



2020

POLICY PRIORITIES



Public Education Partners
Greenville County



Mission

Public Education Partners has a simple mission: to lead our community in acting collectively to support, strengthen, and advance public education and student achievement in Greenville County Schools.

Vision

A Greenville County that shines as a model for how collective community engagement yields opportunity and success for all students in public education.

Staff

Catherine Schumacher, President & CEO

Angel Whaley, Vice President of Advancement

Qena Jennings, Program Director

Carol Beard, Program Associate

Lindsey Jacobs, Policy & Advocacy Director

Craig Stine, Senior Researcher

Michelle Rash, Community Organizer

Jonathan Dunagin, Communications Director

Patricia Robertson, Finance & Operations Director

Welcome

Dear friends,

It has been my privilege to support the work of Public Education Partners (PEP) since its founding in 1985. From inception, PEP has championed Greenville County Schools with a dogged commitment to improve early literacy outcomes, uplift our teachers, and support our students. Our community is better for the efforts of PEP.

After more than three decades of innovative, award-winning programming, PEP is broadening its focus to include public education policy development and advocacy work.

The timing of this shift is critical, as the General Assembly considers legislation that constitutes the most significant overhaul of public education in South Carolina since the 1980s. PEP's voice in this debate is compelling, representing a diverse set of Greenville County stakeholders that includes the business and faith communities, non-profits, and the largest school district in the state.

As South Carolinians, we have an opportunity to recommit ourselves to the promise of a quality public education for every child. I trust PEP to speak on behalf of our students, parents, teachers and schools and to root their recommendations in equity and evidence-based research, as they always have done.

I invite you to join me in learning more about PEP's 2020 legislative priorities and hope you will lift your voice in support of public education in Greenville County and throughout South Carolina.

Sincerely,



RICHARD W. RILEY

GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1979-1987

U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, 1993-2001





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POLICY PRIORITIES

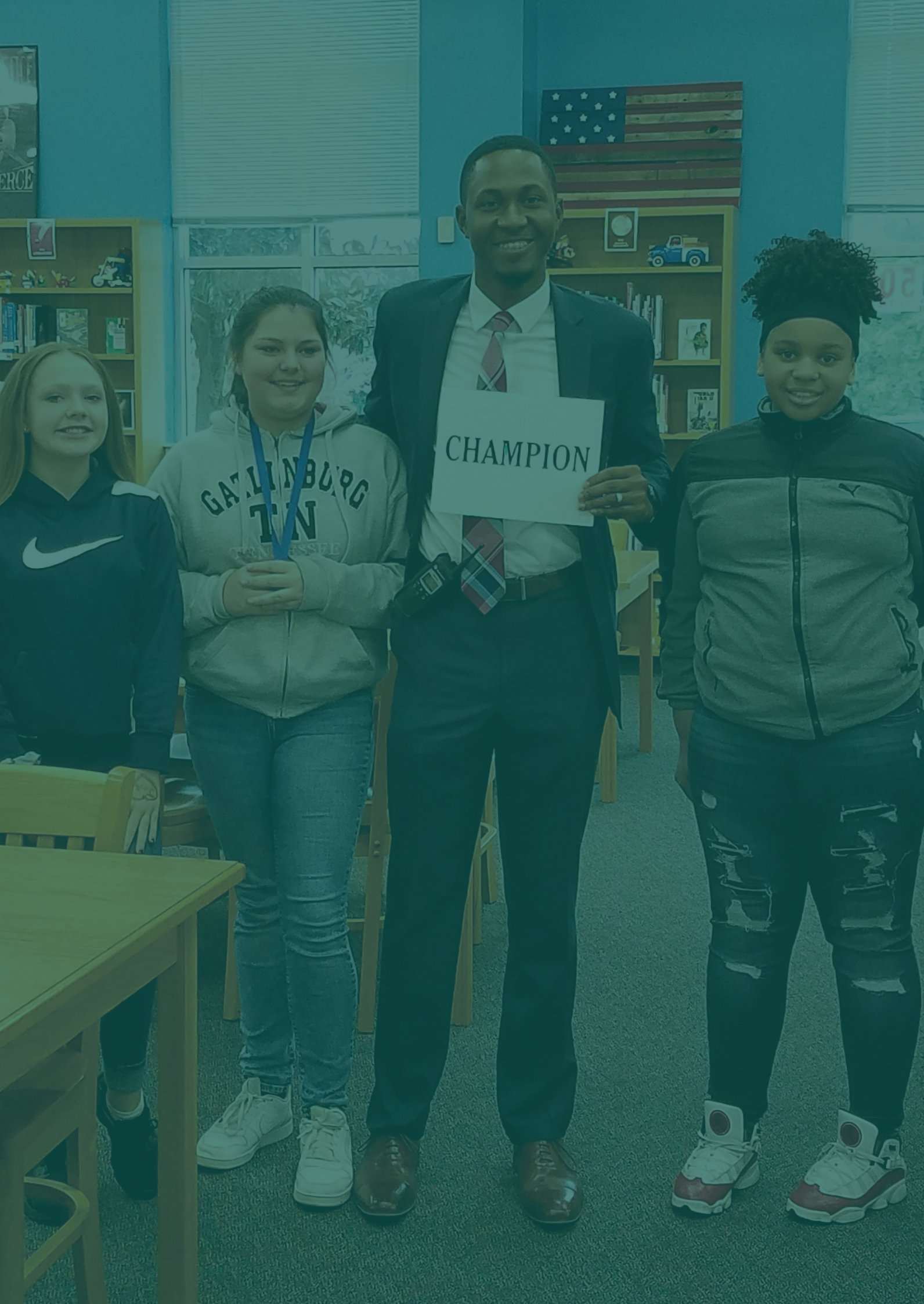
1. AS HIGHLY-EDUCATED, SKILLED PROFESSIONALS, **TEACHERS** DESERVE THE SAME RESPECT, TRUST, AND COMMUNITY STANDING AS SIMILARLY QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS.

2. EACH OF GREENVILLE COUNTY'S MORE THAN 76,000 **STUDENTS** DESERVES AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL AND LIFE, REGARDLESS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES FROM WHICH THEY HAIL.

3. TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ALIKE HAVE A RIGHT TO BE PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY **SAFE** IN THE CLASSROOM.

4. FULL AND EQUITABLE PUBLIC EDUCATION **FUNDING** IS REQUIRED IN ORDER FOR EVERY STUDENT TO REALIZE THEIR POTENTIAL AS SCHOLARS, IN THE WORKFORCE, AND AS CITIZENS.

5. AN ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD, ACCOUNTABLE TO ITS COMMUNITY, IS BEST-POSITIONED TO ORGANIZE AND **GOVERN** LOCAL SCHOOLS.



Priorities

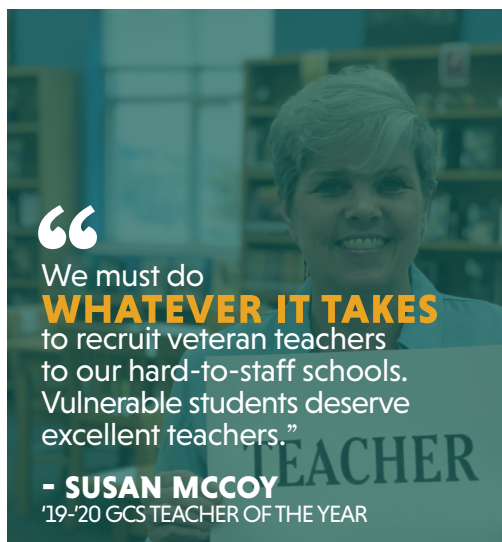
1. AS HIGHLY-EDUCATED, SKILLED PROFESSIONALS, **TEACHERS DESERVE THE SAME RESPECT, TRUST, AND COMMUNITY STANDING AS SIMILARLY QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS.**

A quality teacher in every classroom is the surest in-school way to improve educational outcomes. Nevertheless, a majority of Americans say they would not want their child to become a teacher. This sentiment is not lost on teachers, who often cite a lack of respect – as well as lower-than-average pay and high administrative burdens – as reasons for leaving the teaching profession. Turnover, coupled with a declining number of education graduates, is contributing to a teacher shortage that is only exacerbated by increasing demand.

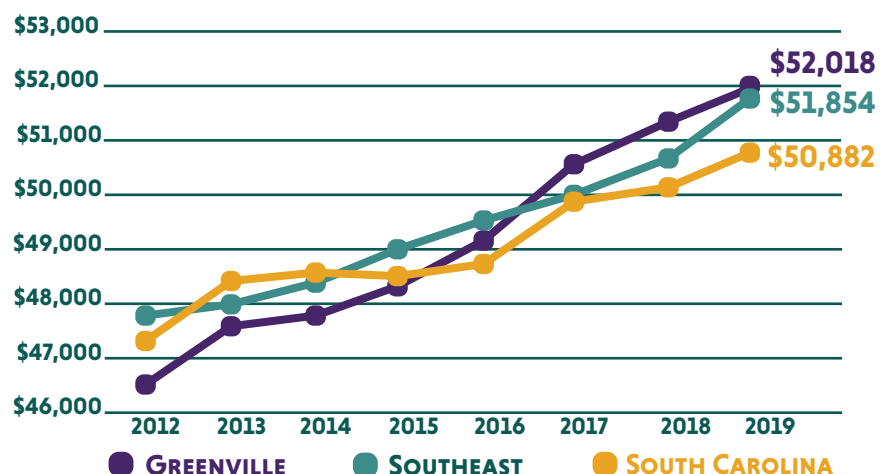
Greenville County is projected to add 222,000 additional residents by 2040; that growth translates to thousands of new children in Greenville County Schools (GCS) who deserve quality teachers in their classrooms. Responding to the teacher shortage requires action on wages and working conditions to improve morale, and a renewed focus on recruiting the next generation of quality teachers.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

- Increase teachers' salaries by 5% above the previous year's Southeastern average
- Provide financial assistance or subsidy for teachers to obtain advanced degrees
- Expand the South Carolina Teacher Loan program to include more teachers and provide forgiveness at higher rates
- Invest in locally-developed financial incentives for highly-qualified teachers who choose to work in hard-to-staff (e.g., Title I) schools
- Invest in supportive programming for teachers – mentorship, emotional support including on-site mental health counseling, and general wellness – with an initial focus on induction teachers and teachers in high-poverty and hard-to-staff schools



AVERAGE TEACHER SALARY





"Schools must take a preventive approach to discipline, including restorative practices. Failing to do so will result in a continued perpetuation of the school-to-prison pipeline, as well as increased equity gaps in academic success."

— **TJ RUMLER**

SOCIAL WORKER & TRAUMA INFORMED SPECIALIST
GREENVILLE COUNTY SCHOOLS

2. EACH OF GREENVILLE COUNTY'S MORE THAN 76,000 **STUDENTS** DESERVES AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL AND LIFE, REGARDLESS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES FROM WHICH THEY HAIL.

A paradigm shift is taking place where we reimagine schools as places not only of instruction and learning, but where children receive the social, emotional, and community support they need as well.

This starts with a quality teacher in every classroom and a focus on early learning, with a commitment to improving reading scores in grades K-3. Recognizing that teachers alone cannot address every need of every child, sustained investment in supportive services and helping professionals is also critical. Research tells us that students who feel safe and supported are better able to learn and less likely to drop out.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

- Amend the Read to Succeed Act to expand reading intervention to grades K-3 and fully fund the costs of employing reading coaches
- Create a Cabinet-level position to manage statewide early childhood programs & initiatives
- Pass legislation to incentivize the development of housing options that are affordable for teachers and students' families in Greenville County
- Pass H.3404, legislation that would allow DACA recipients to receive in-state tuition and public scholarships to state colleges and universities, and allow for professional licensure
- Invest in supportive, wraparound services – including counselors, social workers, and trauma-informed training for administrators, teachers, and support personnel

1,106 STUDENTS
IN GREENVILLE COUNTY SCHOOLS
ARE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS
— **GREENVILLE HOMELESS ALLIANCE**



THE AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

RECOMMENDS ONE SCHOOL COUNSELOR FOR EVERY 250 STUDENTS. GREENVILLE COUNTY SCHOOLS HAS BUDGETED TO MEET THE 250:1 RATIO IN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS.



3. TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ALIKE HAVE A RIGHT TO BE PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY **SAFE** IN THE CLASSROOM.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

There is no question that school safety is top of mind for teachers and parents alike. There is a dual need to invest in both the physical safety of our schools and mental health supports for our students and teachers.

There is also an urgent need to shift discipline and conflict resolution practices toward a restorative justice framework. Teachers, school and administrative leaders, parents, and community members would benefit from ongoing training about restorative practices.

- Oppose any effort to arm school employees, including teachers, with the exception of School Resource Officers
- Promote responsible gun ownership by passing universal background checks and closing the "Charleston loophole"
- Invest in supportive services and training on restorative justice practices for administrators, teachers, and support personnel
- Improve Dept. of Mental Health employee pay, as GCS relies on DMH staff to provide critical mental health services to students

4. FULL AND EQUITABLE PUBLIC EDUCATION **FUNDING** IS REQUIRED IN ORDER FOR EVERY STUDENT TO REALIZE THEIR POTENTIAL AS SCHOLARS, IN THE WORKFORCE, AND AS CITIZENS.

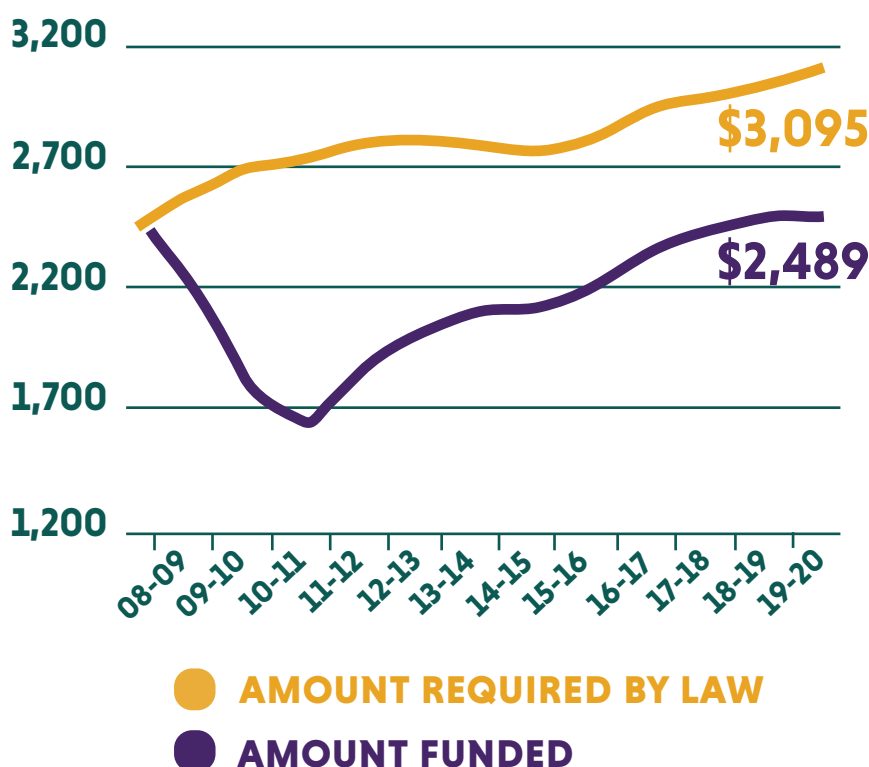
The time has come for comprehensive public education funding reform, as our current statewide funding scheme is overcomplicated and insufficient.

In order for every student to achieve their full potential, any reform of our current public school finance system must: (1) include weightings that right inequities in opportunity between children and contemplate supportive services; (2) provide adequate and consistent funding for our district's operational needs; and (3) ensure that districts are "held harmless" for a statutorily-mandated period of time if they lose state funds under the new funding scheme.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

- Accomplish comprehensive education funding reform
- Oppose the diversion of public funds to private entities through the use of any voucher program, including tuition tax credits and education scholarship accounts
- Ensure that school districts are active participants in county and municipality economic development negotiations, including the designation of multi-county industrial and commercial parks
- The General Assembly must fully fund all state-mandated programs or requirements

BASE STUDENT COST



ESTIMATED LOSS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING IN 2021-22 SCHOOL YEAR DUE TO PROPOSED VOUCHER PROGRAM (\$556)

=
\$457,169,000

Vouchers, including Education Scholarship Accounts, reallocate taxpayer dollars for private educational spending with little accountability or oversight.



"It is a privilege to be selected by my neighbors, church parishioners, and business colleagues to represent their interests on the School Board. Whenever possible, locally elected School Board members should be the final decider on education actions impacting our students and their families."

— **DEREK LEWIS**

GREENVILLE COUNTY SCHOOLS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

5. AN ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD, ACCOUNTABLE TO ITS COMMUNITY, IS BEST-POSITIONED TO ORGANIZE AND **GOVERN** LOCAL SCHOOLS.



Local communities best understand the needs of their schools, teachers, and children; as such, locally-developed solutions to their challenges should take precedence. School board members, empowered by their constituents, should have the autonomy and flexibility to innovate and adapt.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

- Eliminate the Education Oversight Committee, and maintain the elimination of the Special Council on Revitalizing Education in S.419
- Allow school boards to create multiple schools of innovation, as currently provided for in both S.419 and H.3759
- Provide districts with the flexibility of setting their own school year start date
- Allow districts to opt-out of testing mandated by the state but not by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act



AD•VO•CATE

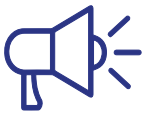
n. one who advocates / v. 1 to raise awareness about an issue that matters to you / v. 2 to take action to affect positive change around that issue



GET INFORMED BY SIGNING UP FOR ADVOCACY ALERTS, VISITING [INFORMEDSC.ORG](https://www.informedsc.org), AND SCHEDULING A ONE-ON-ONE WITH A MEMBER OF PEP'S POLICY AND ADVOCACY TEAM.



GET PERSONAL WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVES BY GIVING THEM A CALL, SENDING AN E-MAIL, OR MEETING WITH THEM IN-PERSON AND ASKING THEM TO SUPPORT GREENVILLE COUNTY'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS, STUDENTS, AND TEACHERS.



GET BUSY ADVANCING GOOD PUBLIC EDUCATION POLICY. SHARE THE REASONS YOU'RE A PUBLIC EDUCATION CHAMPION ON SOCIAL MEDIA. SUBMIT AN OP-ED TO YOUR LOCAL PAPER. JOIN THE #PEPADVOCACY COMMUNITY AT ONE OF OUR QUARTERLY EDTALKS. VOTE IN EVERY LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL ELECTION TO ENSURE THAT PUBLIC EDUCATION IS ALWAYS ON THE BALLOT.



InformEdsc.org is PEP's interactive, eLearning website on K-12 public education in Greenville County and South Carolina. Data is presented with the purpose of creating more informed citizens and elected representatives. These influencers can use this information to 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.

\$40,013

1ST-YEAR TEACHER
SALARY IN GCS

\$52,018

AVG GCS TEACHER
SALARY 18-19

44th

LARGEST SCHOOL
DISTRICT IN U.S.

54.5%

STUDENTS EXPERIENCING
POVERTY IN GCS 18-19



Public Education Partners

Greenville County

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