

# Facts & Figures on our Public Schools

April 2018



**Public Education Partners**  
Greenville County

**[www.pepgc.org](http://www.pepgc.org)**  
**@PEP Greenville**

Take our  
survey!



*This document, the survey and the sources for all information in this document can be found at [www.pepgc.org](http://www.pepgc.org).*

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## Greenville County Schools Quick Facts

**75,600 students**

**4,970 teachers**

**101 schools and centers**

**44<sup>th</sup> largest school district  
in the country**

## 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

- **READING: Improve Literacy Outcomes.**  
Reduce summer reading loss through our Make Summer Count program by providing 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.
- **TEACHING: Mitigate Teacher Shortages.**  
In partnership with Greenville County Schools, invest in attracting, retaining and advancing quality teachers through multiple strategies such as alternative teacher certification, school-based teacher retention initiatives and a public service campaign to elevate and celebrate the teaching profession.
- **ADVOCATING: Build Community Knowledge and Capacity.**  
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. This includes *EdsourceSC*, a new online resource for information on public education in Greenville County and the state coming fall of 2018.



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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.

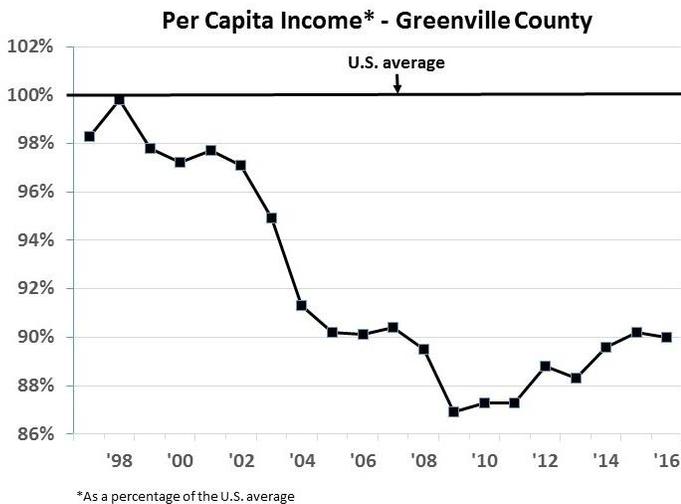
- Nationally in 2016, average annual earnings for a high school graduate were \$10,000 higher than for a dropout. For those with an associate degree, average annual earnings were \$17,800 higher.
- Increasing the high school graduation rate to 90% would increase economic activity in the Greenville metropolitan area by \$9.4 million.

**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 2015-16 Greenville County per capita personal income had rebounded to 90% of the U.S. average. Seventeen years prior it equaled the U.S. average.

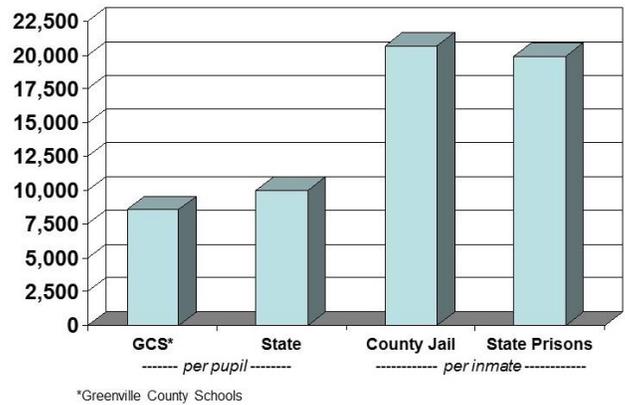


- In 2017 South Carolina's per capita personal income was 80% of the national average--three percentage points lower than it was twenty years ago. It ranked 45<sup>th</sup> in the nation and was \$10,000 less than the national average.

## Failure to educate carries huge social costs

- Dropouts in Greenville County are two and a half times as likely to be unemployed and three 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.

**Schools and Prisons**  
Annual per person operating expenses, 2016



- 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.

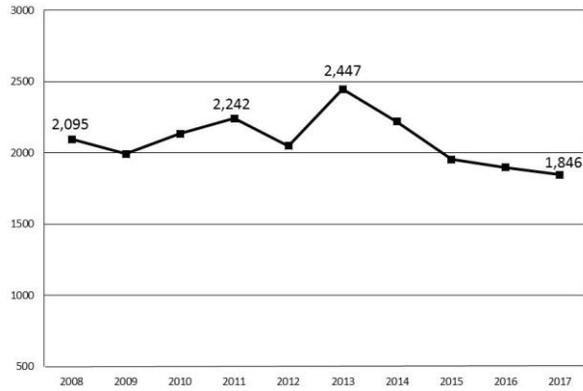
Of the 100 largest commuting zones in the country, Greenville ranks 93<sup>rd</sup> on this measure. Of 26 in the South, Greenville ranks 20<sup>th</sup>.

## Public School Teachers

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

Of all 2016-17 in-state college graduates, 1,846 completed a South Carolina teacher education program. This is a 25% decrease from four years earlier.

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



Over the same four-year period student enrollment and the need for teachers continued to increase: the number of public school students in the state increased by over 4% with an average of 8,000 additional students per year; the number of open teaching positions in the state increased by 23% with vacant positions increasing by 77%.

### 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 \$594 higher than South Carolina's and increased faster over the last three years.

	SE Avg.*	GCS*	SC
Avg. Teacher Salary	49,363	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.

Teachers with National Board certification currently receive an annual salary supplement from the state. However, the state legislature has put forth legislation to end the salary supplement program for new certification applicants. Teachers with existing certification would continue to receive the supplement for the remaining time of their certificate.

### State minimum salaries rank low in the Southeast

For 2017-18 the minimum salary in South Carolina for a first-time teacher with a bachelor's degree is \$30,113, which ranks 8<sup>th</sup> out of nine southeast states with a minimum teacher salary schedule. For a teacher with a bachelor's degree and ten years of experience, the minimum salary in the state is \$38,243, which ranks 6<sup>th</sup> out of nine southeast states.

### 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 2017-18 the salary for a first-time teacher with a bachelor's degree is \$35,400; for a teacher with a bachelor's degree and ten years of experience the salary is \$43,691.

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

The teacher turnover rate for Greenville County Schools in 2016-17 was 9.1% and ranked 13<sup>th</sup> 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 \$9,000 per pupil**

The 2016-17 per pupil operational expenditure for Greenville County Schools was \$8,995. For comparison purposes in 2015-16 our district spent \$8,549 and the state average was \$9,968.

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

In inflation-adjusted dollars, the school district’s per pupil operational expenditure for 2016-17 is below the 2006-07 amount.

**71% of operating dollars are spent on instruction.**

In 2016-17, of the funds available to Greenville County Schools for operational expenses, 71% was spent on instruction and instructional support. District administration accounted for less than 1%.

In 2015-16, 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 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%).

**Percent of Expenditures by Category**

	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2015-16</b>
	<b>GCS*</b>	<b>Total of SC School Dist.</b>
<b>Instructional</b>	<b>71.3%</b>	<b>68.9%</b>
Face-to-face teaching	53.4%	52.0%
Classroom materials	2.4%	3.1%
Instructional support**	15.5%	13.8%
<b>Operations</b>	<b>21.2%</b>	<b>22.4%</b>
Transportation, food & safety	9.4%	8.9%
Facility maintenance	8.9%	9.4%
Business services	2.9%	4.1%
<b>School Management</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>
<b>District Administration</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>
Program management	0.3%	1.1%
District management	0.6%	1.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\*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: 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

### **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 2016-17 school year 63% 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 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 2017-18, 90% was appropriated for this purpose. Lottery appropriations for K-12 education amounted to 5% of the total.

Less than 1% 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 equals the 2008 level.**

After accounting for inflation, total per pupil operating revenue for all South Carolina school districts in 2016 roughly equaled the 2008 amount. This includes revenue from all sources: state, local and federal.

In constant dollars per pupil local and federal funds for 2016 were 110% and 104% respectively of 2008 values. State per pupil funding was 91% of that year's.

Per the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, among the 50 states, South Carolina ranked 12<sup>th</sup> worst in the inflation-adjusted reduction in total state K-12 funding from 2008 to 2015. Over the same time period, South Carolina's inflation-adjusted reduction in combined local and state funding ranked 16<sup>th</sup> worst.

### **The 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 2015-16 the total school tax rate (operations and construction debt) in Greenville County was among the lowest in the state: 65<sup>th</sup> out of 81 school districts.

### **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.

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.

### **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.

### **Building money cannot be spent for operations.**

By state law funds for school construction 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 SC 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.

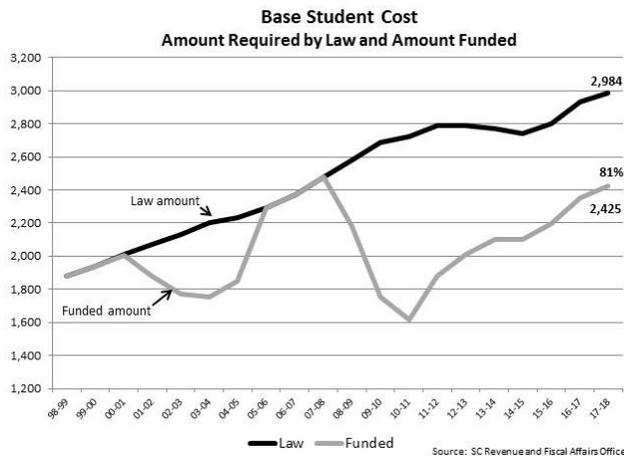
State government funds K-12 education in many ways. Over time the methods of funding have increased and become more complicated and less reliable.

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 (EIA)**
- **Reimbursements for local 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 ten 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 2017-18 state funding is 81% of what the law requires—a base student cost below the 2007-08 required level of funding.



### Education Improvement Act (EIA) revenue has grown steadily for the last seven 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 funding available for public education.

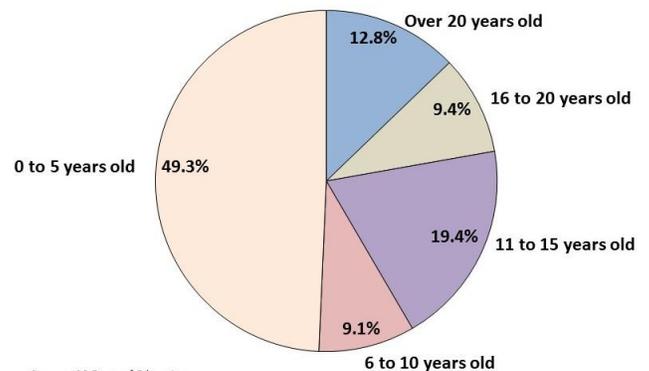
- Passed in 2006, Act 388 replaced stable, local property tax revenue for school operations with less stable, state sales tax income.
- Each year has seen a sales tax revenue shortfall. The cumulative deficit for the five years from FY13 to FY17 was over \$440 million. This gap must be made up from the 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.

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

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 2017-18 the legislature appropriated \$29.7 million for new buses—a \$6.4 million increase from the previous year.
- For the 2017-18 school year more than 20% of Greenville County Schools’ 351 regular-route buses are over 15 years old. In 2016-17 district buses averaged more than 6 breakdowns or failures to start per day.

Age of Greenville County Schools Bus Fleet  
March 2018



## 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 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 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 <sup>th</sup>	213	221	38 <sup>th</sup>
Reading – 8 <sup>th</sup>	260	265	36 <sup>th</sup>
Math – 4 <sup>th</sup>	234	239	34 <sup>th</sup>
Math – 8 <sup>th</sup>	275	282	39 <sup>th</sup>

### Third-grade reading – meet or exceed expectations: Greenville: 51% State: 42%

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 2017.

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

### 44% 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.

44% of high school juniors and seniors in Greenville County Schools in 2016-17 were enrolled in one or more AP or IB classes. Students in this group were successful on 59% of the AP and IB exams taken.

### Silver or above certificates on ACT WorkKeys Greenville: 65% State: 61%

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 67% of the jobs in the ACT database. Over 3,000 employers in the state recognize the certificates.

### High school graduation rate

**Greenville: 87% State: 85%**

The above 2017 graduation rates 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 twelve states 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 may take the test additional times.

For 2017 graduating seniors the average composite score for Greenville County Schools was 19.4. This is above the state public school average of 18.4. Among the seventeen “100%” states, South Carolina’s average composite score for all graduating seniors (public and private) ranked fifteenth.

### Greenville and state SAT scores above 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 previous years.

The percentage taking the test impacts scores. 49% of Greenville County Schools’ twelfth-grade students took the redesigned SAT. The participation rate for South Carolina public schools was 41%. A national rate is no longer published.

Below are the mean scores for 2017 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*	554	534	1088
State - public	539	518	1058
Nation - public	527	517	1044

\*ERW-Evidence-based reading and writing; GCS-Greenville Co. Schools