



2015-16 Collaborative Agenda for PreK-12 Public Education

— SOUTH CAROLINA —

Building a smart, comprehensive public education system through effective policy to develop students who are college and career ready and prepared to become fully engaged, productive citizens



Ensuring South Carolina’s Children Succeed

Seven statewide organizations came together to create this Agenda for PreK-12 Public Education. The South Carolina Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the South Carolina School Boards Association, the League of Women Voters of South Carolina, the South Carolina Association of School Administrators, The South Carolina Education Association, the Palmetto State Teachers Association and the South Carolina Parent Teacher Association worked throughout the 2014-2015 year to create this agenda which will be used by policy makers and advocates during the 2015-2016 legislative session to guide and help determine legislative priorities

and initiatives for PreK-12 public education.

Participating organizations approached this task from a framework of the well-being of the whole child: addressing concerns about achievement gaps, racial, ethnic, geographic, and economic disparities and inequities; teacher quality, recruitment, retention, evaluation, and compensation; the importance and role of early childhood education, and the role of public school choice in creating rigorous and diverse educational options for parents and children.

The 2015-16 Collaborative Agenda for PreK-12 Public Education was created using the framework of the 2015 Early Childhood Common Agenda for South Carolina, a comprehensive vision for early childhood representing more than 30 organizations statewide.

South Carolina national rank in child well-being

42nd

According to the KIDS COUNT Data Book 2015, published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, South Carolina ranks 42nd in the nation in child well-being. Education is an important indicator of well-being together with economics, health, family, and community. The data snapshot below looks at the challenges faced by schools, districts, and our state policy makers in addressing the challenges to educational attainment.

	National	South Carolina
Children not attending pre-school	54%	59%
4th graders not proficient in reading	66%	72%
8th graders not proficient in math	66%	69%
High school students not graduating in 4 years	19%	28%
Per pupil expenditures	11,732	10, 141
Average beginning teacher salary	36,141	32,306

United in support of South Carolina's students (PreK-12), their families, teachers, administrators, schools, and districts; advocates of the 2015-2016 Collaborative Agenda for PreK-12 Public Education propose the following framework for building a smart, comprehensive, public education system through effective policy to develop students who meet the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate, are college and career ready, and prepared to become fully engaged, productive citizens. We urge our elected leaders and policy makers to consider this agenda as decisions are made to advance policies impacting public schools, educators, students, and their families in order to create a brighter future for the children of South Carolina.

Quality Early Care and Education

Research has consistently shown that high quality early childhood education contributes significantly to later success in school, particularly for children identified as at-risk of school failure. Programs must support teachers, parents and caregivers to provide positive, literacy rich, and safe, environments providing young children with the educational and developmental experiences they need for future success.

Recommendations:

- We support investing the appropriate resources for a comprehensive early childhood system to include universal 4K, parent support programs, early identification of at-risk students, and wrap-around services to at risk children ages 0-3.

School Choice

We understand that all children learn differently and that personalized learning and opportunities for students to explore individual interests through specialized education is a social good.

Recommendations:

- We fully support school choice within the public school system, through public charter schools, magnet schools, and other public school choice options. We oppose any use of public funds for tuition tax credits, vouchers, tax deductions for donations to scholarship granting organizations, home school tax credits, or any legislation that has the effect of taking taxpayers money to support private, religious, or homeschooling, to support private, religious, or homeschooling.

Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Compensation

Research consistently indicates that the teacher is an important variable in ensuring a child's success in school. High quality, effective teachers make a positive difference in students' achievement. We are currently suffering a severe teacher shortage in South Carolina which, without intervention, will get worse as more baby boomers retire. We must actively address this problem in order to close achievement gaps, erase inequities, and raise student achievement statewide.

Recommendations:

- To recruit and retain the best teachers, South Carolina must raise and fund the beginning teachers salary to the national average. Salaries must be competitive with other professions to attract our best and brightest college graduates into teaching. We support additional compensation for teachers who assume leadership roles such as coaching or mentoring colleagues. No experienced teacher should make less annually due to maxing out the salary schedule and increases in medical insurance employee costs, as is currently occurring.

Educator Evaluation

All school districts need a fair and comprehensive teacher and administrator evaluation system which assures that all educators are evaluated and supported on a regular basis according to clearly defined and widely accepted standards. Such an evaluation system must provide feedback to educators to help them develop skills. It must be reliable and valid to support personnel employment decisions. All evaluators must be highly trained. Finally the quality of the system should be uniform statewide. All these efforts will help improve teacher retention and educational outcomes.





Recommendations:

- The state and local school districts should implement a fair and comprehensive system of educator evaluation which assures that all licensed educators are evaluated on a regular basis; includes at least three or more qualitative rating categories (not letter grades); uses clearly defined, widely accepted standards and multiple data points; uses educators in developing and implementing the evaluation system; provides feedback to educators to help them develop skills; forms the basis for professional development; supports decisions for retention, dismissal, and assignment; uses highly trained, reliable evaluators, and is fully funded statewide.

School Funding

We know that stable, sufficient, and equitable funding for all public schools is essential in providing an excellent school system for our children. It should never be the case in South Carolina, as it is now, that a child's zip code determines the quality of their education.

Recommendations:

- We support a comprehensive approach to tax reform by the General Assembly which corrects funding inequities created by variances in school districts' revenue generating capabilities. We support restructuring and stabilizing of educational funding and full funding of the base student cost as required by the Education Finance Act, which will create a much greater return on investment in the future of South Carolina. We strongly urge the legislature not to pass any unfunded legislative mandates.

Supporting a rigorous, excellent system of public education yields long term returns on investment by producing graduates who are ready to assume lifelong roles as productive and engaged citizens, prepared for the jobs of the 21st century, and prepared to make South Carolina a national and international leader. We urge our thought leaders and policy makers to work towards implementing these recommendations as rapidly as possible to achieve this goal.

Sources

The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2015). 2015 Data Book: State trends in child well-being. <http://aacf.org/resources/the-2015-kids-count-data-book>
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