



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

November 7, 2019

The Honorable Joseph H. Jefferson, Jr.
Chairman, Education and Cultural Affairs Subcommittee
Post Office Box 11867
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

Via Email

Dear Representative Jefferson:

Please find below responses to inquires made in your follow-up letter dated October 24, 2019.

Department of Education:

1. Please compare and contrast the agency's current vision statement with its prior one.

Current: All students graduate prepared for success in college, careers, and citizenship. By 2022, districts will have available a system of personalized and digital learning that supports students in a safe learning environment to meet the [Profile of the South Carolina Graduate](#).

Former: All students graduate prepared for success in college, careers, and citizenship. By 2018, at least one school in every district will have implemented personalized learning that supports students' meeting the [Profile of the South Carolina Graduate](#).

2. What rankings, if any, do you consider instructive as the leader of the Department of Education?

While they are not ranked, the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) are widely recognized as the best apples to apples comparison of student academic progress across the country.

U.S. News and World Report ranks states on a number of factors including education. Included in their education ranking methodology are:

- percentages of adults with associate degrees or higher,

- rates of students completing public four-year and two-year college programs within 150 percent of the normal time,
- average tuition and fees for in-state students at public institutions,
- average debt load of graduates from public and private colleges,
- percentages of children enrolled in preschool,
- NAEP reading and math scores,
- graduation rates, and
- scores on college entrance exams.

3. Please explain why you consider these rankings useful.

There are a myriad of for and non-profit companies that rank schools, districts, and states on a variety of factors that relate to the company's work. These rankings rarely take into account differences in state policies, laws, poverty, funding, and other factors that can widely swing results. For this reason, the Department of Education, like many other state education agencies, does not put a lot of merit into these rankings. Instead, we rely on the results of commensurable rankings, programs, and studies such as the NAEP and the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count.

4. Please compare the salary for South Carolina's Superintendent of Education with your counterparts in North Carolina and Georgia.

- South Carolina: \$92,007
- Georgia: \$123,270
- North Carolina: \$127,561

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/superintendent-salaries-how-much-do-they-make.html>

5. Please provide copies of African American calendars published in prior years by the Department of Education.

For downloadable copies of all African American calendars published in prior years, please visit: <https://www.scafricanamerican.com/>.

School Districts

6. What types of federal funding, if any, could school districts that opt to consolidate potentially lose?

Federal laws and regulations govern how states must calculate subgrants, particularly for funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (now known as the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In these calculation methodologies, poverty ratings of schools and districts must be included. Dependent on if, and how much, a school or district's poverty rating changes, the school or district may see changed amounts in the federal subgrants made by the Department. As the poverty rates are unique for the school and district, the amounts may vary. However, as for the Title grants, it does not appear changes will be significant. Additionally, in reference to Perkins funds, all funding would be

combined for the consolidating districts. These districts would not lose Perkins funding due to consolidation, they would either be funded at the same amount or more based on their numbers.

7. Please list how much each school district supplements the salary of school bus drivers.

The Department does not control how much each school district may choose to supplement the salary of school bus drivers. However, the Department's Office of Transportation conducted a survey to show the starting salary within the districts as well as the maximum salary. This survey was completed on August 23, 2019, and is attached for your reference. Also attached is the Fiscal Year 2020 driver pay scale guideline.

Additionally, the Department has requested additional funds for an increase of driver salary in our Fiscal Year 2021 budget request. The language below is reflective of this request.

"The requested funds would be used for reimbursement to local school districts of expenses to manage and sustain qualified professional bus drivers. The current funding received does not meet the needs of our local school districts to maintain trained and available drivers. School districts across the state are dealing with a bus driver shortage which increases student ride time and increases the time a student spends at a bus stop. This funding increase would allow districts to offer a more competitive pay scale. The operating funds are essential to meet the needs of our school districts across the state to provide safe timely transportation for the students of South Carolina.

This will help to reduce turnover of bus drivers and decrease down time due to lack of drivers. Also To provide consistent timely transportation for the students of South Carolina, reduce exposure to possible extended road side wait time, and extended ride times.

Current pay scale guideline per hour is \$7.85 if we raise this by 4% ($7.85 \times .04 = \$8.16$)

We are currently appropriated \$56,611,213. With the 4% increase we will need to request \$3,591,491 for driver salary."

8. Please list which school districts are unable to fill a school resource officer position due to a shortage of law enforcement officers.

While the Department is unable to determine which districts have difficulty filling school resource officer positions due to a shortage in law enforcement officers specifically, attached you will find a spreadsheet that contains data regarding how many schools within each district are without school resource officers.

9. Please describe the ways in which the Department of Education is seeking to improve communication with local school district superintendents, principals, and teachers.

Currently, we distribute memorandums to various audiences via email and postings on our website once they have passed internal approval controls. This can lead to multiple memos being sent out within one day, which can be confusing and overwhelming for schools and districts. The

new format will see all memos approved the previous Thursday go out the following Tuesday. This will allow us to send a single communication each week while still differentiating by subject and audience. The agency has also developed an internal tool that districts can use to update contact information for nearly every subject and operation area assuring that communications are not only concise but being delivered to the most appropriate staff.

Parents

10. Please provide a copy of the letter sent to parents during the 2018-2019 school year about students taking the SAT.

Rather than send parents a letter from the state level, the Department provided districts a template to distribute to parents. Districts were allowed to edit to add the district seal and additional questions or information, but were not allowed to remove any of the text provided. Districts keep the completed forms on file at the district or school. Attached you will find a copy of the template provided to districts. Note that we are currently revising the template to provide better guidance and offer a more readable format.

11. What are some of the common requests for assistance from parents made to the agency's ombudsmen?

The mission of the SC Department of Education Ombudsman is to assist parents, students, and constituents, resolve school-related problems for students enrolled in grades K–12 in South Carolina's public school system. The objectives are to provide information and counsel which may involve rights and available options, applicable state laws and regulations and procedural guidelines to follow when filing a complaint.

Attached you will find a "Frequently Asked Questions" of the Ombudsman that is posted to the Department website and updated annually.

12. What changes, if any, have been implemented by the agency based upon parent requests for assistance made to the agency's ombudsmen?

Based upon feedback and requests, the Department has implemented various additional measures to ensure all constituents questions and concerns are addressed. Examples of these additional measures include adding an Ombudsman who specializes in Special Education Services and introducing an online parent/constituent complaint form. With the online parent/constituent complaint form, the Department's goal is to respond within a 24 hour period, unless a further investigation of the issue may be required.

State Board of Education

13. What training, if any, do State Board of Education members receive?

Although the Department has provided new board orientation in the past, typically it is only provided when a large class of new members comes through. In the last two years, members have been appointed outside of the usual set schedule and thus, new members have been added one or two at a time.

November 7, 2019

14. How long has the State Board of Education used a consent agenda format?

The consent agenda has been in place for the State Board of Education since February 2009.

15. Are you aware of any complaints by State Board of Education members about the use of a consent agenda format?

No, there have been no complaints regarding the consent agenda format since its inception.

If the Department can provide any further assistance or detail, please feel free to let us know. We look forward to continue working with the Legislative Oversight Committee throughout this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Molly M. Spearman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Molly M. Spearman
State Superintendent of Education

MMS/kmn

Enclosures



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents
School District Business Officials
School District Transportation Officials
Area and County Supervisors

FROM: Richard Podmore
Director of Safety and Information, Office of Transportation

DATE: July 17, 2019

RE: 2019-2020 School Year South Carolina School Bus Driver Wage Scale Guideline

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) presents this pay scale as a guide to help districts in determining local school bus driver wages for the 2019-2020 school year.

Years of Experience	2019-2020 DRIVER PAY SCALE	Years of Experience	2019-2020 DRIVER PAY SCALE
0	\$7.85	12	\$9.50
1	\$7.87	13	\$9.68
2	\$7.89	14	\$9.86
3	\$7.92	15	\$10.06
4	\$8.09	16	\$10.27
5	\$8.23	17	\$10.47
6	\$8.40	18	\$10.68
7	\$8.58	19	\$10.90
8	\$8.77	20	\$11.11
9	\$8.95	21	\$11.33
10	\$9.13	22+	\$11.55
11	\$9.31		

As of July 1, 2010, one year of experience is equal to performing the duties of an SCDE-certified school bus driver for at least 152 days in a single school year, including summer school.

STATEWIDE DRIVERS SALARY SURVEY

8/23/2019

Timestamp	School Bus Shop	District	Starting Salary (Minimum) State + District	Maximum Salary (Top of current scale) State + District
8/19/2019 13:55:20	Abbeville	Abbeville 60	\$11.70	\$16.42
8/19/2019 12:42:24	Johnston	Aiken	\$13.27	\$21.33
8/19/2019 13:15:21	Brunson	Allendale	\$10.95	\$14.37
8/19/2019 14:48:38	Anderson	Anderson 1	\$12.36	\$17.18
8/20/2019 7:31:19	Anderson	Anderson 2	\$12.71	\$16.42
8/19/2019 13:52:06	Abbeville	Anderson 3	\$11.72	\$19.80
8/20/2019 7:44:52	Anderson	Anderson 4	\$12.69	\$17.02
8/19/2019 13:30:36	Anderson	Anderson 5	\$13.26	\$18.89
8/20/2019 9:23:52	Orangeburg	Bamburg 1	\$8.85	\$13.35
8/21/2019 11:14:15	Orangeburg	Bamburg 2	\$8.65	\$12.35
8/20/2019 12:19:49	Orangeburg	Barnwell 19	\$9.97	\$13.92
8/19/2019 13:15:42	Brunson	Barnwell 45	\$9.14	\$14.01
8/20/2019 12:50:07	Beaufort	Beaufort	\$13.55	\$22.50
8/20/2019 19:47:42	Berkeley	Berkeley	\$14.79	\$25.25
8/19/2019 10:37:08	Calhoun	Calhoun	\$10.25	\$14.87
8/20/2019 13:06:27	Charleston	Charleston	\$15.00	\$21.00
8/20/2019 12:12:36	Cherokee	Cherokee	\$11.91	\$16.79
8/21/2019 16:17:49	Chester	Chester	\$15.77	\$19.76
8/19/2019 10:15:36	Chesterfield	Chesterfield	\$9.89	\$14.00
8/21/2019 6:57:19	Sumter	Clarendon 1	\$11.00	\$17.00
8/19/2019 14:01:26	Sumter	Clarendon 2	\$10.82	\$16.34
8/19/2019 13:21:21	Colleton	Colleton	\$13.50	\$18.50
8/19/2019 10:51:53	Darlington	Darlington	\$11.98	\$17.27
8/20/2019 9:19:23	Latta	Dillon 3	\$10.20	\$13.82
8/20/2019 9:20:14	Latta	Dillon 4	\$10.25	\$14.32
8/19/2019 10:23:33	Dorchester	Dorchester 4	\$12.16	\$16.90
8/19/2019 12:41:25	Johnston	Edgefield	\$12.34	\$15.57
8/19/2019 14:09:54	Fairfield	Fairfield	\$12.71	\$17.66
8/20/2019 8:30:30	Florence	Florence 1	\$12.06	\$17.16
8/20/2019 8:31:15	Florence	Florence 2	\$11.79	\$13.77
8/20/2019 8:31:36	Florence	Florence 4	\$11.49	\$16.34
8/20/2019 8:31:57	Florence	Florence 5	\$9.62	\$14.08
8/19/2019 14:32:55	Georgetown	Georgetown	\$13.53	\$18.87
8/19/2019 15:27:58	Joe Madden	Greenville	\$15.21	\$19.06
8/20/2019 10:15:17	Greenwood	Greenwood 50	\$13.33	\$20.92
8/19/2019 14:56:51	Greenwood	Greenwood 51	\$12.19	\$15.91
8/20/2019 10:15:47	Greenwood	Greenwood 51	\$12.19	\$15.91

STATEWIDE DRIVERS SALARY SURVEY

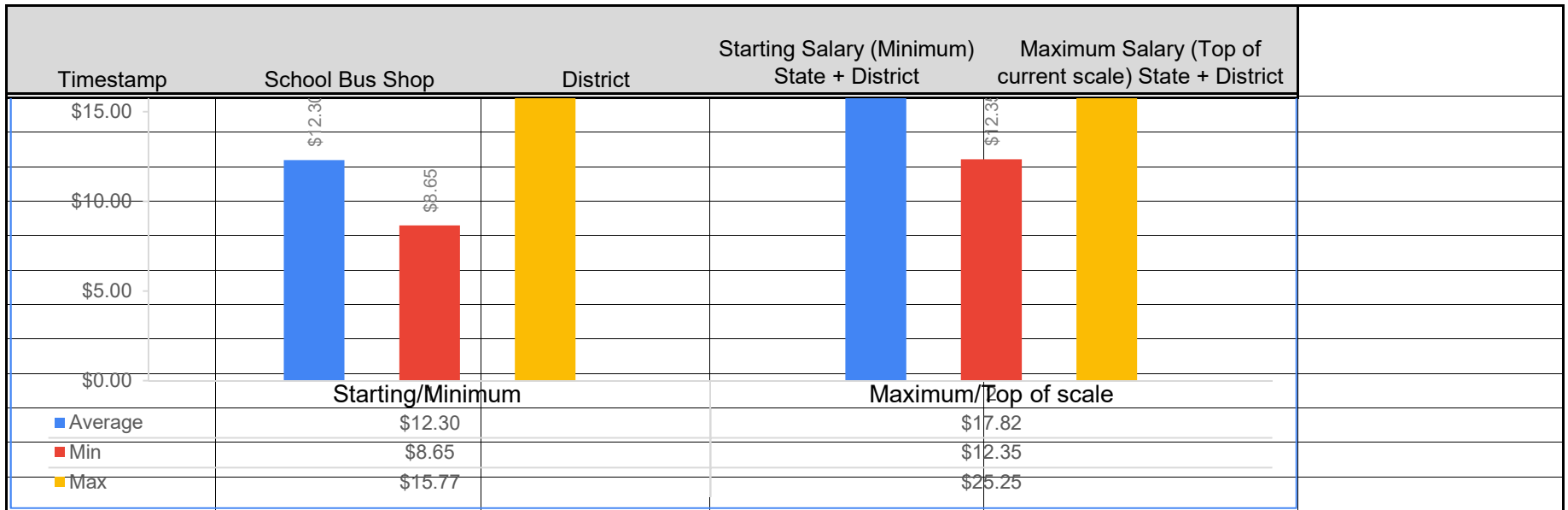
8/23/2019

Timestamp	School Bus Shop	District	Starting Salary (Minimum) State + District	Maximum Salary (Top of current scale) State + District
8/20/2019 13:19:29	Greenwood	Greenwood 52	\$11.85	\$15.55
8/19/2019 13:16:01	Brunson	Hampton 1	\$12.09	\$17.27
8/19/2019 13:16:22	Brunson	Hampton 2	\$11.73	\$15.42
8/19/2019 11:00:20	Horry	Horry	\$13.00	\$20.48
8/19/2019 10:21:19	Socastee	Horry	\$13.00	\$20.48
8/20/2019 13:03:56	Beaufort	Jasper	\$11.47	\$15.45
8/20/2019 9:23:57	Kershaw	Kershaw	\$13.11	\$19.71
8/19/2019 11:07:12	Lancaster	Lancaster	\$13.73	\$17.88
8/20/2019 10:16:20	Laurens	Laurens 55	\$11.26	\$14.90
8/20/2019 11:30:55	Laurens	Laurens 56	\$10.76	\$14.24
8/19/2019 13:48:45	Kershaw	Lee	\$10.52	\$16.28
8/20/2019 15:41:03	Lexington	Lexington 1	\$14.05	\$21.30
8/20/2019 15:42:32	Lexington	Lexington 2	\$14.12	\$24.09
8/19/2019 12:42:59	Johnston	Lexington 3	\$12.11	\$19.82
8/19/2019 10:34:37	Calhoun	Lexington 4	\$13.75	\$20.57
8/19/2019 14:10:57	Fairfield	Lexington/Richland 5	\$14.04	\$20.05
8/20/2019 9:21:06	Latta	Marion	\$10.15	\$14.67
8/20/2019 8:45:52	Marlboro	Marlboro	\$11.46	\$15.91
8/19/2019 11:28:38	Abbeville	McCormick	\$13.62	\$19.53
8/19/2019 14:10:26	Newberry	Newberry	\$11.78	\$16.59
8/20/2019 8:30:24	Oconee	Oconee	\$12.48	\$18.21
8/19/2019 10:24:06	Dorchester	Orangeburg 3	\$15.39	\$19.29
8/20/2019 11:02:01	Orangeburg	Orangeburg 5	\$15.39	\$19.29
8/20/2019 8:40:55	Pickens	Pickens	\$12.36	\$17.30
8/20/2019 14:36:22	Richland	Richland 1	\$14.60	\$21.00
8/20/2019 14:51:28	Richland	Richland 2	\$15.22	\$22.02
8/20/2019 15:47:26	Johnston	Saluda	\$12.08	\$15.70
8/20/2019 15:08:21	Spartanburg	Spartanburg 1	\$11.44	\$17.98
8/20/2019 14:03:06	Converse	Spartanburg 2	\$11.06	\$18.40
8/20/2019 14:03:34	Converse	Spartanburg 3	\$13.77	\$18.55
8/20/2019 15:08:42	Spartanburg	Spartanburg 4	\$11.67	\$18.59
8/20/2019 15:09:00	Spartanburg	Spartanburg 5	\$13.66	\$20.47
8/20/2019 15:09:26	Spartanburg	Spartanburg 6	\$13.84	\$19.67
8/20/2019 14:05:23	Converse	Spartanburg 7	\$11.33	\$17.81
8/19/2019 11:03:46	Sumter	Sumter	\$10.19	\$15.21
8/20/2019 12:12:56	Cherokee	Union	\$9.92	\$16.87
8/19/2019 11:07:08	York	York 1	\$11.76	\$18.43

STATEWIDE DRIVERS SALARY SURVEY
8/23/2019

Timestamp	School Bus Shop	District	Starting Salary (Minimum) State + District	Maximum Salary (Top of current scale) State + District
8/19/2019 13:28:14	York	York 2	\$13.36	\$24.35
8/21/2019 16:22:49	Chester	York 3	\$13.59	\$20.42
8/19/2019 11:07:31	York	York 4	\$13.58	\$24.01
	Count	77	Starting	Maximum
		Average	\$12.30	\$17.82
		Min	\$8.65	\$12.35
		Max	\$15.77	\$25.25
<h3>DRIVERS STATEWIDE SALARY SURVEY</h3> <h4>8-23-19</h4>				
\$30.00				
\$25.00				
\$20.00				
		\$15.77		\$25.25
			\$17.82	

STATEWIDE DRIVERS SALARY SURVEY
8/23/2019



District	ITA	Awarded FTEs in 18-19	New FTE Allocated in 19-20	TOTAL FTEs allocated in 19-20	C=all schools have FT SRO; I=not all schools have FT SRO	# of schools w/o SROs	# of schools with PT SROs
CLARENDON 3	0.00040	1	0	1	C	0	
BARNWELL 19	0.00047	1	0	1	C	0	
BAMBERG 2	0.00060	1	1	2	C	0	
FLORENCE 5	0.00060	1	1	2	C	0	
GREENWOOD 51	0.00061	1	1	2	C	0	
FLORENCE 2	0.00064	1	0	1	C	0	
BARNWELL 29	0.00065	1	1	2	C	0	
HAMPTON 2	0.00068	1	1	2	C	0	
BAMBERG 1	0.00080	0	1	1	C	0	
DILLON 3	0.00086	1	1	2	C	0	
ALLENDALE	0.00109	1	1	2	C	0	
FLORENCE 4	0.00115	1	0	1	C	0	
CLARENDON 1	0.00133	1	1	2	C	0	
BARNWELL 45	0.00146	1	1	2	C	0	
LEXINGTON 4	0.00148	0	2	2	C	0	
HAMPTON 1	0.00165	1	3	4	I	3	
McCORMICK	0.00178	1	1	2	C	0	
LEE	0.0018	1	2	3	C	0	
LEXINGTON 3	0.00188	0	2	2	C	0	
ANDERSON 3	0.00194	0	1	1	C	0	
SALUDA	0.00208	1	1	2	C	0	
SPARTANBURG 4	0.00218	1	1	2	C	0	
CLARENDON 2	0.00234	1	1	2	C	0	
FLORENCE 3	0.00241	1	3	4	I	1	
LAURENS 56	0.0025	1	2	3	C	0	
DILLON 4	0.00259	0	1	1	C	0	
ANDERSON 2	0.0026	1	1	2	C	0	
ABBEVILLE	0.00269	1	3	4	C	0	
SPARTANBURG 3	0.00285	1	1	2	C	0	
GREENWOOD 52	0.00287	0	2	2	C	0	2
DORCHESTER 4	0.00298	1	1	2	C	0	
EDGEFIELD	0.00323	0	4	4	I	1	
MARLBORO	0.0033	0	3	3	C	0	
CALHOUN	0.00353	0	1	1	C	0	
MARION 10	0.00364	1	3	4	I	3	
UNION	0.00373	1	3	4	C	0	
YORK 1	0.00397	1	3	4	I	3	
WILLAMSBURG	0.00444	1	3	4	I	8	
SPARTANBURG 1	0.00446	1	2	3	C	0	
ANDERSON 4	0.00459	0	1	1	C	0	
LAURENS 55	0.00486	0	1	1	C	0	
CHESTER	0.00489	0	1	1	C	0	
JASPER	0.00531	1	0	1	C	0	
CHESTERFIELD	0.00562	1	3	4	I	5	
NEWBERRY	0.00655	0	4	4	I	5	
FAIRFIELD	0.0068	0	4	4	I	2	
COLLETON	0.00799	0	4	4	I	0	4
ANDERSON 1	0.00824	0	1	1	C	0	
GREENWOOD 50	0.0088	0	4	4	I	6	
CHEROKEE	0.00914	0	4	4	I	8	
SPARTANBURG 2	0.00917	0	4	4	I	5	
SPARTANBURG 7	0.00953	0	4	4	I	0	1
KERSHAW	0.00985	0	4	4	I	5	
DARLINGTON	0.01119	0	1	1	C	0	
SPARTANBURG 5	0.01191	0	1	1	C	0	
SPARTANBURG 6	0.01232	0	1	1	C	0	
YORK 2	0.01252	0	4	4	I	3	
YORK 4	0.01267	0	4	4	I	5	
LANCASTER	0.01308	0	4	4	I	10	
SUMTER	0.01332	0	4	4	I	13	2
ORANGEBURG COUNTY	0.01347	1	5	6	I	17	
LEXINGTON 2	0.01351	0	2	2	I	0	3
ANDERSON 5	0.01419	0	1	1	C	0	
FLORENCE 1	0.01703	0	4	4	I	14	

LEXINGTON 5	0.01871	0	1	1	C	0	
LEXINGTON 1	0.01972	0	4	4	I	0	3
YORK 3	0.01976	0	4	4	I	14	
RICHLAND 2	0.01992	0	4	4	I	13	
DORCHESTER 2	0.02023	0	1	1	C	0	
PICKENS	0.02147	0	1	1	C	0	
GEORGETOWN	0.02381	0	4	4	I	8	
OCONEE	0.02464	0	1	1	C	0	
AIKEN	0.02931	0	4	4	I	26	
RICHLAND 1	0.0364	0	1	1	C	0	
BERKELEY	0.04073	0	4	4	I	23	1
BEAUFORT	0.07434	0	2	2	I	17	
HORRY	0.08788	0	2	2	I	46	
GREENVILLE	0.09381	0	2	2	I	56	
CHARLESTON	0.14246	0	2	2	I	23	
ERSKINE CHARTER	NA	0	2	2	I	13	
SC PUBLIC CHARTER	NA	0	3	3	I	26	
Totals		33	172	205		382	16



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents

FROM: Elizabeth Jones, Director
Office of Assessment

DATE: November 7, 2019

RE: ACT and SAT Testing Updates

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with important updates regarding The ACT[®] and SAT[®] testing, including which students are prepared to take the tests and the process for reimbursing districts for testing.

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) will continue to reimburse districts the cost of administering either The ACT or SAT to each eleventh grade student. For these tests, the Education Accountability Act defines an eleventh grader as a student in the third year of high school after their initial enrollment in the ninth grade. The SCDE will also reimburse the cost of a twelfth grade student to take either The ACT or SAT, if reimbursement has not previously been provided for that student. Participation in either of these tests is optional on the part of the parent.

As you know, these assessments are often used in admissions for four-year colleges and universities. In order for students to be successful in taking The ACT, the student should be currently enrolled in or have completed at least three units of English (English 1 and higher); three units of mathematics (Algebra 2 and higher); two units of science (Biology 1 and Physics); and two units of social studies. College Board does not publish required coursework, however, it is important that the student have similar coursework in English and mathematics. These college readiness assessments should be discussed during the student's annual Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) meeting.

Reimbursement procedures have changed beginning with the 2019–20 school year, which will reduce paperwork burden at the school and district level. As in the past, reimbursement will only be provided for a student to take either The ACT or SAT once, during either the eleventh or

twelfth grade and only if the student takes the test on a School Day testing date specified on the SCDE [website](#). Districts will no longer submit invoices from ACT, Inc. or College Board to the SCDE. Reimbursements will automatically be provided for eligible students if the information listed below is available to the SCDE through Enrich. School districts will be responsible for ensuring these data are correctly entered in Enrich.

- Student's name (First, Last, and Middle)
- Date of birth
- Date the student was tested

For students who wish to take another assessment, or the same assessment a second or more time, districts are encouraged to pursue possible testing waivers from ACT, Inc. or College Board.

Finally, parents or guardians must give informed consent to have their student take one of these assessments. The consent should indicate that participation is optional, and allow families to decide which, if either, of the two assessments the student would like to take.

We appreciate your attention to this, and ask that you share this with your applicable district staff. If you have any questions about the administration of The ACT or SAT, please contact Lynn Ferguson at lmferguson@ed.sc.gov or 803-734-8534. If you have questions about reimbursements, please contact Leslie Dawes at ldawes@ed.sc.gov or 803-734-4944.

District's letter head may be added.

College Entrance Assessments

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Your eleventh grader has the opportunity to take the ACT® or the SAT®. The testing is being funded by the State so there is no cost to you. The tests will be administered during a school day. Please place a check in the box beside your choice.

Check One	College Entrance Assessments
	ACT - I want my son/daughter to take the ACT for free.
	SAT - I want my son/daughter to take the SAT for free.
	My son's/daughter's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team determined, and agreed in writing, that taking either of these assessments would not be aligned with his/her program of study and he/she should not take either assessment.
	Even though administration of the ACT or the SAT to my son/daughter is free, I do not want my student tested.

Parent or Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form to your child's high school by _____ (insert date).

District's letter head may be added.

Parent Consent Form College Entrance Assessments

Dear Parents or Guardians,

Your 11th grade student has the opportunity to take either the ACT[®] or the SAT[®] one time at no cost, paid for by the State. The ACT and the SAT are college entrance exams used by some colleges and universities in admitting students.

These tests will be administered during the school day. In order for students to be best prepared to take one of these tests, the student should be currently enrolled in or have completed at least three units of English (English 1 and higher); three units of mathematics (Algebra 2 and higher); and for the ACT, two units of science (Biology 1 and Physics), and two units of social studies. These tests should be discussed during your student's yearly Individual Graduation Plan (IGP) meeting. They are optional.

If you feel your student is prepared and want your 11th grader to take either the ACT or the SAT at no charge, please place a check mark in the box beside your choice, and return this form to your student's school. If you do not want your 11th grader to take either exam, please place a check mark in the third box.

Check Only One	College Entrance Assessments
<input type="checkbox"/>	ACT - I want my son/daughter to take the ACT for free.
<input type="checkbox"/>	SAT - I want my son/daughter to take the SAT for free.
<input type="checkbox"/>	We are not interested in participating in one of these tests at this time.

Student Name: _____

Parent or Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form to your child's high school by _____ (insert date).

Office of the Ombudsman

The mission of the Ombudsman is to help parents, students and the community, resolve school-related problems for students enrolled in grades K-12 in South Carolina's public school system. The objectives are to provide information and counsel which may involve rights and available options, applicable state laws and regulations, and procedural guidelines to follow when filing a complaint.

The Ombudsman's role, authority, and jurisdiction:

- 1) Will try to resolve complaints fairly, and if possible, informally.
- 2) Will not act as an advocate for either side in a dispute.
- 3) Will not place blame, or attempt to determine who is guilty or innocent.
- 4) Will try to negotiate a "win-win" outcome for all parties involved.
- 5) Will serve as a resource to parents in non-legal regular or special education matters.
- 6) Will handle each case with confidentiality, neutrality, informality and independence.
- 7) Will not disclose personal information, discussions and interactions held between the ombudsman, parent, or school district officials.

If you do not find a response that adequately addresses your concern(s) after reviewing the Department's list of [Frequently Asked Questions](#), please contact:

Wanda A. Davis, Ombudsman
Office of Governmental Affairs
SC Department of Education
1429 Senate Street, Room 1005C
Columbia, South Carolina 29201
Office: (803) 734-8485
Facsimile: (803) 734-3389
E-mail: wdavis@ed.sc.gov

All telephone calls will be returned within a 24-48 hour period, unless the phone call was receiving during the weekend or on a designated state holiday.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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[5 year old kindergarten](#)

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Who is eligible to attend 4K programs?

State-funded prekindergarten for four-year-olds serves children in the “most at-risk” category, where family income falls 100% below poverty level or the family is eligible for services such as Even Start, Head Start, state-funded family literacy programs, Social Security, food stamps, Medicaid or temporary assistance to needy families (TANF).

Children also qualify in cases of a documented developmental delay, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) requiring pre-kindergarten, incarceration of a parent, placement of student in a foster home, or the child is classified as homeless. Documentation of family or child “most at-risk” conditions must be kept on file for review. Children who participate in free and reduced meal programs at the center/school they attend may also qualify if income eligibility is verified on each child and records are kept on file for review.

Some districts use local funds to serve children who are not in the “at risk” category. Several districts serve all children who request services. A few districts charge a fee for non-qualifying children, but state regulations prohibit any fees for “at risk” children.

How old does a child have to be to attend 4K programs?

State law says that “students may enter kindergarten in the public schools of this State if they will attain the age of four on or before September first of the applicable school year.”

Who is eligible to attend 5K programs?

Attendance is mandatory for five-year-olds unless the parents sign a waiver at the local school district office indicating their desire not to send their child(ren) to kindergarten. Per [SC Code Ann. §59-23-20](#), "students may enter kindergarten in the public schools of this State if they will attain the age of five on or before September first of the applicable school year or have substantially initiated a public school kindergarten program in another state that has a different attendance age requirement from South Carolina." If the parent signs a waiver for the child not to attend kindergarten when the child has reached the age of 5 on or before September 1 of the applicable school year, the student is not entitled to automatically return the following school term and enroll in kindergarten. When the child reaches the age of 6 on or before September 1 of the applicable school year, the student must enroll in the first grade.

What is the age of attendance for students in public schools enrolled in grades one through 12?

Per [SC Code Ann. §59-63-20](#), students may enter first grade in the public schools if they will attain the age of six on or before September first of the applicable school year, or have substantially begun a first grade program in another state that has a different attendance age requirement from South Carolina, or have attended a public school kindergarten program for one full school year.

"It is not lawful for any person who is less than five or more than twenty-one years of age to attend any of the public schools of this State, including kindergarten, except that:

- (1) persons over twenty-one years of age may attend night schools;
- (2) When a pupil is in the graduating class and becomes twenty-one years of age before graduation, the student is permitted to complete the term if otherwise qualified to do so;
- (3) four year-olds may attend optional child development programs and all three-year-old, four-year-old, and five-year-old children with disabilities in accordance with their individual education program (IEP), may participate in any public education preschool program, including optional child development programs."

What are the qualifications for attendance in SC public schools?

Children within the ages prescribed by §59-63-20 shall be entitled to attend public schools of any school district, without charge, only if the child resides with its parent or legal guardian; the parent or legal guardian, with whom the child resides, is a resident of such school district; or the child owns real estate in the district having an assessed value of three hundred dollars or more, and the child has maintained a satisfactory scholastic record in accordance with scholastic standards of achievement prescribed by the trustees of the local board, and the child has not been guilty of infraction of the rules of conduct promulgated by the trustees of such school district.

What is the state law regarding bus transportation?

Per [SC Code Ann. §59-67-420](#), "the State, acting through the State Board of Education, assumes no obligation to transport any child to or from school who lives within one and one-half miles of the school he attends, nor to provide transportation services extending within a one-half mile radius of the residence of any child, nor to furnish transportation for any child who attends a grade in a school outside the pupil's district when the same grade is taught in an appropriate school that is located within the school district in which the pupil lives."

What is the total number of days a student can be absent from school?

Per [SC Code Ann. §59-65-90](#), "the State Board of Education shall establish regulations defining lawful and unlawful absences. These regulations shall require: (1) that school officials shall immediately intervene to encourage the student's future attendance when the student has three consecutive unlawful absences or a total five unlawful absences, and (2) the district board of trustees or its designee shall promptly approve or disapprove any student absence in excess of ten days."

What is the Department of Education's policy regarding corporal punishment?

Per [SC Code Ann. §59-63-260](#), "the governing body of each school district may provide corporal punishment for any pupil that it deems just and proper."

Can the State Superintendent of Education override the local school board's decision regarding discipline matters?

[SC Code Ann. §59-63-210](#) establishes the grounds for which trustees may expel, suspend, or transfer pupils; petition for readmission; expulsion, suspension, or transfer.

"(A) Any district board of trustees may authorize or order the expulsion, suspension, or transfer of any pupil for the commission of any crime, gross immorality, gross misbehavior, persistent disobedience, or for violation of written rules and promulgated regulations established by the district board, county board, or the State Board of Education, or when the presence of the pupil is detrimental to the best interest of the school. Each expelled pupil has the right to petition for readmission for the succeeding school year. Expulsion or suspension must be construed to prohibit a pupil from entering the school or school grounds, except for a prearranged conference with an administrator, attending any day or night school functions, or riding a school bus. The provisions of this section do not preclude enrollment and attendance in any adult or night school.

(B) A district board of trustees shall not authorize or order the expulsion, suspension, or transfer of any pupil for a violation of Section 59-150-250(B)."

What is the age a student can legally drop out of school without the parent's permission?

Per [SC Code Ann. §59-65-10](#), "all parents or guardians shall cause their children or wards to attend regularly a public or private school or kindergarten of this State which has been approved by the State Board of Education or a member school of the South Carolina Independent Schools' Association or some similar organization, or a parochial, denominational, or church-related school, or other programs which have been approved by the State Board of Education from the school year in which the child or ward is five years of age on or before September first until the child or ward attains his seventeenth birthday or graduates from high school."

Who is responsible for deciding the make-up days for my child's school?

[SC Code Ann. §59-1-425](#) states "(A) Each local school district board of trustees of the State shall have the authority to establish an annual school calendar for teachers, staff, and students. ***The statutory school term is one hundred ninety days annually and shall consist of a minimum of one hundred eighty days of instruction covering at least nine calendar months.*** However, beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, the opening date for students must not be before the third Monday in August, except for schools operating on a year-round, modified school calendar. Three days must be used for collegial professional development based upon the educational standards as required by Section 59-18-300. The professional development shall address, at a minimum, academic achievement standards including strengthening teachers' knowledge in their content area, teaching techniques, and assessment. No more than two days may be used for preparation of opening of schools and the remaining five days may be used for teacher planning, academic plans, and parent conferences. The number of instructional hours in an instructional day may vary according to local board policy and does not have to be uniform among the schools in the district.

(B) Notwithstanding any other provisions of law to the contrary, all school days missed because of snow, extreme weather conditions, or other disruptions requiring schools to close must be made up. All school districts shall designate annually at least three days within their school calendars to be used as make-up days in the event of these occurrences. If those designated days have been used or are no longer available, the local school board of trustees may lengthen the hours of school operation by no less than one hour per day for the total number of hours missed or operate schools on Saturday. Schools operating on a four-by-four block schedule shall make every effort to make up the time during the semester in which the days are missed. A plan to make up days by lengthening the school day must be approved by the Department of Education before implementation. Tutorial instruction for grades 7 through 12 may be taught on Saturday at the direction of the local school board. If a local school board authorizes make-up days on Saturdays, tutorial instruction normally offered on Saturday for seventh through twelfth graders must be scheduled at an alternative time.

(C) The General Assembly by law may waive the requirements of making up missed days or, by law, may authorize the school board of trustees to forgive up to three days missed because of snow, extreme weather conditions, or other disruptions requiring schools to close. A waiver granted by the local board of trustees of the requirement for making up missed days also must be authorized through a majority vote of the local school board.

(D) If a school is closed early due to snow, extreme weather conditions, or other disruptions, the day may count towards the required minimum to the extent allowed by State Board of Education policy.

(E) The instructional day for secondary students must be at a minimum six hours a day, or its equivalent weekly, excluding lunch. The school day for elementary students must be at a minimum six hours a day, or its equivalent weekly, including lunch.

(F) Elementary and secondary schools may reduce the length of the instructional day to not less than three hours for not more than three days each school year for staff development, teacher conferences, or for the purpose of administering end-of-semester and end-of-year examinations.

(G) Priority during the instructional day must be given to teaching and learning tasks. Class interruptions must be limited only to emergencies. Volunteer blood drives as determined by the principal may be conducted at times which would not interfere with classroom instruction such as study period, lunch period, and before and after school."

When and why did the state elect to have a uniform start date for all public schools to begin?

Effective April 8, 2006, former Governor Mark Sanford signed into law House Bill 4429 establishing a uniform start date for all public schools. "Beginning with the 2007-08 school year, the opening date for students must not be before the third Monday in August, except for schools operating on a year-round modified school calendar." [SC Code Ann. §59-1-425](#).

What are the schools doing to protect my child(ren) from bullying by other students?

On June 12, 2006, former Governor Mark Sanford signed House Bill 3573 creating the Safe School Climate Act. The intent of this law is to prevent school harassment, intimidation, or bullying; to instruct local school districts to adopt policies by January 1, 2007 prohibiting harassment, intimidation or bullying of students; and to provide that the State Board of Education shall develop model policies; and provide that the policy must be incorporated into the training programs for all public school districts in the State.

What are the rights of parents regarding access to a child's student records?

Per [SC Code Ann. §65-5-30](#), "the mother and father are the joint natural guardians of their minor children and are equally charged with the welfare and education of their minor children and the care and management of the estates of their minor children; and the mother and father have equal power, rights, and duties, and neither parent has any right paramount to the right of the other concerning the custody of the minor or the control of the services or the earnings of the minor or any other matter affecting the minor.

Each parent, whether the custodial or non-custodial parent of the child, has equal access and the same right to obtain all educational records and medical records of their minor children and the right to participate in their children's school activities unless prohibited by an order of the court. Neither parent shall forcibly take a child from the guardianship of the parent legally entitled to custody of the child."

What is the procedure for requesting a student transfer from one school to another in the same school district, or for a transfer from one school district to another?

[SC Code Ann. §59-63-30](#) states "a child shall be entitled to attend the public schools of any school district, without charge, if such child resides with its parents or legal guardian; and the parent or legal guardian, with whom the child resides, is a legal resident of such school district."

[SC Code Ann. §59-19-90 \(9\) & \(10\)](#) provides for the general powers and duties of your local school board of trustees. "The local board of trustees has the sole authority and jurisdiction under state law to transfer and assign pupils. To transfer any pupil from one school to another so as to promote the best interests of education, and determine the school within its district in which any pupil shall enroll; and (10) Prescribe conditions and charges for attendance." Neither the State Department of Education nor the State Superintendent of Education has the legal authority to intervene and override the local school board decisions made regarding issues of this nature.

Do public school districts initiate criminal background checks on school personnel?

Per [SC Code Ann. §23-3-130](#), "the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division shall disseminate criminal history conviction records upon request to local school districts for prospective teachers and to the State Department of Social Services for personnel of child day care facilities. This service must be provided to the local school districts without charge."

What are educational credits for exceptional needs children?

The Exceptional SC 501(c)(3) scholarship fund (also known as the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children or ECENC) was created by the South Carolina Legislature in 2015. The fund is made up of tax-deductible donations that serve as scholarships for the independent school tuition of exceptional needs students in South Carolina. To receive a scholarship, exceptional needs students complete an application to prove eligibility. The Exceptional SC board reviews applications and awards scholarships based on a number of criteria. Students who are awarded the scholarship must attend a school that the Education Oversight Committee has approved for program participation.

Tuition credits:

Parents or guardians of exceptional needs students attending eligible schools can apply for a Parental Tax Credit toward their South Carolina income tax bill. Parental Tax Credits can only be claimed for actual out-of-pocket spending on tuition, up to \$11,000. There is a statewide cap of \$2 million in credits, reserved on a first come, first served basis.

Scholarships:

Exceptional SC awards scholarships to exceptional needs children. Exceptional SC makes payments to eligible schools on behalf of exceptional needs students. Funding for scholarships comes from donations to Exceptional SC. Individual and corporate donors are eligible for South Carolina income tax credits for their donation to Exceptional SC. Scholarships can cover tuition, transportation, and textbook costs up to \$11,000. To apply for an Exceptional SC scholarship, exceptional needs students must meet eligibility requirements, be a South Carolina resident, and be eligible to enroll in a secondary or elementary public school for the applicable school year.

https://www.exceptionalsc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/exceptionalsc_1617_web.pdf

What is the state's Uniform Grading Policy?

Per [SC Code Ann. §59-5-68](#), the State Board of Education adopted a Uniform Grading Policy (UGP) for South Carolina's public schools in December 1999. That policy, which applied to all students who first enrolled in the ninth grade in the 2000–01 school year, was revised in 2007, 2016 (ten-point scale), and 2017. The particulars of the state's revised Uniform Grading Policy can be found by referring to the referenced link: <https://ed.sc.gov/tests/tests-files/eocep-files/uniform-grading-policy-february-2018>