

FACTS & FIGURES ON OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

GREENVILLE COUNTY AND SOUTH CAROLINA

APRIL 2019

A project of



Public Education Partners
Greenville County

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Greenville County Schools Quick Facts

76,200 students

5,070 teachers*

101 schools and centers

44th largest school district
in the country

*full-time equivalents (FTEs)

Who We Are

Facts & Figures on Our Public Schools and a companion website to be released in the fall of 2019 are projects of Public Education Partners Greenville County. Both the print and web-based, interactive experiences allow the exploration of facts about K-12 public education in Greenville County and our state. We welcome you to join us in our quest to create more informed citizens and elected representatives who can then better advocate for quality public education. Together we can advance the success of students in Greenville County Schools and in public schools throughout South Carolina.

Public Education Partners Greenville County (PEP) has the mission to lead our community in acting collectively to support, strengthen, and advance public education and student achievement in Greenville County Schools. PEP is an independent, non-profit organization primarily supported with private funding from individuals, businesses and foundations in Greenville County. Learn more at www.pepgc.org and @PEPGreenville.



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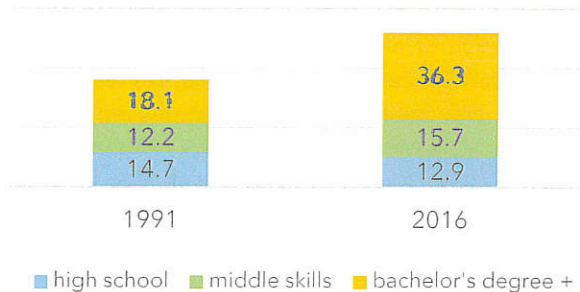
EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Education drives economic prosperity.

Higher levels of educational attainment generally lead to higher incomes and greater economic growth.

- Nationally in 2017, average annual earnings for a high school graduate were \$11,700 higher than for a dropout. For those with an associate degree, average annual earnings were \$20,000 higher.
- The share of good jobs¹ in the country has shifted to those with a bachelor's degree or higher. Middle skills² jobs have also grown.

Number of Good Jobs by Education Level
(in millions)



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce

Our per capita income is 89% of the nation's.

- In 2017 Greenville County's per capita personal income was 89% of the U.S. average. Nineteen years earlier it equaled the national average.

Per Capita Income* - Greenville County



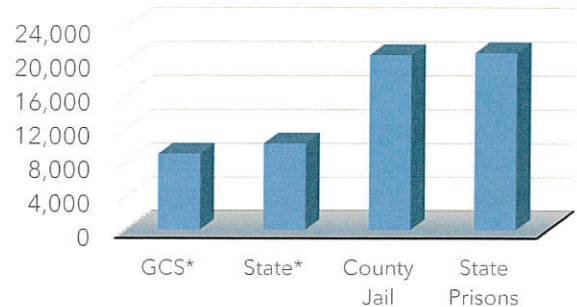
*As a percentage of the U.S. average
Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Dept. of Commerce

- South Carolina's per capita income in 2018 was 80% of the national average—three percentage points lower than it was twenty years ago. It ranked 44th in the nation and was \$11,000 less than the national average.

Failure to educate carries huge social costs.

- Dropouts in Greenville County are two times as likely to be unemployed and three times as likely to live in poverty as those with some college or an associate degree.

Schools and Prisons
Annual per person operating expenses, 2017



*Greenville County Schools; South Carolina Public Schools

- Nationally, a large percentage of those incarcerated are high school dropouts: 56% of federal inmates; 67% of those in state prisons; and 69% of inmates in local jails. The number of prison inmates without a high school diploma has increased over time.
- On average a high school graduate lives six to nine years longer than a high school dropout. Increases in educational attainment lead to better health and lower medical costs.
- Over a lifetime the average dropout will cost taxpayers more than \$300,000 in lower tax revenues, higher cash and in-kind transfer costs, and imposed incarceration costs compared to an average high school graduate.

Upward mobility in Greenville is low versus the nation and the South.

Absolute Upward Mobility is a measure of a lower-income child's chances to achieve economic success. In areas with higher absolute upward mobility, children from low-income parents earn higher incomes on average as adults.

Of the 100 largest commuting zones in the country, Greenville ranks 93rd on this measure. Of 26 in the South, Greenville ranks 20th.

¹Jobs that pay at least \$35,000 for workers age 25 to 44 and at least \$45,000 for workers age 45 to 64.

²Associate degrees, certifications, licenses and some college but no degree.

PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

The number of college graduates eligible for teacher certification is declining.

Of all 2017-18 in-state bachelor's degree graduates, 1,642 completed a South Carolina teacher education program. This is a 32% decrease from five years earlier.

Students Graduating with a Bachelor's Degree Eligible for Teacher Certification



Source: Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention & Advancement

Over the same five-year period student enrollment and the need for teachers continued to increase: the number of public school students in the state increased by over 5% with an average of 7,400 additional students per year; the number of open teaching positions in the state increased by 31% while the number of vacant positions doubled.

First-time teachers are on probationary status for three years.

First-time teachers are formally evaluated over a three-year period based on in-class observation, a portfolio, student achievement and written tests. Those that meet the standards are upgraded from an *initial* certificate to a *professional* certificate.

All teachers must participate in ongoing training and education.

Teachers must be re-certified every five years. This requires completing some combination of college classes, State Dept. of Education or local school district certificate renewal classes or other training. A total of 120 renewal credits are required during each five-year period.

Teachers in South Carolina do not belong to unions and do not receive tenure.

Teachers receive one-year contracts. No one is guaranteed a teaching position for the next year. Teachers can be dismissed with cause at any time.

The average salary in the state is below the Southeast's; our school district's is above.

For 2017-18 South Carolina's average teacher salary was \$574 below the Southeast average; Greenville County Schools' was \$622 above.

	GCS*	SE Avg.*	SC
Avg. Teacher Salary	\$51,378	\$50,756	\$50,182

*GCS - Greenville County Schools; Average of 11 other states in the SE.

Minimum salary levels and increases for teachers are set by the state.

Minimum salaries for teachers are set by the state and are based upon education level and number of years of teaching experience.

In South Carolina salary supplements for teachers with National Board certification are being phased out. Only teachers with existing certification or who applied for certification prior to July 1, 2018 are eligible for a salary supplement. These teachers can continue to receive the supplement for the remaining time of their certificate.

State minimum salaries rank low or in the middle in the Southeast.

For 2018-19 the minimum salary in South Carolina for a first-time teacher with a bachelor's degree was \$32,000 which ranked 7th out of nine southeast states with a minimum teacher salary schedule. For a teacher with a master's degree and ten years of experience, the minimum salary in the state was \$43,949, which ranked 4th out of nine southeast states.

Greenville County Schools pays teachers above the state minimums.

Like many other school districts, our district pays teachers above the state minimums to try to keep teacher pay competitive with area school districts. For 2018-19 the salary for a first-time teacher with a bachelor's degree was \$36,320; for a teacher with a master's degree and ten years of experience the salary was \$50,309.

Teacher turnover in our district is among the lowest in the state.

The teacher turnover rate for Greenville County Schools in 2017-18 was 10.3% and ranked 23rd lowest out of 82 school districts in the state. Many poor, rural districts in the state are experiencing rates in excess of 20%.

PUBLIC SCHOOL SPENDING

Our district spends \$9,650 per pupil.

The 2017-18 per pupil operational expenditure for Greenville County Schools was \$9,643. For comparison purposes in 2016-17 our district spent \$8,995 and the state average was \$10,243.

Since 2011 and the end of the recession, per pupil expenditure in the school district has grown at an average rate of 2.5% per year in inflation-adjusted dollars.

Per pupil spending is based on all operational expenditures including those funded by state and federal government and the local school district.

72% of operating dollars are spent on instruction.

In 2017-18, of the funds available to Greenville County Schools for operational expenses, 72% was spent on instruction and instructional support. District administration accounted for less than 1%.

In 2016-17, totaling all of the school districts in the state, 69% of operational funding was spent on instruction and instructional support.

Percent of Expenditures by Category

	2017-18 GCS*	2016-17 SC School Districts
Instructional	71.7%	68.8%
Face-to-face teaching	52.6%	51.8%
Classroom materials	2.7%	3.2%
Instructional support**	16.4%	13.8%
Operations	20.8%	22.6%
Transportation, food & safety	9.4%	8.9%
Facility maintenance	8.6%	9.5%
Business services	2.8%	4.3%
School Management	6.6%	6.4%
District Administration	0.9%	2.3%
Program management	0.3%	1.1%
District management	0.6%	1.2%
Total	100%	100%

*GCS: Greenville County Schools

**Instructional support includes guidance & counseling, library & media, extracurricular activities, student health & services, therapists, psychologists, social workers, evaluators, curriculum development and teacher training.

Source: InSite, S.C. Dept. of Education

Our district's policy is an operating reserve equal to one month's expenses.

The policy of Greenville County Schools is to keep a minimum of one month of operating expenses in reserve. This allows the district to keep a high bond rating and pay less in interest on construction bonds.

Because the inflow of operating revenue doesn't match the payment of expenses, reserves allow the district to pay bills without borrowing funds and paying interest on those funds. Due to this mismatch, the reserve amount can vary greatly from month to month.

The district may also maintain money in reserve to protect against mid-year cuts in state funding. This reserve prevents major disruptions during the school year.

Our school district's policy of one-month or 8.3% of annual operating costs in reserve is low in comparison to that of the City of Greenville (20%) and Greenville County government (25% to 35%).

Our state ranks below the middle on per pupil expenditures.

There are several different sources that rank the 50 states and the District of Columbia on per pupil expenditures.

The most recent National Education Association statistics rank South Carolina 30th. Based on U.S. Census Bureau statistics, South Carolina ranks 32nd, and after adjusting Census data for regional cost differences, *Quality Counts* also ranks the state 32nd.

There are several reasons why most private schools spend less per pupil than public schools.

Here are some of the reasons:

1. Most private schools do not provide services for special education students, special needs or learning disabled students, or students who do not speak English as their first language. Many public school systems have 15% or more of their students in these categories.
2. Private schools do not have to provide bus transportation for students.
3. Private schools do not have to use certified teachers—teachers that command a higher salary in the market place.

PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING

63% of the funds to operate our school district comes from the state.

State government is the major source of funding to operate our public schools. For the 2017-18 school year 63% of Greenville County Schools operating funds came from the state. The federal government provided 6% with 31% coming from local sources of revenue primarily property taxes.

K-12 education accounts for the largest share of the state General Fund budget.

Of 2016-17 state General Fund expenditures, 38% went to K-12 education.

The Education Lottery provides a small amount of funding for K-12 education.

Most lottery proceeds fund higher education tuition assistance and scholarships. For 2018-19, 87% was appropriated for this purpose. Lottery appropriations for K-12 education amounted to 4% of the total.

Less than 1% of total state funding for K-12 education (not including property tax relief) comes from the lottery.

Accounting for inflation, total per pupil operating revenue now exceeds the 2008 level; however, state funding still lags.

After accounting for inflation, total per pupil operating revenue for all South Carolina school districts in 2017 finally exceeded the pre-recession 2008 amount. This includes revenue from all sources: local, state and federal.

In constant dollars per pupil local and federal funds for 2017 were above pre-recession values at 113% and 104% respectively of 2008 amounts. However, state per pupil funding was 96% of that year's.

Our school district's total school tax rate is relatively low.

School districts assess two types of property taxes—one to pay for school operations and one to pay for school construction debt.

For 2016-17 the total school tax rate (operations and construction debt) in Greenville County was among the lowest in the state: 64th out of 81 school districts.

For that year, the tax rate for operations ranked 68th and the rate for construction debt ranked 32nd.

Property taxes on homes do not pay for school operations.

Homeowners do not pay property taxes for school operations on a primary residence. This is due to a state law called Act 388 passed in 2006. Property taxes are still assessed for school construction debt.

Home property tax bills show that the largest amount goes to Greenville County Schools. However, most of this amount (the amount for school operations) is removed from the tax bill as a "Tax Credit Savings."

All other taxable property (industrial, commercial, rental, vehicles and second homes) is taxed for both school operations and school construction debt.

By state law funds for school construction and school operations must be kept totally separate. Money cannot transfer between the two.

The state limits the ability of school boards to raise local revenue.

The ability of school boards to raise local revenue for operations is limited by the state. School districts cannot assess property taxes on owner-occupied homes for operations. The state has set a limit on local property tax millage increases.

The maximum annual millage increase for operations is based on that year's percentage increase in county population and inflation plus any unused, allowable millage increases from the prior three years.

The tax rate for school construction debt is limited by the amount of debt that can be held by a school district. The state limits school district indebtedness to 8% of the assessed value of the taxable property in the district.

Charter schools are publicly-funded schools.

Charter schools are public schools operating under a contract with an authorizing agency such as a local school district or, in our state, the South Carolina Public Charter School District or an institution of higher learning.

As with other public schools, charter schools receive both state and federal funds for operations. Charters under a local school district also receive local funds for operations. Those not chartered by a school district receive higher per pupil funding from the state.

Generally, charter schools in the state do not receive public funding for facilities. However, state and federal low-cost loan programs have been used by some charters.

ISSUES WITH STATE FUNDING

State funding for K-12 education is complicated and not reliable.

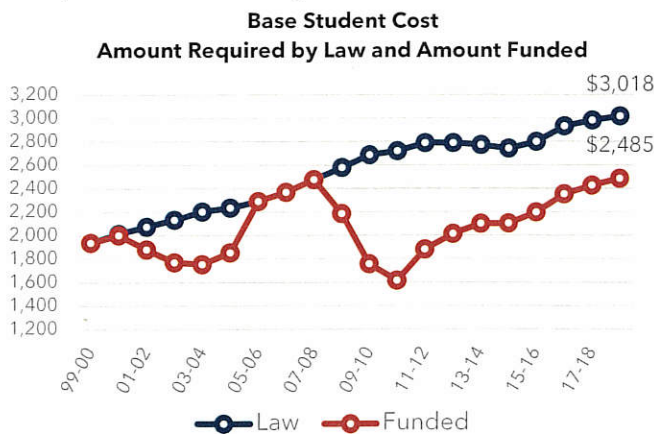
State government funds K-12 education in many ways. Over time the methods of funding have increased and become more complicated and less reliable.

The state funds K-12 education in three major ways:

- State General Fund: 1) **The Education Finance Act (EFA)** and 2) Categorical appropriations
- **Education Improvement Act (EIA)**
- **Reimbursements for local property tax relief.**

The Education Finance Act (EFA)—the base student cost—is rarely fully funded.

- The base student cost is a per pupil amount based on a 1975 definition of “adequacy” with annual increases for inflation. It is the largest source of state funding for South Carolina public schools.
- For the last eleven years the legislature has funded the EFA at less than 85% of what the law requires. For the twenty-three years prior to 2002-03 the state never funded the base student cost below 90%.
- For 2018-19 state funding was 82% of what the law requires—a base student cost below the 2008-09 required level of funding.



Education Improvement Act (EIA) revenue has grown steadily for the last eight years.

- Under the EIA one penny was added to the state sales tax in 1984 with all revenue going to school districts for specific purposes.
- Sales tax revenue goes up and down with the economy. Since bottoming out in 2009-10, EIA revenue has grown at annual average rate of 5%.

Property tax relief has reduced state and local funds available for public education.

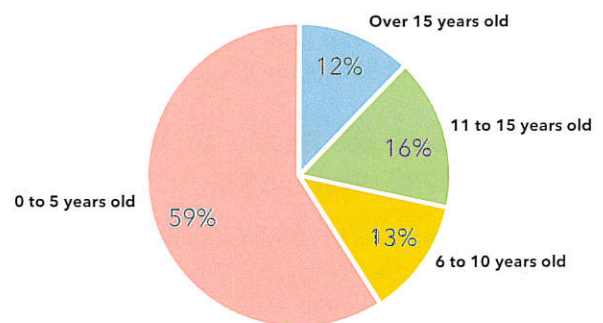
- Passed in 2006, Act 388 replaced stable, local property tax revenue from owner-occupied homes for school operations with less stable, state sales tax revenue.
- Each year has seen a sales tax revenue shortfall. For the last five years, the deficit has averaged more than \$70 million per year. This gap must be made up from the state General Fund reducing funds available for public education.
- With the tax burden shifted to business property, school districts have a smaller tax base from which to raise local revenue.

The state does not meet its 15-year school bus replacement law.

South Carolina is the only state that provides the buses for their school districts. In 2007 the state legislature passed a law requiring a 15-year school bus replacement cycle.

- The legislature last provided annual funding to meet the 15-year replacement cycle in 2008.
- About \$34 million per year is needed to meet the 15-year replacement cycle. For 2018-19 the legislature appropriated \$19.4 million for new buses—a \$10.3 million decrease from the previous year.
- By 2019 all of the fire-prone, 1995-96 model-year buses in the state had been replaced.
- As of April 2019, 12% of Greenville County Schools’ 352 regular-route buses were over 15 years old. In 2017-18 district buses averaged more than 7 breakdowns or failures to start per day.

**Age of Greenville County Schools Bus Fleet
April 2019**



Source: SC Dept. of Education

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

NAEP: Only true state-to-state comparison.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the only testing program that can be used to compare academic achievement among the 50 states.

The two main tests are those in reading and math given to a random sample of 4th and 8th grade public school students in every state. The tests are given every two years. The most recent mean scores (2017) are below.

	State Average	National Average	State Rank
Reading - 4 th	213	221	38 th
Reading - 8 th	260	265	36 th
Math - 4 th	234	239	34 th
Math - 8 th	275	282	39 th

Third-grade reading - meet or exceed expectations: Greenville: 56% State: 46%

Reading on grade level by third grade is a strong indicator of a student's future academic success including graduation from high school.

SC READY assessments in English language arts and math are given in grades 3 - 8. The tests measure student performance on the South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards. The above percentages are for 2018.

Since each state determines its academic standards and assessments, results are not comparable among states.

31% of high school juniors and seniors in Greenville enrolled in AP or IB courses.

Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs are available to high school students in our school district. Students successful in these courses receive varying amounts of college credit at post-secondary institutions.

31% of high school juniors and seniors in Greenville County Schools in 2017-18 were enrolled in one or more AP or IB classes. Students in this group were successful on 60% of the AP and 55% of the IB exams taken.

Silver or above on Ready to Work exam: Greenville: 67% State: 63%

Eleventh-grade students in South Carolina public schools are administered the Ready to Work assessment to measure essential workforce skills. The four certificate levels are Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum. Silver shows readiness for 69% of the jobs in ACT's JobPro® database.

High school graduation rate: Greenville: 84% State: 81%

The above 2018 graduation rates for Greenville County Schools and public schools in the state are four-year adjusted cohort rates now in use in all states. The rate does not include those who graduate after more than four years or those with a GED.

Despite using the same rate formula, valid comparisons among the states are difficult. Two reasons are that states differ in their graduation requirements and the number and types of diplomas. South Carolina is among thirteen states (including D.C.) with the highest credit requirement for graduation. Our state offers only one type of diploma.

2016-17 was the last year high school juniors were required to take the ACT.

2016-17 was the third and last school year that eleventh-grade students in South Carolina public schools were required to take the ACT, a national college entrance exam. South Carolina was one of seventeen states where it was administered to 100% of public high school graduates. Students could take the test additional times.

For 2018 graduating seniors the average composite score for Greenville County Schools was 18.7. This is above the state public school average of 18.0. Among the seventeen "100%" states, South Carolina's average composite score for all graduating seniors (public and private) ranked 16th.

Greenville and state SAT scores are above the national average.

The SAT is another national college entrance exam. A redesigned test was initiated in March 2016. Results of the new SAT are not comparable to years prior to 2017.

The percentage taking the test impacts average scores. 52% of Greenville County Schools' twelfth-grade students took the SAT. The participation rate for South Carolina public schools was 45%. A national rate is not published.

Below are the mean scores for 2018 graduating seniors taking the redesigned SAT. In addition to our school district, scores are for graduating seniors in public schools in the state and the nation.

	ERW*	Math	Total
GCS*	555	534	1089
State - public	543	520	1064
Nation - public	529	520	1049

*ERW - Evidence-based reading and writing; GCS - Greenville County Schools