

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents
District PIOs
District Personnel Administrators

FROM: Phillip Cease
Director of Government Relations and Policy

DATE: June 16, 2026

RE: 2026 Legislative Session Recap

SCDE's Office of Government Relations and Policy closely monitors legislation impacting public education. Below is a summary of legislation that passed this year.

For more information, please contact Phillip Cease at phcease@ed.sc.gov or those listed with each description.

[S. 70](#) (School Board Ethics) – This law requires school boards to adopt a code of ethics based on a model code of ethics passed by the State Board of Education and complete mandatory, SCDE developed board training.

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) will guide and implement the requirements of S.70 through a phased approach over the coming months. First, the State Board of Education will adopt a Model Code of Ethics, which all local school boards (including charter school boards) will be required to adopt within three months of its approval.

In addition, SCDE is developing a new mandatory training program for newly elected and reelected school board members. This training will be required to be completed by May of 2027 for year one, and within nine months of taking office every election thereafter. To ensure the training reflects the needs of school boards, SCDE will solicit feedback from board members and other key stakeholders during the development process. Additional details will be shared as they become available.

Please note, this training represents a new requirement for board members. Failure to complete the required training within the established timeline may result in escalating actions by the State Board of Education, including a letter of caution and, if noncompliance persists, a recommendation to the Governor for removal from office.

For more information, please contact Rebecca Blackburn Hines at rbhines@ed.sc.gov.

[S. 416](#) (School Expulsion) – A student who knowingly brings a firearm to school or school property must be expelled for no less than one year from the date of the incident. The law also requires expulsion for a student who knowingly and willfully threatens to use a weapon to cause bodily harm to another student or school district employee. In these cases, the expulsion period may not exceed one academic year.

For more information on this law, please contact Laura Bayne at ljbayne@ed.sc.gov.

[S. 454](#) (Charter School Accountability) – Strengthens transparency, accountability, and sound governance across South Carolina’s charter school sector to support high-quality outcomes for students. The law seeks to increase openness and consistency, including posting annual budgets and audits on school websites, maintaining transaction registers, and ensuring key financial and operational information is readily accessible to families and stakeholders. The law further strengthens the responsibilities of charter school authorizers by outlining clear expectations for application review, ongoing oversight, and adherence to statewide standards.

The SCDE plays a central and supportive role in implementing these updates. The SCDE is working collaboratively with authorizers to provide guidance, technical assistance, and clear expectations aligned to the new requirements, with special emphasis on the new Annual Authorizer Review process.

SCDE’s approach emphasizes continuous improvement, helping authorizers build strong oversight practices, supporting compliance efforts, and ensuring that charter schools are positioned to operate transparently and effectively in service of students and families across the state.

For more information, please contact Meka Childs at mchilds@ed.sc.gov.

[S. 508](#) (Monument and Memorial Protection) – This new law requires the General Assembly to enact a joint resolution in order for political subdivision of the state (schools and districts are included) to relocate, remove, disturb or alter a monument, memorial, structure, or

other public area, dedicated in memory of or named for any historic figure, historic group of people, etc.

While the Department of Archives and History will promulgate regulations, schools should be aware that school buildings, athletic facilities, dedicated parks or areas may be affected. The Department of Education will monitor the regulations when promulgated and provide updates as necessary.

For more information, please contact Todd Atwater at tkatwater@ed.sc.gov.

[S. 711](#) (School Guard Requirements) – Strengthens the role of school crossing guards in keeping students safe and traffic moving efficiently. In addition to their existing authority to stop traffic for student crossings, crossing guards may now direct and control traffic to help reduce congestion and improve traffic flow.

For further information, please contact Laura Bayne at ljbayne@ed.sc.gov.

[H. 3195](#) (Unstructured and self-directed recess) – Amends code related to physical education and recess. Starting with the 2028-2029 school year, K-5th grade students must have a minimum of one hundred and fifty minutes of physical education and physical activity a week - a majority of the required minutes must come from standards-aligned Physical Education. Students in 6th-8th must have a minimum of sixty hours of physical education and physical activity during each school year - a majority of the required hours must come from standards-aligned Physical Education. 4K -5th grade students must have at least twenty minutes of unstructured outdoor recess daily with allowances for short-term interruptions and inclement weather. Waivers are allowed for students in middle school under certain circumstances.

For further information, please contact Kristi Austin at kdaustin@ed.sc.gov.

[H. 4163](#) (South Carolina High School Athletic Association) – This new law reconstitutes the governing body of the South Carolina High School Athletic Association. In addition, it increases state oversight by, among other things, making the Association subject to the jurisdiction of the Legislative Audit Council, requiring the association to present their annual budget to the General Assembly and testify before Ways and Means and Finance committees among other reforms. Eligibility determinations will continue to be made by the South Carolina Department of Education and the State Board of Education.

[H. 5073](#) (Public School Grading) – Updates state policies on grading practices, grade floors, and credit/content recovery programs. The bill would prevent schools or districts from requiring teachers to give students a minimum grade that is higher than the grade actually earned based on completed work and performance. It also limits the use of district benchmark assessments in course grades unless teachers have access to the assessment before it is given and the assessment measures only content already taught in the course. Districts that do not follow these requirements could lose 10% of their State Aid to Classroom funding. In addition, the bill outlines specific eligibility requirements students must meet to participate in credit recovery and content recovery courses, and directs the State Board of Education to create a task force to review possible changes to the Uniform Grading Policy. The SCDE will create an FAQ prior to the start of the 2026-27 school year to support district implementation of this bill and is also available to provide technical assistance.

For further information, please contact Dr. Abbey Duggins at asduggins@ed.sc.gov.

The General Assembly is still considering the state budget. When they have passed the final budget, we will give you our highlights and analysis in a future Memorandum.