

Facts & Figures on our Public Schools

April 2017



Public Education Partners

Greenville County

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The sources for all data and information contained in this document can be found at www.pepgc.org.

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Greenville County Schools Quick Facts

76,150 students

4,640 teachers

109 schools and centers

**44th largest school district
in the country**

2016 State Report Card, 2016 GCS CAFR

About us.....

Public Education Partners Greenville County (PEP)

Our Mission

To collaborate with the community, educators and elected officials to support and strengthen public education and student achievement in Greenville County Schools.

Our Work

- **Reduce Summer Reading Loss.** Our Make Summer Count program provides students in 29 high-need elementary schools the opportunity to select free books to build home libraries and attend Family Reading Nights to encourage literacy in the home.
- **Increase Graduation Rates.** As a partner in the On Track Greenville Middle Grades Success Initiative, PEP literacy coaches provide training and strategies to teachers in high-need middle schools to help keep students on track for high school graduation.
- **Mitigate Teacher Shortages.** In partnership with Greenville County Schools, address teacher shortages in science and math through the Greenville Alternative Teacher Education (GATE) program offering an alternative way to enter the teaching profession.
- **Build Community Knowledge.** Through cross-sector, multi-stakeholder initiatives, equip the community with the knowledge needed to more effectively engage with an ever-evolving public education landscape and advocate for our students and schools.



Public Education Partners

Greenville County

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Public Education Partners is an independent, non-profit organization primarily supported with private funding from individuals, businesses and foundations in the Greenville community.

Education and Economic Prosperity

Education drives economic prosperity

Areas with the greatest economic growth are generally those that have the highest level of educational attainment.

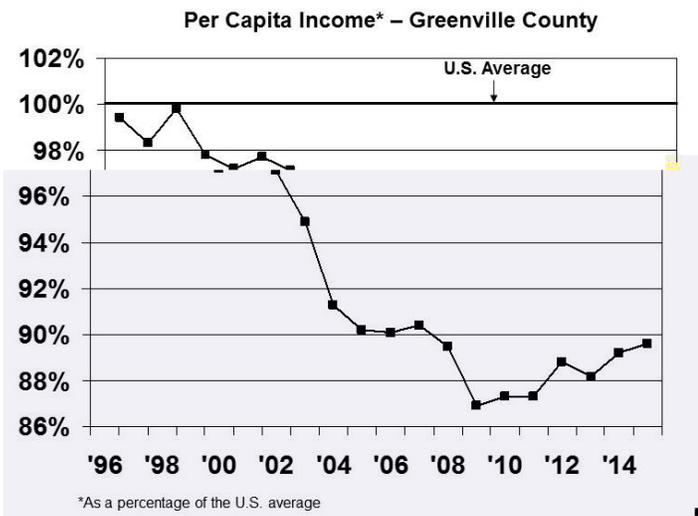
- Nationally in 2015, average annual earnings for a high school graduate were \$11,000 higher than for a dropout. For those with an associate degree, average annual earnings were \$19,400 higher.
- Nationally, increasing the high school graduation rate to 90% would increase economic activity by \$11.5 billion annually and create 65,000 new jobs.

99% of the jobs added since the end of the great recession have gone to workers with at least some postsecondary education.

Georgetown University Center on Education and Workforce

Our per capita income is 90% of the national average

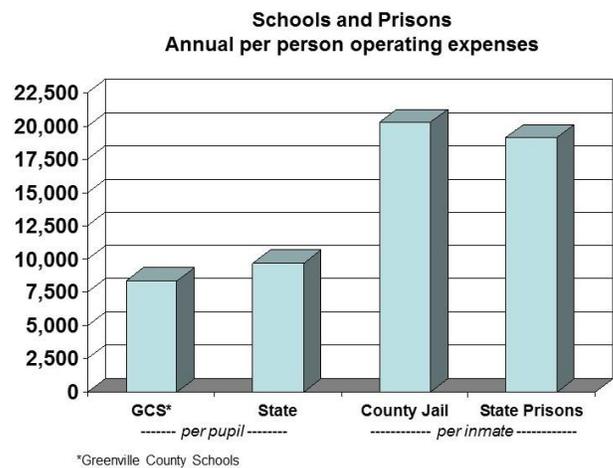
- By 2015 Greenville County per capita personal income had rebounded to nearly 90% of the U.S. average. Seventeen years prior it equaled the U.S. average.



- At 80% of the national average, South Carolina's per capita personal income is three percentage points lower than it was twenty years ago. In 2016 it ranked 44th in the nation and was \$10,000 less than the national average.

Failure to educate carries huge social costs

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

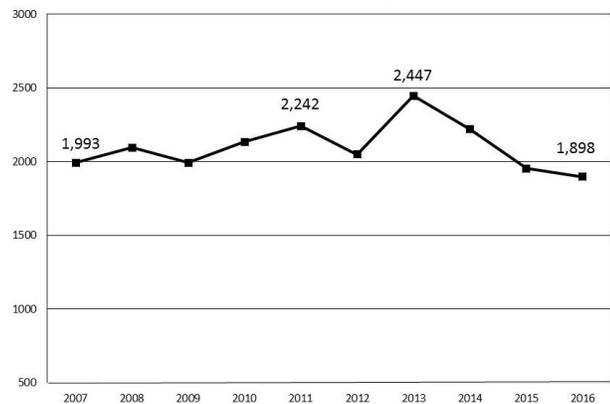
Of the 100 largest commuting zones in the country, Greenville ranks 93rd on this measure. Of 26 in the South, Greenville ranks 20th.

Public School Teachers

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

During the 2015-16 academic year, 1,898 students completed a South Carolina teacher education program. Three years earlier the number was 2,447.

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



Source: SC Commission on Higher Education

According to the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention & Advancement (CERRA), this is of concern “with the state’s ongoing trend of more teachers leaving and more vacancies to fill.” Student enrollment continues to increase. For the last three years, the number of public school students in the state has increased by over 1% per year with 7,000 additional students in 2015-16.

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.

Teacher salaries are below the Southeast average.

For 2015-16 the Southeast average teacher salary exceeded both our school district’s and the state’s. The Southeast average was \$827 higher than South Carolina’s and has been increasing faster over the last three years.

	SE Avg.*	GCS*	SC
Avg. Teacher Salary	49,596	49,112	48,769

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

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. For 2016-17 the minimum salary in South Carolina for a first-time teacher with a bachelor’s degree is \$30,113.

Minimum salary increases are also set by the state: annual increases (step increases) for each additional year of teaching experience and increases for completion of a higher degree. Teachers with national board certification currently receive an annual salary supplement from the state.

Greenville County Schools pay 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—both in-state and out-of-state. For 2016-17 the salary for a first-time teacher with a bachelor’s degree is \$34,271.

Greenville County Schools employs more than 4,600 teachers.

In terms of full-time equivalents (FTE), our school district employed 4,640 teachers and 800 teacher aides in 2015-16 in a district with 76,150 students. For 2015-16 teachers and teacher aides made up 60% of school district employees.

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

The teacher turnover rate for Greenville County Schools in 2015-16 was 8.3% and ranked 11th lowest out of 82 school districts in the state. Many poor, rural school districts in the state are experiencing turnover rates in excess of 20%.

Public School Spending

Our district spends less than \$9,000 per pupil

The 2014-15 per pupil operational expenditure for Greenville County Schools was \$8,579. For comparison purposes in 2013-14 our district spent \$8,355 and the state average was \$9,654.

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

70% of operating dollars are spent on instruction.

Based on the most recent state audited data (2013-14), of the funds available to Greenville County Schools for operational expenses, 70% was spent on instruction and instructional support. District administration accounted for less than 2%.

Totaling all of the school districts in the state, 69% of operational funding was spent on instruction and instructional support.

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 monies in reserve to protect against mid-year cuts in state funds. 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%).

Percent of Expenditures by Category		
2013-14		
	GCS*	Total of SC School Dist.
Instructional	69.9%	69.1%
Face-to-Face Teaching	52.8%	52.4%
Classroom Materials	2.8%	3.3%
Instructional Support**	14.3%	13.5%
Operations	22.0%	22.3%
Transportation, food & safety	9.7%	9.0%
Facility maintenance	9.8%	9.5%
Business services	2.5%	3.8%
School Management	6.6%	6.2%
District Administration	1.5%	2.4%
Program management	1.0%	1.2%
District management	0.5%	1.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

*GCS: Greenville County Schools

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

Source: In\$ite, S.C. Dept. of Education

The state ranks 33rd in per pupil expenditures.

According to *Quality Counts*, for 2014 South Carolina ranked 33rd in per pupil expenditures among the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

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

62% of the funding to operate our school district comes from the state.

State government is the major source of funding to operate our public schools. For the 2015-16 school year 62% of Greenville County Schools operating funds came from the state. The federal government provided 7% 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 2015-16 state General Fund expenditures, 37% 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 2016-17, 79% is appropriated for this purpose. K-12 education is to receive 16% of lottery appropriations.

Less than 2% of total state funding for K-12 education (not including property tax relief) comes from the lottery.

Including all sources of funding and accounting for inflation, total per pupil operating revenue in South Carolina remains below the 2008 level.

After accounting for inflation, total per pupil operating revenue for all South Carolina school districts in 2015 remained below the 2008 amount. This includes revenue from all sources: state, local and federal.

In constant dollars per pupil local and federal funds for 2015 were each 104% or more of 2008 values. Total state funding was 90% of that year's.

Per the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, among the 50 states, South Carolina ranked 12th worst in the inflation-adjusted reduction in total state K-12 funding from 2008 to 2014. However, from 2016 to 2017 South Carolina ranked 2nd best in the percent change in the state formula per student adjusted for inflation.

Tax rates are relatively low.

For 2014-15 the total school tax rate (operations and construction debt service) in Greenville County was among the lowest in the state: 61st out of 81 school districts.

In terms of all state and local taxes, South Carolina taxpayers had the 42nd highest tax burden in the country in 2012 - the last year this figure has been computed.

Property taxes on your home 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 service.

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 construction debt service.

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 millage increase per year is equal to the sum of that year's percentage increase in county population and inflation plus any unused increases from the prior three years.

After raising the property tax millage rate in each of the previous six years, for the 2017 fiscal year the school board did not increase the millage rate.

Building money cannot be spent for operations.

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

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.

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

Specific Issues with State Funding for Public Education

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

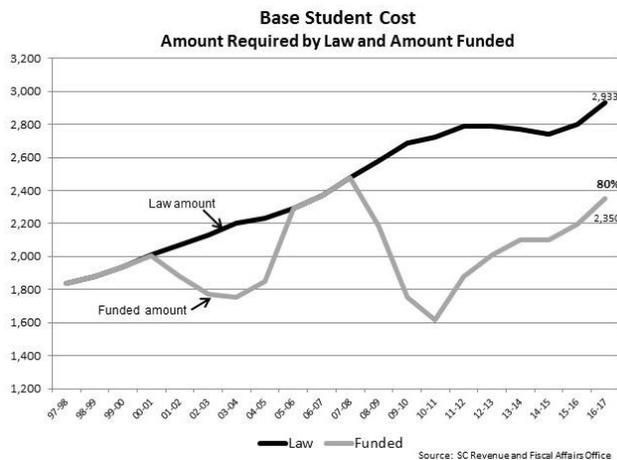
State government funds K-12 education in many ways. Over time the methods of funding have increased and become more complicated and less reliable.

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**
- **Reimbursements for property tax relief**

The Education Finance Act (EFA), the “base student cost,” is rarely fully funded by the state.

- 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 nine 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 2016-17 state funding is 80% of what the law requires—a base student cost roughly equal to the 2006-07 required level of funding.



Education Improvement Act (EIA) revenue has grown steadily for the last six 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 4.5%.

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

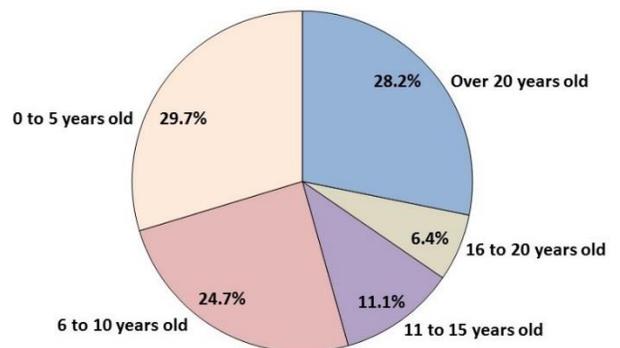
- Passed in 2006, Act 388 replaced stable, local property tax revenue for school operations with less stable, state sales tax income.
- Each year has seen a sales tax revenue shortfall. From FY10 to FY14 the deficit annually exceeded \$100 million. In FY16 the shortfall was \$76 million. This gap must be made up from the state General Fund reducing funds available for public education.
- Act 388 shifted the tax burden to business property, which unlike homes, provides little or no natural growth in revenue for local school districts.
- School districts have a smaller tax base from which to raise local revenue.

South Carolina has the oldest school bus fleet in the nation.

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

- The legislature last provided annual funding to meet the 15-year replacement cycle in 2008.
- In 2010 the state bought 18-year old buses from other states using proceeds from scrap metal sales.
- About \$34 million per year is needed to meet the 15-year replacement cycle. For 2016-17 the legislature appropriated \$23.3 million for new buses, which was \$7.6 million less than the previous year.
- For the 2016-17 school year more than one-third of Greenville County Schools’ 344 regular-route buses are over 15 years old. In 2015-16 district buses averaged more than 6 breakdowns or failures to start per day.

Age of Greenville County Schools Bus Fleet
February 2017



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 (2015) are below.

	State Average	National Average	State Rank
Reading – 4 th	218	221	33 rd
Reading – 8 th	260	264	32 nd
Math – 4 th	237	240	27 th
Math – 8 th	276	281	36 th

Third-grade reading – meet or exceed expectations: Greenville: 51% State: 44%

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.

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

34% of high school juniors and seniors in Greenville enrolled in AP or IB programs.

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.

34.3% of high school juniors and seniors in Greenville County Schools in 2015-16 were enrolled in one or more AP or IB classes. Students in this group were successful on 54.9% of the AP and IB exams taken.

Silver or above certificates on ACT WorkKeys: Greenville: 71% State: 65%

Eleventh-grade students in South Carolina public schools are administered the ACT WorkKeys assessment to measure essential workforce skills. The four certificate levels are Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum. Silver shows readiness for 65% of the jobs in the ACT database. Over 3,000 employers in the state recognize the certificates.

High school graduation rate

Greenville: 87% State: 83%

The 2016 graduation rate for Greenville County Schools was 86.8%. The rate for the state was 82.6%. Both 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 eleven states with the highest credit requirement for graduation. Our state offers only one type of diploma.

All high school juniors take the ACT.

Eleventh-grade students in South Carolina public schools are administered the ACT, a national college entrance exam. Students may take the test additional times. South Carolina is one of eighteen states where it is administered to 100% of public high school graduates.

For 2016 senior graduates the composite average score for Greenville County Schools was 19.2. This is above the state average at all schools of 18.5. Among the eighteen “100%” states, South Carolina ranked sixteenth.

Below are the college readiness benchmark percentages for graduates in our district and in all schools in the state.

	High School Graduates			
	% Meeting College Readiness Benchmark			
	English	Reading	Math	Science
Greenville	50%	35%	29%	25%
State	44%	30%	25%	21%

Greenville SAT scores above national average.

The SAT is another national college entrance exam. The percentage taking the test impacts scores. 53% of Greenville County Schools’ graduating seniors took the test in 2016 prior to the introduction of the redesigned SAT. The participation rate for South Carolina public schools was 41%. A national rate is no longer published.

Below are the 2016 mean scores for tests taken prior to use of the redesigned SAT. In addition to our school district, scores are for graduating seniors in public schools in the state and the nation.

	Reading	Math	Writing	Composite
Greenville	502	502	479	1483
State	490	490	466	1446
Nation	487	494	472	1453