AGENDA
Education Oversight Committee
Monday, August 6, 2018
1:00 PM
Room 433, Blatt Building

I. Welcome and Introductions .... Mr. Neil Robinson

II. Approval of Minutes of June 11, 2018 .... Mr. Neil Robinson

III. Information: Public Awareness Campaign .... Dana Yow
Presentation by Period 3

IV. Approval: eLearning Applications

V. Information Items:
Accountability Working Group Update .... Dr. Rainey Knight

ECENC Program Update.. Melanie Barton

2018 Legislative Session Summary.. Melanie Barton

Fiscal Year 2018-19 Meeting Schedule .... Melanie Barton

VI. Adjournment

SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Meeting

June 11, 2018

<u>Members Present:</u> Neil Robinson, Chair; Dr. Bob Couch, Vice-Chair; Rep. Terry Alexander; Anne Bull; Rep. Raye Felder; Senator Kevin Johnson; Rep. Dwight Loftis; Senator John Matthews; State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman; and Ellen Weaver.

<u>EOC Staff Present</u>: Dr. Kevin Andrews; Melanie Barton; Hope Johnson-Jones; Dr. Rainey Knight; Bunnie Ward; and Dana Yow.

Mr. Robinson welcomed members and guests to the meeting. While Dr. Merck was unable to attend today's meeting, Mr. Robinson notified the members that Dr. Merck's term on the EOC expires at the end of June. Mr. Robinson expressed his appreciation for the eight years that Dr. Merck had served on the EOC. His leadership, commitment to, and passion for improving education in this state were admired by his fellow members and staff. Mr. Robinson noted that the EOC will greatly miss Dr. Merck's leadership on the EOC where he served as Vice Chair and chairman of the Academic and Assessments Subcommittee.

Mr. Robinson also announced the addition of the newest member of the EOC, Rep. Terry Alexander. Rep. Alexander is serving as the designee of the Speaker of the House.

The minutes of the April 9, 2018 meeting were approved as distributed.

Then, Mr. Robinson noted that the EOC is receiving two special reports today. The first was an analysis of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) results from the fall 2017 administration. Mr. Robinson noted that for the first time in at least over a decade, all kindergarten students in South Carolina were assessed to determine what percentage of our students in the state, in counties and in districts were ready to learn upon entering kindergarten. The results have significant policy implications for the state's early childhood programs and for the Office of First Steps to School Readiness. He called upon Bunnie Ward of the EOC staff to provide an overview of the report.

Ms. Ward introduced Dr. Bill Brown from the University of South Carolina, a member of the full-day 4K evaluation team, who was in attendance. Researchers from the University of South Carolina compiled the data for the report. Ms. Ward provided an overview of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) results across the state, highlighting the following:

- Statewide, about 36% of the children were at the KRA Demonstrating Readiness level. There were 33 districts that met or surpassed the overall state average for Demonstrating Readiness.
- Statewide, 31 percent of kindergarteners reached the Demonstrating Readiness level in mathematics, representing the domain with the lowest percent of students at the Demonstrating Readiness level.
- Statewide, 48 percent of kindergarteners were at the Demonstrating Readiness level in Physical Development and Well-Being, the domain with the highest percent of students at the Demonstrating Readiness level.
- Among White children, about 44 percent performed at the Demonstrating Readiness level, while 27 percent of African-American children and 22 percent of Hispanic children were at that level.
- Kindergartners who were identified as having attended a full-day 4K program in a district or private child care center that participated in the Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP) performed at similar levels across the KRA levels of readiness as those from non-CERDEP districts.
- Thirteen districts met or surpassed the state average on every KRA domain: Anderson 4, Charleston, Clarendon 1, Dillon 3, Dorchester 2, Fairfield, Georgetown, Greenwood 52, McCormick, Richland 2, SC Public Charter School District, York 2 and York 4.

Members, including Dr. Couch and Sen. Johnson, raised questions about some districts' KRA results where a significantly greater percentage of students demonstrated kindergarten readiness as compared to the percentage of third graders meeting state standards in English language arts and mathematics. Superintendent Spearman noted that, with the second year of implementation of the KRA, classroom teachers will receive additional training in how to assess students. Rep. Loftis asked about the scope of the evaluation and expressed concerns raised by school districts regarding the usefulness of the assessment for results for improving instruction and informing parents. Other legislative members, including Rep. Alexander and Sen. Johnson, reinforced the importance of the state using the results of the assessments to improve early learning opportunities for all children, but especially children in poverty and Hispanic and Africa-American children. Superintendent Spearman noted that, with the second year of implementation of the KRA, classroom teachers will receive additional training in how to assess students. Staff suggested that districts and community leaders, namely local First Steps County partnerships, should use the results to identify needs and services much like the Spartanburg Academic Movement is doing.

Sen. Matthews asked if schools or the state were tracking children from kindergarten through grade 3. Superintendent Spearman noted that some districts are monitoring students over time. Rep. Felder asked if the students who took the KRA in kindergarten would be assessed using another instrument during the fall of their first grade year to measure academic progress. Ms. Ward responded that students would not be assessed statewide until third grade; however, districts administer formative or diagnostic

assessments annually. The results of those assessments are not collected or reported statewide. Dr. Mathis, Deputy Superintendent of the Division of College and Career Readiness at the South Carolina Department of Education, noted that districts will receive professional learning opportunities on the Early Learning Standards as well.

There being no additional questions, the report was accepted as information.

Mr. Robinson then called upon Ms. Barton to discuss the report on Aid to Districts Technology conducted pursuant to Proviso 1A.84 of the 2017-18 General Appropriation Act. Ms. Barton explained that the General Assembly appropriated $12.0 million in EIA funds to school districts to improve external and internal technology infrastructure and to increase one-to-one computing initiatives in schools. By proviso the EOC is to report to the K-12 School Technology Initiative Committee on how the districts expended the funds. The EOC staff surveyed all districts between March 20 and April 30 and asked school district business or finance staff to complete a survey documenting how the district projected to expend or carry forward funds appropriated in the current fiscal year. All districts responded to the survey.

School districts reported having $22.0 million in funds for technology, which included state appropriations and $10.4 million in funds carried forward from the prior fiscal year to the current. Of these available funds, districts will expend 81% in the current fiscal year and carry forward 19% into the subsequent fiscal year. Of the expenditures, 54% will be used to expand or develop 1:1 computing initiatives, 22% on improving internal connections; 2% on improving external connections and 22% on non-approved expenditures. These non-approved expenditures were reported by twelve districts that did not receive waivers from the K-12 School Technology Initiative Committee to expend funds for expenditures that are not expressly authorized in the proviso or in the 2017-18 Funding Manual published by the South Carolina Department of Education. Sen. Johnson asked if there were any repercussions to these twelve districts, and Ms. Barton responded that she was aware of none. Rep. Loftis asked about the status of including 4K enrollment in the E-rate formula for reimbursement. Ms. Barton noted that 77 districts reported filing for E-rate reimbursements. Ms. Bull asked for an explanation of why some districts do not file for E-rate reimbursements. Ms. Barton responded that some districts with low poverty indices may not file for E-rate while others may have met their E-rate reimbursement levels.

There being no additional questions, the report was accepted as information and will be forwarded to the K-12 School Technology Initiative Committee.

Subcommittee Reports:

Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee: Due to Dr. Merck's absence, Mr. Robinson, who serves as Vice-Chair of the Subcommittee, provided the report which included two action items.

The first action item was approval of industry credentials for defining career ready students in the accountability system.

In the consolidated accountability system for South Carolina that was approved by the EOC last December and by the US Department of Education on May 3, 2018, a Career and Technology Education (CTE) completer who earns a national or state industry credential is deemed "career ready" for the purpose of measuring the percentage of college and career ready students in a high school. There are other metrics that define career ready including students who earn a Silver or better on a career readiness assessment, who earn a score of at least 31 on the ASVAB, or who complete a state-approved work-based learning program.

As explained by Mr. Robinson, industry credentials are vital to ensuring that students have the technical skills needed for available jobs in the state. At the time of the EOC's approval of the metric, the EOC did not have a list of which credentials would be counted; however, the EOC insisted that the business community should make that determination.

Mr. Robinson commended the work of the Department of Education and business interests throughout the state. Since December, the SC Department of Education along with the Career and Technical Education educators from across the state, the SC Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Commerce, the EEDA Coordinating Council, and the Coordinating Council for Workforce Development have reviewed and vetted what is before the EOC today – a list of 130 assessment/certification/industry credentials which, if earned by a CTE completer, will be one metric in our state's accountability system that defines a "career ready" high school graduate for purposes of the 2018 school report card. The credentials are by career cluster and include the certifying agency or industry along with a column that denotes examples of businesses that "support" the credential.

The subcommittee is also asking the EOC to approve an additional 34 credentials for use in the 2018-19 school year for the 2019 school report card. This list of 34 will be forwarded to the Coordinating Council for Workforce Development and the EEDA Coordinating Council for their consideration as well. Finally, it would be the recommendation of the Subcommittee that a formal review process be established by which credentials will be added and deleted from this list pending the workforce needs of our state. Career and Technical Education Centers and businesses must at least annually or biennially review the list and offer additions or changes.

Since these recommendations come as a subcommittee recommendation, Mr. Robinson opened the floor to questions and discussion. Rep. Felder noted how important this information is to parents who want to know what credentials will enable their children to become employable. Rep. Loftis commented that he was pleased to see certifications included that deal with construction, considering the great need that home builders in the state have. Superintendent Spearman noted the grass-roots efforts that went into developing the list.

Rep. Alexander asked about the definition of military-connected students. Mrs. Barton responded there is a federal definition for districts to receive impact aid, but military-connected students are primarily identified by their parents and guardians when they self-report their status in response to district requests to complete impact aid forms. Districts are incentivized to report military-connected students since they may receive federal impact aid funds.

There being no further discussion, the committee voted unanimously to accept the Subcommittee's three recommendations.

Mr. Robinson then explained the next action item, Guidelines for eLearning for School Make-up Days. Because the General Assembly is still working on the state budget for Fiscal Year 2018-19. The two bodies – the House and Senate – have two very different approaches to the issue of how to use eLearning days for school make-up days. Under one proviso, 1A.86., the EOC would be responsible for implementing a pilot program that includes online or virtual instruction. The Senate authorizes the Department to approve districts wanting to use alternative methods, including online or virtual instruction, up to three days of school make up time. If the House version of the budget passes, then the EOC wanted to be ready to approve districts to participate in an eLearning pilot. To this end, the subcommittee is recommending approval of guidelines to be used for districts participating in the pilot. These guidelines were developed with input from Anderson School District 5, the district that presented at the last EOC meeting about their technology capabilities and this initiative, and with consideration of the guidelines used by the state of Indiana.

The Subcommittee recommends that the full EOC approve guidelines to identify up to five school districts, with Anderson 5 being one of the districts selected, for inclusion in a pilot program to use eLearning for school make-up days.

Mr. Robinson asked for questions or discussion about the action item. There being none, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of the subcommittee's recommendations.

EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee: Dr. Couch noted that the Subcommittee met on May 21, 2018 and is recommending that the EOC approve three annual reports that are required by state law.

The first was the annual report on the performance of military-connected students required by the South Carolina Military Family Quality of Life Enhancement Act. Annually the EOC is required to provide a comprehensive annual report concerning the performance of military connected children. The report must address, at a minimum, the attendance, academic performance and graduation rates of military-connected students.

Dr. Couch highlighted the following findings from the report:

- As a state, South Carolina continues to underreport the number of military-connected students, but the difference in numbers reported at the state and

national level is closing. Over the past two years, there has been a 23% increase in the number of military-connected students reported in PowerSchool.

- Districts report that there were 14,070 military-connected students enrolled in public schools in 2016-17, approximately 90% of the students attend one eleven school districts.

- Military-connected students continue to outperform their peers on state-administered standardized tests as measured by their performance during the 2016-17 school year. For example, on SC READY, in English language arts, 57.7% of third grade military-connected students scored "Meets or Exceeds Expectations," compared to 42.1% of their peers who scored "Meets" or Exceeds Expectations." In math, 70.8% of military-connected students scored "Meets or Exceeds Expectations" and 52.5% of their peers scored "Meets or Exceeds Expectations," representing an 18.3% difference. The most significant variation is in the eighth grade Science test. While 49.5% of the state's eighth graders scored "Meets or Exceeds Expectations" in science, almost 62% of military-connected students scored "Meets or Exceeds Expectations," representing a 12.4 increase above the state average.

- The high school graduation rate for military-connected students, including students whose parents were in the National Guard and US Reserves, was 94.1% as compared to the state on-time graduation rate of 84.46%.

Mr. Robinson asked if there were any questions or discussions. There being none, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of the subcommittee's recommendations.

The second report was the annual report on the South Carolina Teacher Loan Program as required by state law and as funded with EIA revenues of $5.1 million. The report documented the administration of the program in Fiscal Year 2016-17. Dr. Couch noted the following findings from the report. Since Fiscal Year 2014-15, the teacher shortage issue has increased:

- The number of graduates from SC teacher education programs has declined by 20%;
- The number of teachers leaving teaching and not returning has increased by 18%; and
- The number of teachers not returning after five or fewer years of service has increased by 43%.

Regarding the Teacher Loan Program in 2016-17, Dr. Couch noted the following statistics:

- 1,401 individuals applied to the SC Teacher Loan Program, an increase of only 5 applications from the prior year;

- 1,166 individuals received a loan; 204 were denied primarily due to the failure of the applicant to meet the academic grade point criteria.

- The percentage of male applicants decreased by almost 1%. There was a 4.7% decrease in African American applicants from 2015-16 to 2016-17, the most significant annual drop in African American applicants. In 2016-17, 14% were minorities, compared to 18% in 2012-13.

- Overwhelmingly, applicants and recipients of the Teacher Loan Program were white females who were Teacher Cadets and were enrolled as undergraduates. In 2016-17, 79.5% were female and 83.5 % were White.

- There were 7,960 former Teacher Loan recipients employed in public schools in 2016-17.

Dr. Couch noted that the South Carolina Teacher Loan Advisory Committee has proposed changes to the Teacher Loan Program that would require statutory changes. The Subcommittee discussed the changes and was concerned that opening the accelerated loan forgiveness to all teachers might exacerbate the teacher shortage in rural school districts.

Mr. Robinson asked if there were any questions or discussions. There being none, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of the subcommittee's recommendations.

The final action item, Results of the 2017 Parent Survey, were discussed. Dr. Couch focused on the results of questions related to bullying, a topic that received much debate in the General Assembly last session. Regarding parents' perceptions of bullying,

- 71.3% of parents believed that their child's teachers or school staff prevented or stopped bullying at school, which means at least one in 4 parents believed that their child has been bullied.

- 63.1% of parents believed that their child's school had an anti-bullying program to prevent or deal with bullying, which means one in three parents do not believe that their child's school has an anti-bullying program.

- When bullying occurred, parents most frequently reported that it occurred in the classroom (12.3%). The second most frequent location for bullying was on the school bus (9.3%), which is consistent with results from the prior year's parent survey.

Dr. Couch also noted the following:
- The number of parent surveys completed and returned totaled 55,844, a slight increase over the prior year. This number reflected an overall response rate of between 30 and 35% of all eligible parents surveyed.
- Responses typically overrepresented the perceptions of parents who had children in elementary schools and underrepresented the perceptions of parents who had children in high school.

- Respondents typically obtained higher educational achievements and had greater median household incomes than the general population of South Carolina
- As in prior years, the "typical" parent responding to the survey was a white female having attended or graduated from college and having a household income of greater than $35,000.
- With respect to the ethnicity of children in the public schools of South Carolina in 2016-17, parents whose children were African American were underrepresented by 5.4%, and parents whose children were Hispanic were underrepresented by 1.4% in the respondents, while parents whose children were white were overrepresented by 6.5%.
- Parents were asked for the first time about their child's Individual Graduation Plan (IGP). Overall, 81.7% of parents indicated that they were satisfied with the IGP process.
- Between 74% and 87% of parents were satisfied with the learning environment, home and school relations, and physical environment of their child's school.

Mr. Robinson asked if there were any questions or discussions. There being none, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of the subcommittee's recommendations.

SC Department of Education Response to HumRRO Report #2

Mr. Robinson then explained an action item that was added to the agenda regarding approval of the state assessment program. State law requires the EOC to review the state assessment program for "alignment with state standards, level of difficulty and validity, and for the ability to differentiate levels of achievement, and to make recommendations for needed changes, if any." Further, new and revised assessments that are to be used as accountability measures must be adopted upon the advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee.

When new College and Career Ready Standards for ELA and math were approved in 2015, the state assessment system had to change. Currently, the accountability system includes SC READY for grades 3 through 8 in ELA and math; Algebra 1 end-of-course assessment; English 1 end-of-course assessment; and Biology 1 end-of-course assessment. The EOC rather than reviewing the assessments, procured the services of an independent evaluation of these assessments. The vendor selected to perform the evaluation was HumRRO, the Human Resources Research Organization. HumRRO has issued two reports that have previously been approved by the EOC that have focused on the validity and reliability of the tests, namely, to answer the following questions:

- Do the tests meet industry requirements?
- Do the tests meet the minimum legal requirements of SC law?
- How could the tests be improved?

The South Carolina Department of Education was then asked to review the recommendations of HumRRO for improving the tests and to respond how the

Department and the testing vendor, Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) will address the recommendations. Mr. Robinson noted that in the EOC packet are the Department's responses. Based on the very detailed responses and assurances by the Department, Mr. Robinson suggested that the EOC approve these assessments for accountability. The evaluations have been conducted, and will assist the Department in getting US Department of Education approval of these assessments. Rep. Loftis moved to approve the assessments; Sen. Johnson seconded the motion.

Mr. Robinson asked if there were any questions or discussions. There being none, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of the subcommittee's recommendations.

Finally, Mr. Robinson announced to the EOC the upcoming meeting schedule. While in the past the EOC held a summer retreat as a time of planning, this year the Committee is going to have a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, August 6 at 1:00 p.m. in Room 433 of the Blatt Building. The next day, August 7, the EOC will host at the USC Alumni Center a statewide reading conference, which is tentatively entitled: "Solving the Reading/Language/Literacy Problem: Specific Suggestions for Diverse Stakeholder Groups." The EOC will have three national reading/literacy experts in attendance who represent the diversity of our students and their needs. The EOC will invite legislators/policy makers including school board members, teachers, district and school administrators, etc. to the conference. Mr. Robinson then called upon Ms. Barton to provide information to members on hotel accommodations.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Date: <u>August 6, 2018</u>

<u>ACTION ITEM</u>
Applications for eLearning Pilot Program for School Make-up

<u>PURPOSE/AUTHORITY</u>
Proviso 1A.86. of the 2018-19 General Appropriation Act as ratified by the General Assembly on June 29, 2018 requires the EOC to implement and evaluate a pilot program that includes online or virtual instruction for school make-up days.

<u>CRITICAL FACTS</u>
The EOC is being asked to consider four applications to participate in the pilot: Pickens County School District; Spartanburg School District 1; Kershaw County School District; and Spartanburg School District 7.

<u>TIMELINE/REVIEW PROCESS</u>

March 14, 2018	House gives third reading to H.4950, which includes Proviso 1A.86.
April 9, 2018	Anderson School District 5 presents to EOC
April 12, 2018	Senate gives third reading to H.4950, which includes Proviso 1A.93.
May 21, 2018	Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee reviews and recommends to full EOC the guidelines to implement the pilot.
June 11, 2018	EOC approves guidelines and participation of Anderson School District 5 in the pilot program. EOC receives application from Pickens County School District.
June 29, 2018	General Assembly ratifies 2018-19 General Appropriation Act
July 9, 2018	EOC staff mails and emails to all school districts the eLearning Pilot Program Guidelines and Application form.
July 19, 2018	EOC receives application from Anderson School District 4.
July 24, 2018	EOC receives application from Spartanburg School District 1.
July 25, 2018	EOC receives application from Kershaw County School District.
July 31, 2018	Anderson School District 4 withdrew its application. EOC receives application from Spartanburg School District 7.

<u>ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR EOC</u>
The EOC will absorb the cost of evaluating the pilot and reporting on its impact.

    Fund/Source:

<u>ACTION REQUEST</u>

☐ **For approval**　　　　　　　　　　☐ **For information**

<u>ACTION TAKEN</u>

☐ **Approved**　　　　　　　　　　☐ **Amended**

☐ **Not Approved**　　　　　　　　　　☐ **Action deferred (explain)**

1A.86. (SDE-EIA: Digital Learning Plan) From funds administered by the K-12 Technology Committee, the following study committee is created to develop a Digital Learning Plan for the state's K-12 public education system. The goal of the Digital Learning Plan is to build upon the existing technology foundation of public schools and develop a coherent long-term strategy that sets directions and priorities, supports innovation, and provides resources to enable educators and students to benefit fully from digital-age teaching and learning. The Digital Learning Plan must provide recommendations for State actions that will guide and support K-12 schools in their transitions to digital-age education. The plan must be submitted to the General Assembly by January 1, 2019 and must address, at a minimum, the following issues for districts and schools: technology, infrastructure, and devices; human capacity; content instruction and assessment; security; regional and state support; policy and funding; local digital learning initiatives; and the use of alternative methods of instruction for scheduled make up time. The Digital Learning Plan must include timelines for implementation and cost projections beginning with the subsequent fiscal year. The study committee shall confer with other states and national experts on developing and implementing the Digital Learning Plan. Staff support shall be provided by the K-12 Technology Committee and agencies represented on the committee. The study committee shall be composed of the following members:

    1.   Executive Director of the Department of Administration, or his designee, who shall chair the study committee;

    2.   State Superintendent of Education, or his designee;

    3.   President of Educational Television Commission, or his designee;

    4.   Director of the State Library, or his designee;

    5.   Executive Director of the Education Oversight Committee, or his designee;

    6.   A representative of the private sector in the field of information technology appointed by the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee;

    7.   A representative of the private sector in the field of information technology appointed by the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee;

    8.   One representative of an educator preparation program appointed by the State Board of Education;

    9.   One member of a local board of education who represents a local education agency that has successfully incorporated technology into its schools, who is appointed by the Education Oversight Committee;

    10. One member of a local board of education who represents a local education agency that has limited access to technology, who is appointed by the Education Oversight Committee; and

    11. One parent of a public school child appointed by the Education Oversight Committee.

The Education Oversight Committee shall be responsible for and have control over the construct and implementation of the pilot program for alternative methods of instruction for make-up days. For the current fiscal year, the Education Oversight Committee shall select school districts around the state for a pilot program to utilize alternative methods of instruction which may include, but are not limited to, online or virtual instruction for scheduled make up time. All make up time must reflect the number of hours of the make-up days the instruction will cover. All make up time must meet state requirements for elementary and secondary school days. The Education Oversight Committee shall provide guidelines to the selected school districts no later than August 1, 2018. All districts shall continue to report to the Department of Education all days missed, reasons for the absences, days made up, and now the alternative method of instruction used. The Education Oversight Committee shall work with the Educational Television Commission (ETV) and the State Library to utilize and coordinate available ETV and State Library resources and explore alternative means of delivery to districts that may lack proper access to online instruction.

The school districts shall report the following information to the Education Oversight Committee by April 1, 2019: method(s) of implementation utilized, advantages and disadvantages of the method(s) used, and any feedback received from parents or guardians.

The Education Oversight shall report those findings to the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee by June 1, 2019.
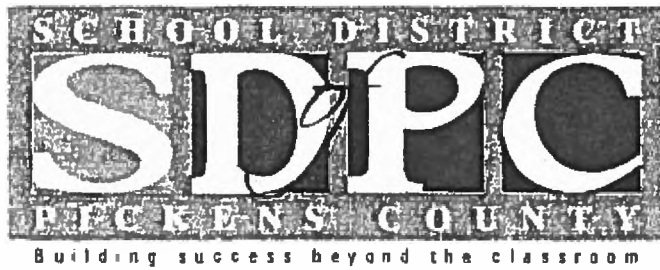
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PICKENS COUNTY

eLEARNING APPLICATION

2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR

Requirements for District Participation in eLearning Pilot

The superintendent of the school district and the chair of the board of trustees of the school district must certify to the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) that the district:

1. Meets the following minimum requirements to participate in the eLearning pilot to use eLearning to make up days missed due to inclement weather;
2. Agrees to provide data to the EOC or independent consultants hired by the EOC to evaluate implementation of the pilot. The data elements will be mutually agreed upon by the EOC and the pilot school districts; however, all data elements will be consistent across districts participating in the pilot; and
3. Agrees to facilitate the collection of online surveys as requested by the EOC to identify the successes and challenges of the pilot from the perspective of administrators, classroom teachers, students, and parents.

Approval of Districts for Participation in Pilot

The following are recommendations proposed by the Academic Standards and Assessments Subcommittee to the EOC staff for determining which districts participate in the pilot:

1. Only school districts that submit documentation certifying their ability to meet the following minimum requirements for participation will be considered for participation in the pilot.
2. No more than five districts will be approved for participation in the pilot in school year 2018-19 with districts that successfully complete the application process approved in the order received. The Subcommittee recommends that Anderson 5 be one of the five districts selected.
3. To the extent possible, the districts selected for the pilot will represent various sizes and geographic locations as well as alternative methods of instruction.
4. Pending final approval of the 2018-19 General Appropriation Act, the EOC will begin approval of districts for participation in the pilot beginning at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

Requirements	Certification or Information Needed from District
All Schools	The district certifies that eLearning will be implemented for **all** schools in the district for one or more make-up days due to inclement weather. **X YES** **___NO**
Instructional eLearning Days	Section 59-1-425 of the South Carolina Code of Laws defines an instructional day and the requirements for make-up days. The law defines an instructional day for elementary students to be a minimum of 5.5 hours a day and for secondary students, 6.0 hours. Regulation 43-172 stipulates that "a pupil shall maintain membership in a minimum of 200 minutes of daily instruction or its equivalency for an annual accumulation of 36,000 minutes." For any eLearning day used, the district certifies that each eLearning day will be 5.5 hours for students in kindergarten through grade 8 and 6.0 hours for students in grades 9-12, or a minimum of 200 minutes of daily instruction. **X YES** **___NO** Will any eLearning days be used for specific built-in, make-up days like Martin Luther King Day, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, etc.? **X YES** **___NO** *If Yes, which days?* SDPC will use eLearning days for the three built-in inclement weather days already in our calendar. Those days are February 15, 2019, March 29, 2019, and April 22, 2019. If additional days are needed, SDPC will use eLearning days for these make-up days as well.
Number of eLearning Days	Will the district limit the number of days of eLearning used for make-up days? **___Yes** **X No** **If Yes . . .** *At a maximum, how many eLearning days could be used for make-up days?* For the 2018-2019 school year, SDPC will use eLearning days for all make-up days.

Requirements	Certification or Information Needed from District
Number of eLearning Days	*How will the district decide when/if eLearning days will occur?* For the 2018-2019 school year, SDPC will use eLearning days for all make-up days. *How will the district notify parents and staff of implementation of an eLearning day?* If SDPC is selected to participate in the pilot, we will begin communicating eLearning days at back-to-school events and communications occurring throughout the summer. This information will be prominent in newsletters, websites, press releases, phone messages, email communication, and social media releases.
eLearning Lessons	The district certifies that the eLearning lessons will address academic content or skills that would have been addressed if school had been in session in a traditional setting. **X** **Yes** **___No**
Access	The district certifies that **all** students in the district have access to a device or an app to complete all eLearning lessons. **___Yes** **X** **No** The district has assigned a digital device for all students in *grades 4 through 12* which can be taken home daily. *Please identify which devices have been assigned.* The SDPC has issued Chromebooks to all students in grades 4-12. Many schools in our district are also 1:1 in 3rd grade. All students in *grades 4 through 12* have access to a digital device or app as documented by the SDPC technology plan. *Please provide specific information on apps to be used to complete eLearning lessons.* SDPC uses Classlink Launchpad as our single sign-on solution and Schoology as our learning management system. All students in grades 4K through 12th have network logins to these applications. Additionally, 92% of our textbooks are available digitally in addition to hundreds of digital web applications, and teachers have digitized lessons for

Requirements	Certification or Information Needed from District
	eLearning days. Digitized lessons can be downloaded to the Chromebooks for students without Internet access. For grades 5K through 3rd grade, optimally teachers will develop eLearning packets that are a continuation of the SC academic standards content on instructional calendar for that day/week (not "emergency lesson plans"). Acceptably, activities may focus on an ongoing SC academic power standards that are repeated throughout the year, and therefore can be planned in advance. They should address power standards for each grade level for ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies. These eLearning packets will be available digitally through Schoology as well as in print form for grades 5K through 3rd grade. Activities should take approximately one class period to complete. The eLearning lessons in grades 4-12 must be a continuation of the SC academic standards content on instructional calendar for that day/week (not "emergency lesson plans"). Teachers should follow a common foldering/naming scheme in Schoology for the eLearning activities to ensure better communication and easier access.
Demonstrated Access to Students of eLearning lesson plans **Demonstrated Access to Students of eLearning lesson plans**	The district certifies that all students and teachers either have access to the Internet away from school buildings or have access to the eLearning assignments. __X__ Yes ____No Please check *all* that apply below and provide any additional information on how the district will document access. __X__ The district will collect information from each teacher and parent/guardian documenting that the student has access to broadband Internet access at home and can download necessary apps. ____ The district will collect information from each teacher and parent/guardian documenting what devices that teachers and students use to access the Internet outside of school. ____ The district will work with teachers and parents to access discounted Internet access at home.

Requirements	Certification or Information Needed from District
	__X__ The district will allow students to download eLearning assignments onto their devices. __X__ The district will allow students to work offline in a learning management system like Google Drive or allow for offline work. ____ Other (Please specify)
Notification	The district certifies that students and parents/guardians will be informed of their eLearning targets for any day missed by inclement weather and made up with eLearning by 9 a.m. __X__ Yes ____No
Teacher Responsibility	The district certifies that each classroom teacher of record will be responsible for uploading eLearning assignments and will have "office hours" to answer questions or assist parents/guardians and students in completing the virtual assignments. __X__ Yes ____No ***Please provide information on the specific responsibilities of classroom teachers.*** Classroom teachers will be responsible for developing standards-based digital lessons for each subject area to cover the lessons that would have been taught the day of inclement weather. All school assignments will be posted by 9 a.m. Classroom teachers will be expected to be online a minimum of 4 hours from 10 AM to 2 PM and 2 hours in the evening on the day of inclement weather eLearning. Additionally, classroom teachers will be available to answer questions through Schoology, phone calls, and email while the work is being completed through the due date. Teachers will make every effort to be available to students before/after school and during the day for students through the make-up due date. Teachers are encouraged to have a partner teacher to share online meeting hours, therefore providing students with access to a teacher for longer portions of the day as well as ensuring access to a teacher in the event the primary teacher does not have Internet access on the eLearning day or in the event the primary teacher is sick.

Requirements	Certification or Information Needed from District
	Classroom teachers and students will do a "test' of the eLearning activity prior to the actual eLearning day to be sure that the materials/assignments have been posted, students know where the materials/assignments are and that they can access the materials, etc. Teachers should follow a common foldering/naming scheme in Schoology for the eLearning activities to ensure better communication and easier access.
Student Responsibility	The district certifies that each student and parents/guardians have a clear understanding of the responsibility of students to complete the eLearning assignments. **X Yes** **No**
Student Responsibility	Please respond to the following questions: *How will the district communicate to students and parents?* In addition to general communication about eLearning days, SDPC and schools will make phone, email, and social media announcements on the day of eLearning to remind students and parents of the eLearning day requirements, with a reminder to access Schoology for digital lessons. Additionally, phone, email, and social media announcements will be made following eLearning days with reminders about due date deadlines. Classroom teachers and students will do a "test' of the eLearning activity prior to the actual eLearning day to be sure that the materials/assignments have been posted, students know where the materials/assignments are and that they can access the materials, etc. Teachers should follow a common foldering/naming scheme in Schoology for the eLearning activities to ensure better communication and easier access. *How many days will the student have to complete all make-up work?* Students will use Schoology to log-in to their course pages where they will access assignments, resources, and other materials. If the power is out, a student may access the course page when power returns. If a student does not have access to a computer or device (tablet, smartphone, etc.) the student can get the assignment once school resumes. Students have five school days to make up eLearning digital lessons/learning packets. Student work will be expected to be turned in to the teacher (either digitally or in person), using a school's process for turning in work following an absence.

Requirements	Certification or Information Needed from District
	How will incomplete work be handled? Students have five school days to make up eLearning digital lessons/learning packets. Work not handed in at all will be counted as an absence. Incomplete work will be handled the same way incomplete work is handled during a regular day. Classroom teachers will follow up individually/directly with students who have not completed/turned in the eLearning requirements during the 5 day window for make-up/incomplete work.
Accommodations	For students with disabilities who do not use an online platform for eLearning or for whom an online platform is not appropriate, teachers will provide parents/caregivers with appropriate educational materials and learning activities for student use. All students who have accommodations for instruction will be provided with or have access to those accommodations. For limited English proficient students, teachers will provide parents/caregivers appropriate educational materials and learning activities for student use per the Individual Learning Plan. __X__ Yes ____No **_Please describe how the district will handle the above accommodations._** Teachers should be available for direct student support during the school day hours (via phone, discussion boards, online conference tools, etc.). Teachers will assure special education, ESOL, and other support teachers have appropriate access to provide student support (e.g., Partner Teacher access in course page). These teachers will also be expected to maintain minimal office hours between 10 AM and 2 PM and 2 hours in the evening. Teachers with students who do not use online platforms will make lessons available in print or following the methodology outlined in the student's IEP or 504 plan. Accommodations written in the student's IEP or 504 will be followed for eLearning lessons in the same way they are for digital learning done face-to-face.
Technical Support	**_If students or parents have problems with accessing the eLearning assignments, how will the district respond to questions or concerns?_**

Requirements	Certification or Information Needed from District
	AITS will have an eLearning electronic support hotline available for parents and students having technical issues from 10 AM through 9 PM.
Learning Management System	The district has a learning management system that will post the assignments for eLearning day and will document that student assignments are collected and completed. __X_Yes ___No
Learning Management System	*Please identify the learning management system or systems to be used.* SPDC uses Schoology for our LMS and all students in grades 5K through 12th grade are accustomed to logging in daily. *Please denote grade levels served:* _5K-12th_____
Other Support	Is the district interested in reviewing and using eLearning resources provided by Discus through the South Carolina State Library and/or SC ETV? __X__Yes ___No
Reporting	The district agrees to work with the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) and its staff to monitor and document the implementation and impact of eLearning for school make-up days. The reporting will include, but is not limited to: methods of implementation utilized; advantages and disadvantages; barriers and opportunities; and feedback from administrators, teachers, students, and parents/ guardians. The EOC will not assess the impact on student achievement. __X_Yes ___No
Key Contact	Please provide the name, title and contact information for the district employee who will be responsible for implementation of eLearning: Name: _Mrs. Sharon Huff_____ Title: _Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services___ Email: _SharonHuff@pickens.k12.sc.us_____ Phone Number: _864-397-1036_____ Name: _Dr. Barbara Nesbitt_
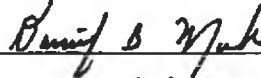
Requirements	Certification or Information Needed from District
	Title: Executive Director of Technology Email: BarbaraNesbitt@pickens.k12.sc.us Phone Number: 864-397-1030

By signing below, the <u>School District of Pickens County</u> (*District name*) certifies that it meets the above requirements to participate in the eLearning pilot for school make-up days and that it will provide the necessary data and cooperation to the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) to monitor and evaluate implementation of the eLearning pilot for school make-up days.

Superintendent: <u>Dr. Danny Merck</u>

Signature of Superintendent:
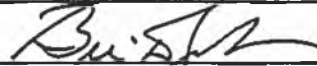
Date: <u>6.8.18</u>

Chair of Board of Trustees <u>Dr. Brian Swords</u>

Signature of Board Chair:

Date: <u>6-8-18</u>

Spartanburg School District 1

eLearning Application
2018-19 School Year

July 24, 2018

Application for elearning Pilot Program	
Requirements	**Certification or Information Needed from District**
All Schools	The district certifies that eLearning will be implemented for all schools in the district for one or more make-up days due to inclement weather. √ YES _NO
Instructional elearning Days	Section 59-1-425 of the South Carolina Code of Laws defines an instructional day and the requirements for make-up days. The law defines an instructional day for elementary students to be a minimum of 5.5 hours a day and for secondary students, 6.0 hours. Regulation 43-172 stipulates that "a pupil shall maintain membership in a minimum of 200 minutes of daily instruction or its equivalency for an annual accumulation of 36,000 minutes." For any eLearning day used, the district certifies that each eLearning day will be 5.5 hours for students in kindergarten through grade 8 and 6.0 hours for students in grades 9-12, or a minimum of 200 minutes of daily instruction. √YES _NO Will any eLearning days be used for specific built-in, make-up days like Martin Luther King Day, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, etc.? _YES √ NO If Yes, which days? N/A
Number of elearning Days	Will the district limit the number of days of eLearning used for make-up days? _Yes √ No If Yes ... At a maximum, how many eLearning days could be used for make-up days? How will the district decide when/if eLearning days will occur? • *The district Superintendent will make the final decision as part of inclement weather procedures.* How will the district notify parents and staff of implementation of an elearningday? • *As part of our inclement weather notification, parents and staff will be notified of eLearning day via email notification,phone call, text, posting to social media sites (facebook-twitter), and each school and district website.*

Application for elearning Pilot Program	
Requirements	**Certification or Information Needed from District**
eLearning Lessons	The district certifies that the elearning lessons will address academic content or skills that would have been addressed if school had been in session in a traditional setting. √Yes _No
Access	The district certifies that all students in the district have access to a device or an app to complete all elearning lessons. √Yes _No The district has assigned a digital device for all students in grades **3** through **12** which can be taken home daily. Please identify which devices have been assigned. --- All students in grade **k** through **12** have access to a digital device or app as documented by **google admin.** Please provide specific information on apps to be used to complete eleaming lessons. • *Google Apps for Education (Google Classroom, Google Sites, Google Drive, Google Mail, Google Calendar) are available to all students (k-12) and teachers.*
Demonstrated Access to Students of elearning lesson plans	The district certifies that all students and teachers either have access to the Internet away from school buildings or have access to the eleaming assignments. √Yes _No Please check a// that apply below and provide any additional information on how the district will document access. √ The district will collect information from each teacher and parent/guardian documenting that the student has access to broadband Internet access at home and can download necessary apps. √ The district will collect information from each teacher and parent/guardian documenting what devices that teachers and students use to access the Internet outside of school. √ The district will work with teachers and parents to access discounted Internet access at home. √ The district will allow students to download elearning assignments onto their devices. √ The district will allow students to work offline in a learning management system like Google Drive or allow for offline work. √ Other (Please specify): The district will monitor access realtime to google classroom and drive services during eLearning days.

Application for elearning Pilot Program	
Requirements	**Certification or Information Needed from District**
Notification	The district certifies that students and parents/guardians will be informed of their elearning targets for any day missed by inclement weather and made up with elearning by 9 a.m. √ Yes _No
Teacher Responsibility	The district certifies that each classroom teacher of record will be responsible for uploading elearning assignments and will have "office hours" to answer questions or assist parents/guardians and students in completing the virtual assignments. √ Yes _No Please provide information on the specific responsibilities of classroom teachers. • *The district will create a detailed list of teacher expectations as well as training materials for teachers to refer for implementation of eLearning virtual assignments.*
Student Responsibility	The district certifies that each student and parents/guardians have a clear understanding of the responsibility of students to complete the elearning assignments. √ Yes _No Please respond to the following questions: • How will the district communicate to students and parents? *A series of infographics, video tutorials, email blasts to parents and students throughout the year.* • How many days will the student have to complete all make-up work? *7* • How will incomplete work be handled? *Every effort will be made to determine that access to technology or resources were not a factor prior to marking work incomplete.*
Accommodations	For students with disabilities who do not use an online platform for elearning or for whom an online platform is not appropriate, teachers will provide parents/caregivers with appropriate educational materials and learning activities for student use. All students who have accommodations for instruction will be provided with or have access to those accommodations. For limited English proficient students, teachers will provide parents/caregivers appropriate educational materials and learning activities for student use per the Individual Learning Plan. √Yes _No Please describe how the district will handle the above accommodations. Multiple languages will be provided for parent communication. • *Each student's individual learning plan will be referenced by the teacher when creating the virtual assignments.*

Application for elearning Pilot Program	
Requirements	**Certification or Information Needed from District**
Technical Support	If students or parents have problems with accessing the elearning assignments, how will the district respond to questions or concerns? • *The district will create a communications portal that will be monitored real-time during eLearning day. A FAQ will also be created for future reference.*
Learning Management System	The district has a learning management system that will post the assignments for eLearning day and will document that student assignments are collected and completed. √Yes _No Please identify the learning management system or systems to be used. Please denote grade levels served: • *Google Classroom*
Other Support	Is the district interested in reviewing and using eLearning resources provided by Discus through the South Carolina State Library and/or SC ETV? √Yes _No
Reporting	The district agrees to work with the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) and its staff to monitor and document the implementation and impact of eLearning for school make-up days. The reporting will include, but is not limited to: methods of implementation utilized; advantages and disadvantages; barriers and opportunities; and feedback from administrators, teachers, students, and parents/ guardians. The EOC will not assess the impact on student achievement. √Yes _No
Key Contact	Please provide the name, title and contact information for the district employee who will be responsible for implementation of eLearning: *Name: Jimmy Pryor* *Title: Assistant Superintendent for Accountability and Technology Services* *Email: jimmy.pryor@spart1.org* *Phone Number: 864-472-2846 ext 5243*

By signing below, **Spartanburg District 1** certifies that it meets the above requirements to participate in the elearning pilot for school make-up days and that it will provide the necessary data and cooperation to the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) to monitor and evaluate implementation of the elearning pilot for school make-up days.

Superintendent: Ronald W. Garner, Ed.D.

Signature of Superintendent:

Date: 7/24/2018

Chair of Board of Trustees: Mark C. Rollins

Signature of Board Chair:

Date: 7/24/2018

Kershaw County School District

eLearning Application
2018-19 School Year

July 24, 2018

Application for eLearning Pilot Program	
Requirements	**Certification or Information Needed from District**
All Schools	The district certifies that eLearning will be implemented for **all** schools in the district for one or more make-up days due to inclement weather. <u>X</u> YES ___NO
Instructional eLearning Days	Section 59-1-425 of the South Carolina Code of Laws defines an instructional day and the requirements for make-up days. The law defines an instructional day for elementary students to be a minimum of 5.5 hours a day and for secondary students, 6.0 hours. Regulation 43-172 stipulates that "a pupil shall maintain membership in a minimum of 200 minutes of daily instruction or its equivalency for an annual accumulation of 36,000 minutes." For any eLearning day used, the district certifies that each eLearning day will be 5.5 hours for students in kindergarten through grade 8 and 6.0 hours for students in grades 9-12, or a minimum of 200 minutes of daily instruction. <u>X</u>YES ___NO Will any eLearning days be used for specific built-in, make-up days like Martin Luther King Day, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, etc.? <u>X</u> YES ___NO **If Yes**, which days? __President's Day only_____
Number of eLearning Days	Will the district limit the number of days of eLearning used for make-up days? <u>X</u> Yes ___No **If Yes . . .** At a maximum, how many eLearning days could be used for make-up days? __5___ How will the district decide when/if eLearning days will occur? __eLearning days for the Kershaw County School District will only be used for inclement weather scenarios.__

Application for eLearning Pilot Program	
Requirements	**Certification or Information Needed from District**
Number of eLearning Days	How will the district notify parents and staff of implementation of an eLearning day? __Powerschool Messenger (telephone, email), twitter, facebook__ _____
eLearning Lessons	The district certifies that the eLearning lessons will address academic content or skills that would have been addressed if school had been in session in a traditional setting. __X Yes ___No
Access	The district certifies that **all** students in the district have access to a device or an app to complete all eLearning lessons. __X Yes ___No The district has assigned a digital device for all students in grades _3_ through _8_ which can be taken home daily. Please identify which devices have been assigned. Chromebook and Dell Laptops _____ All students in grades _K_ through _12_ have access to a digital device or app as documented by _____. Please provide specific information on apps to be used to complete eLearning lessons. Google Classroom (personalized cultivated digital curriculum, Classworks, Imagine Learning, APEX
Demonstrated Access to Students of eLearning lesson plans	The district certifies that all students and teachers either have access to the Internet away from school buildings or have access to the eLearning assignments. __X Yes ___No Please check *all* that apply below and provide any additional information on how the district will document access. Kershaw County School District will employ an individual responsible for eLearning in the district. This individual has been responsible for cultivated digital curriculum for the last 10 years at Northern Illinois University

Application for eLearning Pilot Program	
Requirements	**Certification or Information Needed from District**
Demonstrated Access to Students of eLearning lesson plans	__x__ The district will collect information from each teacher and parent/guardian documenting that the student has access to broadband Internet access at home and can download necessary apps. __x__ The district will collect information from each teacher and parent/guardian documenting what devices that teachers and students use to access the Internet outside of school. __x__ The district will work with teachers and parents to access discounted Internet access at home. __x__ The district will allow students to download eLearning assignments onto their devices. __x__ The district will allow students to work offline in a learning management system like Google Drive or allow for offline work. _____ Other (Please specify)
Notification	The district certifies that students and parents/guardians will be informed of their eLearning targets for any day missed by inclement weather and made up with eLearning by 9 a.m. __x__ Yes _____ No
Teacher Responsibility	The district certifies that each classroom teacher of record will be responsible for uploading eLearning assignments and will have "office hours" to answer questions or assist parents/guardians and students in completing the virtual assignments. __x__ Yes _____ No Please provide information on the specific responsibilities of classroom teachers.
Student Responsibility	The district certifies that each student and parents/guardians have a clear understanding of the responsibility of students to complete the eLearning assignments.

Application for eLearning Pilot Program	
Requirements	**Certification or Information Needed from District**
Student Responsibility	<u>x </u>Yes ___No Please respond to the following questions: How will the district communicate to students and parents? <u>The district will</u> <u>utilize a variety of communication tools, automated phone messaging system, gmail,</u> <u>social media (faceboook and twitter) as well as the LMS in PowerSchool</u> How many days will the student have to complete all make-up work? <u>2</u> How will incomplete work be handled? <u>If work is not completed the student will</u> <u>either be assigned a study table to complete the work or an absence in the attendance book</u>
Accommodations	For students with disabilities who do not use an online platform for eLearning or for whom an online platform is not appropriate, teachers will provide parents/caregivers with appropriate educational materials and learning activities for student use. All students who have accommodations for instruction will be provided with or have access to those accommodations. For limited English proficient students, teachers will provide parents/caregivers appropriate educational materials and learning activities for student use per the Individual Learning Plan. <u>x </u>Yes ___No Please describe how the district will handle the above accommodations. <u>Professional Development will occur early so that teachers are prepared with this type of</u> <u>lesson planning. The "eLearning curriculum coordinator" will be responsible for training staff</u> <u>appropriately. Additionally, there will be a help desk available for ESL students</u>
Technical Support	If students or parents have problems with accessing the eLearning assignments, how will the district respond to questions or concerns? <u>There will be two levels of response, the first will be fielded at the teacher level and the</u> <u>second level will be a fully staffed help desk containing the districts technology personnel</u>

Application for eLearning Pilot Program

Requirements	Certification or Information Needed from District
Learning Management System **Learning Management System**	The district has a learning management system that will post the assignments for eLearning day and will document that student assignments are collected and completed. **_x_ Yes** **___No** Please identify the learning management system or systems to be used. Please denote grade levels served: Blackboard Connect (K-12) Middle and High School teachers will also utilized Google Classroom
Other Support	Is the district interested in reviewing and using eLearning resources provided by Discus through the South Carolina State Library and/or SC ETV? **_x_ Yes** **___No**
Reporting	The district agrees to work with the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) and its staff to monitor and document the implementation and impact of eLearning for school make-up days. The reporting will include, but is not limited to: methods of implementation utilized; advantages and disadvantages; barriers and opportunities; and feedback from administrators, teachers, students, and parents/ guardians. The EOC will not assess the impact on student achievement. **_x_ Yes** **___No**
Key Contact	Please provide the name, title and contact information for the district employee who will be responsible for implementation of eLearning: Name: Dr. William Shane Robbins Title: Superintendent Email: shane.robbins@kcsdschools.net Phone Number: 803-432-8416

By signing below, <u>Kershaw County School District</u>(*District name*) certifies that it meets the above requirements to participate in the eLearning pilot for school make-up days and that it will provide the necessary data and cooperation to the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) to monitor and evaluate implementation of the eLearning pilot for school make-up days.
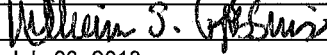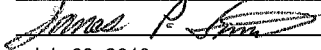
Superintendent: Dr. William Shane Robbins
Signature of Superintendent:
Date: July 23, 2018
Chair of Board of Trustees   Dr. James Smith
Signature of Board Chair:
Date: July 23, 2018

Spartanburg School District 7

eLearning Application
2018-19 School Year

July 31, 2018

Requirements	Certification or Information Needed from District
All Schools	The district certifies that eLearning will be implemented for **all** schools in the district for one or more make-up days due to inclement weather. _X_ **YES** ___**NO**
Instructional eLearning Days	Section 59-1-425 of the South Carolina Code of Laws defines an instructional day and the requirements for make-up days. The law defines an instructional day for elementary students to be a minimum of 5.5 hours a day and for secondary students, 6.0 hours. Regulation 43-172 stipulates that "a pupil shall maintain membership in a minimum of 200 minutes of daily instruction or its equivalency for an annual accumulation of 36,000 minutes." For any eLearning day used, the district certifies that each eLearning day will be 5.5 hours for students in kindergarten through grade 8 and 6.0 hours for students in grades 9-12, or a minimum of 200 minutes of daily instruction. _X_ **YES** ___**NO** Will any eLearning days be used for specific built-in, make-up days like Martin Luther King Day, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, etc.? ___**YES** _X_ **NO** **If Yes**, which days? _____
Number of eLearning Days	Will the district limit the number of days of eLearning used for make-up days? _X_ **Yes** ___**No** **If Yes** . . . At a maximum, how many eLearning days could be used for make-up days? _3_ How will the district decide when/if eLearning days will occur? _ **Please see questions addendum attached.** _____

Requirements	Certification or Information Needed from District
Number of eLearning Days	How will the district notify parents and staff of implementation of an eLearning day? **Please see questions addendum attached.** _____ _____
eLearning Lessons	The district certifies that the eLearning lessons will address academic content or skills that would have been addressed if school had been in session in a traditional setting. **X**_ Yes ___No
Access	The district certifies that **all** students in the district have access to a device or an app to complete all eLearning lessons. **X**_ Yes ___No The district has assigned a digital device for all students in grades **4**_ through **12**_ which can be taken home daily. Please identify which devices have been assigned. _____ All students in grades **K** through **12** have access to a digital device or app as documented by **Active software licenses and inventory records.** Please provide specific information on apps to be used to complete eLearning lessons. **Please see questions addendum attached.**
Demonstrated Access to Students of eLearning lesson plans	The district certifies that all students and teachers either have access to the Internet away from school buildings or have access to the eLearning assignments. **X**_Yes ___No Please check _all_ that apply below and provide any additional information on how the district will document access. **X**_ The district will collect information from each teacher and parent/guardian documenting that the student has access to broadband Internet access at home and can download necessary apps.

Requirements	Certification or Information Needed from District
Demonstrated Access to Students of eLearning lesson plans	**X** The district will collect information from each teacher and parent/guardian documenting what devices that teachers and students use to access the Internet outside of school. **X** The district will work with teachers and parents to access discounted Internet access at home. **X** The district will allow students to download eLearning assignments onto their devices. **X** The district will allow students to work offline in a learning management system like Google Drive or allow for offline work. ___ Other (Please specify)
Notification	The district certifies that students and parents/guardians will be informed of their eLearning targets for any day missed by inclement weather and made up with eLearning by 9 a.m. **X** Yes ___No
Teacher Responsibility	The district certifies that each classroom teacher of record will be responsible for uploading eLearning assignments and will have "office hours" to answer questions or assist parents/guardians and students in completing the virtual assignments. **X** Yes ___No Please provide information on the specific responsibilities of classroom teachers. **Please see questions addendum attached.**
Student Responsibility	The district certifies that each student and parents/guardians have a clear understanding of the responsibility of students to complete the eLearning assignments. **X** Yes ___No

Requirements	Certification or Information Needed from District
Student Responsibility	Please respond to the following questions: How will the district communicate to students and parents? _____ **_Please see questions addendum attached.** _____ _____ How many days will the student have to complete all make-up work? __ **2-3 Days** How will incomplete work be handled? _____ **_Please see questions addendum attached.** _____ _____
Accommodations	For students with disabilities who do not use an online platform for eLearning or for whom an online platform is not appropriate, teachers will provide parents/caregivers with appropriate educational materials and learning activities for student use. All students who have accommodations for instruction will be provided with or have access to those accommodations. For limited English proficient students, teachers will provide parents/caregivers appropriate educational materials and learning activities for student use per the Individual Learning Plan. <u>X</u> Yes ___No Please describe how the district will handle the above accommodations. **Please see questions addendum attached.** _____ _____ _____
Technical Support	If students or parents have problems with accessing the eLearning assignments, how will the district respond to questions or concerns? **Please see questions addendum attached.** _____ _____
Learning Management System	The district has a learning management system that will post the assignments for eLearning day and will document that student assignments are collected and completed. <u>X</u> Yes ___No

Requirements	Certification or Information Needed from District
Learning Management System	Please identify the learning management system or systems to be used. **Schoology, Office 365, Microsoft Teams and OneNote Class Notebooks** Please denote grade levels served: **K-12**
Other Support	Is the district interested in reviewing and using eLearning resources provided by Discus through the South Carolina State Library and/or SC ETV? **X** Yes ___No
Reporting	The district agrees to work with the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) and its staff to monitor and document the implementation and impact of eLearning for school make-up days. The reporting will include, but is not limited to: methods of implementation utilized; advantages and disadvantages; barriers and opportunities; and feedback from administrators, teachers, students, and parents/ guardians. The EOC will not assess the impact on student achievement. **X** Yes ___No
Key Contact	Please provide the name, title and contact information for the district employee who will be responsible for implementation of eLearning: Name: **Dr. Eric Levitt** Title: **Assistant Superintendent for Planning and Innovation** Email: **ejlevitt@spart7.org** Phone Number: **(864) 594-6187**

By signing below, Spartanburg SD Seven (*District name*) certifies that it meets the above requirements to participate in the eLearning pilot for school make-up days and that it will provide the necessary data and cooperation to the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) to monitor and evaluate implementation of the eLearning pilot for school make-up days.

Superintendent:	**Dr. Russell Booker**
Signature of Superintendent:	
Date:	**7/31/2018**
Chair of Board of Trustees	**Mrs. Sharon Porter**
Signature of Board Chair:	
Date:	**7/31/2018**

By signing below, <u>Spartanburg SD Seven</u> *District name*) certifies that it meets the above requirements to participate in the eLearning pilot for school make-up days and that it will provide the necessary data and cooperation to the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) to monitor and evaluate implementation of the eLearning pilot for school make-up days.

Superintendent:	**Dr. Russell Booker**
Signature of Superintendent:	_Russell W Booker_
Date:	**7/31/2018**
Chair of Board of Trustees	Mrs. Sharon Porter _Sharon Porter_
Signature of Board Chair:	
Date:	7/31/2018

Sparttanburg
School
District **SEVEN**

eLearning Pilot Application Questions Addendum

Number of eLearning Days

How will the district decide when/if eLearning days will occur?

As an eLearning pilot district, Spartanburg School District Seven is fully prepared to offer students up to three (3) **eLearning Days** for inclement weather in lieu of three (3) make-up days. In the Upstate, we can count on having multiple winter weather events that require students to make-up days. Starting in the fall, our teachers will be introduced to the idea of an **eLearning Day** during our Teaching and Learning institute called 7Shares, and this will be repeated throughout staff development during the first week of school. Each of our schools is staffed with a highly skilled and highly trained Technology Integration Specialist who will begin working with teachers to develop **eLearning Days** student work portfolios. Students will be able to access their **eLearning lessons** online, or download to their devices, in the event of inclement weather.

Because we will begin preparing for inclement weather events right away, we know that when we have a snow day between December – March, all teachers, students, and parents will be aware and know how to access their learning materials.

During this this first year, we will monitor closely all weather reports leading-up to anticipated snow days and make announcements through a multitude of communications channels including Website, Facebook, Twitter, our mass calling system, Schoology (learning management system), as well as leave automated messages on our district and school phone systems alerting parents and students about the **eLearning Days**. We will likely conduct a "dry run" **eLearning Day** that we would not plan to certify as a make-up day to work out any kinks and answer any questions. If all goes well with the dry run, we will plan to implement an **eLearning Day** on the next inclement weather day.

--Next Page--

1

How will the district notify parents and staff of implementation of an eLearning day?

Spartanburg School District Seven has a robust and comprehensive communications plan to notify parents and students of all important activities and events. Because the expectations for an **eLearning Day** would place new responsibilities on students, parents and teachers, we would begin communicating this new opportunity right away.
This means:

- Notifying teachers that we are an **eLearning pilot district** during our beginning of the year Teaching and Learning Day institute called 7Shares. Our superintendent will make an announcement during our districtwide convocation, and we will follow-up during breakout sessions and throughout staff development scheduled for the first week that teachers return.
- Creating engaging announcements right away on our district and school websites notifying parents that we are an eLearning pilot district, and that all schools, and all students are expected to participate in lieu of making-up one inclement weather day.
- Encouraging parents and visitors to our website, hosted by BlackBoard, to sign-up for alerts from the district and/or any school. We would push **eLearning Days** out as an alert so that anyone subscribed will receive a message.
- Providing copy to all principals and teachers explaining how the **eLearning Day** will work and place **eLearning Day** announcements periodically in school newsletters and classroom newsletters.
- Leveraging our schools' and district very active social media feeds on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The announcement and instructions for **eLearning Days** will be posted to all of these channels starting in the early fall, and then of course when an inclement weather day seems imminent, will be re-shared and re-emphasized.
- Notifying students and parents that we are an eLearning pilot district through Schoology, the district's student learning management system.
- Asking principals and teachers to share information about eLearning Days during upcoming Open House events, as well as during first quarter Report Card conferences in late October.
- Notifying stakeholders through our mass telephone calling database that is maintained with very accurate and updated contact numbers.

--Next Page--

Access

Please provide specific information on apps to be used to complete eLearning lessons.

Now in our sixth (6th) year of our digital conversion, all students in grades 2-12 are equipped with an Apple MacBook Air, and all students in grades K-1 have daily access to classroom sets of iPads. There are several ways that teachers are able to share eLearning lessons. The primary method is through Schoology, our student learning management system. Students can access Schoology not only through the web, but are also able to download the free Schoology app and continue to have full access to their eLearning lessons. Parents may also download the app to their phones, so that if a student does not bring his or her MacBook home, or if it is a grade level that does not bring devices home (grades K-3 do not currently bring a device home), access to eLearning lessons is not an obstacle. In addition to Schoology, Spartanburg School District Seven is a Microsoft Office 365 district, which means that all teachers can share eLearning lessons from their OneDrive account in the cloud, through Microsoft Teams, and/or through Microsoft OneNote, a shared online classroom notebook. Again, even if a student does not have his or her school-issued device at home on an **eLearning Day**, all of the Microsoft Office 365 apps are fully accessible through any phone, tablet or desktop computer. Additionally, all of the traditional Microsoft apps are available to students on their device as well as through online/cloud versions accessible through Office 365. This means all students have access to Word (word processing), PowerPoint (slide presentations), and Excel (spreadsheets), as well as other standard apps loaded on their devices including Apple's Safari web browser and Google's Chrome browser. Teachers may also post any eLearning lessons to their class webpages on our BlackBoard-hosted website as well as send lesson links through apps like Remind 101.

Teacher Responsibility

Please provide information on the specific responsibilities of classroom teachers.

Teacher "buy-in" is critical to make an **eLearning Day** effective and productive. We do not expect teachers to figure completely on their own. The district will provide support and training in the form of school Technology Integration Specialists, our director of instructional technology, curriculum coaches in math, reading and science, our deputy superintendent for instruction and our assistant superintendent for planning and innovation. The responsibilities of every teacher will be to develop meaningful, relevant, rigorous, challenging, standards-based eLearning Lessons that meet the attendance requirements for a typical school day. This means that any teacher who is not trained, or needs a brush-up on Schoology or Office 365 will receive ample training and support throughout the fall in preparation of an **eLearning Day** in the event of inclement weather.

--Next Page--

Teachers will be expected to have posted their eLearning Lessons no later than November so that their principal and other appropriate instructional personnel can review and give feedback. Teachers will also be expected to be preparing students in the classroom for the eventuality that we will have an eLearning Day. This communication can be through informal announcements in the classroom, newsletters going home, and information posted on their classroom web pages and Schoology classrooms.

In the days leading up to a likely snow day, teachers will be prepping students and reminding parents about how to access their eLearning lessons. This could mean teachers instructing students to download eLearning lessons to their device (if a student does not have Internet access at home), and/or reminding parents which apps they need to download on a home computer or mobile phone so that their children can access and complete their eLearning lessons.

On an actual **eLearning Day**, teachers will be expected to keep virtual office hours so that parents and/or students can contact them to ask questions. We will ask each teacher to set reasonable hours based on his/her schedule, grade level and subject. These office hours will be reviewed and approved by the school principal. In reality, most teachers will likely answer any questions throughout the day and night, regardless of specific hours.

Through the Schoology website or free app, students and parents have a private and secure way to communicate directly with their teacher. Office 365 also offers private and secure communication through chat and/or email. Every teacher in Spartanburg School District Seven also has a voice mailbox. Parents and/or students may leave messages for a teacher and it will be transmitted directly to the teacher's email inbox for his or her response.

Student Responsibility

How will the district communicate to students and parents?

- Parents will be notified right away that we are an eLearning pilot district through engaging announcements on our district and school websites, and that all schools, and all students are expected to participate in lieu of making-up one inclement weather day.
- Our website, hosted by BlackBoard, gives anyone the ability to sign-up for alerts from the district and/or any school. We would push the **eLearning Day** out as an alert so that anyone subscribed will receive a message.
- All principals and teachers will be provided copy explaining how the **eLearning Days** will work and will place **eLearning Day** announcements periodically in school newsletters and classroom newsletters.

--Next Page--

- All of our schools and district operate very active social media feeds on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. The announcement and instructions for an **eLearning Day** will be posted to all of these channels starting in the early fall, and then of course when an inclement weather day seems imminent, will be re-shared and re-emphasized.
- Students and parents will be notified of **eLearning Days** through Schoology, the district's student learning management system.
- Principals and teachers will share information about **eLearning Days** during upcoming Open House events, as well as during first quarter Report Card conferences in late October.
- Our district maintains a very accurate and updated telephone calling database at the school and district level that we will use to notify all stakeholders about plans for **eLearning Days**.

How will incomplete work be handled?

We know despite everyone's best effort, circumstances will arise when a student is not able to complete an eLearning lesson. Teachers will take reasonable steps to ensure that students have ample school time that does not interfere with their progress once school is back in session, to complete any work that they were not able to finish during the **eLearning Day**. The expectation, however, will be that ultimately all students complete all of the assignments given within 2-3 days of returning to school.

Accommodations

Please describe how the district will handle accommodations.

As the prompt for this question states, for students with disabilities who do not use an online platform for eLearning or for whom an online platform is not appropriate, teachers will provide parents/caregivers with appropriate educational materials and learning activities for student use prior to any inclement weather day.

All students who have accommodations, per their IEP, BIP or Individual Learning Plan will be provided with or have access to those accommodations and appropriate educational materials and learning activities as they would for any at home assignments.

--Next Page--

Technical Support

If students or parents have problems with accessing the eLearning assignments, how will the district respond to questions concerns?

The district's technology support staff, which includes the director of instructional technology, director of technology, assistant superintendent for planning and innovation, as well as school-level technology integration specialists and principals, will be on standby throughout the day to assist students or parents who are having problems accessing their eLearning assignments. Through our various communications efforts previously described, we will provide phone numbers and email addresses where technology support staff can be contacted. If there are general problems affecting many students, our communications department can post problem-resolutions to our Facebook, Twitter and Website platforms as well as through our mass calling system.

Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children's Fund (ECENC) - Act 247

SCHOOL	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE ADDRESS
Addlestone Hebrew Academy	1639 Wallenberg Boulevard Charleston, SC 29407	843.571.1105	http://addlestone.org/
Anderson Christian School	3902 Liberty Highway Anderson, SC 29621	864.224.7309	http://www.andersonchristian.com/
Ascent Christian Academy	701 Main Street N. Myrtle Beach, SC 29582	843.548.8474	https://barefootchurch.com/family/ascent-christian-academy/
Ben Lippen School	7401 Monticello Road Columbia, SC 29203	803.786.7200	http://www.benlippen.com/
Bishop England High School	363 Seven Farms Drive Charleston, SC 29492	843.849.9599	http://www.behs.com/
Blessed Sacrament School	7 Saint Teresa Drive Charleston, SC 29407-7243	843.766.2128	https://www.scbss.org/
Brilliant Minds Academy	9768 Warren H. Abernathy Hwy Spartanburg, SC 29301	864.251.1934	https://www.brilliantmindsacademyedu.com/
Calvary Christian School-Myrtle Beach	4511 Dick Pond Road Myrtle Beach, SC 29588	843.650.2829	http://ccsmb.com/
Camden Military Academy	520 Highway 1 North Camden, SC 29020	800.948.6291	http://camdenmilitary.com
Camperdown Academy	501 Howell Road Greenville, SC 29615	864.244.8899	http://camperdown.org
Cardinal Newman School	2945 Alpine Road Columbia SC 29223	803.782.2814	www.cnhs.org
Carolina Christian Academy	1850 Kershaw Camden Highway Lancaster, SC 29720	803.285.5565	http://carolinachristian.org/
Chabad Jewish Academy	2803 North Oak Street Myrtle Beach, SC 29577	843.448.0035	http://www.chabadjewishacademy.org/
Charis Academy	255 Stallsville Loop Summerville, SC 29485-5800	843.934.7520	http://charisacademysc.org/
Charleston Day School	15 Archdale Street Charleston, SC 29401	843.377.0315	http://www.charlestondayschool.org

Tuesday, July 24, 2018

Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children's Fund (ECENC) - Act 247

SCHOOL	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE ADDRESS
Christ Church Episcopal School	245 Cavalier Drive Greenville, SC 29607	864.331.4225	https://www.cces.org/
Christ Our King-Stella Maris Catholic School	1183 Russell Drive Mount Pleasant, SC 29464-4057	843.884.4721	http://www.coksm.org/
Clarendon Hall School	1140 South Duke Street P.O. Box 609 Summerton, SC 29148	803.485.3550	http://www.colletonprep.org/index.html
Coastal Christian Preparatory School	681 McCants Drive Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464	843.884.3663	https://coastalchristian.org/
Colleton Preparatory Academy	165 Academy Road P.O. Box 1426 Walterboro, SC 29488	843.538.8989	http://www.colletonprep.org/index.html
Covenant Classical Christian School	3120 Covenant Road Columbia, SC 29204	803.787.0225	http://www.covenantcs.org/
Crown Leadership Academy	1455 Wakendaw Road Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464	843.425.2414	https://www.crownleadershipacademy.org/
Cutler Jewish Day School	5827 A North Trenholm Road Columbia, SC 29206	803.782.1831	www.cjdssc.com
Divine Redeemer Catholic School	1104 Fort Drive Hanahan, SC 29406	843 553 1521	www.divineredeemerschool.com
Einstein Academy	847 Cleveland Street Greenville, SC 29601	864.269.8999	http://www.einsteinacademysc.org/
First Baptist School of Charleston	48 Meeting Street Charleston, SC 29401	843.722.6646	http://www.fbschool.org/
Five Oaks Academy	1101 Jonesville Road Simpsonville, SC 29681	864-228-1881	http://www.fiveoaksacademy.com/
Glenforest School	1041 Harbor Drive West Columbia, SC 29169	803.796.7622	www.Glenforest.org
Greenwood Christian School	2026 Woodlawn Road Greenwood, SC 29649	864.229.2427	http://www.greenwoodchristianschool.org/
Hammond School	854 Galway Lane Columbia, SC 29209	803.776.0295	http://www.hammondschool.org/Home

Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children's Fund (ECENC) - Act 247

SCHOOL	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE ADDRESS
Hampton Park Christian School	875 State Park Road Greenville, SC 29609	864.233.0556	http://www.hpcsonline.org/hpcs
Heathwood Hall Episcopal School	3000 South Beltline Blvd Columbia, SC 29201	803-765-2309	www.heathwood.org
Hilton Head Christian Academy	55 Gardner Drive Hilton Head Island, SC 29926	843.681.2878	http://www.hhca.org/
Hilton Head Preparatory School	8 Fox Grape Road Hilton Head Island, SC 29928	843.671.2286	https://www.hhprep.org/
Holy Trinity Catholic School	1760 Living Stones Lane Longs, SC 29568-7486	843.390.4108	http://www.htcatholicschoolmyrtlebeach.com
Hope Christian Academy	545 Alexander Circle Columbia, SC 29206	803.790.4028	https://www.hcatoday.org/
John Paul II Catholic School	4211 N. Okatie Highway Ridgeland, SC 29936	843.645.3838	www.johnpaul2school.org
Laurence Manning Academy	1154 Academy Drive (P.O. Box 278) Manning, SC 29102	803.435.2114	http://www.laurencemanning.com/
Mason Preparatory School	56 Halsey Boulevard Charleston, SC 29401	843.723.0664	https://www.masonprep.org/
Miracle Academy Preparatory School	1019 Bethel Road Russellville, SC 29476	843.567.4644	http://www.miracleacademy.org/home.html
Mitchell Road Christian Academy	207 Mitchell Road Greenville, SC 29615	864.268.2210	http://www.mitchellroadchristian.org
Montessori School of Anderson	280 Sam McGee Road Anderson, SC 29621	864.226.5344	http://msasc.org/
Nativity Catholic School	1125 Pittsford Circle Charleston, SC 29412	843.795.3975	http://www.nativity-school.com/
New Covenant School	303 Simpson Road Anderson, SC 29621	864.224.5675	https://newcovschool.net/
Newberry Academy	2055 Smith Road Newberry, SC 29108	803.276.2760	http://www.newberryacademy.com/

Tuesday, July 24, 2018

Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children's Fund (ECENC) - Act 247

SCHOOL	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE ADDRESS
North Myrtle Beach Christian School	9535 Highway 90 Longs, SC 29568	843.399.7181	http://nmbchristian.school/
North Walterboro Christian Academy	2177 Jeffries Hwy. Walterboro, SC 29488	843.538.8080	https://northwalterborobc.org/our-school
Northside Christian Academy	4347 Sunset Boulevard Lexington, SC 29072	803.520.5656	http://northsidechristianacademy.org/
Orangeburg Preparatory Schools, Inc.	2651 North Road, NW Orangeburg, SC 29118	803.534.7970	http://orangeburgprep.com/index.html
Our Lady of Peace Catholic School	856 Old Edgefield Road N Augusta, SC 29841	803.279.8396	http://www.olpschool.us/
Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic School	2 James Drive Greenville, SC 29605-2209	864.277.5350	www.olrschool.net
Palmetto Christian Academy-Mt. Pleasant	361 Egypt Road Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464	843-881-9967	www.palmettochristianacademy.org
Palmetto Christian Academy of Greenwood	308 Deadfall Road W Greenwood, SC 29649	864.223.0391	http://www.pcagreenwood.org/
Patrick Henry Academy	8766 Savannah Hwy. Estill, SC 29918	803.625.2440	http://www.patrickhenryacademy.org/
Pee Dee Academy	2903 E. Highway 76 E P.O. Box 449 Mullins, SC 29574	843.423.1771	http://www.peedeeacademy.org/
Porter-Gaud School	300 Albemarle Road Charleston, SC 29407	843.556.3620	https://www.portergaud.edu/
Prince of Peace Catholic School	1209 Brushy Creek Road Taylors, SC 29687	864.331.2145	www.popcatholicschool.org
Ridge Christian Academy	2168 Ridge Church Road Summerville, SC 29483	843.873.9856	http://ridgechristian.info/
Sandhills School	1500 Hallbrook Drive Columbia, SC 29209	803.695.1400	http://www.sandhillsschool.org
Shannon Forest Christian School	829 Garlington Road Greenville, SC 29615	864.678.5107	http://www.shannonforest.com/

Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children's Fund (ECENC) - Act 247

SCHOOL	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE ADDRESS
Sheila E. Academy	4107 Thomas Sumter Highway Dalzell, SC 29040	803.883.5523	https://sheilaeacademy.org/
South Aiken Baptist Christian School	980 Dougherty Road Aiken, SC 29803	803.648.7871	http://www.sabcm.org/
Southside Christian School	2211 Woodruff Road Simpsonville, SC 29681	864.234.7575	http://www.southsidechristian.org
Spartanburg Christian Academy	8740 Asheville Highway Spartanburg, SC 29316	864-578-4238	www.scawarriors.org
Spartanburg Day School	1701 Skylyn Drive Spartanburg, SC 29307	864.582.7539	http://www.spartanburgdayschool.org/
St. Andrew Catholic School	3601 N Kings Highway Myrtle Beach, SC 29577-2933	843.448.6062	www.standrewschoolmb.com
St. Anne Catholic School-Rock Hill	1698 Bird Street Rock Hill, SC 29730-3800	803.324.4814	http://www.stanneschool.com/wp/
St. Anne-St. Jude Catholic School-Sumter	11 South Magnolia Street Sumter, SC 29150	803.775.3632	www.stannesumter.com
St. Anthony Catholic School-Florence	2536 W. Hoffmeyer Road Florence, SC 29501	843.662.1910	www.saintanthonycatholic.com
St. Anthony of Padua Catholic School	311 Gower Street Greenville, SC 29611	864.271.0167	www.stanthonygreenvillesc.org
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic High School	1300 Carolina Forest Blvd Myrtle Beach, SC 29579	843.903.1400	http://www.setonhighschoolsc.org/
St. Francis by the Sea Catholic School	45 Beach City Road Hilton Head Island, SC 29926	843.681.6501	www.sfcshhi.com
St. Francis Xavier High School	15 School Street Sumter, SC 29150	803.773.0210	http://www.sfxhs.com/index.php
St. Gregory the Great Catholic School	323 Fording Island Road Bluffton, SC 29909-6134	843.815.9988	www.sgg.cc
St. John Catholic School-Charleston	3921 St. John Ave N. Charleston, SC 29405	843.744.3901	http://saintjohncatholicsc.org/schoolsite/index.php

Tuesday, July 24, 2018

Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children's Fund (ECENC) - Act 247

SCHOOL	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE ADDRESS
St. John Neumann Catholic School	721 Polo Road Columbia, SC 29223	803.788.1367	http://www.sjncatholic.com
St. John's Christian Academy	204 W. Main Street Moncks Corner, SC 29461	843.761.8539	http://www.sjcacavaliers.com/
St. Joseph Catholic School-Anderson	1200 Cornelia Road Anderson, SC 29621-3349	864.760.1619	http://www.stjosephofanderson.com/
St. Joseph Catholic School-Columbia	3700 Devine Street Columbia, SC 29205-1908	803.254.6736	http://www.stjosdevine.com/
St. Joseph's Catholic School-Greenville	100 St Joseph's Drive Greenville, SC 29607	864.234.9009	www.sjcatholicschool.org
St. Martin de Porres Catholic School	2225 Hampton Street Columbia, SC 29204	803.254.5477	http://www.saintmartindeporres.net/index.html
St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic School	118 York Street, SE Aiken, SC 29801	803.649.2071	www.stmaryschoolaiken.com
St. Michael Catholic School	542 Cypress Avenue Murrells Inlet, SC 29576-8739	843.651.6795	http://www.saintmichaelsc.com
St. Peter's Catholic School-Beaufort	70 Lady's Island Drive Beaufort, SC 29907	843.522.2163	http://saintpeters.school/
St. Peter's Catholic School-Columbia	1035 Hampton Street Columbia, SC 29201	803.252.8285	http://stpeterscatholicschool.org/
Step of Faith Christian Academy	9009 Tarboro Rd. Ridgeland, SC 29936	843-726-6100	http://www.sfcaweb.org/
Summerville Catholic School	226 Black Oak Blvd Summerville, SC 29485-5800	843.873.9310	www.summervillecatholic.org
Sumter Christian School	420 S. Pike West Sumter, SC 29150	803.773.1902	http://www.sumterchristian.org/
Tabernacle Christian School	3931 White Horse Road Greenville, SC 29611	864.269.2760	http://tabernaclebaptistschool.org/
The Barclay School at Ridgeway	1364 Cook Road Ridgeway, SC 29130	803.629.6318	http://www.thebarclayschool.org

Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children's Fund (ECENC) - Act 247

SCHOOL	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE	WEBSITE ADDRESS
The Chandler School	2900 Augusta Street Greenville, SC 29605	864.991.8443	www.thechandlerschool.org
The Charleston Catholic School	888-A King St Charleston, SC 29403-4181	843.577.4495	www.charlestoncatholic.com
The Cooper School	12 Oakdale Place Charleston, SC 29407	843.573.1033	http://thecooperschool.org/
The King's Academy	1015 S Ebenezer Road Florence, SC 29501	843.661.7464	www.tkaflorence.com
The Oaks Christian School	505 Gahagan Road Summerville, SC 29485	843.875.7667	http://www.oakschristianschool.org/
Thomas Hart Academy	852 Flinns Road Hartsville, SC 29550	843.332.4991	https://thomashart.org/
Thomas Heyward Academy	1727 Malphrus Road Ridgeland, SC 29936	843.726.3673	http://www.thomasheyward.org/
Trident Academy	1455 Wakendaw Road Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464	843.884.7046	http://www.tridentacademy.com/
Westminster Catawba Christian School	2650 India Hook Road Rock Hill, SC 29732	803.366.4119	http://wccs.org

Tuesday, July 24, 2018

For questions or
additional information,
contact us at:
803.734.6148 or
www.eoc.sc.gov

SC EDUCATION
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Reporting facts. Measuring change. Promoting progress

2018 Legislative Summary

Investments in Education Accountability and Improvement

The General Assembly in the state budget for FY 2018-19 accomplished the following:

Education Finance Act (EFA) & Fringe Benefits - The legislature increased the base student cost from $2,425 to $2,485, an increase of $55.8 million above the prior year's funding level for EFA and fringe benefits. The total appropriation is approximately $2.6 billion.

School Bus Purchase/Lease - The legislature appropriated an additional $14.4 million for the purchase/lease of school buses to replace all 1995 school buses.

School Safety Program – The legislature appropriated $2.0 million in new, recurring general fund revenues for hiring certified law enforcement officers for school resource officers in school districts that lack adequate resources. Districts apply to the Department of Education for the funding. In addition, the legislature appropriated $10 million in lottery revenues for school safety facility and infrastructure safety upgrades along with up to $5 million in additional lottery revenues if additional collections occur.

EIA – The EIA penny sales tax is expected to generate approximately **$837 million**, an increase of 5.6% or $44 million in recurring EIA revenues. Highlights include:

- Increase in EIA Teacher salary supplement and fringe benefits of $43.2 million to increase minimum starting salary for teachers to $32,000 and to increase statewide minimum salary schedule by one percent;
- Increase of $11.0 million for Technical Assistance to underperforming schools for total of $23.8 million;
- Consolidation of Reading and Professional Development funds allocated to school districts into Aid to District line item;
- SC Public Charter School District, increase of $13.1 million;
- Arts in Education program, increase of $100,000;
- National Board Certification decreased by $6.5 million for a total of $44.5 million. The reduction is due to fewer teachers receiving the certification;
- Industry Certifications, continued funding at $3.0 million;
- Aid to Districts – Technology, continued funding at $12 million;
- Palmetto Digital Literacy Program, $1.4 million to serve Abbeville Equity lawsuit districts and districts with poverty index of 80% or higher; and
- Algebra 1 Pilot Program, $1.1 million, for online tutoring, videos, study guides, and lessons and for workbook study guides, available to all districts and schools.

EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT APPROPRIATIONS SINCE FY15
(EIA, Lottery & Non-Recurring General Funds)*

EAA ITEM	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19
Technical Assistance	8,800,000	8,800,000	12,801,301	12,801,301	23,801,301
Assessment	27,261,400	34,561,400	27,261,400	27,261,400	27,261,400
School Value-Added Assessment				1,400,000	1,400,000
Professional Development	5,515,911	9,515,911	9,515,911	9,515,911	2,771,758
Power Schools/Data Collection	7,500,000	7,500,000	11,147,000	7,500,000	7,500,000
Education Oversight Committee/ SC Autism Society ($500,000)	1,643,242	1,793,242	1,793,242	1,793,242	1,793,242
SCDE Personal Service	1,236,436	1,236,436	1,236,436	1,236,436	1,236,436
SCDE Other Operating	1,174,752	1,174,752	1,374,752	1,374,752	1,374,752
Students at Risk of School Failure **	79,551,723	79,551,723	79,551,723	79,551,723	79,551,723
TOTAL EAA:	**$132,683,464**	**$144,133,464**	**$144,681,765**	**$142,743,265**	**$146,690,612**
OTHER SUPPORTING PROGRAMS:					
K-5 Reading, Math, Science & Social Studies ***	27,891,798				
6-8 Reading, Math, Science and Social Studies ***	2,000,000				
K-12 Technology Initiative	29,288,976	29,288,976	29,288,976	12,000,000	12,000,000
Young Adult Education (30% of Adult Education)	4,072,121	4,522,121	4,972,121	4,972,121	4,972,121
Reading	6,542,052	6,542,052	6,542,052	6,542,052	3,271,026
Summer Reading Camps	6,000,000	7,500,000	7,500,000	7,500,000	7,500,000
Aid to Districts	37,736,600	37,386,600	37,386,600	14,386,600	24,401,779
Reading Coaches	29,483,100	34,444,378	39,405,656	39,405,656	39,405,656
TOTAL OTHER:	**$143,014,647**	**$119,684,127**	**$125,095,405**	**$84,806,429**	**$91,550,582**
GRAND TOTAL:	**$275,698,111**	**$263,817,591**	**$269,777,170**	**$227,549,694**	**$238,241,914**

* Includes all recurring and nonrecurring General Fund, EIA, and lottery revenues but excludes federal funds for testing. If non-recurring funds did not materialize, totals for prior fiscal years have been reduced accordingly.
** For FY15, $59.6 million was reduced from the Students at Risk of School Failure appropriation because a poverty index was added to the EFA.
***Beginning FY16, these funds were allocated through the EFA.

H.3146 (R.235), a joint resolution, asks voters to consider an amendment to the State's Constitution to remove the Superintendent of Education from the list of statewide elected positions. Instead, the Superintendent would be appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate. If approved by the voters of South Carolina in the 2018 general election, beginning January 2023 the Governor would appointed the State Superintendent of Education with the advice and consent of the Senate. The minimum qualifications of the Superintendent were also approved in S.27 (Act 179, R.195).

H.4827 (R.150), a joint resolution, extends the deadline by which the Safety in Schools Study Committee must submit its written report pursuant to Act 125 of 2017 from January 31, 2018, to January 31, 2019.

H.3513 (Act 145, R.153) creates a renewable teacher certificate for a retired educator, allowing a retired South Carolina educator to be eligible to maintain certification for substituting. The retired educator certificate is valid for five years from the date of issuance and may be renewed for an additional five years.

H.3591 (Act 152, R.161) reauthorizes the South Carolina Office of First Steps to School Readiness until June 30, 2025 and defines the reporting and accountability duties of the Office and the Board of Trustees.

H.4077 (Act 247, R.247) codifies the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children (ECENC) Program. The new law mirrors the proviso in the 2018-19 General Appropriation Act. The EOC must provide program level reports to determine whether students participating in the program have experienced measurable improvement. Annually, the Education Oversight Committee will also issue a report to the General Assembly documenting the impact of the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Program on student achievement. In addition, the report must include information on individual schools if at least the majority of students enrolled in the private school participated in the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Program in the prior school year.

H.4434 (Act 213, R.251) requires the Department of Education to establish a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) that uses universal screening procedures to identify students, as early as kindergarten, who may be at risk of experiencing difficulties in reading, math or writing and who also may be at risk of experiencing difficulties in social emotional development. Based upon the results of the screening procedures, each school must have a school-based team that will analyze the data and implement appropriate instruction and evidence-based interventions to assist the students. The Department is also required to provide professional development training and resources for all educators in MTSS and the identification of, and evidence-based intervention methods for, students who are at risk of experiencing academic difficulties, including students with dyslexia. To assist the Department, the law creates a Learning Disorders Task Force to advise the Department in matters relating to reading disorders to include, but not be limited to, dyslexia.

H.5042 (Act 230, R.274) amends Act 23 of 2017, which established within the Department of Education a statewide program to identify districts in fiscal watch, fiscal caution and fiscal emergency. The amendments clarify the conditions by which the State Superintendent of Education may issue a fiscal watch or fiscal caution for a district to include a review of the district's annual audit, failure to provide the annual audit by more than sixty days after December 1, and consultation with an outside, independent auditing firm declaring the district's financial records as unadaptable or the Department's identification of significant auditing and financial deficiencies. The Superintendent may declare a fiscal watch or fiscal caution if the district does not maintain a sufficient general reserve fund or has not made progress in increasing the general reserve fund balance to meet at least one month of expenditures. The amendments also allow the law to apply to a higher education institution or any charter school authorizer. In the event of a mid-year budget reduction, the legal requirements are suspended for two fiscal years. And, the law includes requirements of a school district or charter sponsor involved in restructuring or the transfer of a school under its governance to another district o charter sponsor including updated assessment records and complete student information files.

S.27 (Act 178, R.194) establishes the minimum qualifications of the Superintendent of Education, if the electorate approves in the 2018 General Election a constitutional amendment changing position from being statewide elected to appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the senate. The State Superintendent of Education must possess either a minimum of a master's degree and substantive and broad-based experience in the field of public education or a master's degree and broad-based experience in operational and financial management.

S.28 (Act 179, R.195) amends the South Carolina Released Time Credit Act to allow a school district board of trustees to award a high school student no more than two elective Carnegie units for the completion of released time classes in religious instruction if the district leaves the valuation and assessment function for an off-campus released time class to an accredited private school and accepts the off-campus released time transfer of credit without individually assessing the quality or subject matter of the class. The district is allowed to "trust" the private school accreditation process to ensure that the academic standards of the released time class are adequate.

S.131 (Act 182, R.198) amends existing law relating to disturbances at schools or colleges to clarify actions taken by students and by non-students. It is now unlawful for a non-student to willfully interfere with or disrupt the normal operations of a school or college in the state by: entering the grounds without permission; loitering; initiating a physical assault with another person on the grounds, being loud or boisterous on school or college grounds; threatening the physical harm to another student or school or college employee while on school grounds or property; or threatening to use deadly force on school or college property. A non-student is defined as person who is not enrolled in or who is suspended or expelled from the school or college. Similarly, it is unlawful for a student of a school or college to make threats to take the life of or to inflict bodily harm upon another by using any form of communication whatsoever.

S.302 (Act 185, R.201) amends the law regarding physical education. Currently, every student attending a public school is required to take a course or course in physical education training and instruction with military or naval ROTC considered to be the equivalent of physical education instruction. The new law also counts marching band instruction as the equivalent of physical education instruction provided the district submit a plan to the Department of Education documenting that all South Carolina Academic Standards for Physical Education are met in the proposed marching band instruction.

S.709 (Act 256, R.284) requires fire and safety inspections for new and existing public school facilities implemented prior to the 2020-21 school year. Model fire and safety policies and program guidelines must be developed and made available to each district and charter school before the beginning of the 2019-20 school year. Furthermore, all brick and mortar public schools must conduct fire, active shooter/intruder, and severe weather/earthquake drills on a periodic basis.

S.805 (Act 160, R.171) creates the Department of Children's Advocacy, which is headed by the State Child Advocate, an appointee of Governor from three candidates recommended by the Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Department of Children's Advocacy is responsible for ensuring that children under the care of a state agency (Department of Social Services, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Health and Environmental Control, the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, the John de la Howe School, the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School and the School for the Deaf and the Blind) "receive timely, safe and effective services" ensuring their health, safety and well-being are safeguarded. The Department will also receive and investigate complaints made. The State Child Advocate is responsible for "ensuring that children receive adequate protection and care from services or programs" offered by these state agencies.

S.888 (Act 198, R.216) authorizes a local school district board of trustees or the governing body of a charter school to adopt a policy that all certified and noncertified public school teachers who earn but do not use sick and annual leave in excess of 90 days may be eligible to receive payment at the end of each fiscal year for those days earned in excess of 90 days accrued after July 1, 2018.

Standards and Accountability:
<u>Review of Accountability Metrics</u> <u>Spring - Fall 2018</u>
A working group composed of leaders from K-12 public education, post-secondary education, business leaders, and parents began meeting in April and will continue through summer to finalize the addition of new metrics for future accountability systems. National experts, including consultants from Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) assisted.

<u>Release of 2018 District and School Report Cards</u> <u>November 2018</u>
District and school report cards to be published pursuant to federal and state law. Schools will receive overall ratings of Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average and Unsatisfactory based on a 100-point scale along with individual ratings for each indicator measured (i.e. academic achievement, high school graduation rate, etc.)

Evaluation:
<u>Community Block Grant Partnerships</u> <u>Fall 2018</u>
Report on the impact of the 2016-17 and 2017-18 grants.

<u>Annual Review of EIA-Funded Programs and Initiatives</u> <u>Fall 2018</u>
EOC will make budget recommendations for FY 2019-20 to Governor and General Assembly.

<u>Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children Program</u> <u>February 2019</u>
Report on compliance and program testing requirements as well as school and student-level achievement results. The EOC also approves schools for participation in the program.

<u>Annual Report on Military-Connected Students and Achievement</u> <u>June 2019</u>
This report will include information on academic performance of military-connected students and the results of the expanded pilot program to increase the level of educational quality and support for military-connected children through increased training and resources to two school districts.

<u>Annual Evaluations of SC Teacher Loan Program and Parent Survey</u> <u>June 2019</u>
EOC will report on the progress, challenges, and impact of the SC Teacher Loan Program on recruiting teachers into the teaching profession and the results of the annual parent survey.

Innovation:
<u>Partnerships in Innovation</u> <u>December 2018</u>
The EOC will report on the first-year implementation of Algebra Nation to General Assembly.

<u>Community Block Grants</u> <u>February 2019</u>
EOC will award $1.0 million in grants to districts for improving the quality of 4K programs.

Public Reporting and Engagement:
<u>Public Awareness Campaign</u> <u>Ongoing</u>
In anticipation of school report card ratings, first since 2014, the EOC will publish website informing public of public education successes and challenges along with information on how to use school report cards to promote involvement and improvement.

EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019

Tentative Meeting Schedule

Subcommittees	Full Committee
	August 6, 2018
August 7, 2018 – Reading Conference, Columbia	
September 17, 2018	
	October 8, 2018
October 29, 2018	
November 26, 2018	
December 3, 2018	
	December 10, 2018
January 28, 2019	
	February 11, 2019
March 18, 2019	
	April 8, 2019
May 20, 2019	
	June 10, 2019

The EIA and Improvement Mechanisms Subcommittee will tentatively meet in October, November and December for EIA budget hearings and reviews.

FYI

SREB

South Carolina State Progress Report

Looking Closer

2018

Southern
Regional
Education
Board

SREB.org

SREB's
Challenge to Lead 2020
Goals for Education

All children **entering school** will exhibit the knowledge and the social and developmental skills needed for success in first grade.

Student achievement for all groups in the **early grades** will exceed state standards and national averages — at rates that close achievement gaps between groups.

Student achievement for all groups in the **middle grades** will exceed state standards and national averages — at rates that close achievement gaps between groups.

Eighty percent of all groups of ninth-graders will graduate from **high school** ready for college and career training. (This likely means more than 90 percent will need to graduate from high school and more than 80 percent will need to meet readiness standards for college and career training.)

Sixty percent of working-age adults will have a **postsecondary** credential: an associate or bachelor's degree, or a career certificate. Public postsecondary institutions will make it a top priority to help states meet state needs by increasing graduates, public service and research.

Increasing percentages of **adults** without high school or postsecondary credentials will pursue opportunities to earn high school alternative certificates, college degrees or career certificates.

South Carolina
Looking Closer

2018 State Progress Report

on the

Challenge to Lead 2020

Goals for Education

Southern Regional Education Board

A Message From the President of SREB

Challenge to Lead 2020 Goals for Education, SREB's latest in a series of education goals, has provided benchmarks and timelines for assessing educational progress in our states since 2012. A 2016 update, *Challenge to Lead 2020: Refreshed 2016*, streamlined the goals and aligned them more closely with policy recommendations from four SREB policy commissions. The biennial progress reports help policymakers stay informed on how well their states have performed on key education outcomes, from pre-K through adult learning, and how much progress they are making toward the 2020 goals.

With only two years remaining in the 2020 goals period, it is important that states take a **closer look** at their individual successes and challenges and determine what has worked and what still needs to be done. Each SREB state is different, but rarely does one need to reinvent the wheel to achieve progress. If SREB states work together and share ideas, they can meet their goals.

In looking closer at our **progress** across the region, I am pleased to report growth for SREB states in three key areas:

> With only two years remaining in the 2020 goals period, it is important that states take a **closer look** at their individual successes and challenges.

- **Leading the nation in early childhood education** — SREB states continue to hold leadership in the nation when it comes to pre-K access and quality. In 2017, four of eight states nationwide that enrolled at least half of 4-year-olds in state-funded pre-K were SREB states. Only three states in the nation, including one SREB state, met all 10 nationally recognized standards of program quality for state-funded pre-K that year. Another six SREB states met at least eight of the 10 standards.

- **Impressive gains in eighth grade reading achievement** — While the reading achievement of eighth graders nationwide on NAEP changed little from 2013 to 2017, five SREB states ranked among the top 10 states in the nation for reading gains at the Proficient level.

- **Improving high school progression rates and graduation rates** — The percentage of *ninth graders progressing to 12th grade* in four years increased in *all* SREB states. Eleven SREB states have progression rates within 10 points of the national average. Improving these rates is necessary for continued progress on *high school graduation* rates. In 2016, the SREB region exceeded the national rate in high school graduation for the fourth year. The most recent high school graduation rate for the SREB region was 2 points ahead of the nation. Thirteen SREB states improved their rates from 2015 to 2016. Now it is time to couple this progress with college readiness at the time of graduation.

This report also details where **South Carolina** stands in education. You and your state can take pride in these highlights on key outcome measures and policy implementation.

Notable outcomes in South Carolina

- Enrollment in the state-funded pre-K program exceeded the nation's rate.

- Hispanic eighth graders and eighth graders from low-income families outpaced the region and nation in gains in reading achievement on NAEP at the Proficient level.

- The high school graduation rate outpaced the nation and the region in growth.

- The percentage of students from low-income families who graduated with standard diplomas exceeded that of their peer group nationwide.

- The six-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time freshmen who entered public, four-year colleges and universities exceeded the national and regional rates.

I am encouraged by the progress reflected in all the state progress reports. But I also see four **challenges** in the pages of these reports that warrant all of our attention.

- **High quality pre-K programs are not available to all children who need them.** Pre-K provides a critical foundation for children who would likely fall behind in school without it. While some SREB states lead in pre-K access and quality, others have a long way to go if they want to ensure that high quality programs are available to the children who will benefit from them the most.

- **Most SREB states did not make progress toward the early grades or middle grades targets for NAEP performance between 2013 and 2017**. In 2017, the median SREB state was more than 10 percentage points away from meeting the Basic performance target set for 2020 for fourth graders in both reading and math and more than 15 points away for eighth graders. Students who do not develop strong foundations in reading and mathematics before high school will struggle all through high school and have trouble becoming ready for college and careers.

- **While more students in our region are graduating from high school on time, far too few are ready for postsecondary study when they graduate**. The readiness gap for college and careers shows up once again in the ACT results for the class of 2016. While 86 percent of the class in SREB states graduated from high school on time, only 21 percent of those who took the ACT met its four college-readiness benchmarks. Far too few graduates are prepared for postsecondary work.

- **Despite SREB states' efforts to increase the educational attainment of working-age adults in our region, too many still do not have the high school and postsecondary credentials they need for success in the workplace**. In 2016, 3.8 million adults in SREB states did not have a high school credential, and 19 million did not have a postsecondary credential. If SREB states are serious about educational attainment and job advancement for working-age adults, they will need to provide greater support for adult educational programs.

SREB is committed to working with states to ensure that progress continues. We look to state leaders to draw on strong and effective education policies — like the ones published with the latest *Challenge to Lead 2020 goals*. Together, we can boost student achievement and help SREB states meet their educational, economic and workforce goals.

Dave Spence

Table of Contents

Foreword

Looking Closer is the eighth biennial report to SREB states on their progress in meeting SREB's Challenge to Lead goals for education. SREB provides a customized state progress report for each SREB state. These state reports document progress on both measurable outcomes and state policies. Through effective policy implementation, the goals can help states drive improvements in student achievement, high school graduation, college completion and work force readiness.

SREB's 2002 commission report on goals, *Challenge to Lead Goals for Education*, boldly declared that SREB states could lead the nation in education progress and established ten goals for the region. Between 2008 and 2012, SREB hosted four formal policy commissions and several key study groups. Each made recommendations on essential policies to help states reach the goals.

By 2012, leaders in SREB states could see measurable progress on the 2002 goals, but they knew their work was not finished. So, in 2012 SREB updated the Challenge to Lead goals. This effort resulted in six revised goals to guide SREB states through 2020. State leaders in the SREB region then linked the recommended policies to the goals to ensure that their best ideas would guide state efforts and promote increases in student achievement. The recommended policies can help states set the stage for success. But implementation is key, and states should evaluate their efforts on a continuous basis to ensure that their intentions produce the results they want.

> Through effective policy implementation, the goals can help states drive improvements in student achievement.

SREB promised to help states achieve the Challenge to Lead goals by monitoring, measuring and reporting on outcomes for each state and by benchmarking implementation of recommended policies. The six goals for 2020 focus on the student — from prekindergarten through postsecondary education and into the adult years. The biennial reports showcase progress on the educational milestones students must reach at each stage. They also pay attention to the transitions between stages. Research shows that many students drop out of school during these transitions because they are not fully prepared for success at the next educational level.

Since the 2014 biennial progress reports were published, three SREB commissions have developed and presented recommendations — including ones that can be linked to the Challenge 2020 goals. These commissions addressed career and technical education, community colleges and early childhood education. The 2018 state progress reports include closer looks at these policies.

What to expect in this report: The progress reports begin with demographic and economic perspectives to situate SREB states in their regional and national contexts. The South's overall population growth and particularly school enrollment growth have outpaced the rest of the nation in the last decade. The region has become more racially and ethnically diverse during the same period. And it continues to recover from a long economic recession. These perspectives provide a critical backdrop for the remainder of the report — underscoring the importance and difficulty of making educational gains in SREB states.

Reporting on outcome measures continues in this report. Policymakers have come to expect SREB to report on such key measures as results on the National Assessment of Education Progress, ninth-grade enrollment bulge, high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates of recent high school graduates. These particular measures give a picture of progress on how well current students are thriving as they move through school and what challenges SREB states face in helping students make critical education transitions. Whenever possible, the reports show outcome measures in national and regional contexts and over time so that policymakers can determine how students in their states stack up with students elsewhere and whether they are making gains.

Policymakers will also find information about whether — and how — important policies are implemented in their states. In several instances, the elements of these policies, as they relate to the goals, are laid out in clear tables. In other cases, color-shaded maps of the region allow policymakers to compare stateson these policies. These tables and maps now include new elements recommended by the latest SREB commissions. They give policymakers an indication of where their states stand on these critical, emerging issues.

While the 2020 finish line is nearing, policymakers still have time to *look closer* and measure key indicators of progress in their states, including the following.

- How many students in your state have access to high quality prekindergarten?

- How many students in your state are ready for first grade on day one?

- How many students can read proficiently no later than fourth grade? What about English language learners and those from low-income families?

- How are all eighth graders performing in reading and math?

- What percentage of eighth graders are successfully making the transition to high school?

- As high school graduation rates have improved, have gaps narrowed for students of racial and ethnic groups, for students from low-income families and for students with disabilities?

- What percentage of high school graduates measure up on benchmarks of college and career readiness?

- What percentage of recent high school graduates are enrolling in postsecondary institutions?

- What percentage of entering college students make it to their sophomore year?

- What percentage of high school graduates are eventually earning a credential?

- How many working-age adults in your state have some type of postsecondary credential?

- How many working-age adults in your state do not have a high school credential?

For policymakers who do not like the answers to these questions — all available in this report — it is not too late to adjust policies and programs that will make a difference. It's time to *look closer* and ensure that as many students as possible measure up by 2020 and thereafter. Chances are, SREB's policy commissions have already made recommendations that can help. It's time to be sure they are implemented well.

SREB states have already come a long way. In the past dozen years, they have made gains in publicly funded pre-K access, NAEP achievement in reading and math, and high school graduation rates. For the most part, these gains resulted from the efforts of inspired SREB state leaders who championed research and policy. They implemented important policies with good planning that called for state and local support — and they were committed to putting their plans in place and achieving their goals over the long haul. SREB will continue to help states, especially as they close in on the finish line for the Challenge 2020 goals, by keeping its commitment to measure outcomes and benchmark progress on policy.

Demographics

The Challenge to Lead 2020 goals are ambitious, targeting high achievement for *all* groups of students and emphasizing the need for states to close stubborn achievement gaps. Efforts to meet these goals are complicated by rising enrollment and dynamic population changes: more public-school students, more families struggling economically, and more students whose primary language is not English. At the same time, states are slowly recovering from a historic economic downturn. Understanding the challenges these factors present for schools and colleges is the key to overcoming them.

The SREB region has been home to more than a third of the nation's total population for decades, and growth in the region represented more than half of the nation's total population growth between 2005 and 2015. The overall population in SREB states rose 5 percent from 2010 to 2015, so it is no surprise that **public elementary and secondary school enrollment** also grew. Enrollment in SREB states increased by 4 percent over this period, faster than the 2 percent growth in enrollment nationwide.

Enrollment Changes
Public Elementary and Secondary Enrollment in South Carolina

Actual Growth
Fall 2010 to Fall 2015

- SC: 5%
- SREB: 4%
- U.S.: 2%

Actual and Projected Growth
Fall 2010 to Fall 2020

- SC: 4%
- SREB: 3%
- U.S.: 1%
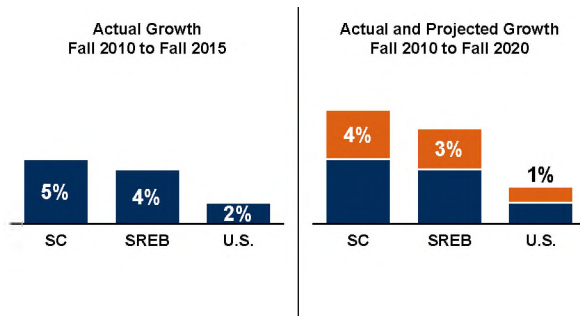
Source: SREB, based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics

Thirteen SREB states had higher enrollment in fall 2015 than in fall 2010, while three states saw enrollment decline. The changes ranged from a 7 percent increase to a 2 percent decrease. Looking ahead, national public school enrollment is projected to increase at a slightly slower rate from 2015-16 to 2020-21. Overall enrollment in the SREB region is expected to increase by 3 percent during this period, though three SREB states could see continuing declines in enrollment through fall 2020. More students means more schools, teachers, buses and books — in short, larger education budgets just to meet the growing demand for basic education services.

In South Carolina:

- Public school enrollment outpaced growth in the SREB region from 2010 to 2015, and it is expected to outpace growth in the region again between 2015 and 2020. About 764,000 students were enrolled in South Carolina's public schools in 2015.

- The proportions of black and white students enrolled in public schools declined from 2005 to 2015, while the proportion of Hispanic students grew.

- The percentage of children living in poverty shrank by 5 percentage points from 2011 to 2016.

Coupled with the overall growth in public school enrollment is increased diversity over the past decade. In fall 2015, 49 percent of public school students in the United States were white — down 8 percentage points from fall 2005. The proportion of black students declined by almost 2 points, to 16 percent, from fall 2005 to fall 2015. The proportion of Hispanic students rose 6 points, to 26 percent, over the period.

All SREB states mirrored the nation in **increased student diversity** from 2005 to 2015. In fall 2015, black and Hispanic students represented nearly half (49 percent) of public school enrollment in the SREB region. Hispanic students, the fastest-growing group, increased as a proportion of student enrollment in the region by 18 points during this time. These students — many from low-income households or with limited English-language proficiency — will likely need extra support to graduate from high school ready for college and careers.

Public Elementary and Secondary Enrollment
Racial Composition in South Carolina

Legend: Black, Hispanic, White, Other

Fall 2005
- Black: 40%
- Hispanic: 4%
- White: 54%
- Other: 2%

Fall 2015
- Black: 34%
- Hispanic: 9%
- White: 52%
- Other: 6%
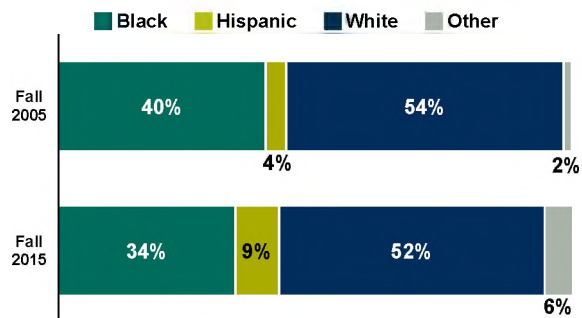
Source: SREB, based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics

The U.S. Department of Education projects that this trend of rising diversity will continue. The proportion of white public-school students in the nation is expected to continue to decline from 2015 through 2026. On the other hand, the proportions of Hispanic students, Asian or Pacific Islander students, and students who identify as multiracial are projected to increase further.

As the nation continues to recover from the last recession, child poverty rates have finally begun to fall. Still, more than 14.1 million children under 18 years old in the United States lived in poverty in 2016 — about 19 percent of all children in the population. More than 43 percent of all children living in **poverty** in the nation resided in SREB states. The U.S. Census Bureau measures poverty by income and household size. The poverty threshold in 2016 was equivalent to $24,250 in annual income for a household of four.

Children Living in Poverty
Percentage of Residents Under 18 Years Old in Poverty, 2016
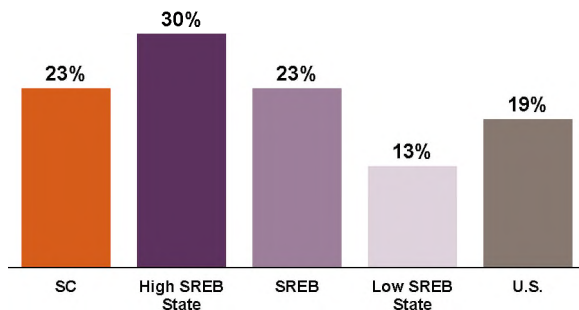
Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation

The percentages of children living in poverty decreased from 2011 to 2016 in both the nation and the SREB region. These percentages fell in 13 SREB states and were unchanged in the remaining three. However, 13 SREB states still had higher childhood poverty rates than the nation in 2016. These rates ranged from 13 to 30 percent of all children across the SREB region.

Despite welcome decreases in poverty rates, the percentage of students living in **low-income households** in the nation rose from 48 percent in 2011 to 50 percent in 2016. This percentage grew from 53 percent to 57 percent in the SREB region during this period. In fact, it rose in all but four SREB states, ranging from a high of 75 percent of students to a low of 37 percent.

Federal law defines *low income* as eligibility for free or reduced-price meals in the National School Lunch Program. This program is available to students from households with incomes up to 185 percent of the annual poverty level, or up to $44,863 for a household of four during the 2015-16 school year.

Free or Reduced-Price Meals
Percentage of Students Eligible in South Carolina, 2016
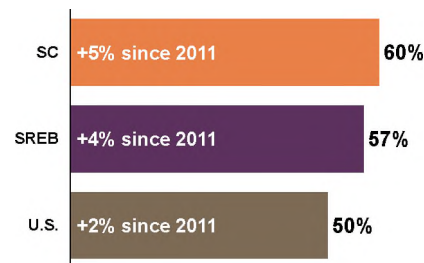
Source: SREB, based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics

Why does low family income matter? Research indicates it can cause frequent family relocation and lead to higher absenteeism, disrupting student learning. It can also result in poor nutrition, inadequate health care and weak family engagement with schools — all factors that affect student achievement.

Two other student groups — English language learners and students with disabilities — also face challenges that can affect their academic achievement. In fall 2015 in the SREB region, 10 percent of students were classified as English language learners and 11 percent of students received special education services. The students in these groups require specialized services and support to succeed in school. Researchers have found that 80 to 90 percent of students with a learning disability are affected by dyslexia. These students will struggle with reading, in particular.

The good news is that the economy is again growing and more jobs are available. Increased enrollment in public schools, however, means that the number of students who need special services and support is also increasing. Policymakers will need to seek cost-effective program and policy solutions to meet the needs of all students in their states.

Early Learning

The Challenge to Lead 2020 goals call for all children entering school to exhibit the knowledge and skills needed for success in first grade. This goal can be achieved by increasing **access** to pre-K and kindergarten and ensuring the **quality** of these programs. If young children experience high-quality early learning programs, they are more likely to enter first grade ready to learn, and their chances for success throughout school are greatly improved.

Enrollment in Publicly Funded Pre-K Programs
4-Year-Olds in South Carolina, 2016-17

State Pre-K 41%

Head Start 7%

Special Education 4%
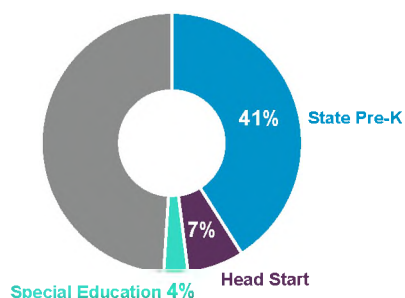
Source: National Institute for Early Education Research

Historically, SREB states have led the nation in pre-K access for 4-year-olds. By 2015, all SREB states had state-funded programs, and Georgia and Oklahoma were the first states in the nation to make pre-K universally available. These state programs extend access beyond that provided by federally funded Head Start and special education pre-K programs. Between 2007 and 2017, the percentage of 4-year-olds enrolled in state-funded pre-K rose in 14 SREB states. Nine states nationwide enrolled at least half of 4-year-olds in state-funded pre-K during the 2016-17 school year, including four SREB states.

States in the SREB region still face the challenge of providing earlier access to pre-K programs. Research underscores the importance of two years of pre-K for children at risk of struggling in school. Eight SREB states enrolled 3-year-olds in their state programs in 2016-17, and four enrolled them at rates at or above the national rate of 5 percent. However, only two states in the region served more than 10 percent of their 3-year-olds.

While access to pre-K is important, quality is the key to achieving lasting gains for young children. NIEER, The National Institute for Early Education Research, has identified **10 standards of quality**, or benchmarks for ensuring high structural and process quality for pre-K programs. Aspects of *structural quality* include class size limits, low child-to-staff ratios, and state monitoring requirements.

NIEER revised its standards in 2017 to reflect new research on the importance of *process quality*, which is closely related to instruction, learning and long-term academic gains. Program elements that promote it include learning standards aligned through grade three, regular observations of classroom quality, and well-qualified teachers who receive ongoing coaching.

Alabama and North Carolina were the first states in the nation to meet all 10 of the previous NIEER standards. Alabama is one of only three states nationwide that met all 10 of the revised standards in the 2016-2017 school year; another two SREB states met nine of these standards.

The 2020 goals emphasize strong **teacher qualifications** and continuing professional development for early learning teachers. Research shows that pre-K teachers who have a bachelor's degree and specialized training in early childhood education tend to produce better outcomes for their students. Assistant pre-K teachers need the Child Development Associate credential. Ongoing, hands-on professional development — at least 15 hours per year — is also important for all classroom teachers.

Despite these findings, few pre-K teachers and their assistants have the degrees, credentials and training they need to be prepared for their roles. Four of the 10 NIEER standards of quality spell out minimum requirements in these areas. Alabama and Georgia were two of just

In South Carolina:

- From 2006-07 to 2016-17, state-funded pre-K enrollment for 4-year-olds increased by 3 percentage points.

- In 2016-17, approximately 50 percent of 4-year-olds were enrolled in publicly funded prekindergarten programs.

- NIEER reported that South Carolina's CERDEP pre-K program met seven of the 10 revised standards of quality for pre-K in 2016-17, including two of the four teacher standards.

four states in the nation that met the four revised NIEER teacher qualification standards in 2016-17.

A 2017 SREB policy report, *Ready to Read, Ready to Succeed: State Policies That Support Fourth Grade Reading Success*, stresses that kindergarten is a critical link between early childhood and the early grades, especially for children at risk of academic struggles. As expectations for later grades have increased, so has the importance of kindergarten as a transition point to help young children build on pre-K gains and be prepared for success in elementary school and beyond.

Research shows that children who attend full-day kindergarten programs, compared with half-day programs, make more academic progress during the kindergarten year and are therefore better prepared for first grade. Districts often choose to offer full-day programs even in states where they are not required. But the minimum number of instructional hours for full-day kindergarten programs varies widely across SREB states — from as few as 680 annual hours to as many as 1,260. Programs with more instructional hours tend to be more effective at preparing kindergartners for the early grades.

Researchers also find benefits for smaller class sizes in the earliest school years. Policymakers in nearly every SREB state have set class-size or student-to-teacher ratio maximums for kindergarten classrooms. These maximums ranged from 18 to 30 students per kindergarten teacher in 2017; the median SREB state allowed no more than 22 kindergartners per teacher.

Developmentally appropriate assessment in kindergarten provides important information for teachers and for states. A readiness assessment at kindergarten entry can help teachers plan instruction for the varying needs of their students. Screenings can identify the one in 10 children who may have dyslexia and need early reading intervention before they fall behind. As of fall 2018, nine SREB states require a kindergarten entry assessment, and four more states require an assessment of literacy and numeracy skills. Six SREB states require dyslexia screening.

Teacher Quality in State-Funded Pre-K
South Carolina, 2017

NIEER Standard (Revised 2017)	State Required
Lead teacher has a bachelor's degree	
Lead teacher has specialized training in early childhood development	✓
Assistant teacher has the Child Development Associate credential or equivalent	
Teaching staff receive ongoing coaching and at least 15 hours/year of professional development	✓

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research

In 2015, SREB's Commission on Early Childhood Education published *Building a Strong Foundation: State Policy for Early Childhood Education.* The report emphasizes that pre-K and kindergarten provide the foundation for later learning, especially for at-risk children. It also urges SREB states to make early investments to prepare children for school so they can reap sizeable benefits later. If states commit to the report's recommendations, the SREB region is likely to continue making progress in improving access to high-quality early learning programs — thereby ensuring that more children have a solid start in school.

Kindergarten Policies in South Carolina

Policy Elements	Status	Comments
Minimum amount of instructional time for kindergarten		1,080 hours per year — at least 6 hours per day for at least 180 days
Maximum number of students per teacher in kindergarten classrooms	30	LEAs must maintain an average ratio of 21 students per teacher. Paraprofessionals count as half of one teacher in computing the student-teacher ratio.
Requires comprehensive early childhood learning and development assessment at kindergarten entry	✓	Requires *Kindergarten Readiness Assessment*
Requires screening for dyslexia in kindergarten	✓	

Source: SREB analysis of state documents and Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes

Early Grades

Challenge to Lead 2020 goals call for 90 percent of fourth graders to score at or above the Basic level in reading and math on NAEP, the National Assessment of Educational Progress. They also call for the percentages of fourth graders scoring at or above the Proficient level in these subjects to increase regularly — and ultimately exceed national averages. The NAEP Proficient level is most closely associated with college and career readiness.

Known as the Nation's Report Card, NAEP is a series of exams measuring student achievement in specific subjects and grades. These exams are given every two years, most recently in 2017.

In **reading**, the percentages of fourth graders in the nation and SREB region scoring at or above the NAEP **Basic** level declined from 2013 to 2017. During these years, the region's loss — 2 percentage points — exceeded the loss in the nation. Still, three SREB states saw growth during the period. Although no SREB state reached the 90 percent target in 2017 for fourth graders scoring at or above the Basic level, three SREB states reached 70 percent or more.

Overall growth in the region in the percentage of fourth graders scoring at or above the **Proficient** level in reading was slower than that of the nation from 2013 to 2017. Ten SREB states increased the percentage of students scoring at or above the Proficient level, and five of these outpaced the nation in growth. In 2017, six SREB states had a greater percentage of students scoring at or above Proficient than the nation.

In **math**, the percentage of fourth graders in the nation scoring at or above the NAEP **Basic** level decreased

from 2013 to 2017; the percentage in the SREB region decreased nearly twice as much — a drop of 6 percentage points. While no SREB state reached the 90-percent target for students scoring at or above Basic in math, six states exceeded 80 percent.

Despite overall decreases in the percentages of fourth graders scoring at or above **Proficient** in math in both the region — 3.5 points — and the nation, fourth graders in six SREB states improved their performance from 2013 to 2017. Six SREB states also had a greater percentage of fourth graders scoring at or above Proficient than the nation in 2017.

4th Grade NAEP Math
Percentage Scoring At or Above Proficient in South Carolina, 2017
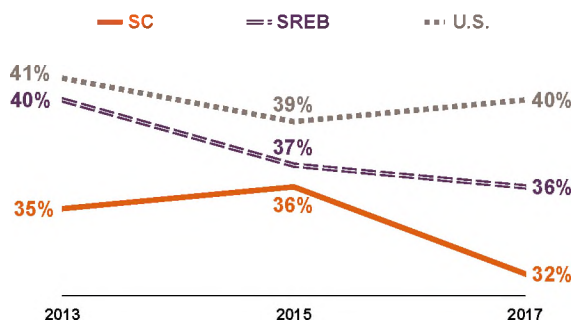
Source: National Center for Education Statistics

The Challenge to Lead 2020 early grades goal emphasizes the need for SREB states to close NAEP performance gaps for students of racial and ethnic groups, for those from low-income households, and for those who are English language learners.

At the NAEP Proficient level in 2017, black fourth graders in SREB states made greater gains than their white and Hispanic peers in reading and lost less ground than their peers in math. From 2013 to 2017, the achievement gap for black students and their white peers in the SREB region narrowed in both reading and math by about half a percentage point. However, the gaps for Hispanic students widened, by 2 percentage points in reading and 1 point in math.

Academic outcomes related to household income contribute to some of the largest and most pervasive achievement gaps across the nation and SREB region. In **reading**, the achievement gap for fourth graders from low-income families and all other fourth graders in the

4th Grade NAEP Reading
Percentage Scoring At or Above Proficient in South Carolina, 2017
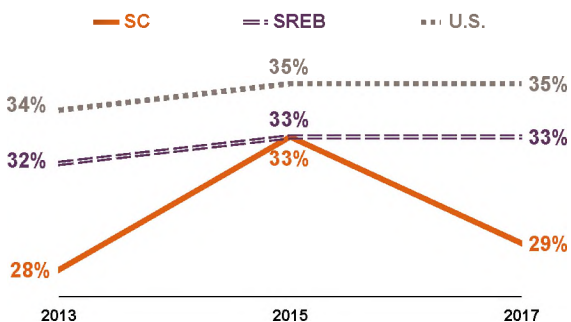
Source: National Center for Education Statistics

In South Carolina:

- In reading, the percentages of black, white and Hispanic students scoring at or above Proficient on NAEP rose from 2013 to 2017, to 15 percent, 40 percent and 22 percent, respectively.

- In math, the percentage of Hispanic students scoring at or above Proficient on NAEP rose from 2013 to 2017, to 26 percent. The percentages of black and white students scoring at that level declined over the period, to 13 percent and 45 percent, respectively.

region scoring at or above the Basic level on NAEP narrowed by 2 percentage points from 2013 to 2017, shrinking in 10 SREB states. The gap at the Proficient level or above was smaller in nine SREB states in 2017, narrowing by 1 percentage point overall in the region from 2013. In **math** at the Basic level, the regional gap between income groups widened by 2 percentage points, but the gap at the Proficient level shrank by 2 points. National trends were similar.

4th Grade NAEP Reading Gap
Percentage Scoring At or Above Proficient in South Carolina
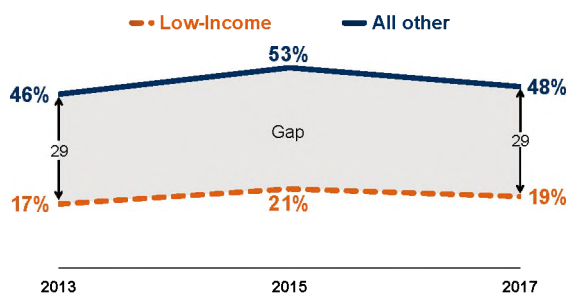
In **math**, the gap shrank by 6 percentage points, to 29 points in 2017. The percentage for students from low-income families was flat over the period, while the percentage for all other students fell.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

English language learners often enter school with little to no exposure to the English language and struggle in U.S. classrooms, especially in subjects that are reading-dependent. This group is projected to account for an increasing proportion of enrollments in SREB states in the immediate future. In 2017, these fourth graders in SREB states outperformed their national peers in **reading** by a fraction of a percentage point at both the Basic and Proficient levels. Significant achievement gaps

persist between them and their classmates. In reading, this gap in SREB states widened slightly from 2013 to 2017 at both the Basic and Proficient levels. In math, the gap between English language learners and their classmates in the region grew by 4 percentage points at the Basic level and was largely unchanged at Proficient.

4th Grade NAEP Reading Gap
Percentage Scoring At or Above Proficient in South Carolina
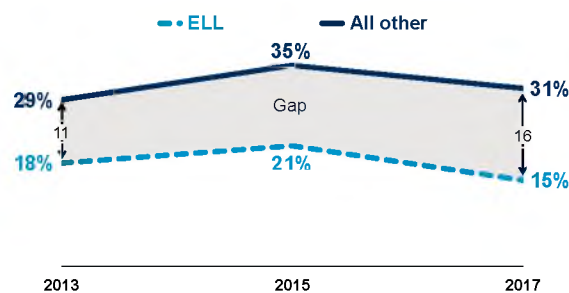
In **math**, the gap widened by 5 percentage points, to 14 points in 2017. The percentage for each group decreased over the period.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Despite growing enrollments, demographic changes and the persistence of achievement gaps, some SREB states made promising gains in reading and math achievement between 2013 and 2017. Fourth graders in Mississippi made significant progress in both subjects and at both benchmark levels. Some SREB states closed performance gaps between student groups by as many as 16 percentage points. Even so, many SREB states still have a high proportion of school-aged children considered at risk of falling behind and dropping out of school. It is crucial that states intervene to help these students meet standards and reach higher academic levels.

The 2015 report of the SREB Early Childhood Commission, *Building a Strong Foundation: State Policy for Early Childhood Education*, emphasized the significance of reading proficiency in the early grades. Research suggests that persistent language gaps develop in the first months of life. These early language and literacy deficits lay the foundation for later reading problems. By the end of third grade, a child who is not reading proficiently is four times more likely not to graduate from high school on time than a child who can read proficiently. States should monitor each child's early language and literacy development from prekindergarten through at least the third grade, thereby providing more children the skills they need to flourish later in school.

Early Grades

A focus on college and career readiness has pushed states to help more students reach the NAEP Proficient level in reading and mathematics. Performance at this level means students are on track for college and careers. Understanding a state's challenges in bringing more students to a higher level requires a closer look at *all* the data. Performance at the Basic level indicates partial mastery of the academic skills necessary for success in the next grade. Helping students rise from Basic to Proficient on NAEP is critical, but an intermediate step is often helping them improve from below Basic to Basic.

While 33 percent of fourth graders in the median SREB state performed at or above the Proficient level on NAEP in reading in 2017, another 36 percent fell **below Basic**. These students did not demonstrate even partial mastery of grade-level skills. They are far from the target reading benchmark and are likely to struggle in future grades even if provided with extra support. A significant proportion of these students may have dyslexia and need specialized instruction to improve in reading.

4th Grade NAEP Reading
Results by Performance Level in South Carolina, 2017
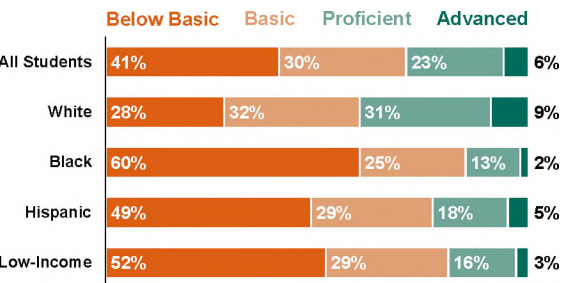
Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Overall percentages of fourth graders performing below Basic on NAEP reading hide large gaps between student groups. While 24 percent of white fourth graders in the median SREB state fell below Basic in 2017, more than half of black students — 51 percent — performed at this level, as did 44 percent of Hispanic students. The gap between students in different income groups was also large: 45 percent of fourth graders from low-income families performed below Basic, compared with 19 percent of their more affluent peers. These large performance gaps call out to states and schools to do more to support all students in the early grades, and especially those most at risk of academic struggles.

SREB began comparing student results on state-adopted or state-developed assessments to NAEP results in 2005 to help policymakers better understand how their state assessment results compare in a national context. When the percentage of students scoring at or above the level considered proficient on state assessments is close to the percentage scoring at or above NAEP Proficient, the standards, cut scores and reporting categories of that state are likely to accurately indicate college and career readiness. Likewise, similar percentages of students scoring below a basic level of achievement on state assessments and NAEP indicate that states are accurately identifying the students who need the most support.

4th Grade Reading/ELA Results
South Carolina, 2017

	Assessment	
	State	**NAEP**
Below Basic	**30%**	**41%**
At or Above Proficient	**41%**	**29%**

Sources: National Center for Education Statistics and South Carolina Department of Education

In 2017, a higher percentage of fourth graders performed at or above the proficient level on state-adopted assessments of **reading** than at or above the Proficient level on NAEP in 15 SREB states. The gaps in these percentages between state and NAEP results ranged from 2 to 34 percentage points. A smaller proportion of students performed below basic on state assessments than below the Basic level on NAEP in 15 SREB states, too; this gap ranged from 4 to 34 percentage points. Only one state in the SREB region — Maryland — had gaps of 5 percentage points or fewer at both levels.

States in which students' performance on NAEP is very different from their performance on state assessments are less likely to be able to accurately measure the proportion of students who are ready for college or careers. They may also underestimate the proportion of students struggling to acquire academic skills and fail to provide the support these students need.

Education Technology

To reach their education goals, SREB states need to ensure that students have access to technology, digital instructional materials and online learning. States also need to ensure that teachers have training to help students use these resources and tools effectively.

Open educational resources, or OER, are now an essential part of today's technology ecosystem. OER, according to the Hewlett Foundation, are "teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under a special copyright that permits their free use and re-purposing by others." OER help schools and districts make affordable, up-to-date and relevant instructional materials available.

OER advances are possible with Creative Commons licenses, which can substitute for traditional copyrights when authors permit. They give teachers greater flexibility in adopting resources for their courses. They also provide a middle stage between free and paid options. Authors can waive fees for use of the materials, but they can still require citation for use, and they can hold or waive other rights, such as for reuse, sharing or adapting the work.

Supportive state policies provide cost savings for a broad array of OER, copyrighted textbooks and digital content in all coursework. Such policies allow more schools and teachers access to inexpensive materials that are up-to-date. This means that students will be better prepared for 21st century job demands.

Several SREB states have digital content repositories that contain OER content. SREB's 2017 report, *Alignment of Instructional Materials*, reported that half of SREB states participated in multi-state OER initiatives. The most effective initiatives align materials to state standards to reduce the variability in the quality of instruction across classrooms and to boost student achievement.

Adoption of OER is stalled in some states by outdated practices which stand in the way of the new. Often purchasing processes are written for physical instructional materials and do not account for digital ones. Sometimes the state's review process is too slow for the rapid advances in digital content. By the time they can review new material for purchase it is old. Sometimes state processes do not provide for aligning content with state curriculum standards, which results in a failure to adopt all the supplementary and complementary materials for the primary content.

What OER implementation policies do states need to adopt and support statewide?

- Digital OER along with other OER statewide
- Purchasing contract language appropriate for OER digital content
- Teacher professional development on using, locating, editing and sharing OER
- Technical support for teachers in using OER in the classroom
- Development of materials that complement OER such as test banks, learning activities, and lesson plans

K-12 Digital Instruction Policies in SREB States

Policies	AL	AR	DE	FL	GA	KY	LA	MD	MS	NC	OK	SC	TN	TX	VA	WV
Definition of instructional materials includes digital materials	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Review of instructional materials includes open educational resources						✓	✓	✓					✓	✓		✓
Allows for implementation of digital instructional materials		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
Requires implementation of digital instructional materials		✓		✓			✓			✓						✓
Has a digital learning plan and digital learning standards for students	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓	✓
Has repositories that include open educational resources.	✓						✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓

Source: State Education Technology Directors Association, 2017

Middle Grades

Like the target set for fourth graders, Challenge to Lead 2020 calls for 90 percent of eighth graders to score at or above the Basic level on NAEP in reading and math. It also calls for percentages of these students scoring at or above the Proficient level to increase regularly, ultimately exceeding national percentages. The NAEP Proficient performance level is closely associated with college and career readiness.

In 2017 no SREB state reached the 90 percent target of eighth graders scoring at or above Basic in reading or math on NAEP; neither did the nation. Still, three SREB states had higher percentages of eighth graders who scored at or above the Basic level in reading than the nation, and two states beat the nation in math.

In South Carolina:

■ In reading, the percentages of white and Hispanic students scoring at or above Proficient on NAEP rose from 2013 to 2017, to 42 percent and 27 percent, respectively. The percentage of black students scoring at that level declined over the period, to 11 percent.

■ In math, the percentages of black, white and Hispanic students scoring at or above Proficient declined from 2013 to 2017, to 8 percent, 38 percent and 19 percent, respectively.

From 2013 to 2017, the percentage of eighth-grade students in the SREB region scoring at or above the **Basic** level in **reading** fell by 3 percentage points; this percentage fell by 1 point in the nation. Four SREB states made gains, led by a 2-percentage point increase in Mississippi.

The percentage of eighth graders in the SREB region scoring at or above the **Proficient** level on NAEP in reading fell by 1 percentage point between 2013 and 2017. Still, nine SREB states saw improvement at this performance level, and eight states outpaced the nation in gains over the period. In four SREB states, a greater percentage of eighth graders scored at or above the Proficient level in 2017 than in the nation.

In **math**, middle graders' performance fell in both SREB states and the nation from 2013 to 2017. The percentage of eighth graders scoring at or above the NAEP **Basic** level dropped by 5 percentage points in the SREB region

8th Grade NAEP Reading
Percentage Scoring At or Above Proficient in South Carolina

— SC   — · SREB   ···· U.S.
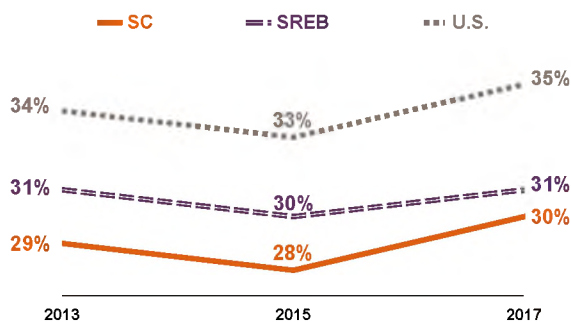
Source: National Center for Education Statistics

and 4 points in the nation during the period. Every SREB state lost ground between 2013 and 2017, leaving the region further from the 90-percent target for eighth graders in math.

Percentages of eighth graders scoring at or above the **Proficient** level in math fell by 2 percentage points in the SREB region and 1 point in the nation from 2013 to 2017. Six SREB states increased the percentage of eighth graders scoring at the Proficient level during the period. In 2017, two SREB states had greater percentages of eighth graders at the Proficient level in math than the nation.

8th Grade NAEP Math
Percentage Scoring At or Above Proficient in South Carolina

— SC   — · SREB   ···· U.S.
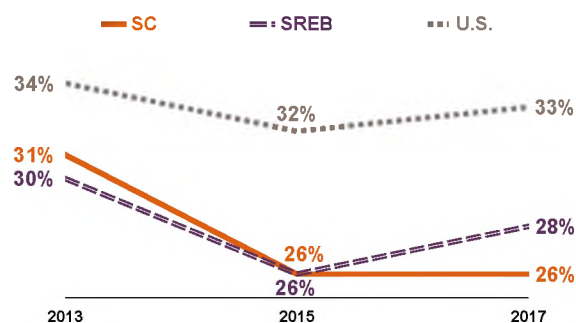
Source: National Center for Education Statistics

The Challenge to Lead 2020 goal for middle graders emphasizes the need for SREB states to close achievement gaps for all groups of students — including those of racial and ethnic groups, from low-income households, and with disabilities.

8th Grade NAEP Math

Percentage Scoring At or Above Proficient in South Carolina

· · · Black   - - Hispanic   — White

43% (White, 2013)
36% (White, 2015)
38% (White, 2017)

23% (Hispanic, 2013)
22% (Hispanic, 2015)
19% (Hispanic, 2017)

13% (Black, 2013)
8% (Black, 2015)
8% (Black, 2017)

2013   2015   2017
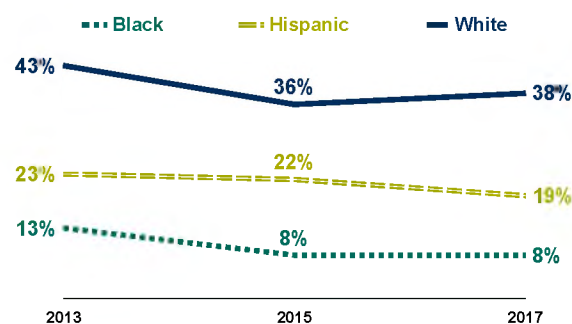
Source: National Center for Education Statistics

White eighth graders in SREB states outperformed their black and Hispanic peers in both reading and math at both the NAEP Basic and Proficient levels in 2017. From 2013 to 2017, the achievement gap in **reading** at the Proficient level for black students and their white peers in the SREB region widened by 2 percentage points; it was unchanged in **math**. These gaps for Hispanic students and their white peers in the region widened by 2 and 3 percentage points, respectively.

The gap in **reading** at the Proficient level for eighth graders from low-income families and all other students in the SREB region narrowed by nearly 2 percentage points from 2013 to 2017. Twelve SREB states reduced the gap — three of them by 5 or more percentage points. This gap in **math** was unchanged in the nation but narrowed by 2 percentage points in the SREB region. Despite this progress, substantial gaps for eighth graders

8th Grade NAEP Math Gap

Percentage Scoring At or Above Proficient in South Carolina

· · Students with disabilities   — All other

34% (All other, 2013)
29% (All other, 2015)
29% (All other, 2017)

29 (Gap, 2013)
Gap
25 (Gap, 2017)

5% (Students with disabilities, 2013)
3% (Students with disabilities, 2015)
4% (Students with disabilities, 2017)

2013   2015   2017
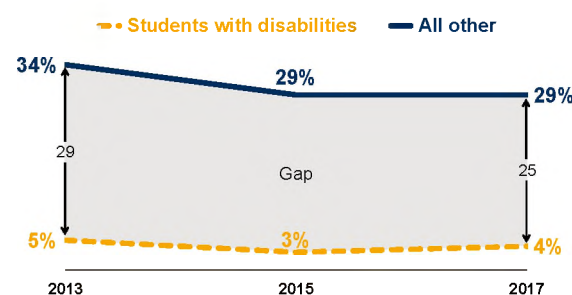
In **reading**, the gap widened by 2 percentage points, to 30 points in 2017. The percentage for students with disabilities decreased, while the percentage for all other students increased.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

from low-income families continued in all SREB states in 2017, ranging from 14 to 32 percentage points on NAEP in reading and 18 to 35 percentage points in math.

For students with disabilities in SREB states, achievement gaps with their classmates continued in 2017 on NAEP. These gaps in **reading** widened at the Proficient level from 2013 to 2017 and remained about the same at the Basic level. In **math**, eighth graders with disabilities narrowed the gap by 1 percentage point at both the Basic and Proficient levels over the period. Performance on NAEP in reading and math for eighth graders with disabilities in the SREB region continued to lag behind that of their national peers in 2017.

Despite growing enrollments and demographic changes in public schools, some SREB states made promising gains in reading achievement on NAEP and narrowed long-standing reading and math achievement gaps between student groups from 2013 to 2017. Even so, gaps remain in all 16 SREB states. Too many states have a high proportion of middle grades students considered at risk of falling behind or dropping out of high school. It is crucial that states intervene to help these students meet standards and reach higher academic levels.

Just as reading proficiency is a stumbling block for many children in the early grades, math mastery often becomes a barrier to student success in the middle grades. The root of academic problems often extends back to children's first years in school. SREB has a long record of supporting state efforts to align math curricula so students are ready for middle-grades and high school math.

Studies indicate that algebra is a critical building block for math success in high school. Challenge to Lead 2020 calls for all students to pass Algebra I no later than ninth grade, and preferably in eighth grade. Nevertheless, the 2017 NAEP results indicate that too many SREB states have not sufficiently raised math achievement for most middle graders, and too many students still leave middle school poorly equipped for success in algebra.

The Challenge to Lead 2020 middle-grades goal calls for stronger standards, better alignment of standards and curricula, effective professional development for teachers, attention to STEM (science, technology, engineering and math), and access to technology that promotes learning. With these elements in place, middle-grades students are more likely to be successful in high school and beyond.

Middle Grades

A focus on college and career readiness has pushed states to help more students reach the NAEP Proficient level in reading and mathematics. Performance at this level means students are on track for college and careers. Understanding a state's challenges in bringing more students to a higher level requires a closer look at *all* the data. Performance at the Basic level indicates partial mastery of the academic skills necessary for success in the next grade. Helping students rise from Basic to Proficient on NAEP is critical, but an intermediate step is often helping them improve from below Basic to Basic.

While 28 percent of eighth graders in the median SREB state performed at or above the Proficient level on NAEP in math in 2017, another 34 percent fell **below Basic**. These students did not demonstrate even partial mastery of grade-level skills. They are far from being prepared for high school math classes and are likely to struggle, even with extra support.

8th Grade NAEP Math
Results by Performance Level in South Carolina, 2017
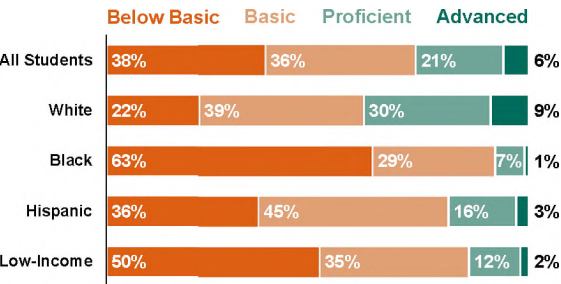
Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Overall percentages of eighth graders performing below Basic on the NAEP math assessment hide large gaps between student groups. While 23 percent of white eighth graders in the median SREB state fell below Basic in 2017, more than half of black students — 56 percent — performed at this level, as did 42 percent of Hispanic students. The gap between students in different income groups was also large: 47 percent of fourth graders from low-income families performed below Basic, compared with 21 percent of their more affluent peers. These large performance gaps indicate that schools could do more to support all students in the middle grades, but especially those most at risk of academic struggles.

SREB began comparing student results on state-adopted or state-developed assessments to NAEP results in 2005 to help policymakers better understand how their state assessment results compare in a national context. When the percentage of students scoring at or above the level considered proficient on state assessments is close to the percentage scoring at or above NAEP Proficient, the standards, cut scores and reporting categories of that state are likely to accurately indicate college and career readiness. Likewise, similar percentages of students scoring below a basic level of achievement on state assessments and NAEP indicate that states are accurately identifying the students who need the most support.

8th Grade Math Results
South Carolina, 2017

	Assessment	
	State	**NAEP**
Below Basic	**32%**	**38%**
At or Above Proficient	**35%**	**26%**

Sources: National Center for Education Statistics and South Carolina Department of Education

In 2017, a higher percentage of eighth graders in 13 SREB states performed at or above the proficient level on state-adopted assessments of **math** than at or above the Proficient level on NAEP. The gaps in these percentages between state and NAEP results ranged from 1 to 25 percentage points. A smaller proportion of students performed below basic on state assessments than below the Basic level on NAEP in nine SREB states; this gap ranged from 2 to 33 percentage points. Two states in the SREB region, North Carolina and Tennessee, had gaps of 5 percentage points or fewer at both levels.

States in which students' performance on NAEP is very different from their performance on state assessments are less likely to be able to accurately measure the proportion of students who are ready for college or careers. They may also underestimate the proportion of students struggling to acquire academic skills and fail to provide the support these students need.

Postsecondary Faculty Diversity

The Challenge to Lead 2020 goals call for enrollment at public colleges and universities that reflects their states' recent high school graduating class. Research suggests that if colleges are to successfully meet the needs of a diverse student body, they need a diverse faculty that can provide leadership, mentorship and role models for the students they teach. While more than one-third of America's college students are people of color, only 5 percent of faculty are black, 3 percent are Hispanic and about 1 percent are Native American. For 25 years, the SREB-State Doctoral Scholars Program has worked to change this striking imbalance.

Since 1993, SREB's DSP has supported over 1,400 doctoral students who commit to doctoral study in preparation to enter the professoriate. The program's 90-percent retention-graduation rate far exceeds that of most doctoral programs. Its impressive results support state efforts to help improve college completion rates at two- and four-year colleges for students from all racial and ethnic groups.

Currently, program alumni work in 43 states with a higher concentration in SREB states. More than 70 percent of these graduates are employed in institutions of higher education. Some of the graduates who make up the other 30 percent work in K-12 education, education agencies, and in research and leadership positions in places such as the National Institutes of Health and NASA.

The Doctoral Scholars Program helps states and institutions identify promising doctoral scholars — ones already admitted to their doctoral programs based on their academic merits. Many of these students are first-generation college graduates and are often the only persons of color in their doctoral program. DSP provides multi-layered student services, including career and professional development, and leadership and networking opportunities to help these students make the transition to the professoriate.

Addressing the shortage of minority doctoral students and faculty members strengthens both public higher education institutions and states. Both have seen substantial returns in research revenue as more graduates become faculty and leaders in their institutions and communities. These graduates win grants, produce research, earn patents and mentor students. In a recent survey, 85 DSP

SREB Doctoral Scholars
Number of Scholars Supported, 1993-2018
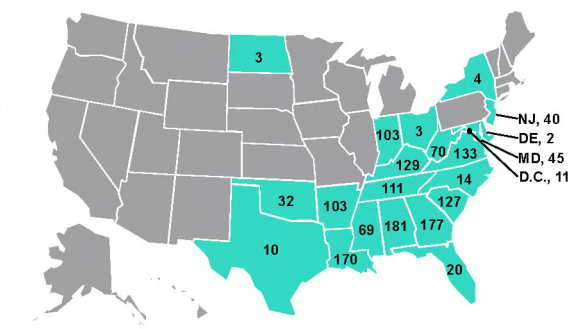
Source: SREB

alumni reported having generated more than **$21 million** in research grants from such entities as the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health.

The program's success yields additional benefits to participating states and institutions.

- **Efficiencies** DSP Ph.D. candidates finish two years faster than the average Ph.D. student nationwide, saving themselves and their states money.

- **Workforce talent** DSP alumni are highly trained and skilled talent for their states, able to conduct cutting-edge research and bring in external grant funding.

- **Role models** DSP alumni become faculty members who encourage more minority students on their campuses to succeed. More importantly, these faculty serve as thought-leaders in their fields of study and potential mentors to students campus-wide.

- **Institutional recruitment** State institutions and research labs can recruit from a highly qualified pool of minority Ph.D. graduates and use the DSP online directory of scholars in a wide range of fields to identify potential job candidates.

- **Leadership** The DSP creates highly trained, well-educated leaders who provide skilled services and leadership to their institutions and communities.

- **Campus climate** DSP faculty can help black, Hispanic and women students feel less isolated when they see their race, ethnicity and gender reflected in classroom and administrative leadership positions.

High School

Making a successful transition from eighth to ninth grade is key to student success in high school. But this transition proves difficult for many students. Ninth-grade public school enrollment in SREB states exceeds eighth grade enrollment, and this increase is a possible indicator that too many middle graders were not prepared sufficiently for high school. The **ninth-grade enrollment bulge**, seen throughout the nation, is not new, and states have monitored it for some time. It is calculated by comparing the enrollment of ninth graders to that of eighth graders the prior school year.

This enrollment bulge stems, in part, from middle graders moving from private and home schools to public high schools. It is somewhat offset by eighth graders who exit public schools for private high schools. These shifts differ by state. But a sizeable bulge generally indicates that more than an average proportion of public school ninth graders were not promoted.

9th Grade Enrollment Bulge
South Carolina
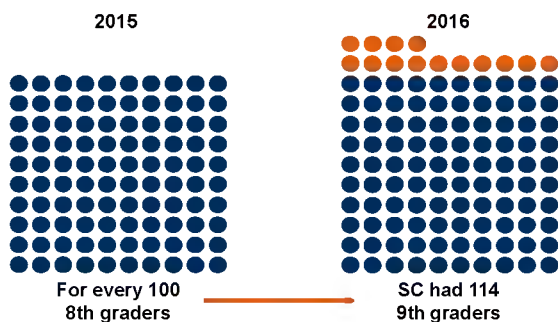
Source: SREB, based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics

In the SREB region, 109 ninth graders were enrolled in public schools in 2016 for every 100 eighth graders in 2015. The bulge included from three to 14 more students in ninth grade across SREB states. States need to monitor eighth- and ninth-grade enrollments annually to help all students make a smooth transition and receive the support they need to be successful in high school.

Students in other grades also struggle with transitions. They may face challenges as they advance through high school, which may put them at risk of failing a grade or dropping out. States should monitor the percentage of students who successfully advance from one grade to the next — a measure of grade-level progression.

Grade-Level Progression
Enrollment for the Class of 2016, South Carolina
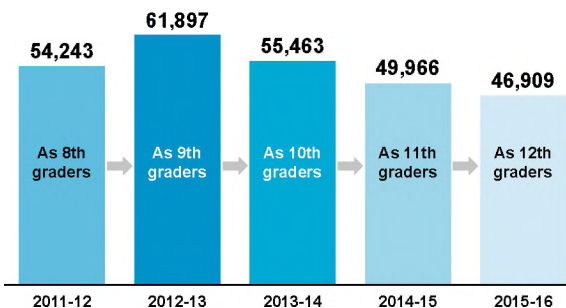
Source: SREB, based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics

SREB states have seen improvement in high school grade-level progression. From 2011 to 2016 the percentage of ninth graders who reached 12th grade on time increased 7 percentage points. In 2016 the high school progression rates in SREB states ranged from 74 percent to 89 percent.

State data systems can monitor progression rates by tracking student enrollment rates at each high school grade level. This monitoring will help school staff identify students at risk of failure and show state leaders where state policies and programs can support student success.

In addition to improvements in student progression, SREB states have made strides toward the Challenge to Lead 2020 target of a 90 percent high school graduation rate, adopted in 2012. When the first Challenge to Lead goals were set in 2002, the median graduation rate in SREB states was 69 percent, 2 percentage points below the national average.

The estimated graduation rate for the SREB region in 2011 was 78 percent, 1 point below the national rate. By 2016 SREB's graduation rate increased to 86 percent — and exceeded the national rate by 2 points. Fifteen SREB states saw their high school graduation rates rise during this time, by between 3 and 15 percentage points.

During those five years, over half of SREB states had significant increases in graduation rates for black or Hispanic students, English language learners, students with disabilities or students from low-income families. These increases helped narrow **graduation-rate gaps**. Yet, amid these overall gains in graduation rates in SREB states, gaps remain among student groups.

Over time, states agreed to standardize to one formula for calculating a high school graduation rate. Since 2014, SREB has reported the federal **Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR)**, based on actual counts of cohorts of students. Before then, states reported data for a federal calculation that yielded an estimated rate.

High School Graduation Rates
South Carolina, 2016

SREB Graduation
Rate Target: 90%

All	Black	Hispanic	White	Low-Income	ELL	SWD
83%	80%	80%	84%	88%	76%	52%

ELL: English Language Learners   **SWD:** Students with Disabilities
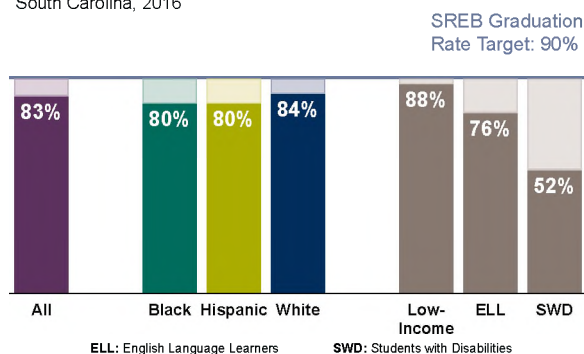
Source: U.S. Department of Education, Ed Data Express

From 2014 to 2016 the median graduation rate gains in SREB states for black students, students with disabilities and students from low-income families substantially outpaced the gains made by all students in the region. This means that graduation rate gaps narrowed for these students.

In 2016, 81 percent of black students in SREB states graduated from high school. Their graduation rates improved in 15 SREB states, by between .50 point and 11 points.

At the same time, 67 percent of students with disabilities in the SREB region graduated from high school, with

In South Carolina:

- The high school graduation rate increased by 9 percentage points from 2011 to 2016.

- The percentage of ninth graders progressing to 12th grade in four years increased from 67 percent in 2011 to 76 percent in 2016.

- In 2017, 34 percent of 11th and 12th graders enrolled in at least one AP course, compared with 38 percent in the nation.

graduation rate gains in 13 states. Students from low-income families graduated at a rate of 80 percent, with graduation rate gains in 13 states.

In 2016, Hispanic students in the SREB region graduated from high school at a rate of 81 percent, and white students at 89 percent. They, along with black students, were all short of SREB's 90 percent target. Even so, graduation rates improved by 3 points for black students and 1 point for Hispanic students from 2014 to 2016. All three student groups in SREB states graduated at rates higher than their peers nationwide.

In addition to graduating students from high school, SREB states need to focus on preparing students for the transition to college and careers. The Challenge 2020 goals call for states to increase the availability of accelerated programs that can prepare students for work beyond high school. Such programs include Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Early College and dual enrollment.

Specifically, the goals recommend that students take AP exams while in high school. Research shows that students who take AP courses in high school and attempt the related exams are more academically successful as college freshmen. This is true even if the students do not earn a score of 3 or higher on the test — considered passing and generally sufficient to earn college credit.

Percentage Scoring 3 or Higher on AP Exams
Class of 2017

—DE, 20
MD, 31

U.S., 23   SREB, 19
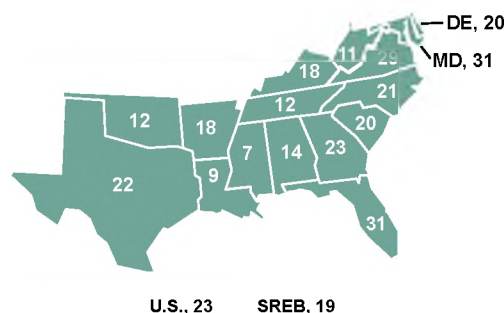
Source: The College Board

In 2017, nine SREB states had more 11th and 12th graders enrolled in AP courses on average than other states nationwide. The SREB regional participation rate was 42 percent, compared with 38 percent in the nation.

High School

Although increasing high school graduation rates is important, the focus of the SREB 2020 goal for high schools is on college and career readiness. This goal calls for 80 percent of ninth graders to be ready for college and career training when they complete high school.

To help states meet this readiness goal, SREB developed a **college- and career-readiness action agenda**. It calls for states to adopt five policies — all focused on helping students become ready for postsecondary study. The agenda includes having states:

- adopt readiness standards for math and literacy;

- assess student progress on readiness no later than junior year of high school;

- offer courses in high school to students who do not meet the readiness standards;

- align college admissions and placement policies to state readiness standards; and

- make postsecondary readiness a high school accountability measure.

By 2017, many SREB states had adopted most of these policies. All SREB states had set math and literacy standards; 15 had set **college- and career-readiness benchmarks** for their statewide high school assessments. Students who fall below these benchmarks are identified as needing help in the transition from high school to postsecondary study. All SREB states now offer courses designed to help students catch up to standards. Half of the states require students who do not meet the benchmarks to take the courses.

College Readiness Courses
For Students Not Meeting Readiness Cut-Scores in High School

■ Requires students to take readiness courses
■ Offers but does not require readiness courses
■ Does not offer or require readiness courses
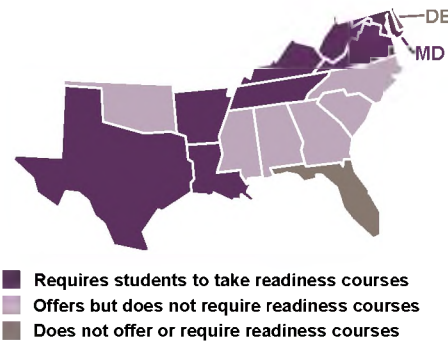
Source: SREB analysis of state documents

Student performance on national assessments such as the ACT and SAT provides states with critical information about how students may perform after high school. Eight SREB states use ACT or SAT results to measure college readiness. Both assessments also set college readiness benchmarks that help students and their advisors make final high school course choices.

Nine SREB states required students in the class of 2017 to take one of these tests, generally in their junior year. Of these states, eight required the ACT and one required the SAT. Arkansas also had full participation on the ACT even though the test was not required.

Among SREB states, the percentage of students taking these admission tests differs greatly, and the proportion of students taking them has shifted in recent years. In Florida, Georgia and South Carolina more than half of

College and Career Readiness (CCR) in South Carolina

Policy Element	Status	Details
Gives assessment to high school juniors for CCR	Yes	ACT and ACT WorkKeys
Offers transition courses to juniors or seniors not ready for college and careers	Yes	Implementing SREB readiness courses
Requires remediation in high school for students scoring below college- and career-readiness benchmark(s)	No	
Requires postsecondary institutions to use high school assessment results for college placement	No	
Exempts "ready" students from placement testing	No	Institutions determine placement testing

Source: SREB analysis of state documents

ACT and SAT Participation Rates
Percentage of the Class of 2017

DE, 100
MD, 69
69 65
100
100
100
100 100
100 100 61
62
100
83

■ Higher percentage of students took the ACT
■ Higher percentage of students took the SAT
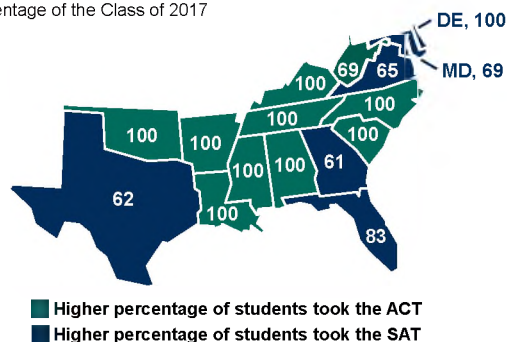
Sources: ACT, Inc. and state departments of education

the class of 2017 took both tests. Of the remaining SREB states, nine had 50 percent or higher participation on only the ACT, and four had 50 percent or higher participation on only the SAT.

In the SREB region, 73 percent of the class of 2017 took the ACT, up from 63 percent for the class of 2013. This increase largely resulted from more states having 100 percent participation. SAT participation for the 2017 class was 49 percent — a 0.5 percentage point drop from the class of 2013.

In South Carolina:

■ Participation rates on the ACT for the class of 2017 rose to 100 percent, up 49 percentage points, compared with the class of 2013.

■ The average ACT subscore for reading for the class of 2017 decreased to 19.1, down 1.8 percentage points, compared with the class of 2015.

■ The average ACT subscore for math for the class of 2017 decreased to 18.6, down 1.6 percentage points, compared with the class of 2015.

SREB's 2020 goals call for states to reach national averages on the ACT and SAT. The average ACT composite score for the SREB region for the class of 2017 was 20.0, compared with the national average of 21.0. Since 2013, the regional average remained flat, and the national average rose 0.1 point. For the ACT, 0.1 point is considered statistically significant.

An increased proportion of graduating seniors taking the ACT partially explains why scores did not rise with the national increase. Generally, as a greater proportion of students takes a college admission test, the average score drops as the expanding group includes many students who are not prepared for college.

In the SREB region, the average composite ACT score for black and Hispanic students in the class of 2017 improved, compared with the class of 2016. In 2017, white students in SREB states exceeded the national average score by 0.6 points. Black students trailed the national score by 4.1. Hispanic students trailed the national score by 2.3.

Average Composite ACT Scores
Graduating Classes, South Carolina

─── SC   ═ ═ SREB   ▪▪▪ U.S.

20.9
21.0
21.0
20.4
20.4
20.0
20.1
20.0
18.7

2013   2015   2017
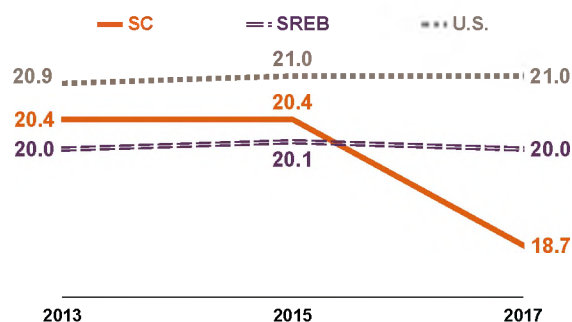
*Participation increased to 100 percent for the Class of 2016.
Source: ACT, Inc.

The 2017 SAT results are based on College Board's new test, which introduced two sections: Evidence-Based Reading and Writing, and Math. While this new test is derived from previous ones, it has been greatly revised. Previous scores do not directly correspond to current and future ones. For the first time, SAT has set empirically-based benchmarks of college readiness for each section: 480 for ERW and 530 for Math.

The average SAT score for the class of 2017 in SREB states was 1043, compared with 1060 for its peers nationally. Overall in the SREB region, the average score for black students in the class of 2017 matched the ERW benchmark; they scored 70 points below the Math benchmark. Hispanic students exceeded the ERW benchmark by 19 points but fell below the Math benchmark by 43 points. White students exceeded the ERW and Math benchmarks by 90 and 21 points, respectively.

High School

SREB states can use various measures to gauge their students' progress toward the SREB college- and career-readiness goal. These include the ACT, SAT, state assessments, and such indicators as completion of dual enrollment courses and national industry certifications.

Both the ACT and College Board have established empirically based readiness benchmarks for their respective tests — ACT and SAT. These benchmarks are the minimum scores that indicate students have a high probability of success in credit-bearing college courses.

- For ACT, a readiness benchmark score indicates a student has about a 50 percent chance of earning a B or better and about a 75 percent chance of earning a C or better in the corresponding college courses.

- For SAT, a readiness benchmark score indicates a student has about a 75 percent chance of earning a C or better in the corresponding college courses.

SREB states have made significant increases in high school graduation rates since 2002, but ACT and SAT college-readiness results show that too many graduates are leaving high school unprepared for college coursework. The benchmark results indicate that students are not prepared to earn the grades necessary for success in college.

This gap between high school completion and college readiness — **the readiness gap** — comes at a time when labor projections suggest that nearly two-thirds of future job openings will require candidates with postsecondary certificates or degrees.

Graduation Rates vs. College Readiness
Graduating Seniors Meeting All ACT Benchmarks, South Carolina
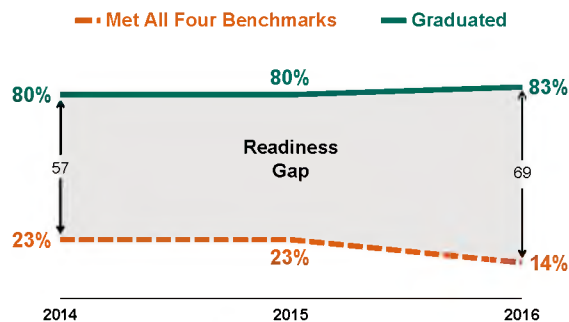
Source: ACT, Inc., U.S. Department of Education, Ed Data Express

Nationwide, of students in the class of 2017 who took the ACT, 27 percent met all four college-readiness benchmarks — English, math, reading and science. In SREB states, 21 percent did.

Across the nation, 46 percent of the class of 2017 who took the SAT met college- and career-readiness benchmarks in reading and writing, and math. In SREB states, 42 percent did.

A closer look at ACT and SAT benchmark results shows wider performance gaps in meeting the benchmarks for black and Hispanic students than for white students.

Percentage Meeting All Four ACT Benchmarks
Graduating Class by Subgroup, South Carolina
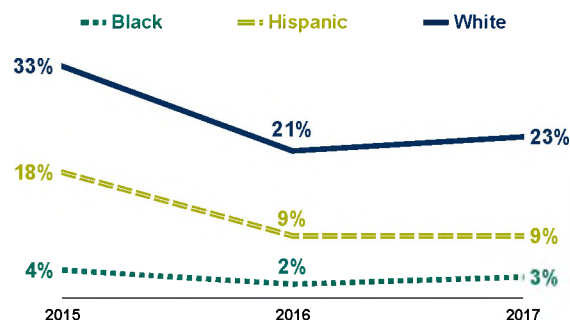
Source: ACT, Inc.

Across the SREB region in 2017, ACT benchmarks results showed: 29 percent of white students met all four college readiness benchmarks; 14 percent of Hispanic students met all the benchmarks; and 5 percent of black students did. Students in all three groups were best prepared in English followed by reading, and then about equally in science and math.

The pattern of results was similar on the SAT. In 2017, 59 percent of white students met both SAT benchmarks, 30 percent of Hispanic students met both benchmarks, and 19 percent of black students met both benchmarks. About half of black students and 60 percent of Hispanic students met at least one of the SAT benchmarks compared with 86 percent of white students. The gap between black and white students in meeting the readiness benchmarks was 37 percent; for Hispanic and white students it was 23 percent.

According to ACT results in 2017, students were particularly underprepared in the STEM area, which represents

science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Nationwide, 21 percent of students in the class of 2017 who took the ACT met the STEM benchmark, compared with 15 percent in the SREB region. While 21 percent of white students met this benchmark, less than 10 percent of black and Hispanic students did.

Across the SREB region, the gaps between black and white students meeting the STEM benchmark ranged from 10 to 39 percentage points. The gaps in meeting this benchmark were slightly narrower between Hispanic and white students, ranging from 4 points to 24 points.

Percentage Meeting ACT STEM Benchmark
Graduating Class in South Carolina, 2017

Participation Rate = 100%

1%	6%	15%
Black	Hispanic	White
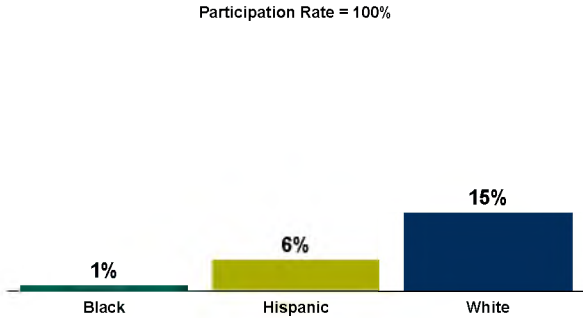
Source: ACT, Inc.

In the nine SREB states with 100 percent ACT participation for the class of 2017, 1 percent to 4 percent of black students met the STEM benchmark, while 5 percent to 8 percent of Hispanic students did and 12 percent to 19 percent of white students did.

State policymakers and education leaders have worked with business and industry leaders to address gaps in

In South Carolina:

- The gap on ACT's reading benchmark for black and white students narrowed by 6 percentage points from 2015 to 2017 — to 34 percent. The gap for these students on the math benchmark narrowed by 10 points — to 30 percent.

- The gap on ACT's reading benchmark for Hispanic and white students widened by 4 percentage points — to 20 percent. The gap for these students meeting the math benchmark remained the same — at 18 percent.

high school students' readiness and prepare more students to graduate from high school with the academic and career skills needed to meet current and future workforce needs.

To address a growing need for greater technology skills in the workplace, SREB's 2016 Commission on Computer Science and Information Technology studied how states can meet labor market demands in the computing field. Its report, *Bridging the Computer Science Gap: Five Actions States Can Take*, made recommendations that include the development of statewide K-12 computer science standards, the creation of clear computer science career pathways from high school to postsecondary education, and the preparation of great computer science teachers.

Currently, one SREB state has implemented all the commission's policy recommendations. Fourteen other states made progress implementing one or more of the commission's policy recommendations.

K-12 Computer Science Policies in South Carolina

Policy Element	Status
Statewide computer science standards for K-12	Yes
State/Local computer science leadership position(s) created	No
State certification path for computer science teachers	Yes
Teacher preparation programs offer computer science training	No
State funding for computer science professional development	No
High schools must offer computer science	No

Sources: SREB, adapted from Code.org

Accountability

SREB's Challenge to Lead 2020 goals recognize that state accountability systems explicitly tie college and career readiness to high school standards as a key policy lever for academic quality and postsecondary readiness.

Since 1990, state leaders in SREB states have refined state policies to create accountability systems that promote and support continuous improvement for all students and schools across the K through 12 continuum.

In 2007 and 2008, the SREB Governor's Committee to Improve High School Graduation Rates and Achievement focused its attention on state policies to improve high school graduation rates and college and career readiness. Its 2009 report, the *Next Generation of School Accountability*, called for accountability systems that would require more from students, educators and schools — and from state leaders. The following SREB tenets of accountability grew from committee recommendations and state efforts to create accountability systems that would have a greater focus on college and career readiness.

- Establish long-term goals that support increased college and career readiness, accompanied by interim goals that mark progress over time.

- Establish state, district and school accountability systems that are based on multiple measures and place emphasis on high school measures of college and career readiness.

- Give greater weight to accountability measures that reflect state priorities and goals, with college and career readiness as the focal point.

- Provide incentives to local districts and schools to support continuous improvement for all students and all student groups — ultimately leading to greater percentages of high school graduates who are ready for college and careers.

- Provide timely, regularly scheduled, understandable reporting to all stakeholders.

- Support local capacity building to increase student achievement and get more students college and career ready.

- Include accountability mechanisms that identify and trigger state and local intervention for schools that need improvement; these mechanisms should be aligned to the specific type and degree of need at each school.

When the Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA) passed in 2015, Congress gave states greater flexibility than they had in previous legislation. As a result, SREB states have been able to redesign their accountability systems, including their goals and indicators, so they can better measure what matters in promoting student learning based on state priorities.

While ESSA makes no specific provisions for college and career readiness, SREB states took the initiative to supplement federal requirements with greater state emphasis on college and career readiness. For example, five SREB states included explicit statewide college and career readiness goals in their federal ESSA accountability plans. And, fifteen SREB states included college and career readiness indicators.

College- and Career-Ready Goals in State/Federal Accountability Plans

AL	By 2030, 94 percent of high school graduates will be identified as college and career ready by earning at least one college- or career-readiness indicator.
OK	By 2025, 100 percent of students in grades six through 12 will develop an Individual Career Academic Plan.
	By 2025, the need for postsecondary remediation in math and English will decline by 50 percent.
SC	By 2035, 90 percent of high school graduates will be college-, career-, or citizenship-ready.
	The percentage of high school students graduating ready to enter postsecondary education without the need for remediation will increase by 5 percent annually.
TN	By 2020, the majority of Tennessee high school graduates will earn a postsecondary credential.
	By 2020, the state will reach a target average ACT composite of 21.
TX	By 2030, 60 percent of adults in Texas ages 25 to 34 will possess a postsecondary credential.
	By 2032, 60 percent of all students — and each student subgroup — will meet grade level on state English language arts and math assessments, indicating that they are on track for success in a postsecondary setting.

Sources: State ESSA plans, analyzed by SREB

SREB state leaders understand that the region's economic competitiveness depends on their ability to close critical gaps in credential attainment and skills in their current and future workforce. While well-designed career pathways can help students gain the broad mix of skills employers need, career pathways that connect to a college-ready academic core curriculum, postsecondary studies and career opportunities do much more.

These highly connected pathways raise expectations for all students, which the research suggests engages and challenges them to achieve at higher levels. They also help reduce academic disengagement, the reason for most dropping out, and they promote successful transitions to college and the workplace.

Fifteen of the 16 SREB states incorporated various indicators of technical career readiness such as completing an academic core with a sequenced career pathway, passing a state licensure exam or earning an industry-recognized credential, into their accountability systems.

SREB state education leaders understand that if districts and schools are to pay significant attention to career readiness, their accountability systems need to include measures and indicators of career readiness along with college readiness. States need long-term student achievement and credential attainment goals — for the percentage of students who graduate college ready, career ready or both, with measures of growth toward each of those goals annually and over time.

Goals and measures, however, are likely not enough. Most accountability system plans need to provide incentives to districts and schools to prepare more students for both college and careers. SREB states should find ways to value college readiness and career readiness equally in their respective accountability systems. For example, more states could provide accountability incentives to high schools with a large percentage of students who:

- graduate both college ready and career ready;

- complete a four-course career pathway sequence in a priority industry and earn a passing score on approved end-of-course exams or industry certification exams in those courses;

- complete a four-course sequence of AP, IB or AC courses in a targeted STEM field — like advanced manufacturing, clean energy technology or informatics — and score at the proficient level or above on approved end-of-course exams in those courses;

- earn a college- and career-readiness diploma endorsement for completing a college-ready academic core curriculum and a career pathway program of study; and

- earn an advanced credential or a significant number of credits toward a credential or degree in a priority industry or STEM field.

In the end, states should ensure that accountability systems measure and provide incentives to schools and districts for increasing the percentage of high school students who graduate with the academic knowledge and career skills they need to be successful in the future.

Career Readiness in State/Federal ESSA Accountability Plans

CTE Indicators in Accountability Plans	States
Career Readiness Exams such as WorkKeys and ASVAB	AL, DE, FL, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN
Apprenticeships / Work-Based Learning Experience	DE, GA, KY, LA, MD, OK, SC
Earned Approved Industry Certification	AL, DE, FL, GA, LA, MD, MS, OK, TN, TX
Completion of an Approved Career Pathway	GA, KY, MD, SC

Sources: State ESSA plans, analyzed by SREB

Postsecondary

SREB states will need to increase college enrollment substantially in the coming years if they are to achieve the Challenge to Lead 2020 goal — that 60 percent of working-age adults have a postsecondary degree or certificate. The 2016 SREB Affordability Commission addressed the critical challenge of increasing degree completion — one that becomes more difficult as escalating tuition and fees price students out of postsecondary education and better careers.

Increasing overall postsecondary enrollment rates — and enrollment rates for all student groups — is a critical step in closing college completion gaps. As postsecondary institutions try to attract a greater percentage of students, states will need to provide increased support for them, particularly those from low-income families and those who are first in their families to consider postsecondary education.

In fall 2016, 69 percent of the recent high school graduates in SREB states enrolled in postsecondary education, ranging from 62 to 88 percent across the SREB region. From 2011 to 2016, postsecondary enrollment in SREB

Postsecondary Enrollment
High School Class of 2016 in South Carolina

54,340 seniors in fall 2015

44,885 graduated in 2016

30,914 enrolled in postsecondary within a year
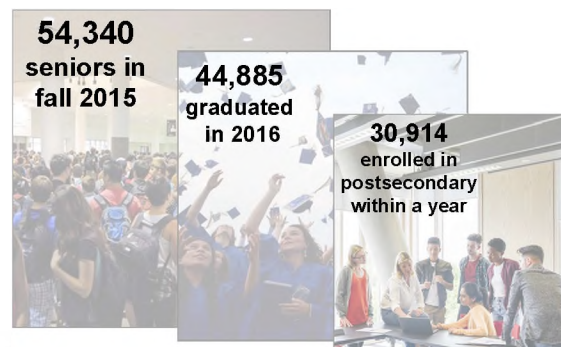
Source: SREB-State Data Exchange

states decreased for black students by 13 percentage points, with double-digit decreases in 15 SREB states. Conversely, enrollment increased for Hispanic students by 21 points in the region, with gains ranging from 11 to 59 percentage points across the SREB region.

The policies and strategies states use to increase the number and diversity of students in certificate and degree programs will vary. Most SREB states provide some combination of need-based and merit-based aid. Need-based financial aid helps cover the cost of attendance at public postsecondary institutions for s tudents who meet admission standards, but who may not qualify for merit-based scholarships. While state aid in SREB programs varies considerably, need-based financial aid remains an important tool to help students and their families overcome the **affordability gap**.

Federal Pell Grants assist students from low-income families by providing funding support they do not

In South Carolina:

- From 2011-12 to 2015-16, the number of Pell Grant recipients decreased by 23,953 — or 29 percent.

- For 2015-16, the average Pell Grant award per recipient attending public colleges was $3,605.

- From 2012 to 2016, the average student loan debt for bachelor's degree completers at four-year public and private nonprofit colleges increased by $2,707 — or 10 percent.

Percentage of Annual Income Needed to Pay the Net Price at Public Four-Year Colleges in South Carolina, 2016

Annual Income Level	Families in This Level	Average Income in This Level	Net Price*	Income Needed
$0 - $30,000	28%	$16,927	$14,094	83%
$30,000 - $48,000	18%	$39,022	$15,166	39%
$48,000 - $75,000	22%	$60,786	$17,900	29%
$75,000 - $110,000	17%	$90,998	$19,561	21%
$110,000 or more	15%	$177,704	$20,489	12%

* Note: Net price equals tuition and required fees plus room and board, books and other expenses minus grant aid students receive from the federal or state government or the institution.

*Source: SREB Fact Book on Higher Education* and *Institute for Research on Higher Education*

have to pay back. Students whose total family income is $50,000 a year or less qualify for Pell, but most Pell Grant money goes to students with total family incomes below $20,000 per year. From 2005-06 to 2015-16, the average Pell Grant award nationwide per recipient at public colleges increased from $2,335 to $3,609. In 2015-16 the average Pell Grant award in SREB states ranged from $3,310 to $4,046. Even though Pell Grant awards increased in the SREB region, the number of students receiving Pell Grants declined by 432,000 students from 2012 to 2016. During the same period, every SREB state decreased in the number of students receiving awards while the proportion of college costs that Pell Grants covered declined.

The net-price cost for an undergraduate student to attend a public four-year institution for one year in SREB states ranged from $8,934 to $24,650 in 2016. The National Center for Education Statistics defines net price as the total cost of attendance minus the average state, federal, and institutional scholarship and grant aid. It factors in what students can expect to receive in all types of financial aid, including federal and state aid.

Students' families are expected to pay a share of these costs based on their annual **Expected Family Contribution**. This EFC is based on a family's taxable and nontaxable income, family size, the number of family members going to college that school year and the student's financial aid information. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System at the National Center for Education Statistics categorizes yearly income across five income levels: families with yearly incomes of less than $30,000, from $30,000 to $48,000, from $48,000 to $75,000, from $75,000 to $110,000, and $110,000 and above.

EFC varies dramatically across income levels. Families in the lowest income bracket are expected to contribute less

Bachelor's Graduates with Student Loan Debt
Public and Nonprofit Four-Year Institutions in South Carolina

60% of South Carolina's bachelor's degree completers in 2016 had debt.

Average Student Loan Debt **$30,123**
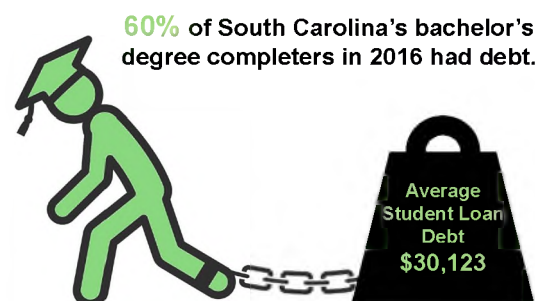
Source: SREB, from Projectonstudentdebt.org

than families in other brackets; even so, their contribution represents a much larger portion of their annual earnings. Student loans can help to cover this gap, but loans stretch out the cost with interest added — requiring students to make payments that can span a decade or more beyond graduation. Approximately 60 percent of U.S. college seniors graduated with **student debt** in 2016. Their average debt was $28,446. Across SREB states, average debt ranged from $24,461 to $33,838. Faced with the prospect of so much debt, many families may decide that college is just too expensive.

SREB's 2015 Community College Commission recommended that states and institutions create clear pathways to help students complete postsecondary credentials efficiently by reducing the cost and the time it takes to earn a credential. This means that states need strong advisement programs designed to keep students on track to graduate from both high school and college.

Percentage of Annual Income Needed to Pay the Net Price at Public Two-Year Colleges in South Carolina, 2016

Annual Income Level	Families in This Level	Average Income in This Level	Net Price*	Income Needed
$0 - $30,000	28%	$16,927	$7,535	45%
$30,000 - $48,000	18%	$39,022	$7,442	19%
$48,000 - $75,000	22%	$60,786	$9,711	16%
$75,000 - $110,000	17%	$90,998	$10,925	12%
$110,000 or more	15%	$177,704	$11,027	6%

* Note: Net price equals tuition and required fees plus room and board, books and other expenses minus grant aid students receive from the federal or state government or the institution.

Source: SREB Fact Book on Higher Education and Institute for Research on Higher Education

Postsecondary

SREB states monitor their college freshmen persistence rate as a predictor of college completion. This rate measures the percentage of first-year, full-time students who return to their colleges for a second year of study. States submit these data to the SREB-State Data Exchange.

Unlike other persistence rates used across the country, the SREB-State Data Exchange **first-year persistence rate** is the percentage of freshmen in the first-time, full-time bachelor's degree-seeking cohort who were enrolled at the institution they first attended or who transferred to another college or university the next fall.

First-Year College Persistence Rates
Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities, 2015 to 2016
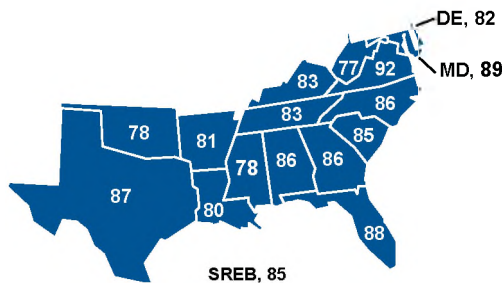
Source: SREB-State Data Exchange

For freshmen students entering in 2015, the average persistence rate at public four-year institutions in SREB states remained the same as in 2014 — 85 percent. Across the region, rates for the 2015-16 cohort ranged from 77 percent to 92 percent. Nine SREB states realized increased persistence rates from 2010 to 2016.

The key performance outcome measures for states are the **six-year graduation rate** for four-year colleges and universities and the **three-year graduation rate** for two-year colleges. Institutions must report these rates to the U.S. Department of Education. Federal law defines college graduation rates as the percentage of first-time freshmen who enter college in the fall term and remain at the same institution and graduate within the six and three years. But the rates do not account for students who enroll at later dates, part-time students or those who transfer from other institutions. Thus, they provide a partial picture of college graduation rates.

In 2016, the SREB region's six-year college graduation rate was 56 percent, the same as in 2014. It trailed the

Six-Year Graduation Rates
Public Four-Year Institutions in South Carolina, 2016
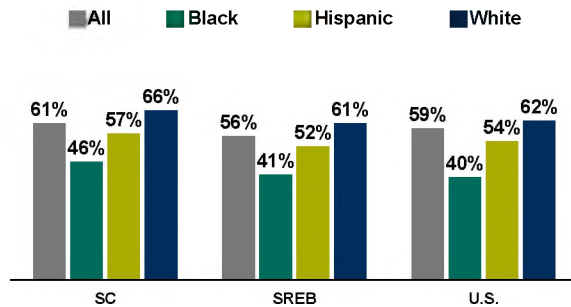
Note: First-time, full-time freshmen who entered in Fall 2010 and graduated by 2016
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

nation by 3 percentage points. Six SREB states had graduation rates that exceeded the national average of 59 percent for students who enrolled in 2010.

The six-year graduation rate for Hispanic students in seven SREB states exceeded the rate for their peers nationwide. In six of these seven states, black and white students also exceeded the rates for their respective peer groups nationwide. In the SREB region, graduation rates for black students ranged from 24 percent to 54 percent. For Hispanic students, the range was 44 percent to 71 percent.

In 2016, the three-year college graduation rate for the SREB region was 21 percent, up 4 percentage points from 2013; it trailed the national average for two-year colleges by almost 3 percentage points in 2016. Six SREB states

In South Carolina:

- Percentages of working-age black and Hispanic adults with associate degrees or higher trailed the rates of their respective peers in the nation and region — white adults trailed the nation.

- Percentages of working-age black, Hispanic, and white adults with bachelor's degrees or higher trailed the rates of their respective peers in the nation and region.

- In 2015-16, 48 percent of students who earned a bachelor's degree from a four-year public institution had previously been enrolled at a two-year public college.

had graduation rates that exceeded the national average of 24 percent for students who enrolled in 2013.

Three-year graduation rates for Hispanic students in eight SREB states exceeded the rates for their peers nationwide. The rates for black students exceeded the rates for their peer group nationwide in seven SREB states, and the rates for white students exceeded the rates for their peers nationwide in six SREB states. Graduation rates for black students in the SREB region ranged from 7 percent to 25 percent. For Hispanic students, the range was 11 percent to 31 percent.

While many students at four-year institutions graduate from college within six years, many finish, but not within that time period. The Data Exchange partners with SREB states to track students for up to 10 years from the year they enter college to calculate an **SREB progression rate** — the percentage of first-time freshmen who complete a bachelor's degree or remain enrolled or transfer to another institution after their initial enrollment. This rate provides states an indicator of the progress a cohort is making toward graduation.

In 2016, the SREB progression rate was 76 percent after six years for students who entered public four-year colleges and universities in 2010: 56 percent had graduated, 16 percent had transferred to other institutions and 4 percent remained enrolled.

Recent data from the National Student Clearinghouse provides a closer look at enrollment patterns for the 2016 college graduates who earned a bachelor's degree. In 2016, almost half of the baccalaureate recipients nationwide had been enrolled in a two-year college at some point over the prior ten-year period. For the SREB

Associate Degrees or Higher
Working-Age Adults in South Carolina, 2016
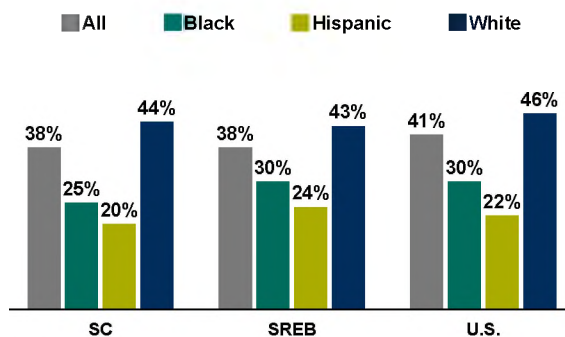
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

region, the average was 53 percent with a range across the states of 32 to 75 percent. Clearly, two-year colleges play a role in the success of four-year colleges.

The Challenge 2020 **adult educational attainment** goal calls for 60 percent of working-age adults in SREB states to earn a postsecondary credential. Postsecondary certificates, as well as associate and bachelor's degrees, count toward the goal. In the SREB region, 38 percent of working-age adults, ages 25 to 64, had earned an associate degree or higher by 2016 — 3 percentage points below the nation. Three SREB states matched or exceeded the national average of 41 percent.

In four SREB states, the percentages of black or Hispanic working-age adults with an associate degree or higher exceeded their respective peer groups nationwide in 2016. This was true for both groups in two SREB states. The percentage of white working-age adults with an associate degree or higher in four SREB states exceeded their peer group nationwide.

States and institutions should consider ways to support students better so that more graduate.

- They should provide greater support for their Pell Grant recipients to ensure their success.
- They should provide support for transfer students to ensure they graduate.
- They should provide rewards for postsecondary institutions that meet or exceed completion performance targets.
- They should align postsecondary education and workforce needs to provide incentives to students.

SREB Progression Rate
Status of 2010 Entering Students, 2016

Remained enrolled at the same institution 4%
Graduated with a bachelor's degree 56%
Transferred to another institution 16%

Note: First-time, full-time freshmen in public four-year institutions
Source: SREB-State Data Exchange

Lifelong Learning

SREB encourages states to help working-age adults, ages 25 to 64, meet the Challenge to Lead adult educational attainment goal — to earn a postsecondary certificate or degree. Adults with these credentials are more likely to be employed and to earn higher wages.

States can improve their adult **educational attainment** rates by attracting more adults to education programs and helping them complete credentials. They will also help these adults be less dependent on state and federal aid programs.

State programs can help three specific groups of adults increase their attainment levels:

- adults without a high school credential;
- adults with a high school credential but no post-secondary education; and
- adults with some postsecondary education but no credential.

These three groups comprised between 55 and 74 percent of the adult population in SREB states in 2016. Across the region, approximately 4.7 million adults 25 and over had earned less than a ninth grade education; 6.8 million attended some high school but had not completed a diploma; almost 17 million had completed some college but had not earned a degree.

Educational Attainment of Adults 25 and Over
South Carolina, 2016

Total 3,269,424

No high school credential — 14%
High school credential only — 29%
Some postsecondary, no credential — 21%
Postsecondary credential — 36%
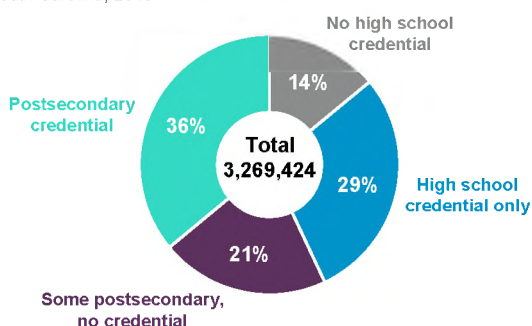
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The Bureau of Labor Statistics expects a continued shift away from jobs requiring high school credentials toward those requiring postsecondary credentials. BLS tracks **entry-level education requirements** by assigning occupations to one of eight educational attainment categories that reflect the minimum education needed for an entry-level position in that profession.

From 2007 to 2016, employment opportunities nation-wide increased overall by 4.5 percent. During this period BLS recorded decreases in occupations in just two of its educational attainment categories — the one requiring a high school credential, and the one requiring some college but no degree. Occupations requiring a high school credential decreased by 2.6 percentage points, while those typically requiring a postsecondary credential increased by 2.3 points.

Employment Rates by Education Level
Adults 25-64 in South Carolina, 2016

No High School Credential — 49%
High School Credential Only — 65%
Some College or Associate's Degree — 73%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher — 83%
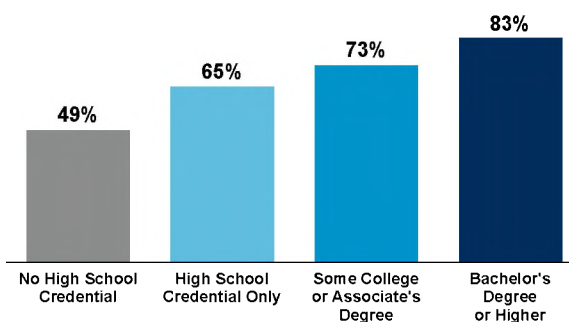
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Between 2014 and 2024, jobs requiring only a high school credential are projected to grow at a rate of 3.9 percent — more slowly than the overall national projected rate of 6.5 percent for all occupations. Jobs requiring some postsecondary education, but no credential, are projected to grow by less than 1 percent; those requiring an associate degree are projected to grow by 8.7 percent.

The likelihood that adults will earn incomes below the poverty level is tied to their educational attainment. U.S. Census Bureau poverty levels, established not only for families but also for individual wage earners, are directly related to adult educational attainment for wage earners. In SREB states in 2016, 27 percent of the adults *without a high school credential* earned wages at or below the poverty level; 15 percent of those *with a high school credential but no postsecondary study* did; and 4 percent of those with a bachelor's degree or higher did.

Adults with higher levels of educational attainment are not only less likely to experience unemployment and poverty but less likely to rely on federal and state aid programs such as TANF, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. They also contribute more in taxes.

Educational Attainment and Poverty
Income Levels for Adults 25 and Older in South Carolina, 2016

■ At or Above the Poverty Level   ■ Below the Poverty Level

	27%	14%	10%	4%
	Less than a High School Graduate	High School Graduate	Some College or Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
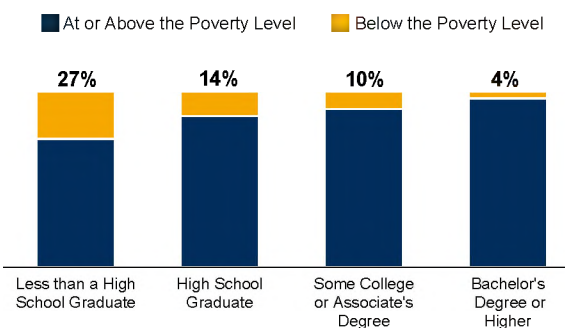
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

College Board estimates that in 2015, adults who had earned bachelor's degrees paid approximately $7,000 more in federal and state taxes and took home $18,000 more in after-tax income than high school graduates.

Across the SREB region, adults who graduated from high school earned an average of $6,300 more in 2016 than those without a high school credential. Adults with bachelor's degrees earned $20,500 more, on average, than those with only high school credentials — and $15,300 more than those with some college credit or an associate degree.

The U.S. Office of Vocational and Adult Education provides states with grant funding for adult education programs based on the number of adults over age 16 in each state who are not enrolled in and have not completed high school. Congress appropriated about $582 million for adult education in 2017. SREB states received approximately $227 million, or 39 percent of the funds allocated to states nationwide. In turn, states must provide a

In South Carolina:

■ In 2016, approximately 460,000 adults ages 25 and older did not have a high school credential; 2.1 million — 64 percent — did not have a post-secondary credential.

■ That year, among working adults, the earnings gap between those with a bachelor's degree and those with a high school credential was $19,052.

25 percent in-kind match for the federal funding they receive and satisfy a "maintenance of effort" provision, requiring that they spend at least 90 percent of what they spent in the prior year on adult education programs. States can leverage both state and federal funds to promote educational attainment, both for those with no high school credential and those with no postsecondary credential.

All SREB states provide adult education programs for adults who have not completed high school, generally through their K-12 or two-year or technical college agencies. Federal funding helps states provide basic literacy and math skills through Adult Basic Education programs, English instruction through English language acquisition programs, and preparation for high school equivalency assessments through Adult Secondary Education programs.

High School Equivalency Assessments
SREB States, 2017

■ GED, HiSET and TASC   ■ GED only
■ GED and TASC   ■ HiSET only
                        ■ TASC only
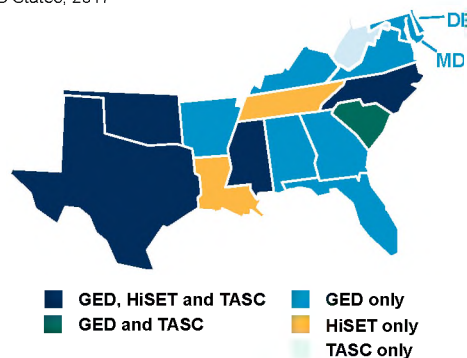
Source: SREB analysis of state documents

In 2017, SREB states offered three **high school equivalency assessments**: the HiSET, or High School Equivalency Test, the TASC, or Test Assessing Secondary Completion, and the GED. The HiSET and TASC provide more testing formats than the GED, and at a lower cost. Some SREB states offered more than one of these exams.

To improve the quality of life for the region's residents and to meet future job needs, states and colleges need to ensure that more adults enroll in educational programs — and then earn degrees or certificates.

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Where Education Reform Goes from Here

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June 28, 2018

After two decades of mostly-forward movement and many big wins, the last few years have been a tough patch for education reform. The populist right has attacked standards, testing, and accountability, with particular emphasis on the Common Core, as well as testing itself. The election of Donald Trump and appointment of Betsy DeVos, meanwhile, have made school choice and charter schools toxic on much of the progressive left. And the 2017 results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress indicate a "lost decade" of academic achievement. All of these trends have left policymakers and philanthropists feeling glum about reform, given the growing narrative that, like so many efforts before it, the modern wave hasn't worked or delivered the goods, yet has produced much friction, fractiousness, and furor.

But this is no time to declare defeat or embrace defeatism. It's not just that America's children, especially those growing up in poverty, depend on us to dramatically improve their schools, lest they be sentenced to a life of low-wage jobs and lagging social mobility. Or that the country will continue to suffer from political and socioeconomic divisions and dwindling global competitiveness if we don't better prepare young people for bright futures. It's also that we might be throwing in the towel prematurely. It's quite possible that the current reform strategy is working better than we think, but is taking time to blossom, and is facing headwinds (especially from the Great Recession) that are about to recede. We should be mindful of lessons from previous reforms, including "small schools of choice" and No Child Left Behind. Both had been declared failures, too, until enough time had passed for data to demonstrate their positive impacts on student achievement.

Therefore, those of us in the education reform movement, and leaders in positions of authority and influence, must commit to a delicate balancing act. We should admit that some of our pet policies and stratagems are failing to achieve their intended effects, and should continue searching for approaches that work better. And we should recognize that much of the backlash to reform is understandable; there has been too much testing, too much narrowing of the curriculum, too little quality control in the school choice movement, etc. But we must also avoid discarding efforts that may look disappointing now but are likely to show long-term success.

That's what I will attempt to do in this paper: Identify today's reforms that need nurturing and defending; point to those that should be cast aside; and begin to mark the new territories that serious reformers must explore. I will argue that, when it comes to grades K–8, we need to stay the course and finish what we started. High schools, though, are a different matter, and need a complete reimagining.

I. What Reform is Aiming to Achieve

It's helpful to take Steven Covey's advice and begin with the end in mind. What's the whole point of our K–12 education system, and our decades-long effort to reform it?

The pithy answer is to prepare students for college, career, and citizenship. Arne Duncan and Margaret Spellings put it more eloquently in a recent *Washington Post* op-ed: "An educated populace, versed in civics, trained to reason and empowered to act is what safeguards our democracy. Equitable access to education—our greatest force for economic mobility, economic growth and a level playing field for all—is what underwrites the American meritocracy."

Reform may never be "finished," but we'll know that our K–12 system is succeeding when almost all parents are satisfied customers and when almost all graduates:

- Successfully complete some form of postsecondary education, whether it be a technical credential, two- or four-year degree, or military training;

- Become self-sufficient soon after completing their education, with a rewarding career that can support a family; and

- Participate as active and informed citizens in our democracy and civil society institutions.

Of course, those are all medium- to long-term targets. In the short term, we want to see students:

- Make at least a year's worth of progress in reading, writing, and math, every year, with low-performing students making greater gains;

- Develop a strong understanding of history, science, civics, and the arts; and

- Feel a sense of connection to their schools, as vital preparation for participation in civil society.

To be sure, our schools cannot be expected to solve all of the problems that plague our nation. Grinding poverty and the challenges associated with it take a harsh toll on children; kids raised by affluent, well-educated parents will always have a leg up on their less advantaged peers. Great schools can help to narrow the gap in opportunities and outcomes, but cannot erase them entirely.

The question is not whether schools can do it all—but whether they are doing all they can.

II. The Reform Agenda for Grades K–8: Let's Finish What We Started

More so than for high schools, the essential elements of a successful strategy for our elementary and middle schools are in sight. That's because there is broad agreement about what Americans want these institutions to achieve: to send students into ninth grade with strong reading, writing, and math skills; with a storehouse of knowledge about the world and how it works; and with at least a basic understanding of what it means to be an active, engaged citizen in a democracy. Along the way, we want children to experience excellence every day. And we want our schools to model good character through their norms, rhythms, and rituals.

To be sure, we are a long distance from making this vision a reality. We made real progress from the late 1990s until about 2013, with eighth graders making huge gains in reading, writing, and math. Black and Hispanic students, and our lowest-performers, made especially large gains, outscoring their predecessors by two to three grade levels over this period. Unfortunately, that progress appears to have come to a halt.

Eighth Grade Reading, 10th Percentile (1992–2015)
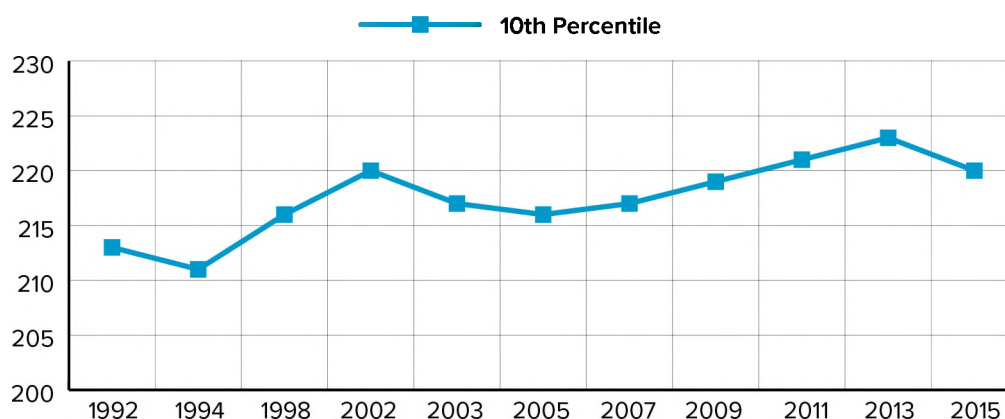
Still, all over the nation, high quality elementary and middle schools are getting this job done. The challenge is to scale up their successful efforts and make them the rule instead of the exception. In particular, we need to accelerate students' progress so that many more leave eighth grade ready for high school–level work, even those children who enter kindergarten far, far behind.

We have five major ways of doing that, which fall under the headings of school choice, accountability, instructional material, talent, and personalized pacing.

High Quality Schools of Choice

We must continue to expand high quality schools of choice and enable many more children to access them. Partly that's to better match our schools to parents'

values and preferences. But mostly it's because the best schools of choice have demonstrated just how much progress is possible, especially for low-income children who start out far behind. These kids need excellent elementary and middle schools, not just good ones, if they are going to enter high school prepared for true college prep or high quality career and technical education (CTE) programs, and if they are to find success in postsecondary education and beyond. Sadly, few school districts have demonstrated an ability to deliver excellence at scale, especially for poor children. But several charter networks have done it (as have some Catholic and other private schools), and we need to help them to grow and thrive.

Here we've made a lot of progress in recent years, with charter quality improving at a rapid clip thanks to reforms in key states around charter oversight and authorizing, and we need to keep at it. We must also close the stark funding gap that continues to put charter schools at such a disadvantage, bringing in sixty cents on the dollar in some cities, and find ways to make facilities more affordable, including by opening up more district buildings to charter schools. Winning these political battles around charter financing and facilities is the most important thing we can do to bring life-changing opportunities to more disadvantaged students.

Accountability

The good news is that our school accountability systems are much stronger than they were a decade ago. Most states embraced significantly higher standards in English language arts and math in 2010, and even after the political battles surrounding the Common Core, those standards remain largely in place in forty-plus states. The annual assessments were also significantly upgraded, especially with 2015's introduction of PARCC and Smarter Balanced, still being used in almost half of the forty Common Core states. Other states, too, now use tests that have much higher standards for meeting the "proficient" bar, and that more accurately report results to parents.

The way that test scores are turned into annual school ratings has also improved, thanks to state implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Most states now rely heavily on growth measures rather than proficiency rates alone, rightly giving schools credit for helping students make progress from year to year. This is much fairer to high-poverty schools and also to children at the high and low ends of the performance spectrum, for it says that their progress counts, too. And the grades given to schools are dramatically clearer, with A–F, five-star, or 1–100 systems now dominating.

Together, today's standards, assessments, and accountability systems provide a clear message to our elementary and middle schools: Your job is to get students on track for college, career, and citizenship by building the knowledge and skills, year by year, they will need to succeed. And for students who come into your schools far behind, we expect you to help them make rapid gains.

That's not to say that accountability systems are perfect. Reading tests in particular continue to encourage a focus on "comprehension skills" over the acquisition of knowledge, without which there can be little true understanding. Louisiana's proposal to develop a content-based reading assessment under ESSA's innovative assessments pilot may prove to be a reform worth emulating. And interest continues

to grow in finding short-term indicators of school quality that aren't test scores; I'm particularly enthusiastic about those that relate to developing students' civic habits and attitudes.

We must also respond better to the signals coming from these accountability systems. We still don't have a proven approach for intervening in chronically low-performing schools, though some studies show that a true "turnaround" can work if it involves a new principal and at least some new teachers. Still, the best strategy might be to allow their families to vote with their feet and move to high quality schools of choice. We also don't see many states recognizing or rewarding *high-performing* schools; that is an opportunity for the taking.

Finally, we must improve how we translate the higher expectations of the standards into the real-world of classrooms, student assignments, and report cards. States are sending home "score reports" to parents that often include bleak news about their children being off track, based on their performance on new annual standardized exams. But most moms and dads continue to think their own kids are on grade level or above thanks to what they're hearing from their children's teachers and seeing on their report cards. Finding smart, supportive ways to debunk this "Lake Wobegon Delusion" is essential. Allowing students to move at their own pace through the grade levels (see "personalized pacing" below) would help, too.

Instructional Materials

A driving force for reform in recent years was the finding that individual teachers can make an enormous impact on students' learning, which can translate into real-world outcomes decades later. This led many advocates to focus on evaluating teachers in the hope that we might remove the most ineffective ones and reward and retain the best.

Yet with a few exceptions—the District of Columbia and Tennessee come to mind—teacher evaluation reform has mostly disappointed. Many teachers view it as unfair and punitive; most instructors continue to receive "satisfactory" or "outstanding" reviews despite the supposed rigor of the new systems; and almost nobody has actually been fired, or paid more, as a result of the reforms.

A better way to think about the finding that "teacher effectiveness differs dramatically" is to build a system whereby teacher effectiveness differs less. In other words, work to help average teachers become good or great. That brings us to the importance of high quality, teacher-friendly, standards-aligned instructional materials. The notion is straightforward: When we expect teachers to be both instructional designer and instructor, some will succeed wildly, but many will falter. If we redefine the role to focus solely on delivering instruction—with great tools developed by leading educators and in a constant state of improvement—many more can thrive. Professional development can finally be focused around what teachers are actually doing in the classroom. And teacher "evaluation" can morph into teacher "feedback," as school leaders, instructional coaches, and others provide actionable support and advice about how teachers can improve their craft.

The good news is that instructional materials are much stronger than they used to be, with several curricula receiving high ratings from the non-profit EdReports,

including some that are available online for free. The bad news is that the vast majority of teachers still aren't using these high quality products. Fixing that is low-hanging fruit with potentially enormous payoff.

Talent

Although teacher evaluation reform was mostly a bust, that doesn't mean that we should abandon all efforts to recruit and retain talented teachers (and principals). But we should be smarter about it, focusing on fixing the educator pipeline on the front end rather than trying to push mediocre teachers out of our classrooms on the back end.

We should start by setting high expectations for people who want to enroll in teacher preparation programs and enter our schools. We should ensure that they get exposed to evidence-based instructional practices that are tied to the actual standards and curriculum they will be teaching. And we should pay attention to the diversity of our teaching corps as well.

For reformers still itching to remove ineffective teachers from the classroom, the best chance to do that is before they attain tenured status. States and districts can work to change the tenure approval process from a rubber stamp to one that is appropriately rigorous, indicating true mastery and professionalism.

Personalized Pacing

The best elementary and middle schools have always known that they are in a race against time. That's not to say they try to whip their teachers and students into a frenzy; that is rarely an effective strategy. But it does mean that they maintain a high sense of urgency because they understand that students who enter high school well below grade level are unlikely to succeed there or in postsecondary settings. With so many poor kids and kids of color still entering grade school at a major disadvantage, even in places with high quality preschool programs, the name of the game is catching up fast. And all kids deserve to be challenged and learn as much as they possibly can every day at school.

Enter "personalized learning." This much-bandied and oft-maligned term has no set definition, but its most appealing aspect, in my view, is the notion of "personalized pacing." It says that rather than march kids of the same age through the curriculum at the exact same pace, let's allow them to go faster or slower depending on their mastery of the material. Technology can sometimes help, as it allows educators to move away from the whole-classroom model of instruction. But changing our approach to grouping students is probably even more important—allowing students to learn next to kids who are at their same level, regardless of how old they are.

This is particularly critical for higher-achieving low-income students, who often attend schools where most of their peers are far below grade level. If they are forced to learn at the same pace as their classmates, we will squander their learning potential and leave them feeling bored and frustrated. Personalized pacing can allow them to zoom ahead and close the gap with their more advantaged peers.

Schools and districts should embrace this approach, even if it means moving to multi-age classrooms and upsetting other norms and practices. And states need to find ways to encourage it, especially by allowing students to be assessed by accountability exams that are matched to their current level of ability instead of the "grade" they are supposedly enrolled in. In other words, let fourth graders who are learning at a sixth grade level take the sixth grade test, and let those who are learning at the third grade level take the third grade test, rather than force everyone into a Procrustean bed of "grade level content."

. . .

Let me summarize the (sizable) reform agenda for our elementary and middle schools.

For Policymakers:

- Close the charter school funding and facilities gaps.

- Defend the higher standards, tougher tests, and smarter accountability systems in place today.

- Reform the tenure-approval process to be much more than a rubber stamp.

- Allow students to be tested above or below their official grade levels for accountability purposes.

- Continue to look for valid and reliable ways to measure school quality beyond test scores, especially around civics and citizenship.

- Celebrate and reward high-performing schools.

- Move to content-based reading tests, as Louisiana intends to do.

For Local Practitioners:

- Identify and adopt high quality instructional materials, especially those with top ratings from EdReports.

- Provide extensive support and professional learning opportunities to teachers around implementing these high quality, aligned instructional materials, with a particular focus on raising their expectations around what their students can achieve.

- Find ways to disrupt the "Lake Wobegon Delusion," including by experimenting with reader-friendly report cards and better approaches to the parent-teacher conference.

- Embrace personalized pacing by moving to multi-age classrooms, competency-based promotion policies, and the thoughtful use of digital instruction.

Nothing on this list is easy, but these tasks aren't unfamiliar or incomprehensible. For grades K–8, the challenge is to push the pedal to the metal, win the political battles, and "get 'er done."

Not so when it comes to high schools.

III. What Ails the American High School

With some exceptions, the typical American high school is broken, and has been for a long time. These institutions are supposed to prepare students for "what's next"— but they are failing at this task with alarming regularity.

The best evidence for this comes from the college-completion crisis. Consider:

- One-third of high school graduates who matriculate to four-year universities do not complete a degree or credential of any kind within six years;

- Almost two-thirds of high school students who matriculate to two-year colleges do not complete a degree or credential of any kind within six years;

- Sixty percent of black high school graduates who matriculate to college (either two-year or four-year) do not complete a degree or credential of any kind within six years; and

- An astounding 90 percent of low-income students who start college in remedial course do not complete a degree or credential of any kind within six years.

Some of the blame for this completion crisis can be laid at the feet of higher education institutions, due to a lack of support for first-generation college students, exorbitant costs, etc. But there is little doubt that much of it stems from inadequate preparation at the K–12 level. Consider just student readiness (or lack thereof) in reading, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

NAEP's Assessment of Student Readiness, Grade 12
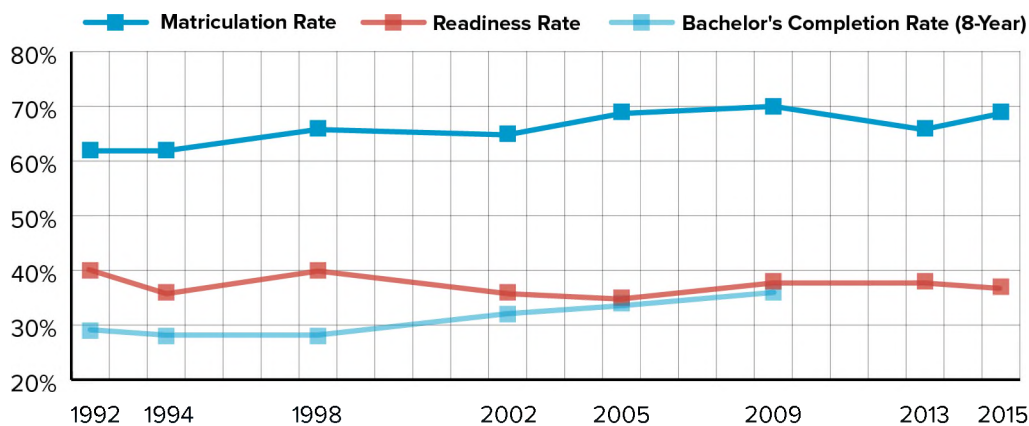
So when measured by their outcomes, high schools are a mess. But we shouldn't be surprised because the whole logic of the American high school is nonsensical. In 2018 it goes something like this:

1. Virtually any student can matriculate from middle school to high school, regardless of their level of academic preparedness. That's because of our aversion to ending social promotion, especially for older students, and our worries that if we do hold students back, they will disrupt other middle schoolers and/or drop out.

2. As a result, the ninth graders at a typical high school are many grade levels apart in terms of their reading, writing, and mathematics skills, not to mention their content knowledge. Some are still struggling to ready *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* while others are ready to take and pass Advanced Placement (AP) exams.

3. However, thanks to the anti-tracking movement, high schools are increasingly bashful about grouping students by their current abilities and/or prior achievement. Schools have reduced the number of "tracks" from three to two or eliminated them entirely.

4. Meanwhile, states have set course requirements with the assumption that the default path for most students is to march through college-prep courses and then matriculate to a four-year liberal arts program. And that's what at least 80 percent of students do; only 20 percent "concentrate" in career and technical education pathways, a low bar itself in most places (perhaps three courses in the same area).

5. The college-prep route works OK for 35 to 40 percent of American students, as illustrated by the graph above. But another 35 to 40 percent trudge through so-called college-prep courses, even though they are reading, writing, and doing math several grade levels behind. Most meet states' low graduation standards (which are usually based on Carnegie units, not competency), matriculate to college (mostly community colleges), end up in remedial education, and drop out with nothing but debt and regret.

6. Unlike almost every other advanced nation, very few of our students— maybe 5 percent—spend any of their time in high school doing real career training, including preparing for technical programs at the postsecondary level.

As crazy as this system is, it's easy to see how we got here. In particular, our discomfort with tracking is understandable, given the racist and classist history of twentieth-century America's "voc-tech," which regularly sent children of color to low-level programs so they could learn to "work with their hands." As recently as a decade ago, when Michelle Rhee's team stormed D.C., they found a high school in Anacostia still teaching shoe shining. It's no surprise that tracking is a third rail.

Nor should we be shocked that policymakers and educators are resistant to keeping unprepared students out of high schools in the first place, or to making them meet a high standard to graduate.

Yet it's also undeniable that the needs and interests of high-school-age kids vary dramatically, and meeting those needs will require significantly different educational offerings. That's true on the front end—the achievement level of students as they enter high school—and it's true on the back end—their postsecondary plans and what they need to be ready for them.

Though career and technical education has staged a partial reputational comeback in recent years—including among reformers and politicians—it remains controversial to imply that, at some point in the life of a high schooler, it's appropriate to ask her to choose to follow either a traditional college-prep route or a technical-training route. Instead, we now say that students should be ready for "college and career" not "college or career," and we continue to make everyone take more or less the same courses and rack up the same Carnegie units.

The U.S. is an outlier among advanced nations in this respect, and it results in a system whereby millions of teenagers sleepwalk through so-called college-prep classes, graduate (sometimes without earning it), get pushed into college (often into remedial courses), and quickly drop out. It's "bachelor's degree or bust," and for the majority of kids, the result is bust.

IV. The Way Forward for High Schools

So what might work better? Twelve years ago, the *Tough Choices or Tough Times* report made an intriguing set of recommendations that would make the American system more like those in Europe. It's time to dust them off again. Here's my spin on them.

1. In ninth or tenth grade (maybe earlier for advanced kids), all students should sit for a set of gateway exams. They would assess pupils on reading, writing, math, science, history, and civics—the essential content and skills that all students should be expected to know to be engaged and educated citizens. There would also be a component assessing students' career interests and aptitudes as best as these can be gauged for fifteen-year-olds.

2. Students who pass the exams would then choose among several programs for the remainder of their high school years—programs that all could (but need not) take place under the same roof. Some would be traditional "college-prep," with lots of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate (IB), or dual enrollment courses. Others would be high quality career and technical education offerings connected to degree or certificate programs at a technical college. All of the programs could set entrance requirements that ensure that students are ready to succeed in them. And their selectivity would make them prestigious and appealing to a wide range of students, as they are in other countries. At the end of high school, students would graduate with special designations on their diplomas indicating that they are ready for postsecondary education or training without the need for remediation. Students might receive cash bonuses when they pass AP exams or earn industry credentials, or might have access to paid apprenticeships.

3. Students who don't pass the exams would enter developmental programs specifically designed to help them catch up and pass the tests on their second or third (or fourth or fifth) tries. Those who catch up quickly can join their peers in the college-prep or CTE programs.

It should be obvious, but these would be *enormous* shifts in the way American high schools function. Yet most high school traditions could continue unscathed, especially if the coursework for these various pathways occur under one roof in comprehensive schools. The sports teams, the theater programs, the debate clubs—all of that could continue, as well it should, since it is incredibly valuable. But what students are actually doing between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. (or later) would change dramatically.

. . .

Let me propose, then, a reform agenda for our high schools.

For State Policymakers:

- Create a set of high quality "gateway exams," tied to tenth grade courses in ELA, math, science, history, geography, and citizenship. Also develop a career-exploration tool.

- Revise high school graduation requirements to focus on earning passing scores on these gateway end-of-course exams, with special designations for students who earn Advanced Placement or dual enrollment credits, or an industry-certified credential.

- Provide extra funding for tutoring and other supports for students who don't pass the exams on their first try.

- Fund AP/IB-fee-waiver programs for low-income students who have passed gateway exams, as well as cash-bonus initiatives (for students and teachers) for earning passing scores on the AP/IB exams.

- Develop and fund dual enrollment and/or early-college policies with a particular focus on high quality technical postsecondary routes. Allow these programs to set entrance requirements for participating high school students. The goal is for students to seamlessly move from K–12 to higher education without any interruption, and to finish with a one-year certificate or two-year degree, valuable workplace experience, and a job.

For Local Practitioners:

- Partner with local technical (or community) colleges to enable high school students to apply for admission into high quality technical-training pathways via dual enrollment or early-college initiatives. Ideally the technical college in partnership with local employers would develop these pathways, offer the coursework at the students' home high school and at the college, and provide participants with workplace experience.

- Develop a range of alternatives to comprehensive high schools, possibly in partnership with other school districts, including selective regional CTE high schools (modeled after those in Massachusetts), STEM schools, and early-college programs.

- Experiment with intensive efforts to help underprepared ninth graders catch up, either at their regular high school or in alternative settings.

The basic logic is straightforward, if hard to pull off. Start by recognizing that some high school graduates will matriculate into four-year liberal arts programs, and should be well prepared by doing college-level work while still in high school. Other high school graduates will matriculate into technical training programs at the postsecondary level, and should be well prepared by starting on those pathways while still in high school. By making all of these eleventh and twelfth grade experiences rigorous and selective, students will be capable of switching pathways if and when they decide they have changed their minds. And the tenth grade level gateway exams will ensure that nobody graduates from high school without the basic level of knowledge and skills needed for informed and engaged citizenship in a democracy.

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Education reform may be down, but it's surely not out. We have a long way to go until we have a K–12 system worthy of our great nation. Let's keep at it.

Teacher Satisfaction With Salary and Current Job

The Teacher Questionnaire was administered as part of the 2015–16 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), which is a nationally representative sample survey of public K–12 schools, principals, and teachers in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Are public school teachers satisfied with their teaching salary, and does this vary by school and teacher characteristics?

Public school teachers were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement "I am satisfied with my teaching salary" (strongly agree; somewhat agree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree). Overall, 45 percent of teachers agreed that they were satisfied with their salary, and 55 percent disagreed **(figure 1)**.

Similar percentages of teachers at traditional public (45 percent) and charter schools (46 percent) agreed they were satisfied with their salary.

A lower percentage of teachers in rural schools agreed they were satisfied with their salary than teachers in city, suburban, and town schools (42 percent compared to 44, 47, and 46 percent, respectively). A lower percentage of teachers in city schools agreed they were satisfied than teachers in suburban schools.

A lower percentage of teachers of elementary grades (43 percent) agreed they were satisfied with their salary than teachers of secondary grades (48 percent).

A higher percentage of teachers who were a member of a teachers' union or an employee association similar to a union (49 percent) agreed they were

FIGURE 1. Percent of public school teachers who agree or disagree that they were satisfied with their teaching salary, by selected school and teacher characteristics: 2015–16
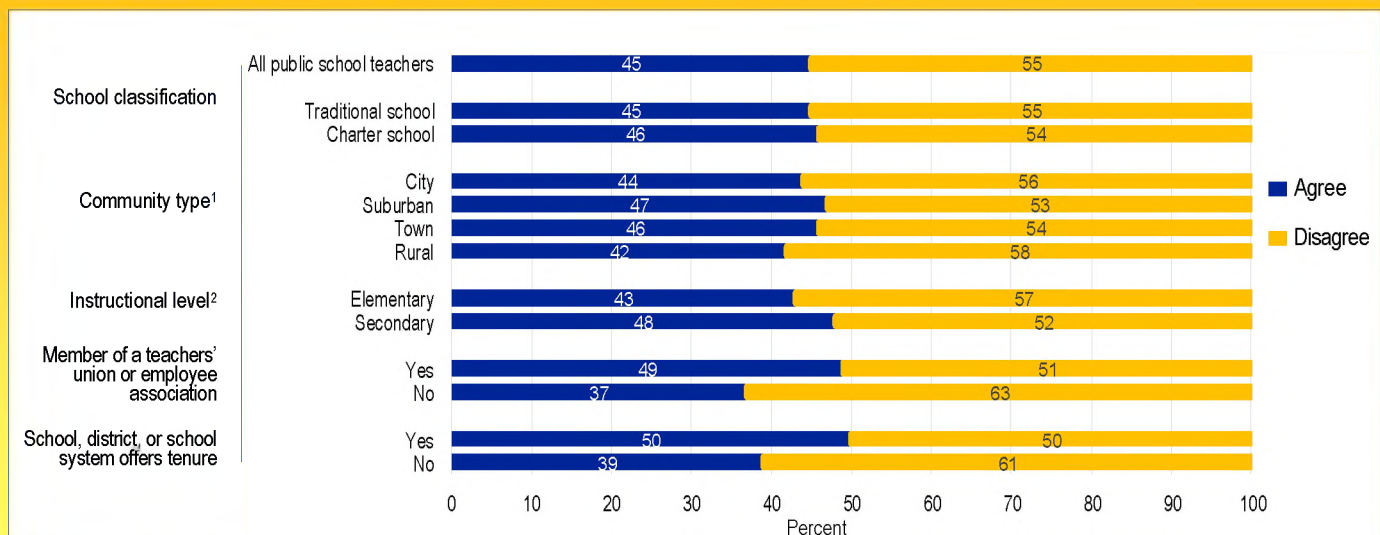
[1] Community type is defined by the urban-centric school locale code based on the 2010 Decennial Census data, collapsed into four categories: city, suburban, town, and rural.
[2] Instructional level refers to the grade levels taught by a teacher and divides teachers into elementary or secondary based on a combination of the grades taught, main teaching assignment, and the structure of their classes.
NOTE: Interpret data on city teachers with caution. After nonresponse adjustments, the nonresponse bias for this category is greater than for other characteristics.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2015–16.

FIGURE 2. Percent of public school teachers who agree with various statements about their job satisfaction, by whether they are satisfied with their teaching salary: 2015–16
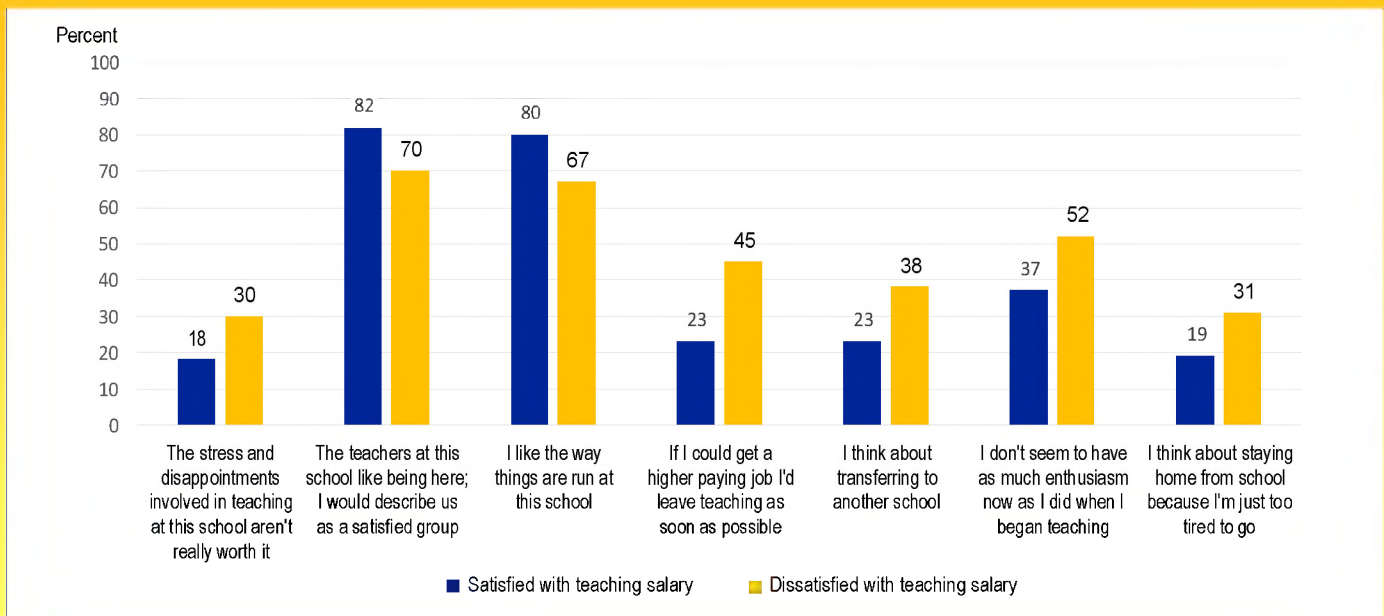
NOTE: "Agree" includes teachers who selected "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree."
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2015–16.

satisfied with their salary when compared to nonmembers (37 percent). A higher percentage of teachers whose school, district, or school system offered tenure agreed than teachers whose jurisdictions did not offer tenure (50 percent, compared to 39 percent).

How does public school teachers' satisfaction with their jobs vary by their satisfaction with their salary?

Public school teachers were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed (strongly agree; somewhat agree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree) with various statements about their current job.

A higher percentage of teachers who were satisfied with their salaries agreed, "The teachers at this school like being here; I would describe us as a satisfied group," than teachers who were dissatisfied with their salaries (82 percent compared to 70 percent). Similarly, a higher percentage of teachers who were satisfied with their salaries agreed, "I like the way things are run at this school" (80 percent compared to 67 percent) **(figure 2)**.

A higher percentage of teachers who were dissatisfied with their salary agreed, "The stress and disappointments involved in teaching

at this school aren't really worth it" (30 percent), "If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave teaching as soon as possible" (45 percent), "I think about transferring to another school" (38 percent), "I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching" (52 percent), and "I think about staying home from school because I'm just too tired to go" (31 percent) than teachers who were satisfied with their salary (18 percent, 23 percent, 23 percent, 37 percent, and 19 percent, respectively).

Building the Workforce of Tomorrow

CFES BRILLIANT PATHWAYS™

GE Foundation

Building the Workforce of Tomorrow

Stating the Case

Jobs are plentiful in the United States. In fact, we have more job openings than unemployed Americans for the first time in two decades. For those entering the workforce, the challenge they face is having the skills and credentials necessary to get one. Increasingly, the highest-paying jobs are reserved for those who have earned college degrees and certificates. Over the last decade, more than eight million new jobs were created in the United States for those who hold bachelor's degrees or higher.

The value of a college degree has never been greater, which makes it that much more important to put all students in a position to succeed. We know that students in the top economic quintile are eight times more likely to get a bachelor's degree than students from the lowest income brackets. Not only is that unfair for our nation's underserved students, but it also threatens our country's economic competitiveness.

Simply ensuring that students attain degrees and jobs is no guarantee that they will be set for life. "When we start thinking about getting people ready for the workforce of the future, it's a fool's errand to say we're going to train them for a specific job. That day is over," said Joe Fuller, a professor at the Harvard Business School, while addressing a group of thought leaders at a May summit sponsored by CFES Brilliant Pathways and the GE Foundation.

The skills necessary to succeed in the future workforce will not be static – so the people filling those positions will need to continually grow.

Graduating from college is an important step in preparing for the jobs of tomorrow. Students can also benefit from:

- **The Essential Skills.** Academic knowledge is critical. But there is no stronger leading indicator of a student's future success than their mastery of skills such as teamwork, leadership and agility. We call these the Essential Skills and employers are increasingly recognizing their importance.

- **Corporate-educational partnerships.** Schools and businesses need to work together to understand where the jobs of tomorrow will be. High-impact partnerships can expose students

Jessica Stokes, College MAP

to careers they never knew existed, and build pathways to career opportunities.

- **College pathway knowledge.** For many students, a college degree remains more a dream than a likely destination. The search alone – researching colleges, understanding the financial aid process, filling out an application – can be daunting. We must use approaches such as mentoring to help students see a clear path to college completion and beyond.

For nearly 30 years, CFES Brilliant Pathways has ensured that students from urban and rural areas, regardless of economic constraints, get to college and pursue careers after they graduate. When CFES began, simply getting students to college felt like a triumph. Now, we know success isn't measured by how many students get to college, nor even how many graduate. We need to put students in a position to achieve lifetime success.

"We know how great the odds are for many students," said Rick Dalton, CFES Brilliant Pathways' president and CEO. "That means that we all need to get better every day in terms of how we deliver resources to our kids."

The Essential Skills: Getting beyond technical achievements

Greg Muccio, the senior manager of talent acquisition at Southwest Airlines, is responsible for filling 8,000 positions a year. Every new hire, he said, needs to abide by the Southwest Way: To possess a warrior spirit, a service heart and a fun-loving attitude.

Each of those characteristics, he said, emerges directly from mastery of what we call the Essential Skills: A set of six habits and attributes that include agility, goal setting, leadership, networking, perseverance and teamwork.

As a result, Muccio urges his team to find employees who fit that mold. "I will always support you if you submit a candidate that is not necessarily a technical

fit in all areas," he tells them. "But you will not have a good day if you submit somebody who isn't a good Southwest fit."

Statistics from hiring managers show: Employees are far more likely to be fired because they have trouble communicating with others, solving problems or motivating themselves than because they fall short on some other ability. "The No. 1 cause for failed hires is an Essential Skills problem – not a technical issue," Harvard's Fuller said.

The cost of failure is more than wasted time. It threatens our nation's competitiveness. By 2020, the McKinsey Global Institute projects there will be a shortfall of 38 million to 40 million college-educated employees around the world – but a surplus of 90 million to 95 million low-skill workers.

By the time students get to college – or, worse, the workplace – it's too late to start cultivating these habits. The work needs to start at the grade-school level. "This has to get baked into the curricula of every topic," Fuller said.

The GE Foundation, a leader in developing the workforce of tomorrow and in bolstering STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education, emphasizes the need to integrate foundational principles of math, science and literacy with skills such as perseverance and communications. "It's not just one content area that is going to lead to success," said Kelli Wells, executive director for education and skills at the GE Foundation. "It's not just about STEM. You also have to encourage those Essential Skills."

Booker Middle School in Sarasota, Florida embodies those GE Foundation values. LaShawn Frost, the school's principal, has worked with CFES Brilliant Pathways for six years and recognizes the importance of imbuing technical lessons with the Essential Skills.

"For us, college and career readiness is not just about preparing students for college and a career, it's teaching students how to engage in strategic
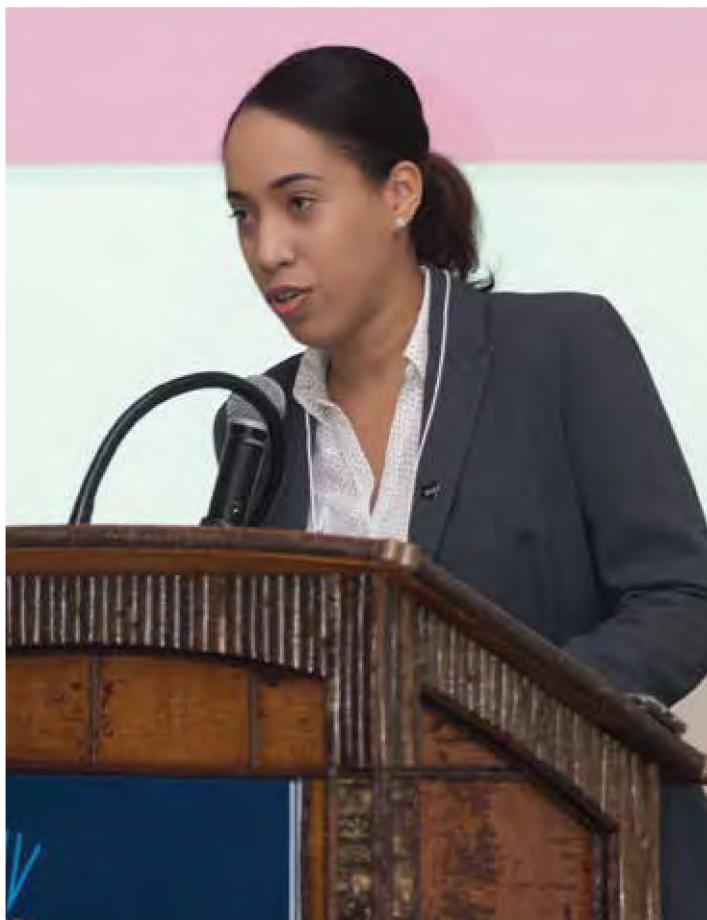
Shadey Trinidad, CFES Brilliant Pathways Alumni Network

thinking," Frost said. "We are preparing students for the real world by allowing them to understand the importance of working in teams. We are actually teaching every student to be a leader, every student to engage in the learning process."

While schools incorporate lessons on the Essential Skills into their curricula, it remains a challenge for employers to know which students have them, and which do not. Testing doesn't reflect a student's capability for leadership, and it isn't reflected on a transcript. On the other hand, it's easy for an employer to ascertain whether a job candidate has a college degree or a particular credential - and, as a result, the temptation remains for employers to measure candidates by this metric. Once the hard work of helping students gain these skills is accomplished, educators and businesses must come up with a way to measure them.

Assessment:
A critical component

To build talent pipelines and test whether candidates are good fits, companies are developing internship programs and partnerships with schools that give them the ability to work with a potential employee before extending a job offer. At Southwest, Muccio said he's able to tell quickly whether or not an intern can cut it. "The ones that excel are the ones who can think for themselves, take the initiative, solve problems," he said.

Southwest has developed summer apprenticeship programs in four of its hub cities and a summer camp in Dallas that inspires high school-aged students about the possibilities of careers in aviation.

At GE, its long-running internship program for high school and college students is a proven route for the company to recruit talent: 60 percent of GE employees in its leadership program are former interns. With operations in more than 170 countries,

Ted Cross, Thunderbird School of Global Management

interns are vital to the company's future.

"We know students need help building pathways to all kinds of careers," said Wells, of the GE Foundation. "It's why we're working with both Brilliant Pathways and the Boston Celtics on our Brilliant Career Lab, which goes directly to middle school students to open their eyes to the jobs that await them and the skills they need to get there."

Businesses that recognize the value of the Essential Skills are also developing programs to impart those skills directly to students. Ernst & Young (EY) worked with CFES to develop a program called College MAP (Mentoring for Access & Persistence) where EY volunteers mentor groups of high school students.

College MAP students are taught the value of being on time, how to reply to an email and how to dress appropriately for a job interview. In many cases, it's their first experience learning how they'll be expected to conduct themselves in a professional setting.

The Essential Skills

"These are not 'soft' skills. And we shouldn't call them 'noncognitive,'" Rick Dalton told educators and business leaders at a national conference three years ago. "They're the Essential Skills, and to call them anything else diminishes their value at a time when our students need them more than ever."

The trend has caught on. Joseph Fuller of Harvard Business School and many of his colleagues no longer refer to them as 'soft,' but call them the Essential Skills, as does Kelli Wells of the GE Foundation. And the 50 participants at the Workforce of Tomorrow summit specifically identified the Essential Skills as a key ingredient in preparing workers for 21st century jobs.

CFES has trademarked the term, Essential Skills™, and identified six Essential Skills (goal setting, teamwork, leadership, agility, perseverance and networking). CFES works with educators and students to strengthen and develop these skills through a set of strategic activities, including service projects, student expos and other interactive and engaging exercises.

Kelli Wells, GE Foundation

Partnerships: Bridging the business-education divide

Work-based learning opportunities will play an increasingly important role in preparing students to take future jobs, Harvard's Fuller said. Traditionally, educators and business leaders have had trouble communicating with each other: Educators often bristle at the notion of turning out automatons, and businesses frequently grouse that educators don't work quickly enough to provide what they need. With millions of jobs threatening to go unfilled, though, the two groups need to get to the table – and quickly. "Business leaders and educators have got to understand they're working toward a collective outcome," Harvard's Fuller said.

Kris Duffy, SUNY Adirondack

What will those partnerships look like? In the best scenarios, businesses illuminate where the future jobs will be, and colleges adjust the skills they teach and the courses they offer to reflect that.

Health care, one of the fastest-growing industries in the U.S., is fertile ground for partnerships. John Fortune, a trauma surgeon at the University of Vermont Medical Center, said that health care needs are likely to grow by as much 22 percent in the next eight years.

In response, UVM is building a partnership between the six hospitals in the University of Vermont's Health Network and several community colleges. "We are going to blur the lines between work and school," said Cynthia Belliveau, UVM's dean of continuing education, who expects the partnership to create jobs in medicine, public health and allied health.

That kind of targeted collaboration is most likely to succeed, said J.D. LaRock, CEO of the

Commonwealth Corporation in Massachusetts. "These new enterprises can't do everything," he said. "It's very hard to develop excellence in a key domain if you're trying to do 30 things."

The Commonwealth Corporation works directly with students, employers and educators in an effort to build the state's economy. "We believe that programs have to be co-designed with employers," LaRock said. Commonwealth is building such an effort with three critical employers — GE, MassMutual and Partners Health Care.

"Work experience is crucial in developing skills that are needed to enhance the future workforce," said Sal Fernandez, president and CEO of the STEM Happens Network. "Integrated STEM opportunities through connecting science, technology, engineering and mathematics education provide students the opportunity to make sense of the world around them."

Opening the door wider: Giving marginalized populations greater access

While employers may struggle to find workers, it doesn't mean we lack the population to fill those jobs. It means, in many cases, that the population isn't getting the skills and training needed to compete for that work.

It's a problem highlighted by Enrico Moretti's "The New Geography of Jobs," which points to the lack of opportunities students have in underserved regions where they can't see a clear pathway to success – and, as a result, they don't take the steps necessary to achieve it.

Steve Tyrell, president of North Country Community College, said that while 22 percent of high school graduates in New York State elect not to go to college, that number is close to 50 percent in rural, northern New York.

One answer, Tyrell and others suggested, is to build flexible education models to attract a wider

Rick Dalton, CFES Brilliant Pathways

range of students. After all, said SUNY Adirondack President Kristine Duffy, "The system was built to serve white males in their late teens – a population that accounts for a small fraction of the overall college population today." The system no longer works for many non-traditional students who have rich work experiences that could contribute to college credit.

Educators say it's crucial to build programs that are not just hands-on, but demonstrate clear career pathways for first generation college students who are not raised in an atmosphere where college is an expectation and often don't understand its importance.

Annette Hammond, superintendent of the 400-student Gilbertsville-Mt. Upton School District in Central New York, said she often finds the promise of a paycheck today blinds students from working toward a higher-skill job in the future. "A lot of really capable kids that have been accepted to college tell me they can make more money working the pipeline in Pennsylvania or Ohio," she said. "But what happens when you're 40 and your body is tired of working on the pipeline?"

About the Summit

Six years ago, CFES began partnering with the GE Foundation to sponsor a summit annually that gathered education, business and philanthropy leaders to exchange ideas and learn from each other. At this daylong summit, held at the CFES headquarters in Essex, N.Y., leaders have frank conversations about what it will take to ensure our kids are in the best position to succeed not just in school but in life.

The summit isn't just about inspiring good ideas and lofty thoughts. Every year, participants walk away from the summit ready to take action – and

participants are positioned to make that happen. In addition to panels that provide participants the opportunity to share their ideas on the summit topic, each person participates in a table group that shares action steps.

This year, CFES and the GE Foundation welcomed presidents and deans from 10 colleges, leaders from organizations including Apple, the Boston Celtics, Oracle, EY, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Marathon Health, NEA Foundation and Southwest Airlines, a half dozen school superintendents, and more.

Hammond understands, though, that many students simply don't have the vision to know what could be available for them. "We're trying to link up with the health care system near us, because we recognize there's going to be such a need in those areas," she said. "My students don't have a sense of what there is beyond a nurse or a doctor."

Her experience highlights the importance of pathway development in areas with limited 21st century jobs. "College and career readiness is about ensuring that all students are successful," said Kelli Wells. "When students plan for their future, we need them to go beyond just thinking about a college major. We want them to think about, 'What careers will be waiting for me? What am I interested in doing? And what do I need to know to get there?'"

Next Steps in Building the Workforce of Tomorrow

With as many as 20 million high-paying jobs threatening to go unfilled over the next decade because of a lack of qualified candidates, our nation's economic competitiveness depends on finding ways to ensure that more students attain college degrees and that they have the skills to not only land jobs when they graduate, but the ability to continually adapt to new needs.

These strategies, which emerged from the Summit, can help us build the workforce of tomorrow:

1. **Increase the number of comprehensive school/ business partnerships.** We have exemplary partnership models—like those developed by GE,

Joe Fuller

Harvard Business School's Joe Fuller offered these insights at the summit:

- Employers are unnecessarily raising the educational bar for candidates. Many jobs are becoming harder to fill because employers are requiring a four-year degree when all they really need is a two-year degree: The unemployment rate for new college graduates is just 1.5 percent, and targeting the most in-demand pool to fill those jobs is a losing proposition.

- We have a crisis with male participation in the workforce. Millions of men in their prime working age are idle, for reasons including disability and substance use. Marginalized populations must be mobilized to sustain the economic viability of the United States.

- Technology isn't destroying jobs, it's creating them. Technology is a disruptive force that constantly requires workers to re-train themselves. At the same time, though, it's opening new opportunities at a high rate.

- Listening to educators try to speak to employers can be like listening to two people who speak different languages – frustrating. Employers view those conversations with anxiety because they just want to say what they need, and they hear, 'We're already doing that.' Both sides need to establish goals and work in concert to reach them.

Joe Fuller

EY and Southwest Airlines—that are taking steps to build the workforce of tomorrow. Clearly, we need more of these high-impact partnerships, and this means that we must enlist more business and corporations that will partner with schools to provide mentors, internships, speakers, apprenticeships, job shadowing and help students build the Essential Skills.

2. **Develop tools to build and measure the Essential Skills.** Throughout the summit, participants spoke about the need for today's youth to develop and strengthen the Essential Skills. There was much chatter about the transformative value of the Essential Skills. We agreed that successful young people possess competencies that have the ability to move them to and through college and into 21st century jobs. In addition to creating school-business partnerships (noted in Action Step #1) and building pathway knowledge, our challenge is finding the best practices to develop the Essential Skills. We recommend also creating apps and online resources that can help students strengthen and develop the Essential Skills.

It's not enough to teach the Essential Skills, we also must find ways to assess how well our students pick them up. Likewise, employers need to assess whether job candidates have acquired the Essential Skills, and young people—the workforce of the future—will benefit from evidence of their Essential Skills development.

3. **Elevate individuals from communities that are suffering from diminishing jobs and low average wages.** These are often rural communities, like those described by college president Steve Tyrell and school superintendent Annette Hammond, whose residents are at risk of falling further behind as the unprecedented redistribution of jobs and wealth in the United States widens inequalities. Not only is there an opportunity gap, but also a resource gap that defines these struggling communities.

We need to ensure that the young people in these communities are exposed to ongoing college and career readiness activities. Philanthropies, businesses and nonprofits need to be especially aware of and respond to a generation of youth that is being forgotten. It will be difficult but we must redirect already scarce resources to children in these desperately underserved communities.

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GE Foundation

BUILDING A SKILLED WORKFORCE FOR A STRONGER SOUTHERN ECONOMY

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK of ATLANTA

CENTER FOR WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK of ST. LOUIS

NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION
Every worker. Every industry. A strong economy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

TO EFFECTIVELY COMPETE IN TODAY'S ECONOMY, THE SOUTH MUST HELP ADULTS BUILD SKILLS

A new day has dawned in the South. No longer is a high school education and a willingness to work hard sufficient to secure a family supporting job. In fact, the majority of all jobs in the U.S. labor market require some postsecondary education or training. To effectively compete in today's marketplace, states must have skilled workforces.

For the southern United States, this new environment requires a shift. Economies once built on low-skill industries must now compete globally for jobs that require training beyond high school. Most of these jobs are middle-skill jobs, requiring education or training beyond high school but not a four-year college degree.

Across the South, there are not enough workers trained to fill middle-skill jobs. This skills gap hurts businesses that are not able to fill positions. It hurts states because the lack of skilled workers makes it challenging to attract and retain new businesses. And the skills gap hurts low-wage, low-skill workers who are not able to advance their careers and move into good, middle-skill jobs.

But the middle-skill gap isn't insurmountable. Southern states could step up to the challenge of educating more of the region's adults to close this gap. Focusing on grade school students alone won't be enough to close the skills gap now. If each and every one of the South's graduating high school students were to stay in the region and train for open jobs that require postsecondary education, there would still be unfilled positions.

If southern states are going to close their skill gaps, they must provide opportunities for *all* adults — including people of color — to increase their education and training. More than four in ten Southerners are people of color. And people of color will make up the majority of the U.S. population by 2044. To create a skilled and

> "
> To create a skilled and thriving southern economy, state leaders must create an inclusive workforce.
> "

thriving southern economy, state leaders must create an inclusive workforce.

To close their skills gaps, southern states must also address people's barriers to work. The history, geography, and policy decisions of the South help create obstacles that prevent people from working, building their skills, and advancing their careers. These barriers include higher poverty rates, burdensome transportation costs, onerous child care costs, high incarceration rates, and restrictive policies for previously incarcerated people. These obstacles can be even more daunting in rural areas, where there may be additional challenges like limited job openings and limited broadband service.

THE ROADMAP FOR SOUTHERN SKILL BUILDING

To help states realize economic improvement, this report includes a roadmap of critical steps states may take to establish policies that could help them close their skills gaps. State policymakers could:

- Use workforce development strategies, such as sector partnerships and work-based learning, as economic development tools capable of meeting industry needs.
- Invest in communities to implement high-quality workforce development strategies at the local level.
- Establish job-driven financial aid programs that are available to a wide range of students.
- Form career pathways and include comprehensive supportive services that enable completion.
- Create state data systems that provide accountability on how training programs are helping residents with diverse needs get skilled jobs.

State policymakers could also consider easing their path to implementation of these steps by taking the following actions, which could help bring a broad set of stakeholders to the table to unite around a common plan for skills development:

- Set a bold goal for increasing the number of adults trained for skilled jobs.
- Create a cross-agency "Skills Cabinet," and task agency leaders with working together to develop and implement a strategy for meeting the state's postsecondary attainment goal for adults.

This report discusses specific policies that states could adopt to develop skilled workforces and fully realize the economic potential of local businesses and workers. Examples of current policies from southern states are also included, proving that these policy changes may be implemented in the region's context.

Residents, businesses, and state economies are counting on their leaders to create policies that will help them thrive now and in the future. Southern state leaders should examine and consider taking the necessary steps to close their skills gaps.

MOST JOBS IN THE SOUTH ARE MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS
JOBS BY SKILL LEVEL, AMERICAN SOUTH, 2015

16%
LOW-SKILL

29%
HIGH-SKILL

55%
MIDDLE-SKILL
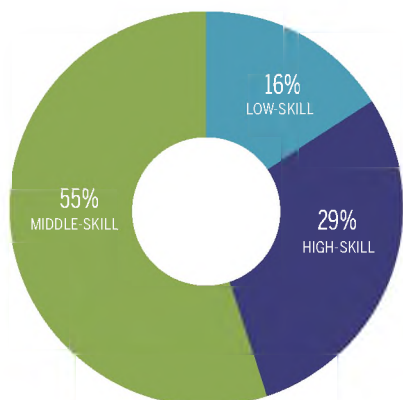
Source: NSC analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics

WHY A SKILLS AGENDA FOR THE SOUTH?

MARYLAND
DELAWARE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
WEST VIRGINIA
VIRGINIA
KENTUCKY
NORTH CAROLINA
TENNESSEE
OKLAHOMA
ARKANSAS
SOUTH CAROLINA
MISSISSIPPI
GEORGIA
ALABAMA
LOUISIANA
TEXAS
FLORIDA

This definition of the southern states is established by the U.S. Census Bureau.[1]

> **In the South, many jobs that could be done with only a high school degree —already in decline before 2007 —were lost and are not coming back.**
>
> Carnevale and Smith, 2012

NEW RULES FOR A NEW SOUTHERN ECONOMY

The majority of jobs in the U.S. labor market require some postsecondary education or training.[2] To effectively compete in today's marketplace, states must have skilled workforces.

For states in the southern United States, this new environment requires that economies once built on low-skill industries compete globally for jobs that demand training beyond high school. Southern states must invest in skills across all races, genders, and geographies for the region to succeed.

The south's economy used to be based on inexpensive labor and land that drove agriculture and extractive industries. Prior to the Civil War, cotton and other agricultural staples produced by enslaved people who were not paid wages were profitable and southern states did little to diversify their industries as other states did.[3] Following the Civil War, southern state economies expanded beyond agriculture to include some basic manufacturing and natural resources extraction, but the region principally competed on the basis of low wages, limited unionization, and tax credits.[4] These industries, which tend to be lower skill, are now declining.[5]

During the 1960s and 1970s, the United States economy began to shift from centering on producing physical goods to one focused on technology, innovation, knowledge, and service. Over the past thirty years, American communities became increasingly defined by their residents' level of education.

Now places with the "right" mix of industries and skilled workers attract good jobs while those at the other end of the spectrum are stuck with a disproportionate share of low-wage, low-skilled jobs that offer workers little advancement.[6] In other words, economic development *and* workforce development are inextricably linked in the modern economy. Southern states can no longer compete mainly on cheap land, low-wage labor, and lower taxes.

WAGES OF SOUTHERN STATES STILL TRAIL THE REST OF THE NATION
SOUTHERN STATES V. NON-SOUTHERN STATES
2016 MEDIAN ANNUAL WAGE
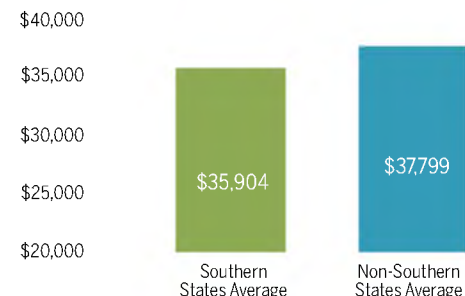
$40,000	
$35,000	
$30,000	
$25,000	
$20,000	

Southern States Average: $35,904
Non-Southern States Average: $37,799

Source: NSC analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics

Some southern cities have attempted to respond to the shift in the economy by attracting and retaining skilled workers. However, the legacy of low-skill and low-wage is still present in the South. Even after adjusting for cost of living, a recent analysis found that average earnings in southern metro areas lag behind the rest of the country.[7]

To ensure that workers, families, and businesses prosper, southern states need to adapt to the new economy and invest in skill building for adults. Today's jobs demand more skills and training than they once did. Stronger basic proficiency in math, teamwork, problem-solving, communicating, and complex thinking are now necessary not just in jobs that require advanced degrees but also in the middle of the labor market — jobs that require some education or training beyond high school but not a four-year college degree.[8] Moreover, the middle of the labor market now requires additional technical skills and training.[9]

MOST SOUTHERN JOBS REQUIRE MORE THAN HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION, NOT A 4-YEAR DEGREE

Middle-skill jobs, which require some education or training beyond high school but not a four-year college degree, account for over half of all jobs in the South. Education and training for middle-skill jobs can vary from short-term job training programs or two-year degree programs often offered by community or technical colleges or other community training providers, to apprenticeship or on-the-job training with an employer. While key industries vary across southern states, their labor markets have a common feature: middle-skill jobs hold the plurality of jobs in each state.

Many of these middle-skill jobs are "opportunity occupations," paying at least the national median wage (roughly $37,000 per year in 2016) and requiring less than a four-year degree.[10] The proportion of middle-skill opportunity occupations varies across the South, less in metro areas with a prevalence of low-wage work like Miami, and often more in areas with large production or logistics and transportation industries such as Birmingham and Baton Rouge.

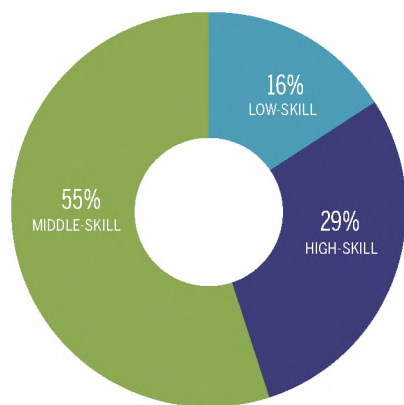## DEVELOPING SKILLED WORKERS CAN HELP SOUTHERN CITIES AND TOWNS COMPETE

The ability to adapt to the new skills-based economy has important consequences for the overall growth of the South. The South's population and economy has grown over the past several decades, but the growth hasn't been even across the region. Metropolitan areas in the south vary significantly — some have high concentrations of skilled workers and booming economies and others are older industrial cities undergoing significant economic restructuring.[11]

Historically industrial cities once reliant on old models of manufacturing have struggled to develop the skilled workforce required by today's economy. The majority of good jobs in these cities, after all, were attainable with only a high school education. Now, lower education levels among residents hampers job creation in these areas.[12]

To help reinvigorate older industrialized cities, states could invest in training that gives low-income workers the skills they need to compete for jobs that pay family sustaining wages. These skilled jobs can help attract more workers and revitalize these regions.[13]

Many very small cities, towns and rural areas have also seen significant economic change, driven by new technologies that aided in automating and mechanizing the agricultural and manufacturing industries. Population growth has been particularly slow in farming and mining communities and has declined in rural areas dependent on manufacturing.[14]

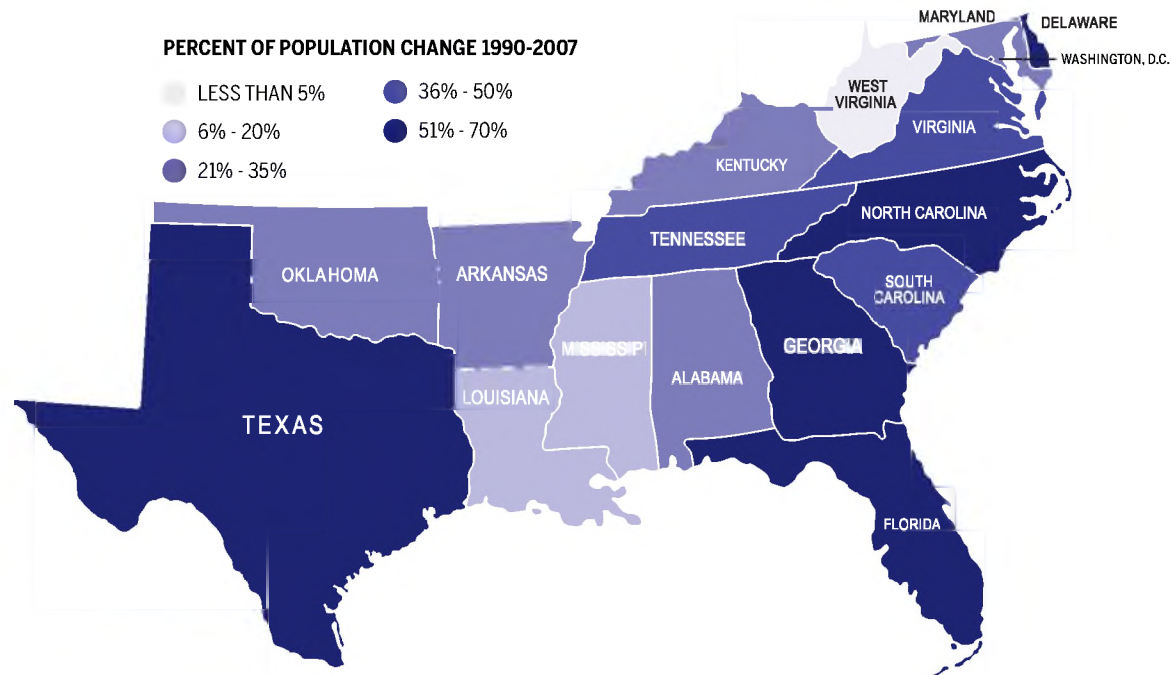## SOUTHERN STATES MUST CLOSE THEIR SKILLS GAPS TO GROW THEIR ECONOMIES

The desire for growing, thriving communities is strong motivation for states to support skills training. Across the South, there are not enough workers trained to the middle-skill level to fill middle-skill jobs. This creates a middle-skill gap in each of the Southern states.

The skills gap hurts employers. It keeps local businesses (which create the vast majority of new jobs in states[15]) from filling skilled positions and growing. A lack of skilled workers may also make it challenging to attract and retain new businesses who are looking to relocate to areas that can meet their skill needs.

The skills gap also hurts workers by limiting opportunities for lower-skilled workers to advance in their careers and secure family supporting work, and keeps lower-skilled people without jobs on the sidelines of the labor market.

MOST JOBS IN THE SOUTH ARE MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS
JOBS BY SKILL LEVEL, AMERICAN SOUTH, 2015

16% LOW-SKILL
29% HIGH-SKILL
55% MIDDLE-SKILL

Source: NSC analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics

SOUTHERN STATES WITH MORE SKILLED WORKERS HAVE HIGHER POPULATION GROWTH

PERCENT OF POPULATION CHANGE 1990-2007

LESS THAN 5%   36% - 50%
6% - 20%   51% - 70%
21% - 35%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Efforts to close the skill gap must be inclusive of all workers. By providing more equitable pathways to good skilled jobs, Southern states can strengthen their economies.

Adults and out-of-school youth are key to closing the skills gap

The middle-skill gap isn't insurmountable. There are proven, common-sense strategies that southern states could employ to close it and help businesses and workers succeed. Many states turn to their K-12 education

MOST SOUTHERN JOBS ARE MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS, BUT NOT ENOUGH WORKERS ARE TRAINED TO THE MIDDLE-SKILL LEVEL

Source: NSC Analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics by State, May 2015 and American Community Survey data, 2015.
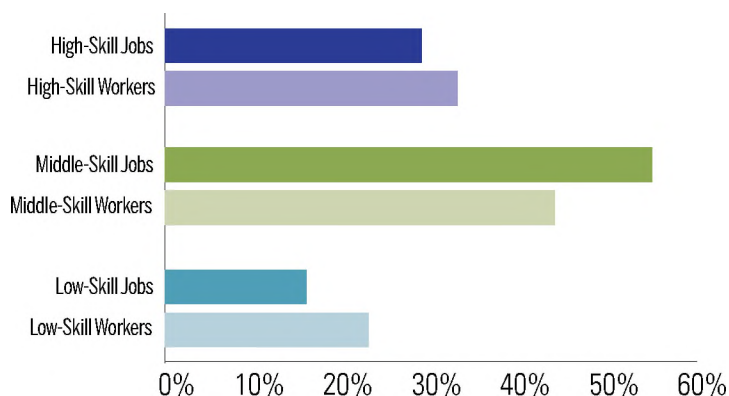
systems as a starting place for closing their skills gaps. While providing high school students with career education is critical, focusing on K-12 alone won't be enough to close the skills gap. For example, even if each and every one of the South's graduating high school students were to stay in the region and train for open jobs that require postsecondary education or training, there would still be unfilled positions.[16]

To close the skills gap, these states must also upskill the existing adult workforce. Southern states represent eight of the ten states with the highest proportion of working-age adults with no more than a high school education. Preparing lower-skilled adults for middle-skill jobs will require action on behalf of state policymakers.

Southern states make up nine of the top twelve states with the largest share of "opportunity youth" — young adults between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four who are not working and not in school. Opportunity youth are missing a critical opportunity to build skills for their future careers.[17]
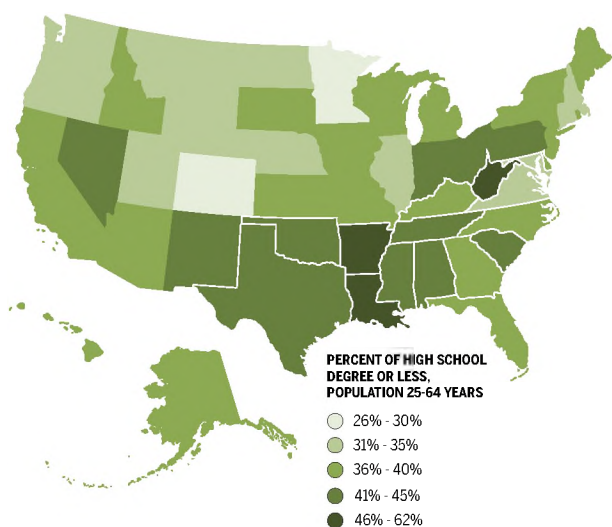
Efforts that focus on opportunity youth should also address the unique context and challenges facing young people of color, since opportunity youth are disproportionately nonwhite. Higher unemployment rates among young African Americans help drive this disparity, and are likely due to a combination of factors, including discrimination and a higher likelihood of living in areas of concentrated poverty.[18,19,20] These challenges can also contribute to lower rates of high school completion among

SOUTHERN STATES LEAD NATION IN SHARE OF ADULTS 25 TO 64 YEARS WITHOUT EDUCATION BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

PERCENT OF HIGH SCHOOL
DEGREE OR LESS,
POPULATION 25-64 YEARS

- 26% - 30%
- 31% - 35%
- 36% - 40%
- 41% - 45%
- 46% - 62%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau/American Fact Finder. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS FOR THE POPULATION 25 TO 64 YEARS. 2012-2016 American Community Survey

SOUTHERN STATES LEAD IN THE SHARE OF YOUTH 16 TO 24 YEARS NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL OR WORKING

PERCENT OF YOUTH NOT
ATTENDING SCHOOL AND
NOT WORKING,
POPULATION 16-24

- 8%
- 9% - 11%
- 12% - 13%
- 14% - 17%
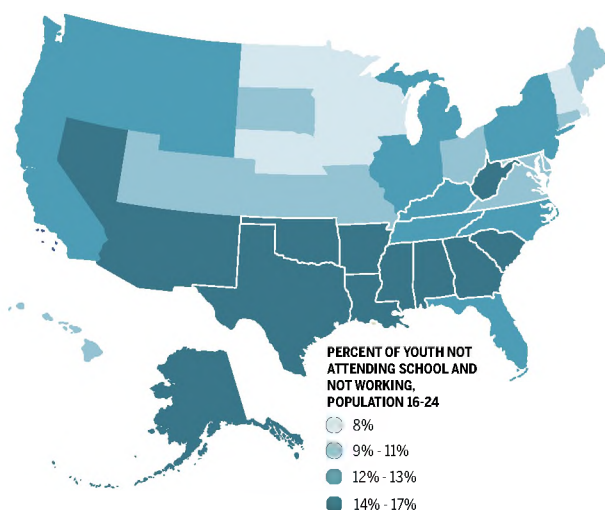
National KIDS COUNT

> " With low unemployment rates and fewer skilled people looking for jobs, many employers have a harder time finding qualified employees. "

young people of color.[21] Some youth employment programs have been shown to be effective in addressing these disparities for opportunity youth and efforts to close the skills gap should include an awareness of the most successful programs.

THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE REQUIRES A SKILLED WORKFORCE

The U.S. labor market is booming and unemployment is nearing record lows. Lower unemployment rates make it tougher for employers to find workers with the right skills. These economic conditions heighten the imperative for policymakers to evaluate and consider skill-building strategies for their residents.

Lower unemployment rates create hiring challenges

Unemployment is lower in 2018 than it was before the recession of 2007-2009. Some metropolitan areas in the South (Nashville, Austin, and Birmingham) have some of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation.[22]

Many economists believe that low unemployment rates signal an economy that is near "full employment." Many people who lost jobs during the recession are now back to work, making it difficult for some employers to identify and hire skilled employees.

To meet business needs in an economy with fewer job-seekers, state policymakers could consider policies that facilitate the upskilling of entry-level workers who need more training to advance within their careers and

earn family supporting wages. A recent survey found that while two out of three adults in the U.S. with limited reading, math, or digital problem-solving skills are employed, most have low earnings.[23]

Though overall unemployment rates are lower than they were pre-recession, unemployment rates for black and Latino workers in the region continue to be higher than for their white counterparts. States should work to ensure that all residents have access to skilled jobs and

U.S. UNEMPLOYMENT LOWER THAN PRE-RECESSION RATES
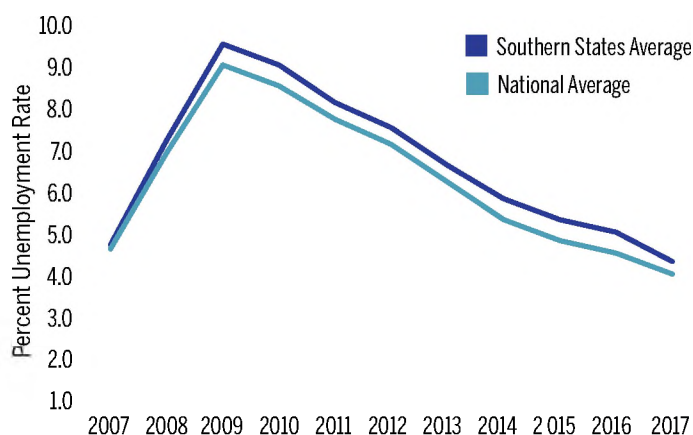
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

that postsecondary education, training and employment strategies are helping to close these racial disparities in unemployment.

Tighter labor markets underscore the importance of skills and addressing barriers

While states have record low unemployment rates for residents who participate in the labor force, they have also seen an increase in people who have been sidelined from the labor market. Many state policymakers in the southern U.S. have expressed concern over their states' lower labor force participation rates, which, despite a booming labor market, are lower now than they were before the Great Recession.[24,25] While there are likely many reasons for a lower labor force participation rate, it's likely that at least some people who want jobs have stopped looking for work because they don't have the right skills and supports to find a family-supporting, full-time job.

State policymakers should consider ensuring that workforce development polices work in tandem with other public policies to address barriers to work, including transportation, child care, and criminal records. In fact, the country's major piece of federal workforce development legislation — the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 — enacted with overwhelming bipartisan support, requires states to develop workforce development strategies for people with significant barriers to employment. In a tight labor market, such as we have today, many employers are more willing to hire workers who lack work experience if they have the foundational skills, technical training, and supports necessary to succeed on the job.

MOST PERSISTENTLY POOR COUNTIES ARE IN THE SOUTH

Persistent Poverty Counties
- Nonmetro County
- Metro County

TACKLING BARRIERS TO WORK ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN SOUTHERN STATES

The South's history, geography, and policy environment have combined to prevent many people from working, building their skills, and advancing their careers.

For example, the legacy of low-skill, low-wage work is still observable in the region's high poverty rates. Eight of the ten states with the highest poverty rates are southern states. This is particularly troubling given that a family of three with one child had to earn less than $19,318 in 2016 to officially live in poverty.

Most counties with persistent poverty, where at least one in five residents has lived in poverty over the last thirty-five years, are also in the South. Though the largest share of people living in poverty in the South are white, poverty rates are higher among Native Americans (22%), African Americans (23.5%), and Latinos (21.7%), in the region compared to their white counterparts (10.9%).[26]

Poverty can create barriers to work, including lack of access to transportation and child care. People living in poverty also tend to have lower levels of educational attainment, which in turn constrains a region's ability to attract middle-class jobs. However, as southerners are able to move out of poverty, they can spend more money at local businesses and contribute more to the economy.

Transportation presents a significant barrier for low-income workers across the South. An analysis shows that lower-income households who spend over two-thirds of their incomes on housing and transportation are concentrated in the South. Many areas in the South perform relatively well on housing costs alone, but when transportation costs are included, it becomes evident that these two expenses are burdensome for many families in the region.[27] The time it takes to get to work also presents a particular challenge for workers in rural areas.

In addition to transportation, caretaking responsibilities keep people from participating in the labor force. Child care may not be readily available during work hours and quality care is often expensive and in high-demand. On average, child care expenses can consume more than 10 percent of household income for married couples and nearly 36 percent of income for single-parent households.[28]

In fact, a recent U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics study found that working age women not in the workforce claim home responsibilities as the main reason they're not working.[29] Child care can be an especially acute challenge for single-parent households, which make up a disproportionate share of households in many southern states and a disproportionate share of those attending community colleges.[30] By investing in child care support during training and after parents find a job, states could help more people enter the labor force.
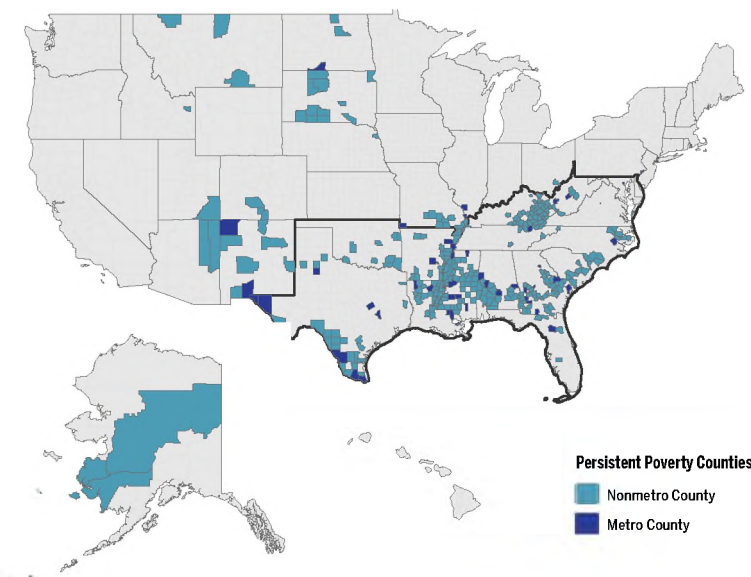
ADDRESS BARRIERS TO WORK IN RURAL COMMUNITIES TO HELP THEM PROSPER

Over three-quarters of people in the South live in metropolitan areas. Yet in Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, and West Virginia, 36 percent or more of the population lives in rural areas. In these areas, challenges that apply across the southern states can present an even greater burden.

As an example, limited job openings can be a challenge in rural communities where there are neither a diverse set of industries nor a concentration of businesses. A lack of access to high-speed internet service further constrains job openings and economies in rural areas.[33] To grow the economies in communities with limited labor markets, states should consider developing a skilled workforce *and* diversifying their industry base. Tools like broadband internet service could be used to attract employers and connect prospective employees to education and training.

Rural communities could also deploy strategies for connecting people with nearby metropolitan economies in a manner that provides mutual benefit, such as connecting metro employers to rural employees available to work remotely.[34] States could closely coordinate economic development and workforce development strategies to ensure that job creation and talent development go hand-in-hand; in doing so, states could diminish brain drain while providing more economic opportunity to residents and businesses.[35]

Transportation costs can be especially acute burdens in rural areas. Many rural areas have no public transportation options, while the distance between workers' homes and their workplaces makes access to an automobile a necessity. States and localities could expand transportation options to connect workers with available jobs.

A lack of quality child care options can also be a unique challenge to rural areas. Nearly 60 percent of rural Census tracts qualify as child care deserts — areas with little or no access to licensed child care. This compares to 44 percent of suburban areas. In these areas, a lower share of mothers participate in the workforce.[36] States could incentivize the expansion of child care options in rural areas so that more parents can work.

MOST SOUTHERNERS LIVE IN METRO AREAS, BUT RURAL POPULATION IS SIGNIFICANT
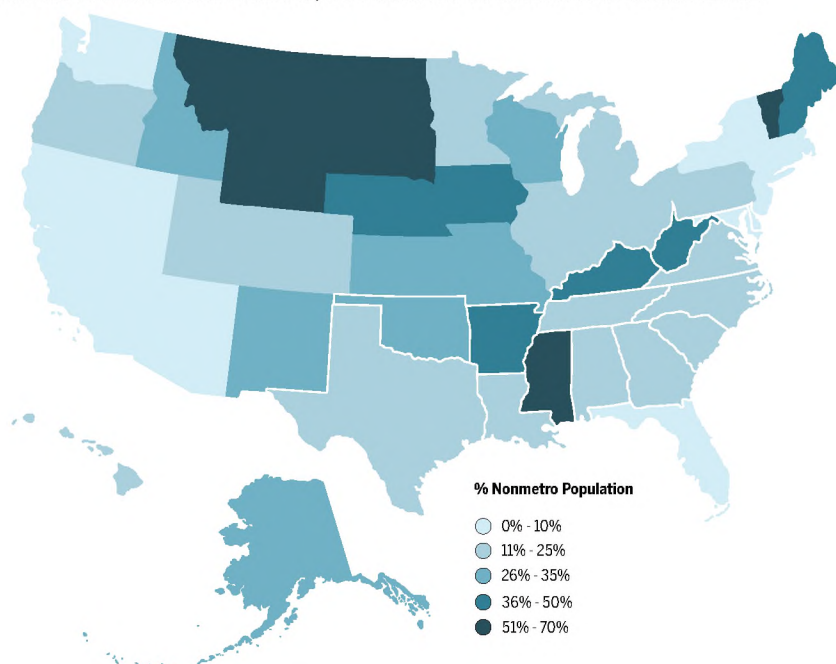
% Nonmetro Population

- 0% - 10%
- 11% - 25%
- 26% - 35%
- 36% - 50%
- 51% - 70%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (Population); 2015 ERS County Typology Codes. USDA Economic Research Service using data from Bureau of Economic Analysis and U.S. Census Bureau (Metro/Nonmetro).

State policies regarding criminal justice also impact people's ability to work. The South has some of the highest incarceration rates in the country. Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Oklahoma outpace all other states in the nation in regard to male imprisonment rates, and Florida and Texas also have relatively high incarceration rates, which is challenging given their large populations.[31]

People who have been incarcerated, have a criminal record, or have otherwise been involved with the criminal justice system face major challenges finding work. To widen their pool of potential workers and create more economic opportunity for their residents, states could take steps to remove barriers to employment for people who were formerly incarcerated. For example, some states have "ban the box" laws that prohibit work applications from asking as a yes/no question about whether the applicant has been convicted of a crime. Some states have also pursued expungement of criminal records for certain ex-offenders who have maintained a clean record.

Especially low education rates create yet another barrier for southern states. Four of the five states that have the highest proportion of working age adults with no formal education beyond high school also have the highest unemployment rates.[32] Declining industries like mining and extraction, forestry, agriculture, and durable goods manufacturing are also more prevalent in these states, meaning that there may be fewer jobs available, especially for those with limited skills.

A SKILLED AND THRIVING ECONOMY MUST BE AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

Like the U.S. as a whole, the South is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. With these changes, southern states will only succeed in developing a skilled workforce that positions the region to compete economically if leaders create equitable pathways to postsecondary credentials and careers for all residents.

Southern states are racially and ethnically diverse

While the majority of Southerners are white, African Americans and Latinos each account for nearly one-fifth of the South's total population. In fact, more African Americans live in the South than in any other region of the country and the South has the fastest growing Latino population of any region.[37] Estimates indicate that people of color will make up the majority of the U.S. population by 2044.[38]

"Reverse migration" of black people from the north to the south in the 1990s helped shape this racially diverse South, with more African Americans moving to the South than leaving.[39] Widespread job growth in the South during the 1990s and in the early 2000s before the Great Recession attracted both Latino and Asian people as well.[40]

Persistent racial and ethnic disparities in educational attainment and employment hurt the economy

Despite these changes, stark racial and ethnic disparities persist across the South when it comes to educational attainment and employment. On average, Latinos and African Americans have lower education levels than whites, and have faced greater barriers to pursuing postsecondary education and training. Lower incomes and wealth among these groups impedes access to college and to training programs. In fact, when families of equal *wealth*[41] — as opposed to income — are compared, studies show racial disparities in rates of four-year college graduation disappear.[42]

Racial disparities in unemployment are even more striking. African Americans face higher rates of unemployment than any other racial or ethnic group, a fact that cannot be entirely explained by differences in educational attainment.[43] Since people who are unemployed are actively looking for work, higher unemployment rates suggest that Black Southerners face systemic barriers in the labor market, including bias and discrimination.[44] These disparities stand in the way of realizing the full potential of a skilled economy.
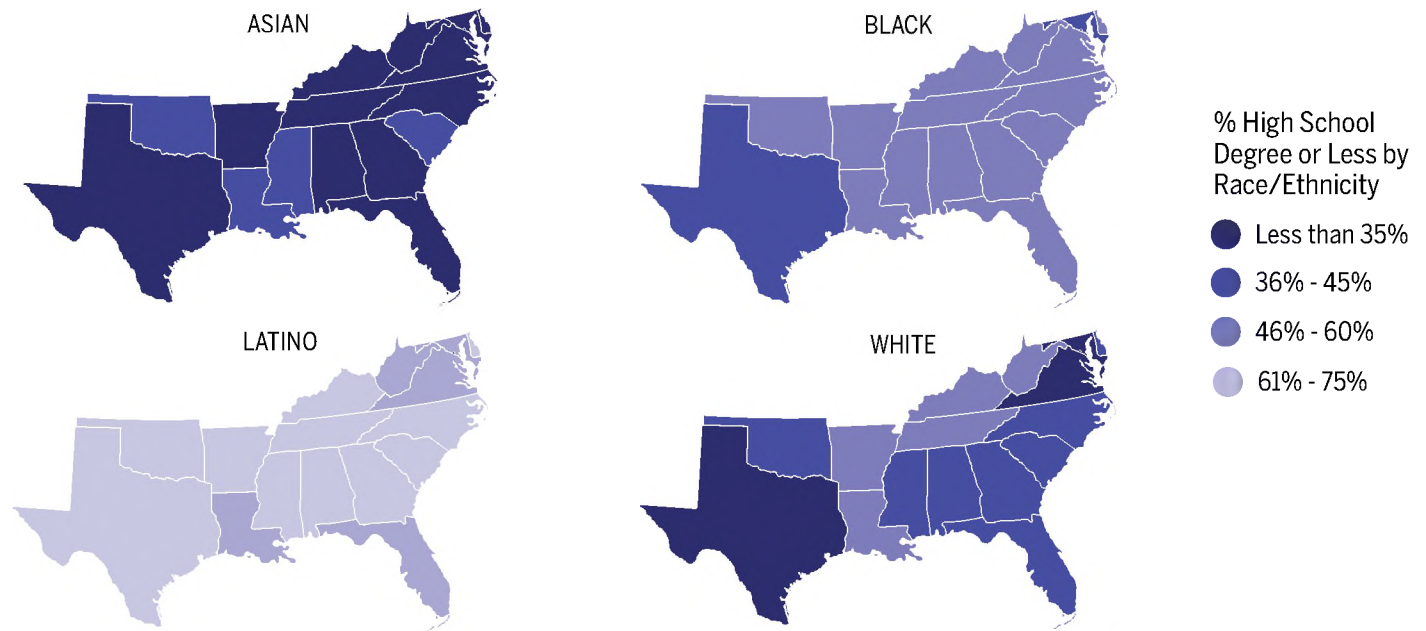
To ensure the strongest possible workforce, policymakers could evaluate access to job training, financial aid and other training supports by race and ethnicity. Where gaps exist, policymakers could review state policies and engage community leaders to determine the best solutions for increasing access.

MORE THAN 4 IN 10 SOUTHERNERS ARE PEOPLE OF COLOR
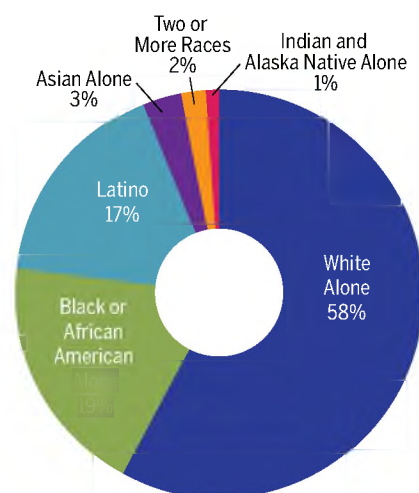
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (Population); 2015 ERS County Typology Codes. USDA Economic Research Service using data from Bureau of Economic Analysis and U.S. Census Bureau (Metro/Nonmetro).

SHARE OF ADULTS WITH ONLY A HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION DIFFERS BY RACE/ETHNICITY

ASIAN

BLACK

LATINO

WHITE

% High School
Degree or Less by
Race/Ethnicity

- Less than 35%
- 36% - 45%
- 46% - 60%
- 61% - 75%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau/American Fact Finder. Sex by Education Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over. 2012-2016 American Community Survey

STARK DIFFERENCES IN UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY RACE/ETHNICITY

ASIAN

BLACK

HISPANIC

WHITE

% Unemployment
Rate by
Race/Ethnicity

- Less than 5%
- 6% - 8%
- 9% - 11%
- 12% - 15%
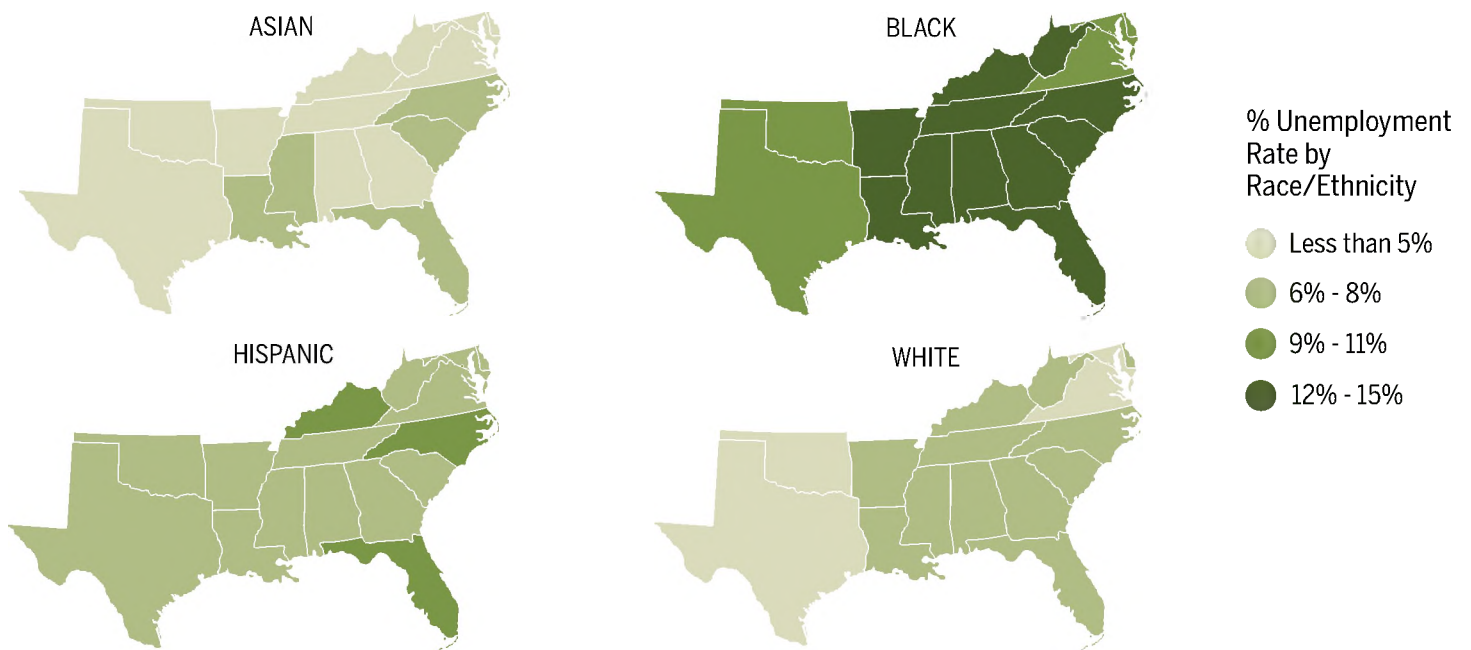
Source: U.S. Census Bureau/American Fact Finder. Employment Status. 2012-2016 American Community Survey

THE STATE OF SKILLS POLICIES IN THE SOUTH

State leaders could adopt policies that develop a skilled workforce and fully realize the economic potential of local businesses and workers. Many southern states have already started to create strategies for closing skills gaps. These include polices that promote industry engagement in training, as well as policies that ensure that postsecondary institutions are equipped to train today's students — including working adults and people without jobs who are looking to get back into the workforce — for middle-skill jobs. Federal laws like WIOA, as well as major federal and philanthropic grants, have driven some of this innovation.

However, the breadth, depth, and reach of skills policies varies across the region, with the weakest policy infrastructure in the mid-south states of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi, as well as the Appalachian states of Kentucky and West Virginia.[45] Overall, a stronger workforce development policy infrastructure could help southern states grow existing businesses, attract new ones, and provide economic opportunity to more people.

SOUTHERN STATES CAN BETTER ENGAGE INDUSTRY LEADERS IN JOB TRAINING

Policies that promote industry-driven training ensure that local businesses, including small- and medium-sized companies, are partners in a region's workforce training strategies. Examples include state policies to support sector partnerships and work-based learning. These policies are critical for ensuring that workforce training is "industry-driven" — responsive to the changing needs of the labor market. They are also key for creating a hiring network for workers who are building their skills. By setting policies that develop and scale industry-driven training in communities across their state, policymakers can improve the odds that employers can hire workers with the right skills and that workers are training for real jobs.

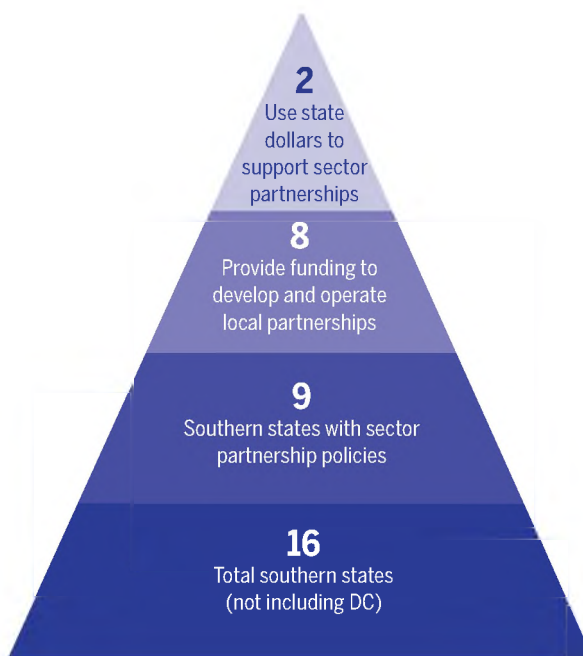### Sector partnership policies help ensure training matches open jobs

Sector partnerships bring together multiple employers within an industry to collaborate with community and technical colleges, schools, workforce agencies, community organizations, and others to align training with the skills needed for that industry to grow and compete. By working with training providers to develop or modify programs that respond to specific industry needs, these partnerships create a pool of skilled workers for multiple employers within an industry, and create opportunities for workers to train for and access skilled jobs. Rigorous evaluations of sector-based training that offers industry-recognized credentials and engages employers have demonstrated results: increased training completion, credential attainment, employment, and earnings, including for unemployed and low-income workers.[46]

As part of a broader sectoral approach to economic development, sector partnerships can help states attract new businesses and retain existing ones. States could use sectoral economic development strategies to support the growth of businesses in target industries by providing supports for a range of activities that make an industry competitive. These include supports for technology transfer, research and development, industrial processes, and skills training.

North Carolina's Biotechnology Center is an example of a sectoral economic development strategy that includes skills training. The Center supports the growth of the state's biomanufacturing, life sciences, and pharmaceutical businesses by providing services that help those businesses conduct research, develop new products, and train employees with cutting-edge skills.[47] The BioNetwork sector partnership is an integral part of the Center's talent development supports. Through the network, the North Carolina Community Colleges work closely with life science businesses and other partners to develop sector-specific education and training. North Carolina invests $4 million annually in state funds to support the BioNetwork. The state's sectoral approach to developing the life sciences industry — and the strong emphasis it places on training the workforce for the sector — have made North Carolina a leader for commercial bioscience.

Other states have adopted policies to support and scale sector partnerships, even if they have not yet integrated sector strategies into their economic development efforts.

MANY SOUTHERN STATES HAVE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP POLICIES, FEW INVEST THEIR OWN DOLLARS

2
Use state dollars to support sector partnerships

8
Provide funding to develop and operate local partnerships

9
Southern states with sector partnership policies

16
Total southern states (not including DC)

GEORGIA HIGH-DEMAND CAREER INITIATIVE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

I n 2011, the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) met with employers and economic development stakeholders about what most influences business expansion and relocation decisions. While site selection and tax incentives were important considerations, access to a skilled and educated workforce was the prevailing factor in the majority of regions.

To better align economic development with workforce development, Governor Deal launched the High Demand Career Initiative (HDCI) in 2014, which brought together postsecondary educational institutions and private sector employers to discuss workforce challenges. GDEcD, which houses HDCI, teamed with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government to engage stakeholders from the University System of Georgia (USG) and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and more than 120 private sector employers throughout the state. At a total of seventeen public meetings, employers identified current and projected high-demand career sectors in Georgia, as well as associated high-demand skills and attributes. To expand the reach of this conversation, GDEcD also developed an online workforce needs assessment with questions similar to those asked during public meetings. This ongoing, publicly available questionnaire allows any Georgia employer to report and update their workforce needs.

These meetings and assessments determined specific skills gaps across high-demand sectors and moved HDCI beyond data collection and into the next two-pronged solution development phase. First, GDEcD formed five HDCI industry task forces for film, aerospace, logistics, construction, and IT. Working groups of industry-related stakeholders meet regularly to address ongoing workforce issues, such as how to expand apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities in the construction industry. Second, GDEcD established the HDCI Sector Partnership Grant using $3 million from the Governor's WIOA Reserve Funds. This grant program aims to engage communities in workforce solutions by helping local partners build and maintain regional sector partnerships. Starting in 2016, Georgia's twelve economic development regions could apply for grants up to $250,000 with a 10 percent local match requirement. The grant is strictly for capacity building (i.e., hiring "regional convener" employees or consultants) to create a better system of collaboration among regional workforce partners.

Grant applications were required to identify high-demand industry sector(s) using labor market information and plans to address employer engagement, career pathways, WIOA-defined special populations, partnership sustainability, and how the partnership will leverage a 10 percent required local match, and other existing state workforce resources. The applications also needed to designate a leader of the sector partnership and letters of participation from: at least five regional industry employers; local postsecondary institutions; the K-12 school system; the Georgia Department of Labor office; the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency; the chamber of commerce or economic development professionals; and the Department of Economic Development existing industries representative. Additional partners, such as community-based organizations (CBOs) and local social service agencies, were strongly encouraged.

Grants were available across the state, such that one region's allocation did not diminish funding to other regions. To assist local partners with the grant application process, GDEcD hosted sector strategy trainings and follow-up regional workshops, during which staff shared labor market data to help regions choose an industry sector. A publicly available HDCI Sector Partnership Guide lays out clear steps to identify high-demand industry sectors and develop partnerships between public and private sectors. To date, eleven of twelve regions have applied for and received grant funding.

One particular grant recipient, HDCI Metro Atlanta (HDCI-MA), is focused on building employer-led partnerships in three industry sectors: healthcare; information technology; and transportation, distribution and logistics. Atlanta CareerRise, a regional workforce funder collaborative, is contracted to serve as the partnership leader and hired a full-time HDCI program director and part-time industry sector consultants. Since grant funding began in mid-2017, HDCI-MA has convened over thirty employers (still expanding), as well as academic institutions, chambers, economic developers, CBOs, government agencies, and local workforce development agencies. Sector leads are conducting employer visits to introduce the initiative and understand current and future workforce needs. They are also convening sector work groups with key non-employer stakeholders including chambers of commerce and economic development, K-12 and postsecondary education, government agencies, community providers and local workforce development boards. Combined, these activities will create an environmental scan that will lead to sector roadmaps and strategic priorities. The healthcare sector group, which began before the grant in 2013, already has well established employer and partner councils and strategic priorities. It has developed workforce development programs for the frontline, mid-career, and professional levels expected to be implemented in 2018.

HDCI has been successful in collecting data about skills gaps and other workforce issues, organizing sector task forces and allocating funding for local communities to build and maintain sector partnerships. At the same time, this collaborative effort represents a paradigm shift for many stakeholders and comes with unique challenges across the twelve regions. Stakeholders may be accustomed to operating in their own workforce silos, such as K-12 schools, postsecondary institutions, social service agencies, and workforce training centers. In regions that cover larger areas, collaborative efforts and resources may be centered in the highest-populated city or town with less attention focused on rural areas. Socioeconomic barriers like limited transportation and geographic barriers like the North Georgia mountains may affect partners' ability to participate. Facilitators are tasked with forming an inclusive strategy that engages all potential partners from across the entire region.

While there are currently no dedicated dollars beyond the initial $3 million, HDCI staff expect to reevaluate the grant in 2019 and consider extending funding given a variety of factors including program impact, staff bandwidth and general political will. With or without ongoing funding from the state, identifying other sources of funding is crucial since the grant is limited to capacity building. As trust and collaboration builds among partners in the chosen high-demand sector, it is up to these stakeholders to invest in actual program development that will increase economic opportunity for residents and produce a talent pipeline for regional employers.

Such policies provide investment, technical assistance, and guidance to help communities develop and maintain sector partnerships as a key vehicle for engaging employers in sector-specific training. In fact, nine of the sixteen southern states have adopted polices to provide ongoing support to local sector partnerships in multiple industries (Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia).[48] It is not surprising that more than two-thirds of southern states have adopted sector partnership policies. WIOA requires states to support the development of such partnerships at the local level. Indeed, under WIOA, states can use funds available to the governor to support a number of activities, including sector partnerships.

Of the nine southern states with a sector partnership policy, eight provide funding to support the development and operation of local partnerships.[49] However, only two of these eight use state dollars to support local sector partnerships in multiple industries. Maryland and

Tennessee have each passed state legislation that provides a robust framework for sector partnerships, appropriating $8 million and $10 million respectively in state funds to provide competitive grants for partnership development and maintenance.

The remaining six states use federal WIOA funds rather than state dollars. The amount of WIOA dollars reserved by these states for sector partnership spending widely varies, from $3 million in Georgia to just $350,000 in Kentucky. Meanwhile, Virginia provides technical assistance to local areas who want to create sector partnerships, but does not dedicate federal or state dollars for the specific purpose of supporting sector partnerships.

Apprenticeship and other work-based learning policies enable workers to train on the job

Work-based learning gives workers the opportunity to build new skills while earning a paycheck. Through learning that happens on the job, workers can gain a new

credential and earn higher wages associated with their new skills. Apprenticeship is the most well known form of work-based learning, blending classroom learning with worksite training to get workers the skills they need while they're on the job; other forms include incumbent worker training, on-the-job training, and paid internships for young adults.

Work-based learning pays off for both businesses and workers. For businesses, work-based learning programs reduce recruitment, training, and supervision costs, as well as employee turnover.[50] In fact, registered apprenticeship is a preferred form of training among firms that use it, with 94 percent of employers reporting they would recommend it as a strategy to other employers.[51]

Workers also benefit by gaining skills and credentials with value in their industry while earning income. Over the course of his or her career, a person who participated in a registered apprenticeship earns about $300,000 more than someone working in the same field who was not an apprentice.[52] Since these programs give workers the chance to "earn and learn," without incurring student debt, they put workers on a path to the middle class without the burden of having to choose between advancing their careers and supporting their families.

In recent years, work-based learning has received increasing attention as a workforce development strategy. Specifically, the federal government and some states have adopted policies to expand the apprenticeship model both to a range of industries and to a range of workers. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Labor awarded $10.4 million in State Accelerator Grants to fifty-two states, territories, and D.C to develop strategic plans for expanding and diversifying apprenticeship.[53] They built on this investment with $50.5 million in State Expansion Grants to thirty-six states to continue developing comprehensive strategies for expanding apprenticeship. Ten southern states were awarded these state expansion grants, including Arkansas, Delaware Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas.

Among many states, the federal grants are the primary means for expanding apprenticeship. However, some states have created their own complementary policies aimed at expanding apprenticeship for a broad range of residents, including adults and young adults who are not in school. Tax credits for employers who hire apprentices are the most prevalent policy among southern states, although some states also offer subsidies that cover the classroom instruction component of apprenticeship programs[54] and grants to fund apprenticeship programs in targeted industries.[55]

At least six southern states (Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Maryland, South Carolina, and West Virginia) have created tax credits for employers who hire apprentices.[56] These tax credits are supposed to provide an incentive for employers, particularly those not familiar with the training practice, to sponsor registered apprenticeship programs by offsetting costs associated with program development and administration, instruction, and training materials.

While tax credits are a useful mechanism for starting a conversation with firms about apprenticeship, they may not be enough on their own to incent employers, particularly those from small- and medium-sized firms who create most new jobs, to start an apprenticeship program. For one, firms do not realize the benefits of a tax credit until after they've paid the costs of registering a program and hosting apprentices, and not all firms have the capability to pay these costs upfront. Moreover, in many Southern states, business taxes are so low that such credits may have limited value.

That's why some states have taken additional measures to expand apprenticeship. For example, apprenticeship tax credits in South Carolina and Maryland are only one part of larger initiatives to expand apprenticeship. The South Carolina tax credit is part of Apprenticeship Carolina, administered by the state technical college system's Division of Economic Development. Apprenticeship Carolina has a staff of consultants who serve as "intermediaries," guiding companies through all steps of developing and registering an apprenticeship program at no cost. Moreover, as part of the Economic Development Division, Apprenticeship Carolina consultants have access to employers and can broadly market apprenticeship to them — especially those looking to locate to or expand in the state. South Carolina also subsidizes postsecondary instruction for apprentices so they don't have to cover the costs of classroom instruction associated with their apprenticeship. Furthermore, Maryland recently passed legislation that in addition to establishing a tax credit, also provides a scholarship for classroom instruction for apprentices.

> "Tax credits alone may not be enough to incent employers, particularly small and mid-size businesses, to create apprenticeship programs."

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Over the past few years, the majority of southern states have taken advantage of federal policies and opportunities to expand sector partnerships and apprenticeship.

- Nine southern states have sector partnership policies, but only two southern states invest their own dollars to support local sector partnerships in multiple industries.

- Five southern states created tax credits to reward employers who hire apprentices, but these credits by themselves may not be enough to motivate small and mid-size businesses. To address the needs of these businesses, states could consider supporting intermediaries who can broker work-based learning services, providing tuition assistance for apprentices, and broadly tie apprenticeship and other forms of work-based learning to overall economic development.

CASE STUDY: APPRENTICESHIP CAROLINA

Apprenticeship Carolina was launched in 2007 in response to South Carolina's shortage of skilled workers. A 2003 report by the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce recommended that expanding apprenticeship would be an opportune way to solve this problem. The intent of Apprenticeship Carolina is to assist more industries and businesses in creating registered apprenticeship programs. At its inception in 2007, South Carolina had ninety apprenticeship programs and just under 800 active apprentices. Today, just over ten years later, the state boasts over 900 apprenticeship programs and close to 15,000 active apprentices. Apprenticeship Carolina is now housed under the state's Technical College System and works with all sixteen of its colleges. This unparalleled growth serves an example of how states nationwide can use apprenticeship programs to grow their skilled workforce and spur economic development.

Apprenticeship Carolina fulfills its objective of increasing the number of apprenticeships in South Carolina by educating companies on the benefits of having an apprenticeship program and helping them with registration and start-up process. Companies regularly approach Apprenticeship Carolina directly or through a referral from technical college, WIOA, or other economic development staff.

Although many companies recognize the benefits that apprenticeships provide, getting a registered apprenticeship up and running can be an intimidating endeavor. As an intermediary, Apprenticeship Carolina alleviates much of this burden by walking companies through the process step by step and taking on many of the administrative duties at no cost to the employer. In addition, companies can receive a $1,000 tax credit from the state for each registered apprentice employed for at least seven months during each year of an apprentice's program, for up to four years.

Apprenticeship Carolina immediately wanted to expand beyond the building trades. Though their support is available to employers in any sector, Apprenticeship Carolina targets employers in seven industry clusters that have shown demand for middle-skill workers: advanced manufacturing, construction technologies, energy, healthcare, information technology, tourism and service industries, and transportation, distribution, and logistics.

Apprenticeship Carolina is also a major part of the state's economic development plan. This is because apprenticeship gives employers a pipeline of skilled workers to grow their businesses. A state that supports apprenticeship in a robust way is attractive to expanding businesses. The South Carolina Technical College System recognized this by establishing a Division of Economic Development to ensure the state's competitiveness as it relates to workforce, education, and training. Through this division, the efforts of readySC, which specializes in recruiting businesses and getting them up and running in the state, and Apprenticeship Carolina are streamlined. Apprenticeship opportunities are included in any initial conversation with an employer looking to move or expand to South Carolina.

Apprenticeship Carolina's original goal was 20,000 apprentices served by 2020. However, they've already surpassed that goal and are now working towards getting 2,000 companies in South Carolina to have registered apprenticeship programs. They also see room to grow and momentum around youth apprenticeship. The organization continues to serve as a model nationwide of the potential for growth in apprenticeship with strong state investment.

SOUTHERN STATES HAVE ROOM TO IMPROVE IN HELPING ADULTS SECURE POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

To close the skills gap, state policymakers could consider developing strategies to train adults for middle-skill jobs. Working adults are increasingly turning to community colleges to earn credentials that can help them advance their careers. Indeed, half of all community college students are over twenty-one years old, and the vast majority of students are working while enrolled in school.[57]

At the same time, employers benefit when community colleges prepare local workers for skilled jobs. Community and technical colleges play a significant role in workforce training in the South, and in rural communities, may be the only postsecondary institution in close proximity.[58]

States could adopt policies to better support community colleges in this role and ensure that they prepare all students — including working learners and unemployed people looking to get back into the labor market — for middle-skill jobs. These include policies to promote job-driven financial aid and policies to support career pathways so that adults can upgrade their skills while balancing their training with work, family, and other responsibilities. By making sure that postsecondary training works for adults, states could begin to close their middle-skill gap now.

Job-driven financial aid policies allow students to get credentials that employers value

States could help adults earn postsecondary credentials by making it more affordable for them to participate in training programs. On average, community college students have unmet financial need of $4,011 per year.[59] To help meet this need, states could provide "job-driven" tuition-free assistance for middle-skill training programs generally (such as free community college) or specific high-demand industries in the region.

Job-driven financial aid can also make attending school as a working learner easier by filling gaps in federal financial aid — providing aid to students attending less than half-time or to those enrolled in short-term training programs that take less than one year to complete. For example, it is difficult to use Pell grants, the U.S.'s top source of need-based, debt-free financial aid, for short-term programs — which can include industry-recognized credentials or certifications, licenses, and certificates — despite the fact that these credentials account for 24 percent of all post-secondary awards in the U.S.[60].

More than half of southern states have some sort of job-driven financial aid program in place, though some programs are not funded to their full capacity.[61] Southern states that do not have any significant job-driven financial aid include Alabama, Delaware, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and South Carolina.

Of southern states that do have a policy in place, the amount of funding available and the scope of such programs varies greatly. As the concept of free community college gains popularity, more and more states are developing "Promise" programs that provide last-dollar scholarships — scholarships designed to cover the gap between students' other financial aid and their total financial need — to residents attending community and technical colleges. However, most states have not made these programs available to adults. Out of the southern states, only Tennessee provides free community college to all of its residents, regardless of age.

Georgia and Virginia have established programs to help residents earn credentials sought by employers in leading industries. However, they are not funded to capacity and could be expanded.

Georgia's Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) Grant provides tuition assistance to residents of any age who are pursuing a technical college certificate or diploma, with additional funding available to those pursuing a certificate or diploma in one of seventeen in-demand fields, including precision manufacturing, health science, and welding technology. However, due to a decrease in funding, the HOPE Grant only covers a percentage of tuition and does not cover books, supplies, and other essential costs.[62]

Virginia's newly-established New Economy Workforce Grant Program, provides first-come, first-served grant funding for noncredit workforce training that leads to a credential in a high-demand field. Students can have up to two thirds of the program cost covered through this grant established in 2016. Awards totaling $5 million were given during its first year, providing grants to roughly half of the state's 4,200 credential earners.[63] Given student demand, Virginia has now expanded the program to $7.5 million in awards per year. While these policies in Virginia and Georgia are promising examples, more needs to be done across the region to adopt and adequately fund financial aid programs that help people earn credentials for middle-skill jobs.

Career pathways policies help students address barriers to build in-demand skills

For adults who are trying to pursue a postsecondary credential while holding down a job or raising a family — all on a tight budget — coursework isn't the only challenge. Additional barriers — scheduling difficulties, balancing immediate work opportunities with longer-term education and employment goals, and financial challenges, such as transportation, housing, and child care costs — can prevent success.

Additionally, some adults need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills in order to succeed in postsecondary training. Limited opportunities to build these basic skills can be a barrier for adults seeking to secure college credentials.

> "Half of all community college students are over twenty-one years old and the vast majority of students are working while enrolled in school."

CASE STUDY: TENNESSEE RECONNECT

Governor Bill Haslam of Tennessee signed the Tennessee Reconnect Act (HB 531/SB 1218) into law in May 2017, making community college effectively free to all Tennesseans, regardless of age. Funded by the state lottery, Tennessee Reconnect is a last-dollar scholarship for adults to attend community college to gain a credential or degree. The tuition grant is set to begin disbursement in the Fall of 2018. While the scholarship is critical, Tennessee Reconnect's strong statewide recruitment and enrollment effort is also instrumental to positioning the program for success.

The impetus for Tennessee Reconnect was born out of Governor Haslam's Drive to 55: an initiative to increase the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary degree or credential to 55 percent by the year 2025 in order to keep up with job demand. Governor Haslam started Drive to 55 after an analysis showed that without intervention, only 39 percent of Tennesseans would have a postsecondary credential by 2025.

After reviewing the numbers, officials realized that the Drive to 55 goal could not be attained without a significant number of Tennessee adults returning to college to gain a postsecondary credential. In addition to adults who may never have started college, data revealed that there are actually 900,000 Tennesseans who have completed some college but did not graduate with a credential or degree. Providing free postsecondary education for these adults not only helps more Tennesseans move into better paying jobs, but also helps employers fill critical skills gaps and grow their businesses. Reflecting the skills gap trend nationwide, middle-skill jobs account for 58 percent of Tennessee's labor market, but only 45 percent of the state's workers are trained to the middle-skill level. Tennessee Reconnect aims to help close that gap.

The Tennessee Reconnect program has set itself up for success with distinct marketing and outreach strategies coming from the state, institutions, and regions. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) engages in traditional marketing through advertisements and a user-friendly website. It also runs the Tennessee Reconnect Ambassador program, where people are trained to identify potential Reconnect students, answer basic questions about the program, and connect potential applicants to the right resources depending on their needs. For example, in Middle Tennessee, Urban League staff are trained as Reconnect Ambassadors, ensuring that people receiving other community services through the organization also have the opportunity to learn about Reconnect. The

postsecondary institutions themselves offer information sessions as well as pre-enrollment boot camps focused on topics such as math, technology, or writing.

Regional outreach is also conducted through Tennessee Reconnect Communities, which offer community-based, institution-neutral, high-touch advising, navigation, and support services that often cover a multi-county region. Regions interested in offering this service apply to THEC, which gives start-up grants to hire a director and other staff. Reconnect Communities are led by an organization that is trusted and respected within that community. For example, in Nashville this is the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, but in other regions it may be a community-based organization or a job center. These Reconnect Communities do one-on-one outreach and meetings to work with potential students to develop a plan of action for them to return to school, graduate, and find a good job. Directors go out into the community — to malls, churches, and more — to find potential students. Eight Reconnect Communities have been launched thus far, and they are already serving 13,000 students without the tuition grant even being available yet.

Tennessee Reconnect also works with state agencies and counties to make sure they are using and promoting the program to its full advantage. The Tennessee Department of Transportation has trained several employees as Ambassadors and is poised to take advantage of this opportunity to upskill their workers. THEC plans to replicate this model with other state agencies so that they can educate their employees and their clients about Tennessee Reconnect.

Additionally, THEC has trained thirty staff at twenty companies in Rutherford County as Reconnect Ambassadors, with an additional thirty to be trained in 2018. The Rutherford County Chamber requested this training from THEC as they realized how important Tennessee Reconnect could be to business growth and development, as well as to reaching the county's Drive to 55 goal. Several other counties have seen Rutherford's example and have reached out to try to find out how they can replicate this themselves.

The tuition grant will begin disbursement in Fall 2018. Looking forward, Governor Haslam has pledged to focus on completion and equity to make sure that working learners of all demographics are not only starting college but completing and exiting with an industry-recognized credential or degree.

Some states have introduced career pathways to help mitigate the many challenges associated with securing a college credential. These pathways address challenges in several ways:

- Use **career coaches** who connect people with the right training programs and support services to achieve their career goals, whether those services are provided by the college itself or a partner such as a community-based organization.
- **Expedite training** by helping people brush up on their basic reading, writing, and math skills (or earn their high school equivalency diploma) at the same time as they're building technical skills.
- Provide **in-demand "stackable" credentials** that count toward a higher-level certificate or degree and offer **credit for prior learning**. This means that workers can use their short-term credentials not just to find an in-demand job, but also to continue their education without losing credit for the work they've already done.

Because career pathways are built to help workers earn in-demand, industry-recognized credentials, they create a pool of people with the skills and training that local businesses need. In fact, the best pathways use sector partnerships to engage industry leaders in program design and make hiring connections for students.

While career pathways are recognized as a best practice, community colleges may face challenges in adopting them because they require intensive partnerships with state agencies and community partners, as well as additional financial investment. States could support and scale the adoption of these pathways by providing support directly to community colleges and their community partners, and by taking advantage of opportunities to braid federal and state dollars across workforce, higher education, and human services programs. In fact, such policies are critical in states that are aiming to prepare low-skilled and low-income adults for family-supporting careers.

Few southern states have adopted policies to promote robust postsecondary career pathways. Only four southern states (Arkansas, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia) have policies that explicitly support and invest in these types of pathways despite the South's relatively high poverty and low educational attainment rates.[64]

Some southern states have developed critical components of training pathways using private philanthropic dollars and grants from more general state sources. However, the lack of a dedicated state investment for these initiatives threatens their long-term viability.

For example, the Mississippi Community College Board implemented the Mississippi Basic Integrated Education and Training Program at each of its fifteen community colleges mainly with philanthropic dollars.[65] This "integrated education and training program" is modeled after one in Washington State with proven success.[66] Students have different onramps to the training pathway, including a SmartStart class which consists of a career assessment, basic education, career awareness, and soft skills training for up to three hours of college credit.

The Mississippi Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training program helps people improve their basic reading, writing, and math skills while training for an occupation so they can earn their high school equivalency diploma and an industry-recognized credential at the same time. However, because there are not dedicated state resources for the program, the future of the Mississippi program is uncertain.

Similarly, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Louisiana were among five states to participate in Accelerating Opportunity — a philanthropically funded initiative to promote integrated education and training approaches at the state level. An impact analysis of Accelerating Opportunity found that students earned more credentials while taking fewer credits, accelerating their postsecondary education goals, and in some states, program participants saw labor market gains.[67] With grant resources expired, however, and no substantial state funding, Georgia, Kentucky, and Louisiana may face challenges to institutionalizing these programs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Most states in the South have job-driven financial aid programs, though the funding and the scope of each state's program varies widely.
- Only four southern states use policy and resources to promote postsecondary career pathways. Though pathways have produced results, most southern states have not invested the funding necessary to secure the future of these programs.
- Southern states could consider ensuring that job-driven financial aid is available to more adult students.

CASE STUDY: ARKANSAS CAREER PATHWAYS

The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative (CPI) was formed in 2005 in response to Arkansas' relatively high poverty rates and low number of residents with postsecondary credentials. CPI provides tuition and case management support for low-income parents to earn GEDs, certificates, and associate degrees in community colleges and technical centers across Arkansas. Since its inception, over 30,000 students have enrolled in one of more than 400 career pathway options that link education, training, and support services and lead to employment and career advancement in high-demand industries.

With initial support from the Governor's Workforce Cabinet, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) worked with twenty-five two-year colleges and technical centers to set up and administer CPI programs. The state funds the program with existing federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant dollars, administered by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (DWS). Eligible candidates are required to be custodial parents or guardians of children living at home. In addition, they must be current or past recipients of TANF cash assistance; or be current recipients of Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, or Arkansas' children's health insurance program; or earn 250 percent or less of the federal poverty level. To date, close to 90 percent of CPI participants are women and the majority are single parents. Recipients receive funding each year for tuition and fees (beyond what is covered by Pell Grants), as well as wraparound support services such as career planning and employment counseling, and assistance for childcare, transportation, and coursework materials.

According to an external College Count$ impact study funded by the Winthrop Rockefeller, Ford, and Annie E. Casey Foundations, around half of CPI participants between 2006 and 2013 received at least one postsecondary certificate or degree compared to just a quarter of all Arkansas community college students. CPI students of color were three times as likely to attain an academic credential, compared to their non-CPI counterparts. In 2011, CPI students earned roughly $3,000 more in their first twelve months with a job versus non-CPI TANF recipients. The impact study also evaluated the initiative's return on investment measured by increases in tax payments from wage gains and decreases in public assistance spending. The state of Arkansas receives a significant return of $1.79 over five years for every dollar spent on the Career Pathways Initiative.

Not only does CPI help Arkansans break the cycle of poverty and save the state money, it also reduces the skills gap by connecting participants with jobs in high-demand career sectors. Each year, CPI college and technical center sites conduct a gap analysis using DWS data about job openings, job growth, and job loss across industries. Site leaders also speak with employers around the state about labor demands. CPI advisors use this labor market and anecdotal data to help students align their career goals with actual workforce needs. The Allied Health and Education sector for instance, which includes nursing occupations, is one of the highest-demand industries and employs almost two-thirds of CPI certificate or degree recipients.

The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative has successfully leveraged existing funding to produce substantial academic and employment outcomes that benefit both low-income families and employers. Ongoing coordination across state agencies and the twenty-five participating colleges and technical centers drives the initiative's success. The ADHE maps out career pathways based on current employer demand and provides staff to assist with program implementation. Data sharing between ADHE and DWS allows for continuous program evaluation and improvement. This collaboration is driven in part by the state legislature's ongoing bi-partisan support and its policy that CPI maintain data on course enrollment, degree completion, job placement and retention, and wages. Tuition assistance and case management are also essential components of the initiative, a point emphasized in follow up interviews with CPI participants.

There is much work left to be done, given that Arkansas' 19 percent poverty rate remains higher than the nation's average. While there are more state residents age twenty-five or older with a postsecondary degree than when the program started, numbers still fall short of the national rate. Unfortunately, decreased funding for CPI in recent years has narrowed the impact of the program. In addition, federal TANF work participation requirements create a disincentive for investing TANF dollars in education and training initiatives such as CPI. Limitations on Pell Grant eligibility also provide challenges for CPI students enrolled part-time and/or in short-term programs. Looking to the future, state and federal policies must be aligned with the goals of CPI so the initiative can be as effective as possible in providing economic opportunities for low-income families across Arkansas.

SOUTHERN STATES CAN STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE DATA SYSTEMS TO PROMOTE ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Resources invested in sector partnerships, work-based learning, job-driven financial aid, and career pathways should go to programs that successfully serve people from all backgrounds and places, including women, people of color, and residents from both metropolitan and rural communities. States need accurate and comprehensive data systems to help leaders gauge their progress toward this goal. Data could be used to identify gaps in program access or performance and direct practitioners and policymakers to solutions for closing those gaps. Businesses need access to data that will help them assess whether the regional workforce can meet its current and future needs.

Data systems are crucial to determining where skills gaps exist in certain industries and where sector partnership efforts should be channeled. Systems can show both in-state demand for selected occupations and the number of students enrolled in programs that prepare people for those occupations. Only three southern states — Florida, Mississippi, and South Carolina — report that their systems can conduct skills gap analyses. Most states report that they are in the process of building this functionality.[68]

Data systems for higher education and workforce programs should be able to inform students, workers, employers, policymakers, and others about whether people are accessing and completing programs and finding jobs. Most southern states have data systems capable of providing this information. However, systems in three southern states — Alabama, Delaware, and South Carolina — are not fully capable of helping these different stakeholders make informed career decisions.[69]

Southern states could also use data to produce publicly available consumer information tools for students and workers so that they can compare programs and make informed education and career decisions. Data should be aggregated to protect privacy. About half of southern states produce these tools. Of the states that do not have these information tools, most are in the process of producing them. However, Delaware, Maryland, and Oklahoma have made minimal progress toward producing these tools.[70]

In addition to making data available to students and workers, southern states could also regularly report the education and employment outcomes for the state's education and workforce programs to the state legislature. This prompts policymakers to evaluate the effectiveness of the state's programs. Only five southern states regularly report these outcomes to policymakers. Those states are Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas.[71]

Finally, states could invest their own resources to supplement the federal resources available to develop and maintain data reporting systems. Fourteen states across the nation find it necessary to supplement federal resources for data systems with state resources. Only four southern states use their own money to help create and maintain these important data systems. These states are Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee.[72]

Even states that invest their own funding in systems are primarily dependent on federal grants. Once federal grants expire, many states are forced to downsize systems which stalls the progress they've made and jeopardizes the realization of potential benefits.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Data systems help perform crucial functions that promote accountability, informing students, workers, employers, policymakers, and others about where industry skills gaps exist and whether people are accessing and completing programs and finding jobs.

- Most southern states have data systems capable of providing information about their states' education and training programs. While only a few southern states' systems can determine where skills gaps exist, most states are in the process of building this functionality.

- The majority of southern states have or are in the process of developing consumer information tools for students and workers to make informed career decisions. Yet three southern states have made minimal progress toward producing these tools.

A ROADMAP FOR SOUTHERN SKILL BUILDING

A ROADMAP FOR STATE POLICYMAKERS TO CLOSE THE SKILLS GAP AND GROW THE ECONOMY

This report is filled with examples of how states could close their skills gaps and strengthen their economies. This roadmap describes actions policymakers could take to either begin or continue their work toward building a stronger economy. State policymakers could:

1. Use workforce development strategies, such as sector partnerships and work-based learning, as economic development tools capable of meeting industry needs.

The availability of skilled workers factors heavily into businesses' ability to grow, as well as their decisions to relocate to a new place and stay there. Policymakers interested in expanding their states' business base by targeting high-growth industries could offer industry-driven training through sector partnerships and work-based learning. These workforce development policies could be coordinated with other sectoral economic development policies that support research and development, technology transfer, industrial process upgrading assistance, entrepreneurship, and traditional incentives.

Examples from North Carolina and South Carolina demonstrate the value of this approach. In North Carolina, sector-specific training for the biotech industry dramatically influenced firms' decisions to move to or stay in the state. In South Carolina, the state's apprenticeship program is integral to economic development efforts, ensuring that existing and new companies have the workforce development support they need to train a skilled workforce. By using industry-driven training as a key economic development tool, states can maximize their job creation efforts.

States could use this strategy to promote industry-specific economic development in both rural and metropolitan regions. Aligning economic and workforce development efforts is critical in rural communities that need more jobs and more skilled workers to stabilize and grow their local economies. In metropolitan areas, strategies that promote industry-driven training as a key economic development tool can help ensure that job growth is inclusive and provides opportunities for all residents.

2. Invest in communities to implement high-quality workforce development strategies at the local level.

Over the past several years, a number of Southern states have adopted key skills policies to support local sector partnerships, work-based learning, and career pathways for adults. However, most states are at the initial stage of this work, using federal or philanthropic funds to test new strategies. States could do more to bring this suite of proven skills strategies to scale in communities across the state.

Policymakers could consider investing more state resources into the development and growth of local workforce development strategies. By dedicating state dollars to local strategies, states could make better use of the infrastructure they've started to build with federal funds. State dollars could also leverage investments from other sources, such as philanthropy and business. In fact, state investments in sector partnerships, work-based learning, and career pathways could complement the training investments that employers and workers are already making.

States who invest their own dollars into these strategies could also set requirements around service delivery and program performance so that local practice is tied to state policy goals. Maryland and Tennessee offer examples of states that have invested their own funds in building sector partnerships, giving them more capacity to implement these partnerships.

While funding is critical, local communities need additional investment beyond dollars to successfully adopt new workforce development strategies. States could couple technical assistance with funding to help with initial implementation, disseminate best practices and lessons learned, and help local communities develop the tools necessary to coordinate strategies across employers, education and training providers, and other stakeholders. Technical assistance may be particularly important in parts of the state that have a less robust workforce development system. Through its High Demand Career Initiative, Georgia is working to provide technical assistance to regional sector partnerships.

3. Establish job-driven financial aid programs that are available to a wide range of students.

Over half of the states in the South have established job-driven financial aid policies in recognition of the fact that many students need assistance to earn postsecondary credentials. Yet, in states that do have policies in place, programs leave significant funding gaps for students. For example, financial aid policies may not pay for full tuition, cover costly fees, or apply to short-term training. To ensure that students can acquire the skills and certifications needed by employers, states could offer financial assistance for a wide variety of programs and needs.

Tennessee offers a strong example of job-driven financial aid. Through the Tennessee Reconnect grant set to begin disbursement in Fall 2018, attaining a degree or credential from a community college is effectively free to all Tennesseans regardless of age. Local chambers of commerce across the state see Tennessee Reconnect as an important tool for business growth and development.

4. Form middle-skill career pathways and include comprehensive supportive services that enable completion.

Since upskilling the existing adult workforce is essential to closing state skills gaps, policymakers could introduce career pathways that help mitigate the many challenges adults face in securing college credentials. These pathways use career coaches who connect people with the right training and support services, expedite training, and provide in-demand "stackable" credentials.

The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative is a strong model of such a program. Arkansas assesses gaps in the state's key industries and uses federal money to provide gap tuition funding and wraparound support services for adults so that they can complete their college credentials. An independent study of the program has already confirmed that it produces a positive return on investment for the state, and the initiative's graduates are helping to fill needs in the state's high-demand industries.

Support services like child care and transportation are a key feature of these training pathways for adult students as they enable them to complete college credentials while working, raising a family, or both. They are especially important in the South with its burdensome transportation costs and disproportionately high share of single parents. Southern states could follow Arkansas' lead and use existing federal fund sources to provide career pathways along with strong supportive services and also consider refraining from adding restrictions on supportive services that would interfere with access to education and training.

5. Create state data systems that provide accountability on how training programs are helping residents with diverse needs get skilled jobs.

When policymakers invest taxpayer dollars into workforce development programs, they want to ensure results for workers and employers. Since policymakers looking

to close their state's skills gap must develop a diverse and inclusive workforce, it is imperative that training programs are widely available to all residents, including those who face systemic barriers to economic opportunity. To address these issues, states could collect data and create data tools that show participation, completion, and labor market outcomes for the full range of state education and workforce programs, as well as for different racial, gender, and income groups. These data tools could be accessible to both policymakers and the public so that students, workers, employers, and others can make informed decisions.

Mississippi illustrates how a southern state can invest in data systems. Mississippi's data system can conduct skills gap analyses and produce information on whether people are accessing and completing workforce programs.

However, all southern states could make better use of these data systems to inform students, workers, employers, and policymakers about how workforce programs are preparing jobseekers with different training needs and addressing equity gaps. Once data systems are used to identify gaps in program access or performance, this data could also be used to close these gaps and for overall program improvement.

VEHICLES FOR STATE POLICYMAKERS TO CLOSE THE SKILLS GAP INCLUDE GOAL-SETTING AND A "SKILLS CABINET"

State policymakers could also ease their path to implementation of these steps by taking the actions below. These actions could bring a broad set of stakeholders to the table to unite around a common vision for skills development:

Set a bold goal for increasing the number of adults trained for skilled jobs.

A common goal could mobilize the public and private sectors to work together to adopt practical solutions for closing the skills gap. For example, in 2013, Tennessee's Governor Haslam adopted a goal for 55 percent of Tennesseans to earn a college degree or certificate by the year 2025. This "Drive to 55" goal created a framework for key state policies including Tennessee Reconnect,

which specifically targets adults. By adopting a statewide postsecondary attainment goal for adults that includes high-quality workforce credentials and degrees, state policymakers could show businesses and residents that they are committed to meeting their skill needs.

Create a cross-agency "Skills Cabinet" and task agency leaders with implementing a strategy for meeting the state's postsecondary attainment goal for adults.

Closing the skills gap isn't a job for a single government agency. Instead, it requires coordination across a range of agencies to make sure that workers have the right combination of training, education, and support services to build skills for good jobs. State policymakers could consider creating a Skills Cabinet so that agency leaders across workforce development, economic development, higher education, and human services can develop and implement a comprehensive and shared skills strategy. States like Arkansas, Alabama, Kentucky, and North Carolina have all created multi-agency leadership groups to guide skills policies.[73]

The strength and efficacy of a skills cabinet depends on the actions it takes. So while the creation of the cabinet is a critical first step, activities must go beyond naming and convening a set of agency leaders. To be effective, skills cabinets could:

- Align different agencies' strategic plans in service of their common goal.
- Braid federal and state funding streams to support key strategies and maximize impact.
- Use data systems to measure progress toward goals and ensure that such progress is equitable and inclusive.
- Identify opportunities for aligning education and training programs with other critical policies around issues like childcare, transportation, and criminal justice that are key for removing barriers to work.
- Make joint recommendations to policymakers on new and innovative strategies that agencies can implement in partnership with one another to improve opportunities for workers and businesses.

ENDNOTES

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