



SOUTH CAROLINA'S Dedication to Education

2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The past year has been unique, unpredictable and profoundly challenging. Every facet of our lives was affected, as was every aspect of education. As 2021 begins, we remain encumbered by the difficulties and disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The South Carolina Department of Education is committed to ensuring students and educators of our state continue to improve because the resources provided give them the ability to overcome any challenges.

As we continue to work through this unprecedented school year we have a tremendous opportunity to address the challenges that have presented themselves during the pandemic and tackle those we know to be on the horizon. We believe that 2021 is the most important year for us all.

1 ENSURE THE SAFETY & WELLNESS OF SOUTH CAROLINA STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS

After what has been an extraordinary year, protecting the safety and wellness of our educators and students is more important than ever. It is vital all schools have the resources to provide appropriate mental, physical and emotional health support needed for immediate and continued success.

ACTION Continue to direct schools to maintain a threat assessment team as provided for in proviso 1.80 Safe Schools Initiative and secure funding from the General Assembly to ensure each school in South Carolina has the ability to employ a full-time nurse and school resource officer.

- **Full-Time Nurse** Request: **\$5,577,165**
- **School Resource Officer** Request: **\$23,400,300**

2 RECRUIT & RETAIN TEACHERS

One positive thing to come out of the COVID-19 pandemic is that South Carolinians have a newfound appreciation for the remarkable job that teachers have when it comes to educating our students. However, the pandemic has also intensified the teacher crisis in our state. Now is the time for state and local leaders to come together for current and future educators by supporting financial incentives, policies, and programs that will help secure a strong, high-quality teacher workforce that serves our students for years to come.

- ACTION**
- Obtain funding to **reinstate the annual step increase** while retroactively funding the current year step increase, provide a salary increase for teachers to move toward the national average, and **increase the base student cost by \$50** for a total budget request of **\$218,116,317**.
 - Work with the General Assembly to increase the **teacher supply supplement** amount, provide teachers with protected, **unencumbered planning time**, fund the salary supplement for National Board Certified Teachers, and remove the earnings limitation for **retired educators**.
 - **Streamline the teacher evaluation process**, evaluate requirements for teacher certification and re-certification to make them more efficient, and improve **professional development opportunities** to reach greater outcomes with students.
 - **Review teacher preparation programs** and update them to guarantee all educators are trained to meet the needs of the modern day classrooms and ensure programs are able to recruit a **diverse workforce**.



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GUARANTEE EVERY SOUTH CAROLINA STUDENT HAS ACCESS TO ROBUST COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Career readiness is crucial to the future successes and quality of life for every South Carolina student – as well as for the economic health of our state. To prepare our workforce of tomorrow, a variety of career and technology education courses need to be readily available, no matter the region. This includes equal access to up-to-date technology and instructional materials, as well as a competency-based education that does not rely heavily on high-stakes testing.

- ACTION**
- Expand broadband access including accessibility and payment of services.
 - Secure funding for instructional materials budget request: **\$30,000,000** (recurring).
\$70,000,000 (Non-Recurring)
 - Expand VirtualSC course offerings by requesting **\$5,247,360** in funding.
 - Review the necessities in using summative assessments vs. formative assessments and examine tools available to evaluate formative assessments so that they may be used for accountability measures.
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EXPAND EARLY LEARNING & LITERACY

Research and experience have proven that 4K programs, such as Child Early Reading and Development Education Programs (CERDEP), along with strong parental engagement provide essential foundations needed for kindergarten readiness and continued academic success. To further close the achievement gap and improve literacy in K-12, expansion of full-day 4K across the state, and actively engaging parents with their children's instructional goals, are imperative.

- ACTION**
- CERDEP expansion and parental engagement request: **\$6,000,000**.
 - Review legislation and create updates to strengthen literacy requirements, such as revising Proviso 1.60 and 1A.53 related to Reading/Literacy Coaches, as well as requiring professional development in the Science of Reading.
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MAXIMIZE DISTRICT EFFICIENCY & ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following items include additional priorities and recommendations designed to maximize district efficiency, reform education funding formulas, and support staff at all levels.

- ACTION**
- Review and improve the education funding formula, including evaluating the method in which charter schools are funded.
 - Implement a School Infrastructure Fund to assist with upgrading school facilities in areas of need.
 - Promote consolidation and shared services between districts where feasible, including constructing additional, multi-district career centers and supporting districts with less than 1,500 students in their consolidation efforts.
 - Address the statewide bus driver shortage by requesting a minimum salary increase of 5% per year.