



BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS IN EDUCATION FACT SHEET

South Carolina ranks 24th in per pupil spending, yet we are last in many measures of student achievement. The time has come to have a serious discussion about how we comprehensively reform our education system. Fundamental to this discussion is how we best ensure that more funds are spent in the classroom and that money is not wasted on administration, excessive testing, and duplicative bureaucracies. These factors, among others, contributed to the creation of the S.C. *Career Opportunity and Access for All Act* (H.3759).

When this bill was filed, it was intended to be the starting point for transformative and bold changes in our education system. We are using every opportunity to solicit input from teachers, parents, and students. While we continue to receive helpful input, suggestions, and critiques, we also have been denounced by the usual group of detractors who year after year mount the defense of the status quo. These criticisms largely have no basis in reality. This bill challenges the status quo in a way the status quo hasn't been challenged in decades.

This document lays out the facts and responds directly to the misleading and inaccurate statements being used by those who are fighting against reform.

CLAIM: This bill will abolish the teacher salary schedule and move to a “merit-pay” system.

FACT: This is false. All teachers will get a raise. The base starting teacher pay will increase to \$35,000. All other teachers will receive a raise that will bring them above the Southeastern average with a goal of moving teacher pay to the national average within 5 years. Last year, 35% of teachers did not return to the same position. Teachers need more pay and need to be given a reason to stay in the classroom. The State Department of Education will study and make a recommendation regarding career pay bands, a system used by a majority of states.

CLAIM: This bill will add a 3rd education oversight committee.

FACT: This is false. The Zero-to-Twenty Committee is a unique group of individuals – not bureaucrats – who will monitor our education system from pre-Kindergarten to post-graduation and make suggestions to the General Assembly on how to improve the education-to-workforce pipeline. This committee will have no oversight powers.

CLAIM: This bill will add more tests that will take up teaching time.

FACT: This is false. In fact, this bill will eliminate 4 statewide tests: the 8th grade science test, the 5th and the 7th grade social studies tests, and the U.S. History end-of-course test. Doing away with these tests will save an estimated \$3.1 million and allow more time for classroom instruction.

CLAIM: This bill will add requirements to the Read to Succeed program.

FACT: This is true. There are checkpoints to monitor student progress at the most critical development points of Kindergarten through 3rd grade. Last year, 54.3% of 3rd graders could not read on grade level and 23.2% of these students needed substantial academic support to be prepared for 4th grade. Children need to learn to read so they can read to learn. The bill requires proven screening assessments to be used for those students needing extra assistance with reading before the 4th grade and eliminates the ineffective parts of the Read to Succeed program. This diagnostic tool is used only for those students having significant reading difficulties.

CLAIM: This bill will take control away from local school districts and consolidate them all.

FACT: This is mostly false. This bill only proposes consolidating districts with less than 1,000 students, districts that chronically underperform*, or districts identified by the Superintendent of Education for possible consolidation in order to improve efficiency. It's time to focus on students and classrooms and streamline administrative duties in order to be more efficient with spending. One South Carolina school district spends \$3.1 million on operating expenses and \$1.8 million on the school board, school administrators, and principals, but only serves 711 students.

CLAIM: This bill will require school board members to adhere to new requirements.

FACT: This is true. Schools, school districts, AND school boards must be held to a higher standard. School board members should be required to adopt and follow a code of ethics and be held accountable to make their schools better. Additionally, school boards in underperforming districts must work with the State Department of Education to develop a plan to improve school performance. Nepotism and misuse of funds must stop.

CLAIM: This bill will allow schools to hire non-certified teachers.

FACT: This is true. Only high-performing schools will be allowed to hire instructors to bring real-world experience to the classroom. No more than 25% of a school's faculty in these high-performing schools can be made up of these teachers.

CLAIM: This bill will fire all teachers and principals.

FACT: This is false. This bill allows the elected State Superintendent of Education to remove a principal or teacher as a last resort if, after intensive assistance, a school has chronically underperformed for 3 of the last 4 years. Any teacher or principal can be hired back at the discretion of the State Superintendent of Education.

CLAIM: This bill requires schools to teach a computer science course.

FACT: This is true. It is time to modernize the curriculum to meet the needs of a 21st century economy. High schools will now offer at least one computer science course. The course may be taught in a traditional classroom setting, on-line, or through dual enrollment.

CLAIM: Chronically Underperforming schools will be closed.

FACT: This is true. If a school performs as "unsatisfactory" for 3 out of 4 consecutive years, radical changes need to happen in order to correct the path. There are several options the State Department of Education can use to deal with chronically underperforming schools including, but not limited to: placing the school in a state Transformation School District * or sending students to a different school within the district.

The following beliefs and principles were the guide to the construction of the S.C. Career Opportunity and Access for All Act:

- Our students deserve bold, transformative changes for a 21st Century education.
- Being ranked last nationally is unacceptable and striving for “minimally adequate” is a disservice to our students.
- There is no correlation between getting better results and simply spending more money.
- Reading at grade level by the end of the 3rd grade should be a primary goal of every effort to make our schools better.
- Investing in teachers and freeing teachers from the cumbersome burdens imposed on them is the first step toward better student performance.

The motivation is simple – we have a duty to students, parents, and taxpayers to provide our students with a quality education that prepares them with the skills they need to succeed. Currently, there are 67,595 job openings in our state, but we do not have the skilled workforce to fill them. Last year, 32% of 11th graders in South Carolina were not prepared for an entry-level job. This is unacceptable. We must do better. We owe our students more.

**Chronically Underperforming School* is a school that has received an overall rating of unsatisfactory for 3 out of 4 years according to the State Department of Education.

**Transformation School District* is established as part of the State Department of Education to operate and manage unsatisfactory schools. The State Superintendent shall hire an individual, government entity, or non-profit entity to manage the district's schools.

10 More Facts about South Carolina Education

- **Only 36%** of Kindergarten students entered our public schools “ready to learn” in the fall of 2017.
- **13,897 (23.2%) of our 3rd graders scored “does not meet expectations”** on S.C. Ready English/Language Arts in 2018. These are students who need substantial academic support to be prepared for the next grade level because they do not have the necessary reading skills to be successful. Only 354 of these 3rd graders were retained at the end of the 2017-18 school year.
- **Only 34%** of students in 3rd through 8th grades meet or exceed expectations in Math and English/Language Arts on S.C. Ready. This means only one out of three students are on the path to be college and career ready in Reading and Math.
- According to the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exam, S.C.’s ranking in 4th grade Reading dropped to 47th nationally in 2017 (39th in 2015). This was the 2nd largest decline in the nation.
- **Only 22%** of high school students are college ready, meeting 3 of the 4 college readiness benchmarks of English, Reading, Math, and Science in 2018 on the ACT (100% participation).
- Only **5%** of African American students, **33%** of White students, and **16%** of Hispanic students met 3 or more college readiness benchmarks in English, Reading, Math and Science.
- **In the past decade, South Carolina has declined** in Mathematics achievement on NAEP in 4th and 8th grades. In 2017 in 4th grade Math, S.C. ranked 43rd in the nation. In 8th grade Math, S.C. ranked 44th in the nation.
- According to career readiness assessment results, **one in three 11th graders are not ready for an entry-level job** based on their Math and Reading skills at the end of the 2017-18 school year.
- There are currently **67,595 job openings** in South Carolina.
- The South Carolina teacher shortage has reached a crisis level **with 7,300 teachers not returning to their positions** for the 2018-19 school year. 5,300 of those teachers completely left the S.C. public school system.