and scoring rubrics to standardize hiring. These resources ensure consistency and fairness in candidate evaluation.

Streamlined Hiring Process

- Workflow checklists reduce administrative burden and guide staff through each hiring phase efficiently. This helps save time and minimizes errors in the recruitment process.

- The initiative empowers staff to conduct timely, effective hiring aligned with agency needs.
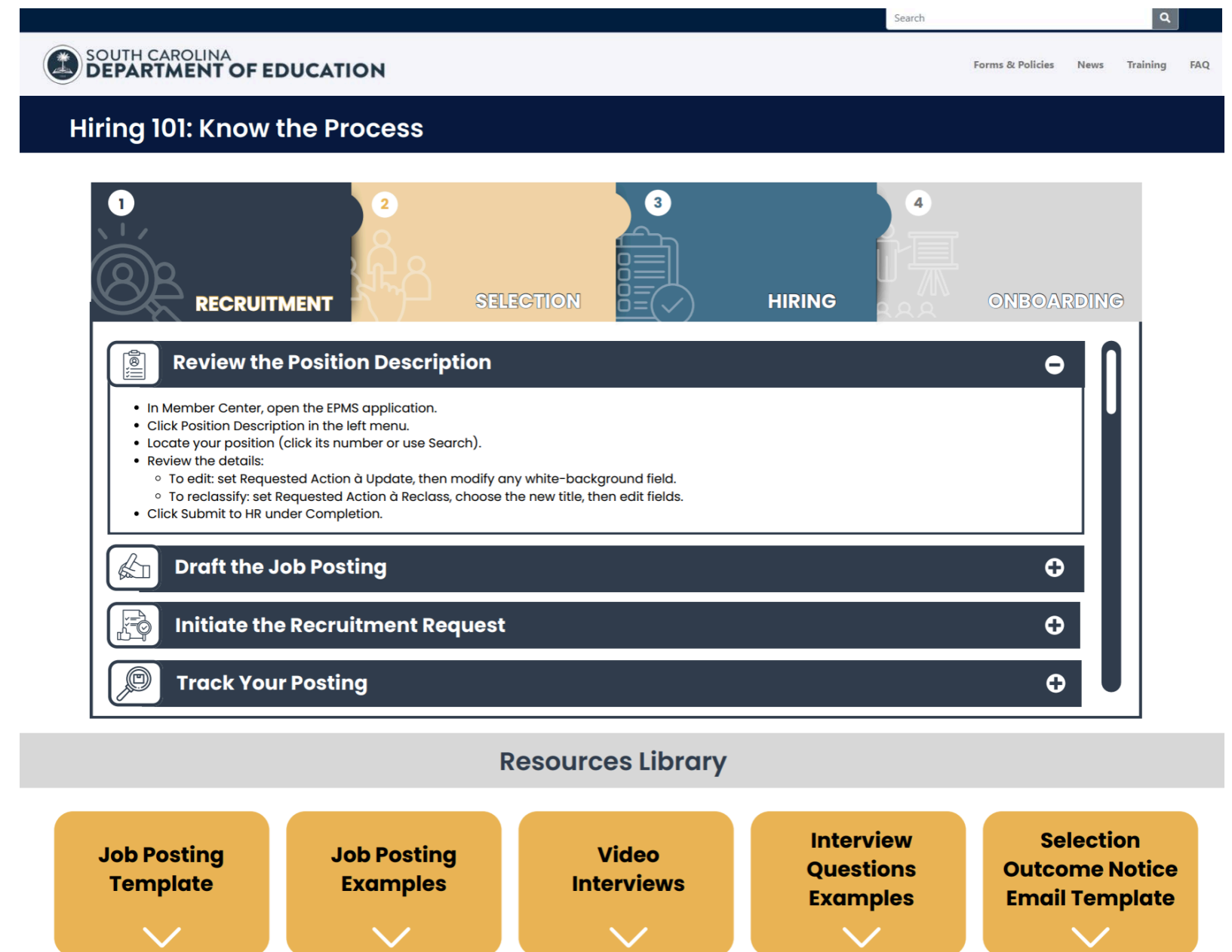
Profile of the SCDE Employee

Knowledge

- Applies relevant laws, policies, and processes to ensure compliance and alignment.
- Leverages knowledge of educational systems to strengthen district and school support.
- Demonstrates subject matter expertise and pursues ongoing learning.
- Builds strong relationships by supporting the growth of colleagues and stakeholders.
- Uses technology and agency tools effectively to enhance daily work.

Skills

- Demonstrates flexibility and resilience in navigating evolving challenges.
- Uses multiple data sources and input to make sound decisions and solve problems.
- Drives momentum by prioritizing projects, organizing tasks, and owning execution.
- Handles sensitive information with discretion and professionalism.
- Builds expertise through continuous learning and applying best practices.

Values

Hope
- Belief in an exceptional education for every student
- Mission-driven communication and collaboration

Excellence
- Work ethic, "Yes I can."
- Accountability
- Continuous improvement

Leadership
- Integrity
- Transparency, patience, and humility

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Agency Divisions

Legal Affairs

Legal Affairs

Todd Atwater

The Division of Legal Affairs ensures the agency operates within state and federal laws through legal guidance, policy interpretation, and regulatory oversight. It includes the Offices of General Counsel and Government Affairs and supports agency and district leaders on legal, legislative, and compliance matters.

General Counsel

Todd Atwater

FTEs: 7

Hiring in Process: 2

Turnover Rate:* 0%

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

General Counsel

Todd Atwater

Responsibility: *The Office of General Counsel serves as the chief legal advisor to the State Superintendent and agency leadership. It provides legal counsel on state and federal education laws, oversees the development and interpretation of regulations, manages administrative hearings, and ensures legal compliance across all agency programs. The office handles contract review, ethics guidance, and dispute resolution while supporting districts with complex legal issues. By promoting sound legal practices, the office safeguards the agency's operations and maintains public trust in the integrity of South Carolina's education system.*

Services:

- Legal guidance on IDEA, FERPA, FOIA, and all educational laws.
- Oversight and legal defense of educator certification disciplinary cases.
- Advisory services on legal compliance for students in foster care, group homes, etc.
- General counsel services for the State Superintendent and SCDE divisions.
- Legal review and advisory services for federal education programs.
- Legal and administrative support to the State Board of Education.

Accomplishments:

- Strong support for the State's litigation regarding overreaching Title IX Regulations.
- Successful implementation of SC Code Reg. 43-170, the Uniform Procedure for Selection of Instructional Materials.
- 82 legal service engagements with LEAs annually (IDEA/FERPA/FOIA/general guidance)
- 210 educator disciplinary matters presented to the State Board in FY24 (up from 186 in FY22, showing increasing demand for legal intervention).
- Responsiveness to federal program inquiries and SCDE executive requests.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Hiring and retention of attorneys.
- Staffing to investigate educator misconduct in a manner that is both thorough and timely.
- Funding, rates, and insurance coverage issues for third-party hearing officers.
- SC Supreme Court's 2024 opinion in *Eidson* striking significant portions of the ESTF program.
- 4th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals rulings inconsistent with the policies and laws of South Carolina.
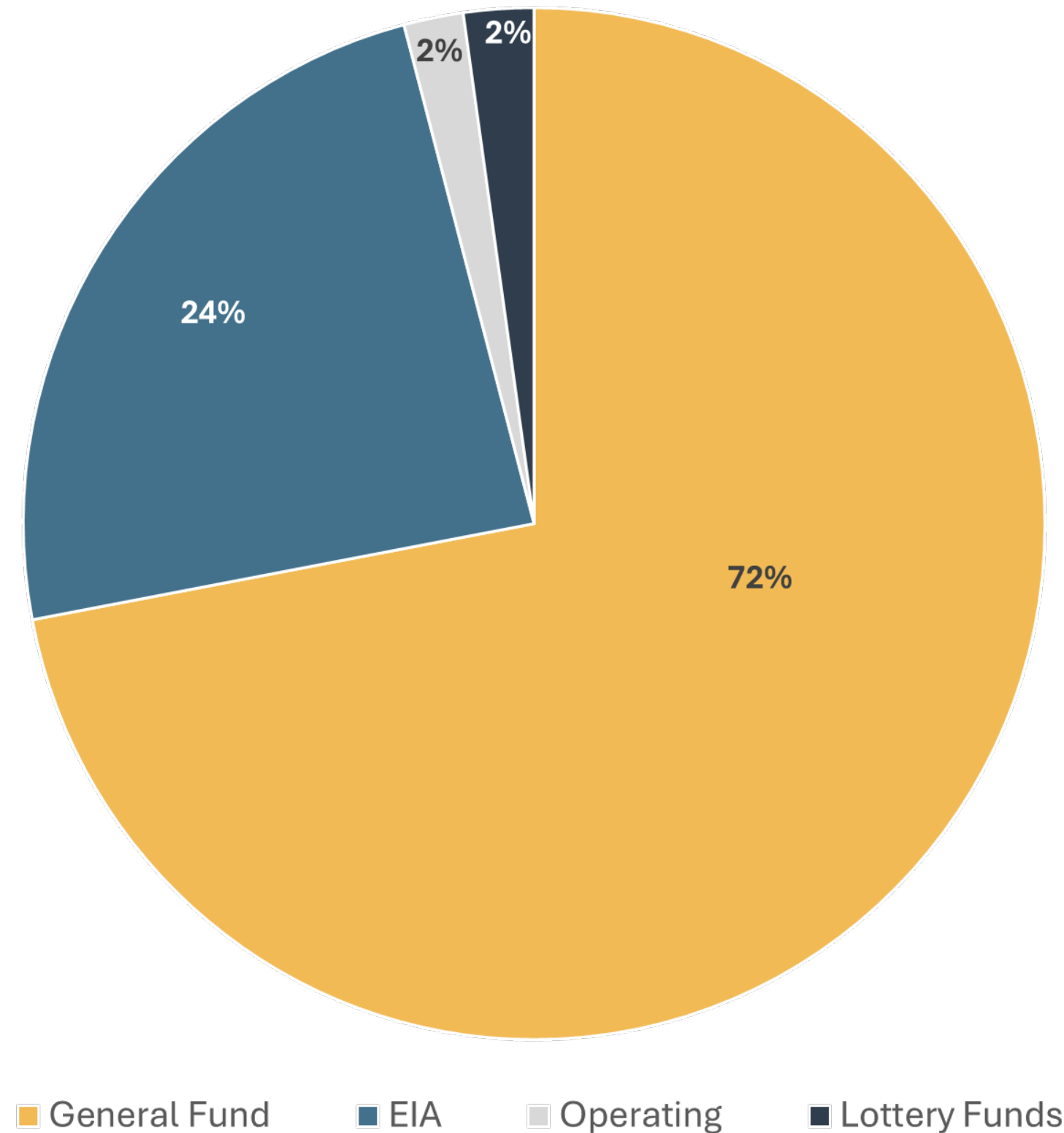
Customers:

School Districts | Educators | State Superintendent | SCDE offices | State Board of Education | General public (e.g., FOIA)

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Strategic Cost Reduction Initiatives

Total FY25 State Appropriations

General Fund
$4,485,175,871

Education Improvement Act (EIA)
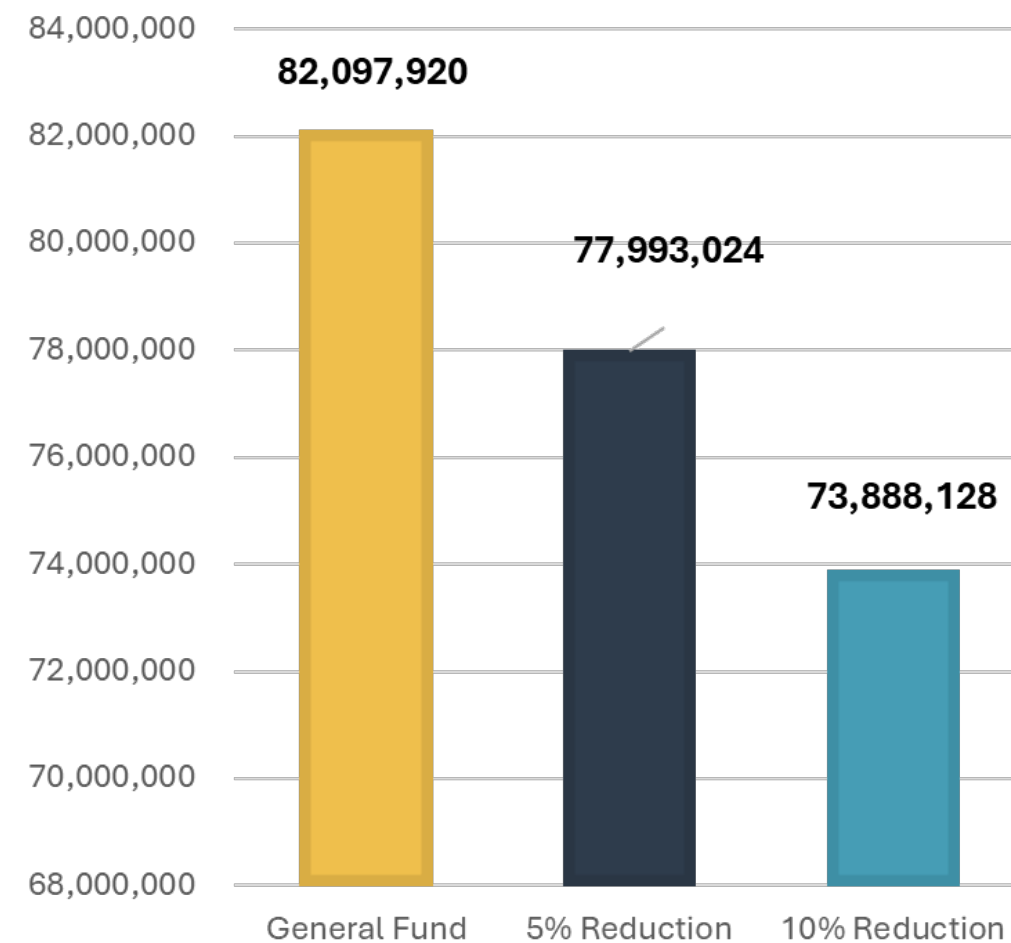$1,487,295,973

Operating Revenue Funds
$117,204,820

Lottery Funds
$138,263,040

Pie chart: General Fund 72%, EIA 24%, Operating 2%, Lottery Funds 2%

Legend: General Fund, EIA, Operating, Lottery Funds

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Discretionary Operating Budget Reduction

General Fund

82,097,920
77,993,024
73,888,128

| General Fund | 5% Reduction | 10% Reduction |

EIA Fund

165,986,579
157,687,250
149,387,921

| FY 26 | 5% Redux | 10% Redux |

Operating Revenue Fund

54,798,755
52,058,817
49,318,880

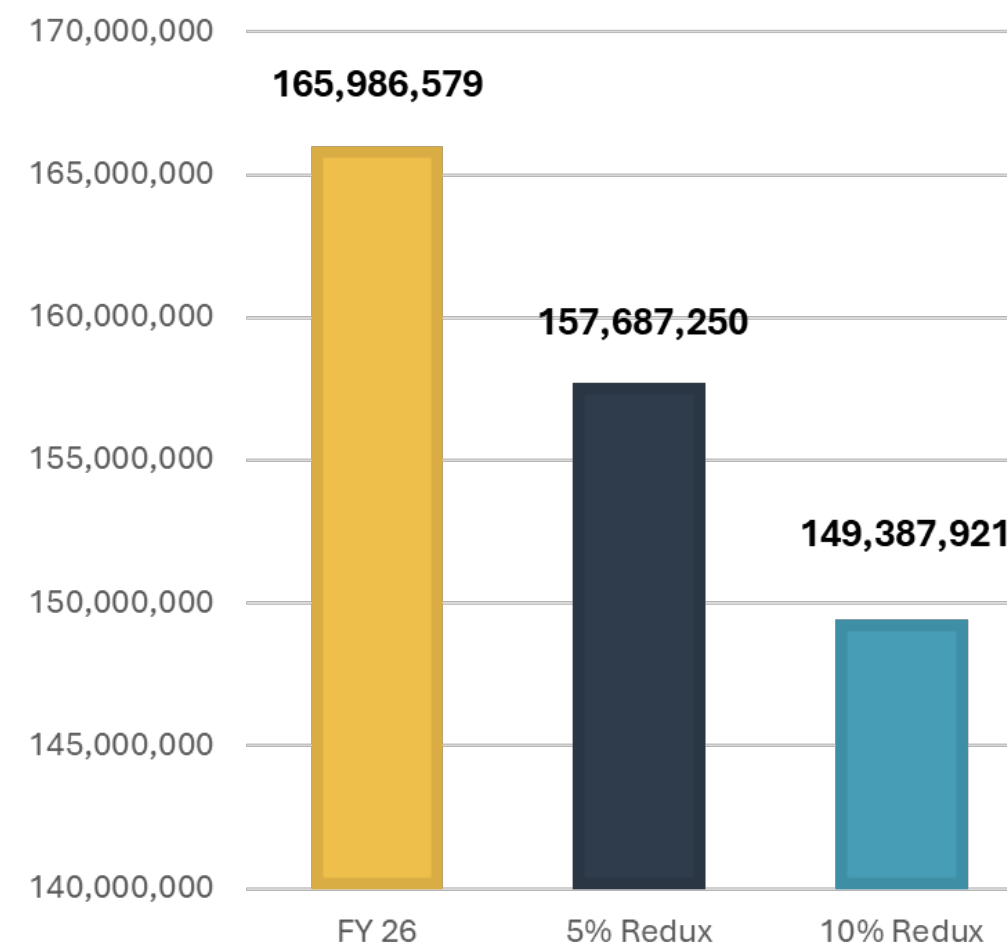| FY26 | 5% Redux | 10% Redux |

FY25 GF Appropriation: $82,097,920

5% Reduction: $77,993,024

10% Reduction: $73,888,128
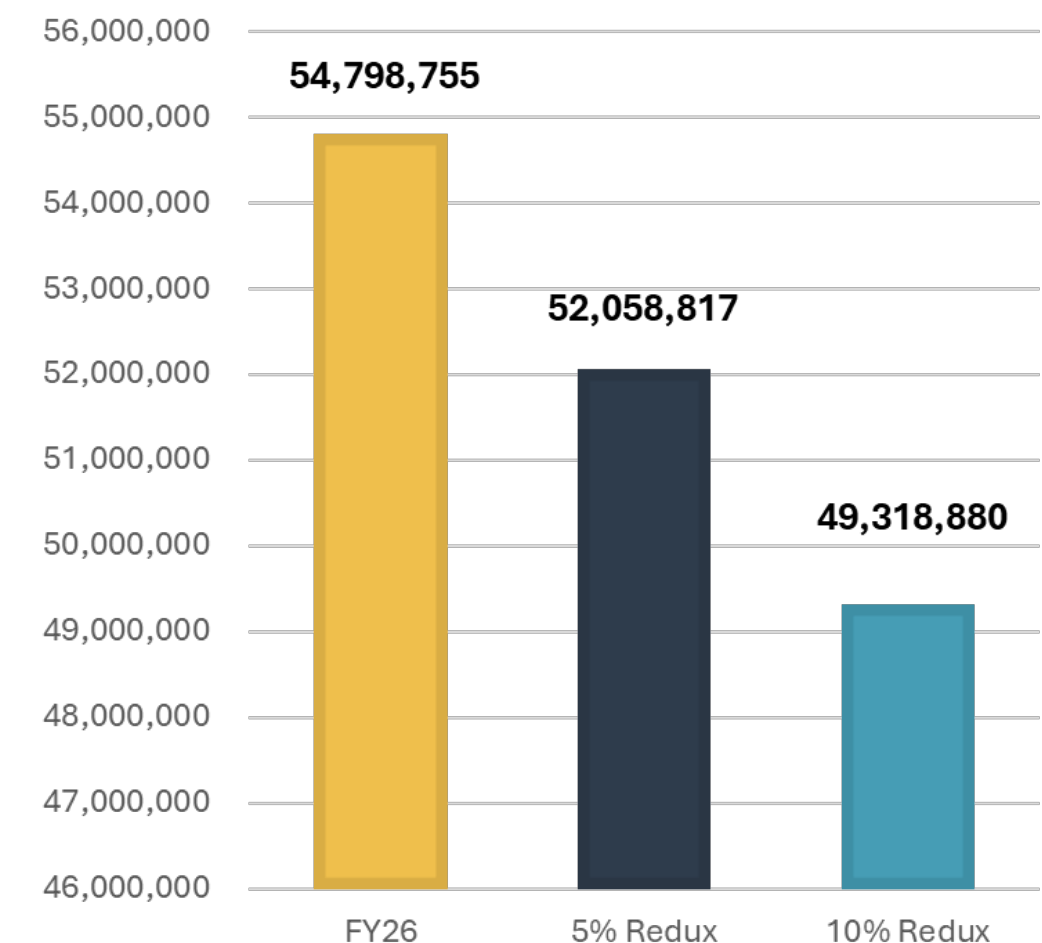
FY 25 EIA $165,986,579

5% Reduction: $157,687,250

10% Reduction: $149,387,921

FY25 Operating Rev: 54,798,755

5% Reduction: $52,058,817

10% Reduction: 49,318,880

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Agency General Fund Reduction (Form E)

General Fund Reduction Contingency Plan

A 3% reduction in total General Fund budget would not only impact the Department but would have a negative impact on school districts throughout the state.

Additionally, any reduction in state funding would negatively affect the federally mandated requirement for Maintenance of Effort for IDEA.

Agency Cost Savings Plan

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) the US Department of Education allows states to retain three percent of funds for direct student services. This provision allows SCDE to utilize existing federal funds to provide services to students and target high needs areas. SCDE is working to streamline requirements for districts to ensure that both the agency and districts might direct more funding to the classroom. While this is not a reduction in current levels of state funding, it allows for the reduced need for state support in administrative programs.

Reducing Cost and Burden (Form F)

Reducing Cost and Burden Plan

The SC Department of Education (SCDE) reduced the burden on local education agencies by suspending the college freshman report.

The SCDE is working to streamline all data collection timelines and processes to reduce burden and increase the efficiency of reporting.

Summary

Department staff is working to identify local education agency reporting requirements to reduce duplication in reporting, reducing the time that local school districts spend completing requests.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Strategic Cost Reduction Initiatives

Cost Reduction

- Discretionary operating budget reductions
- Eliminate non-essential travel
- Reduction in supply purchases
- Review of contractual services

Efficiency Initiatives

Department staff is working to identify local education agency reporting requirements to reduce duplication in reporting, reducing the time that local school districts spend completing requests.

Strategic Cost Reduction Initiatives: Examples

Initiative	Description	Status	Office	Efficiency Categories
Statewide Implementation of ClassLink (SSO Platform)	Eliminates duplicative SSO platform contracts across districts, saving individual district funds while increasing security and ease of access.	In Process	IT	Operational Cost Optimization
Transition to Canvas for Professional Development	Phases out various third-party PD platforms across offices and districts, reducing licensing costs and centralizing training.	In Process	IT, Leadership Effectiveness	Operational Cost Optimization
Power BI Dashboards for Office- and Agency-Level Budget Tracking	Replaces inefficient manual budget tracking with automated dashboards, improving real-time fiscal oversight and reducing staff time required for reporting.	In Process	IT, Finance, I&S	Operational Cost Optimization
Financial Reporting Overhaul	Instituted office-level budget reviews and standardized revenue/expenditure tracking to improve oversight and identify unnecessary recurring costs.	Complete	Finance	Operational Cost Optimization Workforce Optimization
Creation of the Office of Facilities Operations	Consolidated and repurposed staff previously assigned to mail and print services; implemented centralized control of HQ facility functions, reducing outside vendor dependency.	Complete	Facilities Ops	Operational Cost Optimization Cost Reduction Strategies
CMMS System for Work Orders, Contract & Asset Management	Digitalized maintenance requests and preventive upkeep scheduling, reducing emergency repair costs and extending the useful life of facilities. Enabled proactive vendor oversight to ensure contract compliance, avoid unnecessary renewals, and negotiate better rates.	Complete	Facilities Ops	Operational Cost Optimization Cost Reduction Strategies
Print Services Redesign	In-progress effort to retool internal print operations for cost-effectiveness and higher quality, reducing reliance on external vendors.	In Process	Facilities Ops	Operational Cost Optimization

Strategic Cost Reduction Initiatives: Examples cont.

Initiative	Description	Status	Office	Efficiency Categories
Procurement Systems Streamlining	Initiated a full-scale reorganization of internal procurement workflows to streamline intake, reduce bottlenecks, and improve transparency across agency purchasing activities.	In Process	Procurement, I&S	Operational Cost Optimization
Automated Telecommuting Agreements	Automated approvals, tracking and expectations for telecommuting work arrangements.	Complete	HR, IT, I&S	Operational Cost Optimization
Reclassification and Career Ladder Redesign for Bus Shops	SCDE is modernizing its transportation workforce by implementing a three-year plan that redefines job classifications, builds career ladders, and ties compensation to performance—ensuring competitive pay, stronger retention, and long-term operational excellence across all bus maintenance shops.	In Process	HR, Transportation, I&S	Workforce Optimization
Hiring 101	Equips SCDE staff with standardized tools—job posting templates, interview rubrics, and workflow checklists—to streamline hiring, and reduce administrative burden, enabling more timely and effective recruitment across the agency.	Complete	HR, IT, I&S	Operational Cost Optimization Workforce Optimization
Growing Pathways for Students (GPS)	The GPS (Growing Pathways for Students) project is SCDE's statewide data modernization initiative that unifies student, educator, and financial data into a centralized, Ed-Fi–compliant warehouse—replacing fragmented systems with real-time dashboards that support better decision-making, reduce manual data entry, and improve transparency across the education system.	Complete	IT	Operational Cost Optimization

Strategic Cost Reduction Initiatives: Examples cont.

Initiative	Description	Status	Office	Efficiency Categories
Financial Funding Dashboards for Districts	SCDE's Finance Office launched an interactive dashboard that replaces static PDFs with a real-time, user-friendly tool for districts to model funding scenarios—enhancing accuracy, transparency, and local decision-making in budget forecasting and financial planning.	Complete	Finance	Operational Cost Optimization
SAFE K-12 Cybersecurity Program	SCDE's SAFE K-12 initiative strengthens school safety by equipping districts with standardized threat assessment protocols, emergency planning tools, and coordinated support systems—ensuring proactive, consistent responses to potential risks across South Carolina schools.	In Process	IT	Operational Cost Optimization Cost Reduction Strategies Workforce Optimization
Playbook & SOP Templates for District Technical Assistance	Streamlining field support and cutting down custom technical assistance labor by using standardized, reusable tools and frameworks.	In Process	Finance, Leadership Effectiveness	Operational Cost Optimization
Creation of Implementation and Support Program	Created to provide centralized coordination and support for major agency initiatives. Ensures timely follow-through, alignment across divisions, and reduced duplication of effort.	Complete	I&S	Operational Cost Optimization Workforce Optimization
Office-Level Strategic Plan Development	Implemented the 1-4-1-4 strategic planning framework across all offices to align daily work with long-term goals, supported by collaborative planning workshops, leadership coaching, and new tracking tools that promote shared accountability, cross-office visibility, and measurable progress toward the agency's 2030 vision	Complete	I&S	Operational Cost Optimization Workforce Optimization

Strategic Cost Reduction Initiatives: Examples cont.

Initiative	Description	Status	Office	Efficiency Categories
OSF Process & Procedure Improvements	Through targeted reforms in plan reviews, inspections, and charter school support, SCDE's Office of School Facilities has reduced delays, delegated responsibilities, and expanded capacity, demonstrating a cost-effective model for operational efficiency and service improvement.	Complete	School Facilities	Operational Cost Optimization Cost Reduction Strategies Workforce Optimization
District Accounting Systems and Best Practices Committee (DASBPC)	The DASBPC's (established under Proviso1.104) May 31, 2025 report outlines a comprehensive, three-year plan to modernize and streamline school district financial reporting across South Carolina. Inititives underway address these concerns: 1. Increase Transparency for district staff, stakeholders, and policymakers 2. Align Accounting Standards across all districts 3. Simplify Reporting and reduce duplication 4. Consolidate Submissions into a unified platform 5. Promote Data Consistency statewide 6. Support District Finance Staff through training and tools	In Process	Finance	Operational Cost Optimization Cost Reduction Strategies Workforce Optimization
30-Day Processing Time Sustained	SCDE has successfully shortened educator certification processing times to just 30 days—and sustained that pace—by streamlining workflows and modernizing internal systems to improve service delivery and reduce delays.	Complete	Educator Services	Operational Cost Optimization

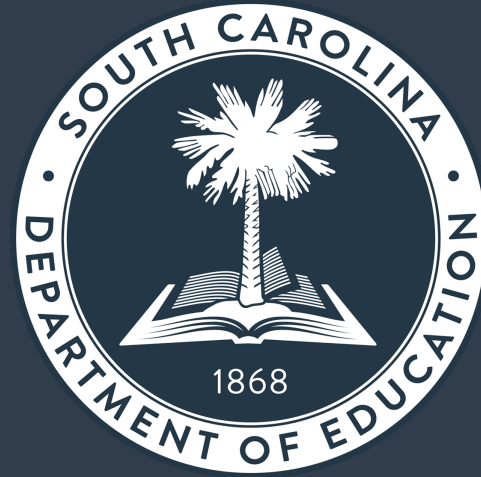# Modernizing SC Procurement Code to Increase Impact

Updating South Carolina's procurement code will empower SCDE to adopt modern tools faster, reduce delays, and deliver high-impact initiatives more efficiently and transparently.

Strategic Enablement

- **Modernizing Frameworks**: Current frameworks, formats, templates, and cost structures no longer reflect today's operational needs. Updating these foundations will enable SCDE to adopt tools and services—cloud-based, subscription-driven, or otherwise—with greater speed, flexibility, and strategic alignment.

- **Streamlining Processes**: By rethinking rigid selection requirements (RFP, IFB, change order, sole source, etc.), SCDE can better evaluate nuanced vendor offerings and secure solutions that truly fit agency needs.

- **Expanding Agile Procurement**: Introducing more adaptable procurement models will allow SCDE to quickly secure tools in a competitive landscape that clearly meet agency needs, supporting iterative and modular technology adoption.

Operational Potential

- **Accelerate Project Timelines**: Instead of months-long queues, procurements could progress swiftly, enabling critical initiatives to launch without delay.

- **Keep Pace with Innovation**: Adopting best practice tools for project management, data analytics, and stakeholder engagement will ensure we stay competitive and responsive.

- **Empower Smart Development**: Instead of coding fragmented, one-off tools, our teams will use integrated, scalable solutions that reduce maintenance and improve data access.

- **Enhance Transparency and Accountability**: Modern systems will enable seamless data integration and reporting, strengthening public trust through greater visibility and accountability.

SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Legislative and Regulatory Statutory Review

Regulatory Review

- The SCDE works directly with the State Board of Education to make necessary changes to Chapter 43 of the SC Code of Regulations.

Examples

Running list of regulations that will be brought before the state board for FY26:

- 43-51 – Remove any names of alt route programs
- 43-53 – Consolidate "lanes" if bachelor's +18 is removed in the budget
- 43-55 – Update based on Educator Assistance Act
- 43-56 – Delete
- 43-57 – Consolidate with sub regs (eliminates 3 sub regs)
- 43-58 – Consolidate with sub reg 58.1
- 43-63 – Overhaul, bring CTE guidelines for SBE approval in future
- 43-64 – is being reviewed
- 43-209 – Delete, as it's no longer necessary.

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Legislative Review

SC Code of Laws – Title 59

- Title 59 of the South Carolina Code of Laws contains approximately 900 statutes that have been passed by the General Assembly over multiple periods of history.
- The SCDE would like to commission a study committee to develop a report and recommendation on Title 59 to make it internally consistent and in conformity with federal requirements.

Examples

The SCDE's report to GELOC includes 55 examples of statutory changes, such as:

- Modification of a misleading heading in SC Code Sec. 1-6-35.
- Modification for obsolescence in Sec. 10-5-270 because it references a program office that has changed names.
- Repealing entire statutes like Sec. 59-1-452 because the public school employee cost savings program no longer exists.

Legislative Review

2017 Review of Title 59

- In 2017, a four-member committee issued a **35-page report** based on their review of Title 59.

Recommendation

- The SCDE would like to pick up where they left off by forming a study committee that will not only review Title 59 but also **draft recommended changes for consideration** of the General Assembly.

**STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

Review of Title 59

General Assembly

Pursuant to Act 241 of 2016

May 2, 2017

Legislation Proposals

Topics

- Education Infrastructure Bank
- START Report Recommendations