



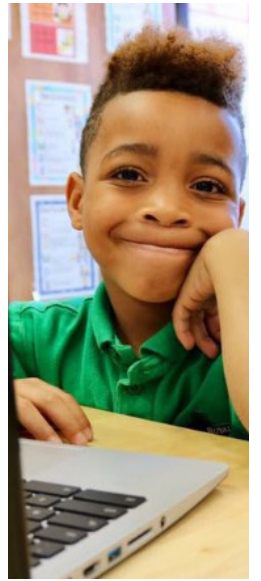
SOUTH CAROLINA
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

2017 ANNUAL REPORT





SOUTH CAROLINA
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL DISTRICT



2017 ANNUAL REPORT

Excellence | Innovation | Results



As a parent, there are few things in life more important than the quality of my children's education. Unfortunately, today in South Carolina, many parents – particularly those living in poverty – do not have access to the same high quality choices as my family. We can and must change this.

The good news is that high quality charter schools can play a key role in this needed change by offering families better choices, by growing what works, and – most importantly – by supporting and inspiring students to achieve at high levels. High quality charters prove what can happen when those closest to their students and communities – the educators and leaders in schools – have the power to make their own decisions, ensure equitable offerings for every student and be accountable for results.

This is why we're so focused on quality and equity. By raising the bar on charter authorization and accountability, we will increase quality choices for families and give students in South Carolina the great education they deserve. We will grow the charters that work and replace the charters that don't work. Over the next five years, our network of schools will have the highest growth in student achievement of any district and will serve as a model of access and equity statewide.

As we work relentlessly toward this goal, I get up every day with renewed hope, motivation and optimism – there are truly no better and brighter kids in the world than ours – and I thank our parents, educators and community and state leaders for supporting our students and mission.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "ESMALLEY".

Elliot Smalley
SCPCSD Superintendent





SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL DISTRICT HISTORY

The law makes clear why we exist. South Carolina's charter school law was passed in 1996, and defines seven key purposes for charter schools, each of which connect to our strategic pillars:

- (1) improve student learning;
- (2) increase learning opportunities for students;
- (3) encourage the use of a variety of productive teaching methods;
- (4) establish new forms of accountability for schools;
- (5) create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site;
- (6) assist South Carolina in reaching academic excellence; and
- (7) create new, innovative and more flexible ways of educating children within the public school system, with the goal of closing achievement gaps between low performing student groups and high performing student groups.

The South Carolina legislature created the South Carolina Public Charter School District (SCPCSD) in 2006 as a state-wide authorizer of new charter schools, schools transferring from local districts, and virtual charter schools. The SCPCSD is unique in that it is state funded and – unlike charters authorized by local districts – its schools can serve students from anywhere in the state. The SCPCSD is governed by an appointed board of volunteer leaders from various regions and cities from around South Carolina. Driven by parent demand, the SCPCSD has grown rapidly. This year, the district expects to become one of South Carolina's 10 largest districts, with 34 brick-and-mortar schools and 5 virtual schools.

HOW OUR SCHOOLS ARE FUNDED

STATE EFA FUNDING

These funds are distributed to schools via a per pupil formula. EFA funding consists of a base student funding amount + a weighted student funding that is based on individual student characteristics.

2016-2017 base student cost funding amount:

\$2,350: per pupil cost

1 - 2.57: student funding weights

0.15 - 0.20: add-on student funding weights

STATE EIA FUNDING

These funds are distributed to schools based on categorical funding rules for certain programs. Examples include teacher salary fringe benefits, nationally board certified teachers and students at risk of academic failure. The 2016-2017 amount varied by category.

PROVISO FUNDS

As a special statewide district, the SCPCSD does not have taxing authority to raise the equivalent of its local revenue. Annually, the SCPCSD requests a proviso-funding amount from the South Carolina Legislature.

2016-2017 proviso funding amount:

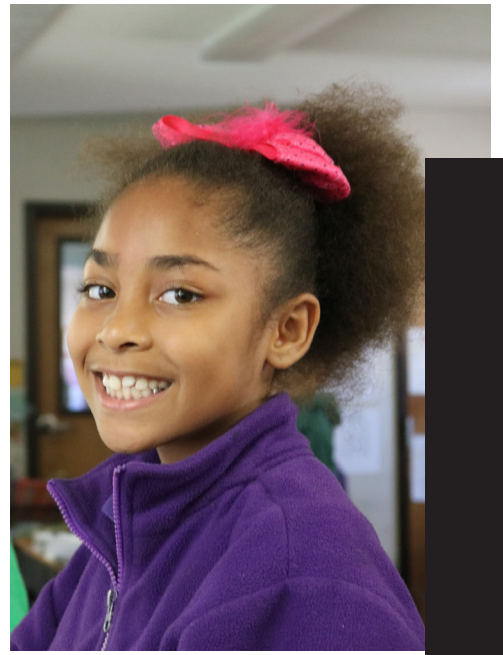
\$3,600: per pupil cost (brick and mortar charter)

\$1,900: per pupil cost (virtual charter)

FEDERAL FUNDS

SCPCSD schools receive federal funds. The main sources include Title I funding for high poverty students and IDEA funds for special education students.

2016-2017 federal funding varied by program and student characteristics.



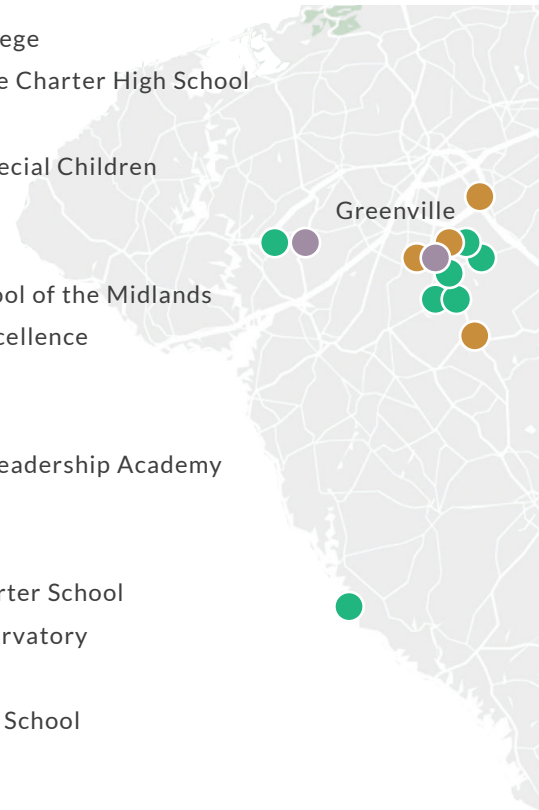
CURRENT SCHOOLS AND NEWLY APPROVED SCHOOLS

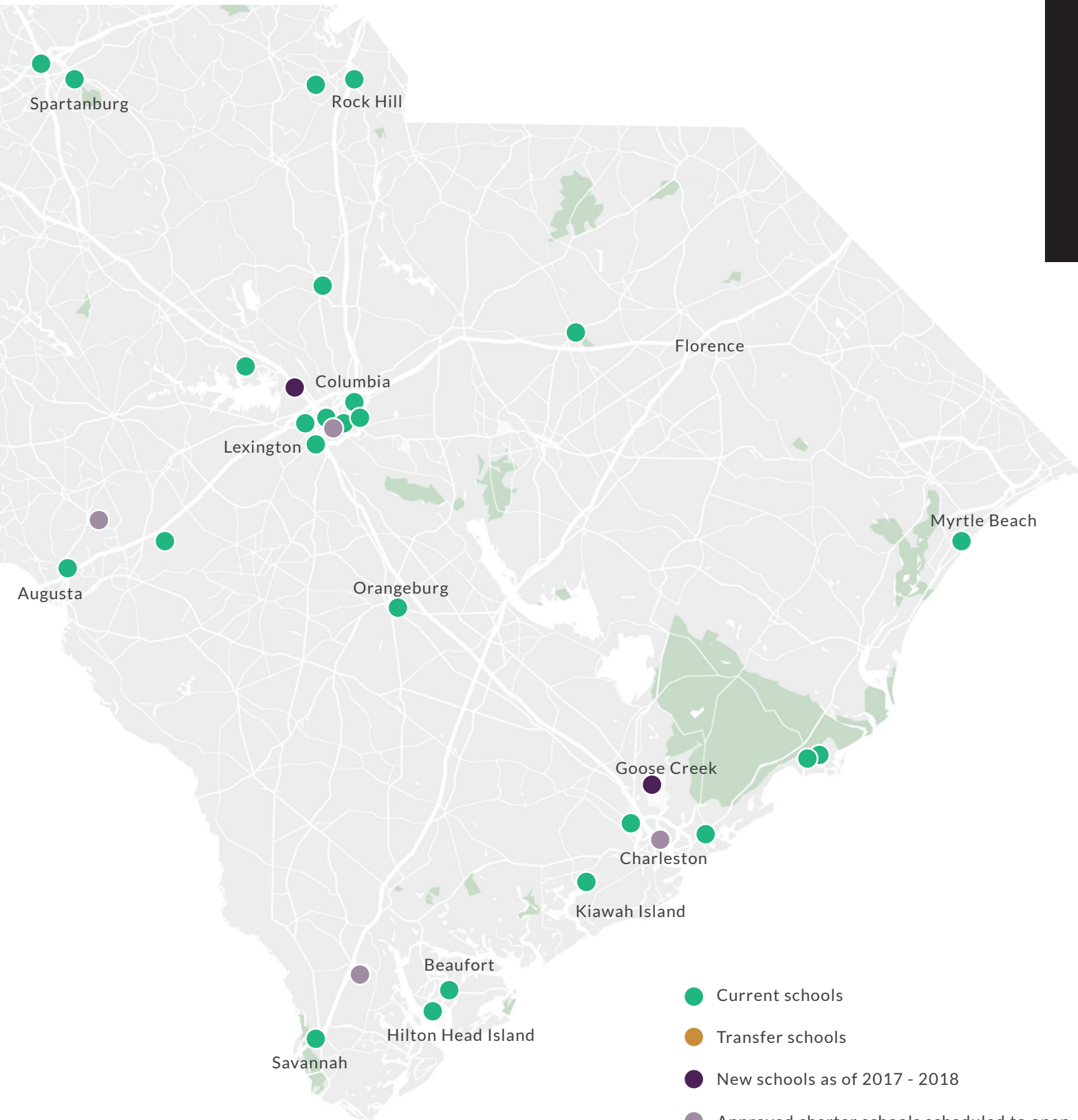
Bridges Preparatory School
 Calhoun Falls Charter School
 Cape Romain Environmental Education Charter School
 Coastal Leadership Academy
 Cyber Academy of South Carolina
 East Point Academy
 Felton Laboratory School
 Fox Creek High School
 Gray Collegiate Academy
 GREEN Charter School
 Greenville Technical Charter High School
 High Point Academy
 Lead Academy Public Charter School
 Lowcountry Leadership Charter School
 Lowcountry Montessori School
 Midlands Middle College - Airport Campus
 Midlands STEM Institute
 NEXT High School
 Oceanside Collegiate Academy
 Odyssey Online Learning
 Palmetto Scholars Academy
 Pee Dee Math, Science & Technology Academy
 Quest Leadership Academy Public Charter School
 Riverwalk Academy
 Royal Live Oaks Academy of the Arts and Sciences
 South Carolina Connections Academy
 South Carolina Science Academy
 South Carolina Virtual Charter School
 South Carolina Whitmore School
 Spartanburg Preparatory School
 Tall Pines STEM Academy
 York Preparatory Academy
 Youth Leadership Academy

Brashier Middle College
 Greer Middle College Charter High School
 Legacy Early College
 Meyer Center for Special Children

GREEN Charter School of the Midlands
 Mevers School of Excellence

Bettis Preparatory Leadership Academy
 East Link Academy
 East Light Academy
 Lakes & Bridges Charter School
 Midlands Arts Conservatory
 Pathways - SC
 Polaris Tech Charter School

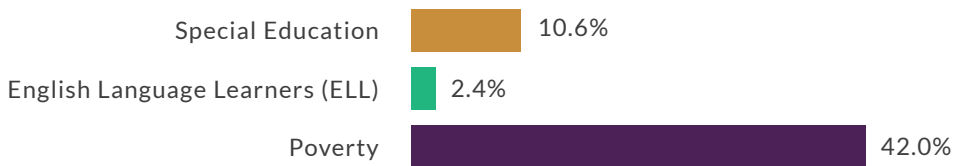
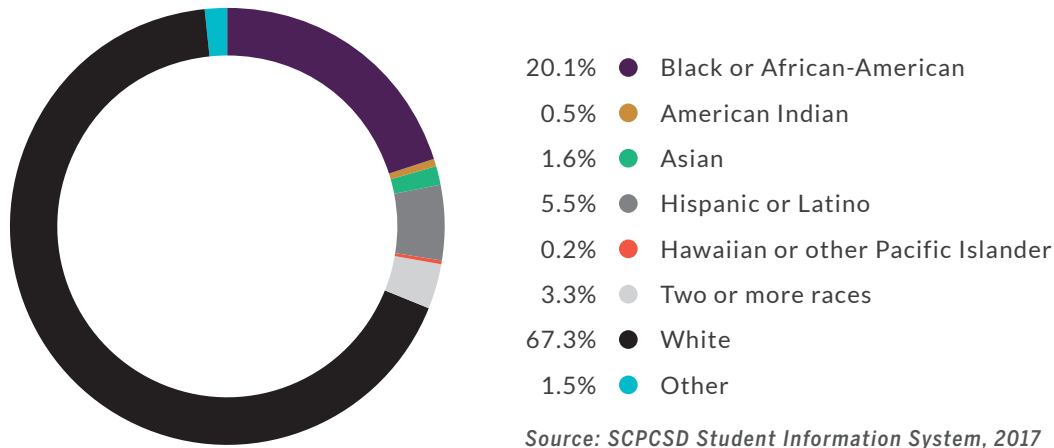




- Current schools
- Transfer schools
- New schools as of 2017 - 2018
- Approved charter schools scheduled to open for the 2018 - 2019 school year

OUR SCHOOLS BY THE NUMBERS

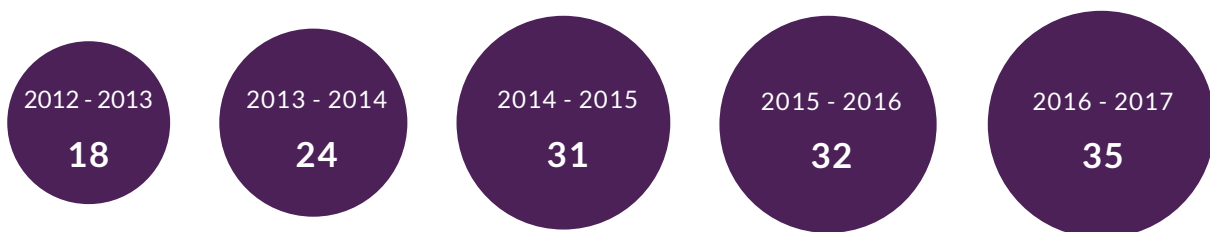
2016 - 2017 DEMOGRAPHICS



ACTIVE STUDENT HEAD COUNTS (45 DAYS)



NUMBER OF SCPCSD SCHOOLS BY YEAR



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Don McLaurin, Chairman
Governor's appointment

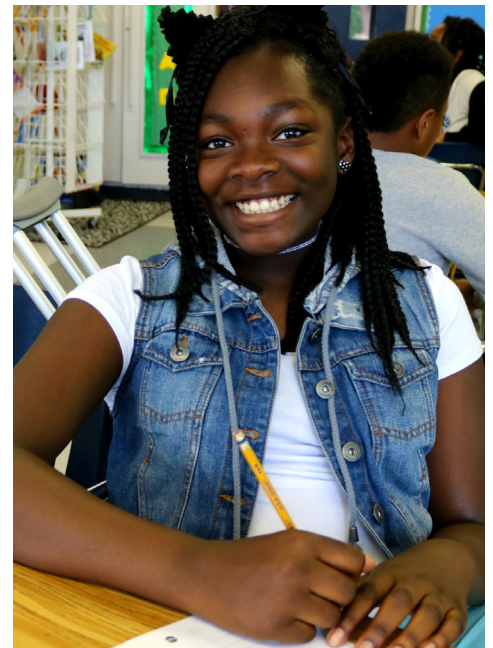
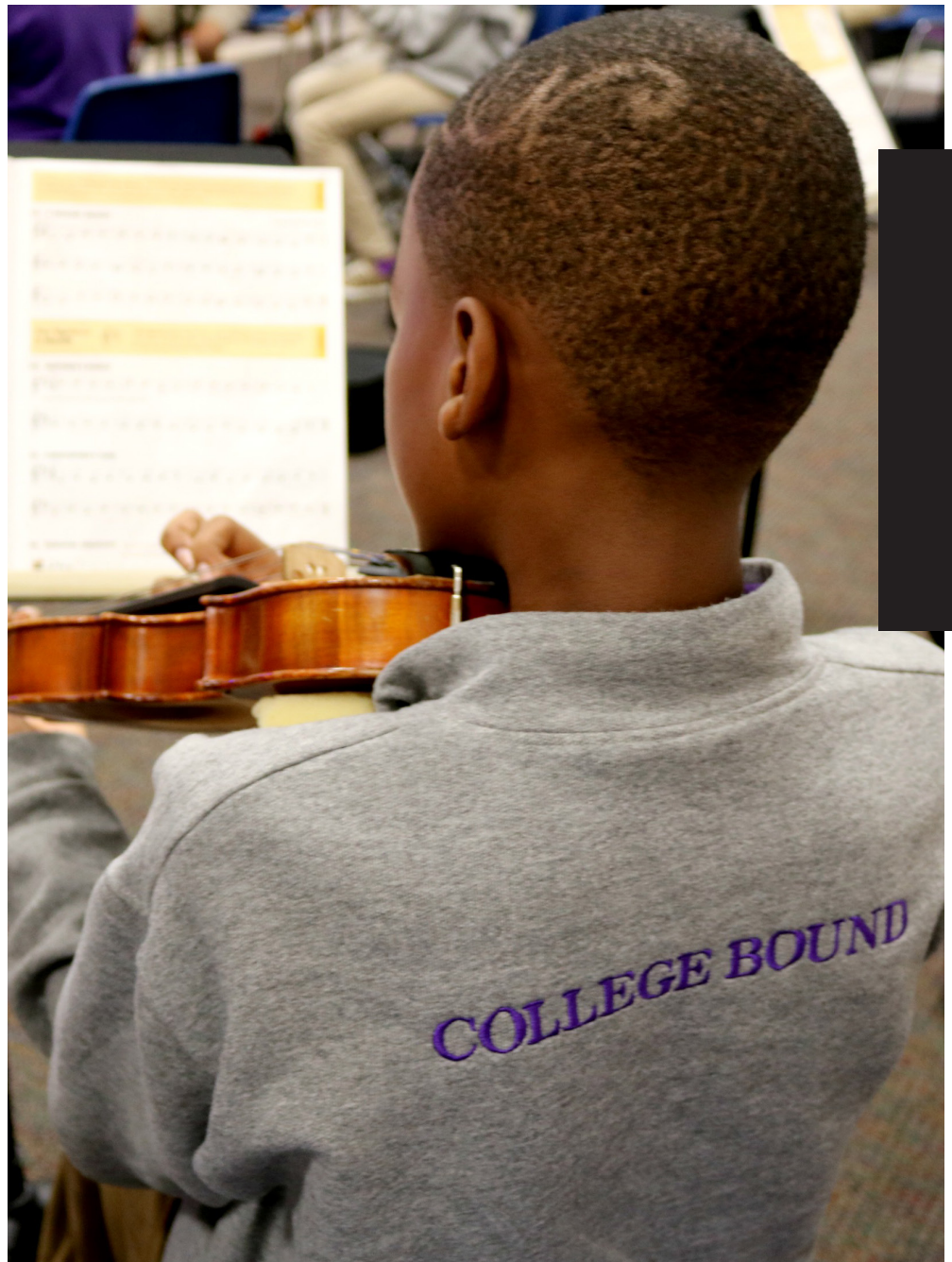
Laban Chappell, Vice Chair
Governor's appointment

Kathleen Bounds, Secretary
Governor's appointment

Anne Bull
Governor's appointment

John Payne
Speaker of the House appointment

Linzie Staley
Governor's appointment



TRANSFORMING EDUCATION IN SOUTH CAROLINA: FOUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

We believe that by zeroing in on four priorities, we will dramatically improve student outcomes, serve as a model of access and equity, and increase learning opportunities for students in South Carolina.



AUTHORIZATION

Open high quality schools with great plans and huge potential for success.



ACCOUNTABILITY

Set clear expectations and hold schools accountable for results.



ACCESS AND EQUITY

Ensure all families have access and students get what they need to succeed.



POLICY

Create the conditions necessary for school operators to thrive.

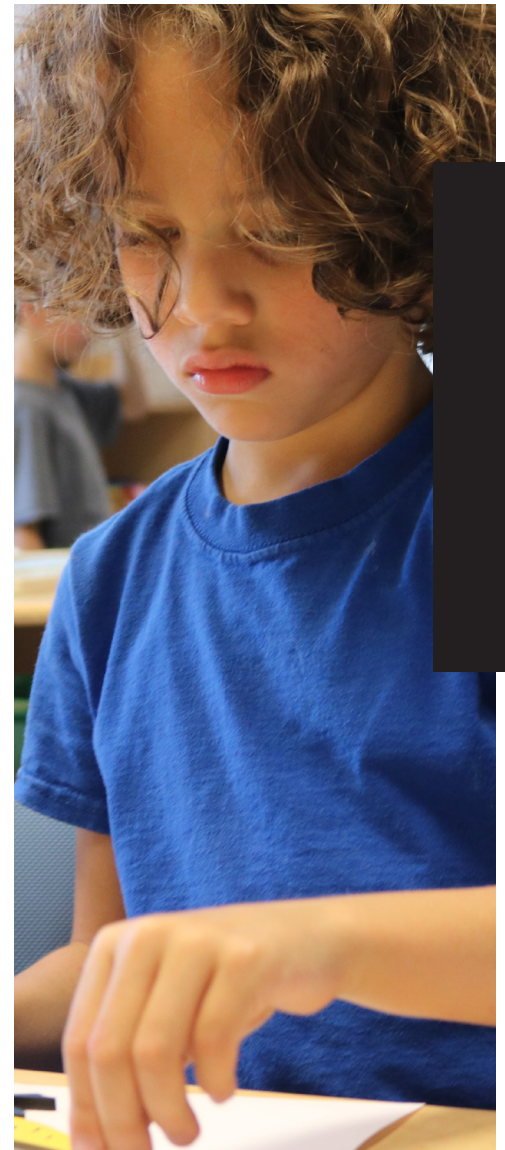
AUTHORIZATION

While the SCPCSD has several responsibilities mirroring local education agencies, our primary lever for student success is in deciding who receives a charter and—in turn—the privilege of serving the students of South Carolina. The SCPCSD authorizes and renews 10-year charters for applicants who show the capacity to operate high-performing, innovative, community-driven schools. We work closely with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) and national and local leaders to bring the highest possible standards and practices to our application process, including SCPCSD enhancements to the state application, external reviewers and data dashboard summaries of our recommendations.

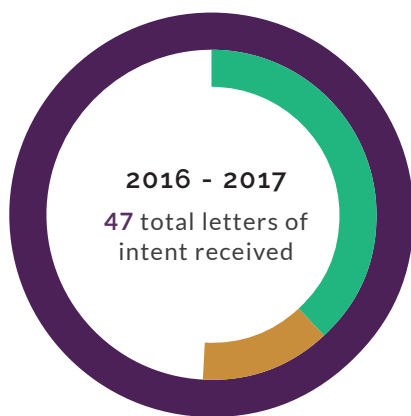
The charter approval process begins with prospective applicants submitting a Letter of Intent by November of the year preceding the application submission.

The next step involves the completion and submission of an application by February of the annual application cycle. The process for charter evaluation includes three primary stages of review: a completeness determination and a public hearing conducted by the SCPCSD Board of Trustees.

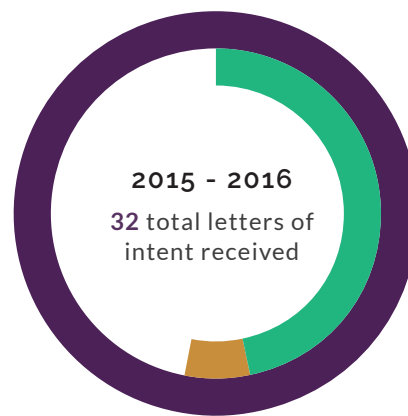
Once a charter is approved, charter school boards are given the autonomy to make decisions they deem the best fit for their plan and community—anything from selecting the teachers and school administrators who will implement the school's mission to determining the precise location and features of their facility. Charter school leaders and boards select their own paths and create what will work best for the students they will serve. The SCPCSD works alongside them to ensure that Pre-opening Conditions are met.



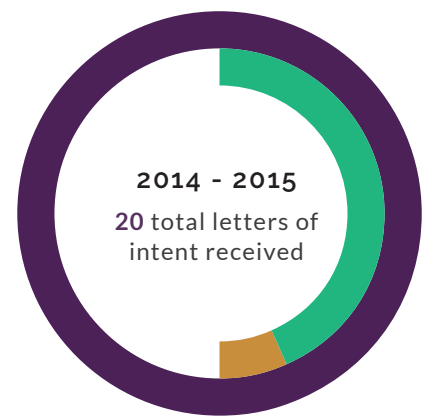
APPLICATIONS FOR NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS BY YEAR



- 47 ● Letters of intent received
- 18 ● Applications received
- 6 ● Applications approved



- 32 ● Letters of intent received
- 15 ● Applications received
- 2 ● Applications approved



- 20 ● Letters of intent received
- 13 ● Applications received
- 2 ● Applications approved

Source: SCPCSD Data Files,

ACCOUNTABILITY

The charter bargain involves striking a balance between autonomy and accountability. You can't have one without the other. Under South Carolina law, charters should create new forms of accountability, and our system—which shines a light on student growth and makes expectations, rewards and consequences clear—has the potential to serve as a national model.

As a charter authorizer, the SCPCSD does not operate in a traditional sense like other school districts. In fact, we send 98 cents on the dollar to our schools and operate a very lean central office relative to districts our size. We are not in the practice of making school-level decisions about programs and people like many traditional school districts – instead, we monitor the performance of schools and take appropriate action if schools do not meet standards. Our Core Performance System (CPS) outlines the district's oversight processes and tools. The School Performance Framework (SPF) is one tool that is used to monitor school performance. The SPF is designed to answer three essential questions:

1. Is the school's academic program successful?
2. Is the school financially viable and sustainable?
3. Is the school organizationally sound (fulfilling its obligations to students and families and adhering to the terms of its charter, contract, and applicable law)?

The SCPCSD monitors school performance data regularly and provides each of its schools with an annual profile and a status level of Good Standing, Caution, Breach, or Revocation Review that may change as warranted by the school's performance. Schools receive different levels of oversight based on performance and years of operation. Schools in their initial years of operation are given additional attention

to ensure they are tracking towards success. Those in Good Standing receive less scrutiny and are eligible for rewards, such as recommendations for replication. GREEN, a high-performing school sponsored by the SCPCSD, will be the first charter replicated in South Carolina with a new school opening in Columbia this year. Schools in Revocation Review—which are at risk of losing their charter—qualify for a comprehensive evaluation, including a charter review, increased monitoring, site visits, and more frequent audits.

This monitoring and oversight process—founded on both quantitative and qualitative data—provides the SCPCSD staff with a comprehensive base of information from which to make objective recommendations to the SCPCSD Board regarding revocation, renewal and non-renewal.

CLOSED SCHOOLS

Young Entrepreneurial Vocational (2009)	Financial reasons due to low enrollment
Mary L. Dinkins Academy (2013)	Low academic achievement
Lake City College Preparatory Academy (2014)	Special education chronic non-compliance and low academic achievement
Palmetto State E-Cademy (2014)	Non-renewal due to low academic achievement
Garden City Preparatory Academy for Boys (2016)	Low academic achievement
Imagine Columbia Leadership Academy (2017)	Low academic achievement
South Carolina Calvert Academy (2017)	Low academic achievement





SPOTLIGHT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Student achievement remains a leading priority of charter schools, as outlined in the SC Charter Schools Act of 1996. The academic component of the SCPCSD's accountability system is built upon high expectations for all kids and eyes student achievement from multiple angles and data sources. The SPF academic performance review was revised last year over a six-month period with feedback from numerous charter operators. It includes indicators which measure overall student achievement, subgroup performance, student growth, college and career readiness, and a comparison of charter school performance to traditional public schools. In addition to these criteria, SCPCSD schools have the option of choosing a goal that is specific to their school's model and mission.

Unfortunately, there are times when a school's performance mandates revocation or non-renewal of

its Charter. A determination by the SCPCSD Board of Trustees that a school demonstrated any of the following behaviors mandates revocation or non-renewal:

1. Committed a material violation of the conditions, standards, performance expectations, or procedures provided for in the charter application or charter school contract, or both;
2. Failed to meet the academic performance standards and expectations as defined in the charter application or charter school contract, or both;
3. Failed to maintain books and records according to generally accepted accounting principles or failed to create an appropriate system of internal control, or both;
4. Violated any provision of law from which the charter school was not specifically exempted; or
5. Is operating in a racially discriminatory manner.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE BY SCHOOL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK (SPF) INDICATOR

Source: SCPCSD Data, 2017

TYPE OF SCHOOL	SPF INDICATOR	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS IN EACH CATEGORY			
		Exceeds	Meets	Does Not Meet	Falls Far Below
Elementary School*	Are students achieving proficiency in English Language Arts (ELA)?	5	5	7	7
	Are students achieving proficiency in Mathematics?	3	4	5	5
Middle School*	Are students achieving proficiency in English Language Arts (ELA)?	10	3	5	5
	Are students achieving proficiency in Mathematics?	6	4	5	5
High School	Are students achieving proficiency in English Language Arts (ELA)?	6	6	4	4
	Are students achieving proficiency in Mathematics?	3	4	4	4
	Are students graduating on time from high school?	3	2	1	1
	Are students graduating within five years from high school?	4	1	0	0
	Does student performance on the ACT reflect college readiness?	4	2	6	6
	Does student performance on WorkKeys reflect career readiness?	6	3	4	4

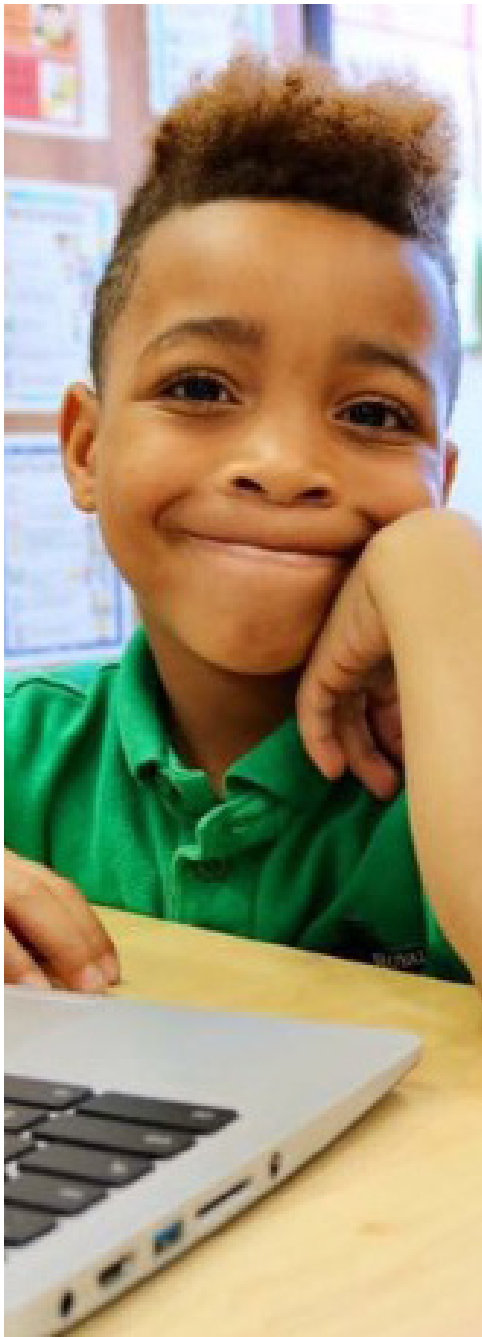
*Due to circumstances with state accountability and data for the 2015-16 school year, some SPF indicators lack data to report.

2015 - 2016* EDUCATION VALUE-ADDED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM (EVAAS) SCHOOL COMPOSITES

School Performance by Overall EVAAS Composite Level



*Most recent data available
Source: evaas.sas.com, 2017





ACCESS AND EQUITY

The SCPCSD is committed to ensuring that the schools it authorizes are accessible to every student eligible to attend public school in South Carolina regardless of race, income or background, and that every student receives an excellent, equitable education once enrolled. Through its accountability system and a new monthly “Access and Equity Dashboard,” the SCPCSD tracks enrollment, mobility, discipline, course offerings and achievement trends across multiple subgroups, including low-income students, students of color and students with disabilities.

In 2017, the SCSPD Board of Trustees commissioned a study to determine the current state of access and equity in the district and to identify opportunities for growth in access and equity practices. Key questions included:

1. Does the current student body reflect the community in which the school is located?
2. Do school enrollment practices create barriers to entrance for prospective applicants?
3. Once a student has accepted a seat, does the school have a fair enrollment process that meets the statutory mandate that requires it to serve all students?
4. Are students exiting in an egregious manner based on subgroups, race, time of school year, student achievement and ability?
5. Are students being disproportionately disciplined and/or penalized due to race, economic status and ability?
6. Are all students achieving at the same level of academic excellence in spite of race, economic status, or ability?

Based on this study and work conducted by the SCPCSD team this year, a series of recommendations were made, including:

- Collect and monitor data on equity metrics more frequently;
- Increase district monitoring activities of schools’ student recruitment and enrollment practices;
- Incentivize student access by requiring schools to create transportation plans;
- Make it easier for families and the public to understand how schools are performing across equity metrics;
- Revise the district mission statement to reflect a commitment to equity; and
- Facilitate school-school collaboration and learning by hosting regional and school model cohort meetings.

The SCPCSD has prioritized the pillar of access and equity and will continue to seek out best practices in the spirit of continuous improvement for all South Carolina kids.

POLICY

CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR SCHOOL OPERATORS TO THRIVE

As an authorizer committed to national best practices and protecting the rights of all students, the SCPCSD engages in policy and advocacy work to ensure that the conditions which enable students to thrive are present.

With leadership from its Board, the SCPCSD has identified a set of legislative challenges and opportunities which face SCPCSD charter schools and the state's charter school sector as a whole. The SCPCSD is committed to addressing these issues with relevant stakeholders to improve transparency and ensure sound accountability practices for South Carolina charter schools. Looking forward, these priorities include:

Strengthening authorizer provisions in the South Carolina Charter Schools Act

Since its original passage in 1996, South Carolina charter law has been updated to reflect the needs of the charter sector as they arise. To ensure a robust charter sector, further additions and edits to the South Carolina Charter Schools Act are needed to ensure that charter school authorizers across the state have the proper tools and the ability to grow quality charter schools and to hold schools accountable for student outcomes, legal compliance and responsible financial stewardship of public funds.

Transportation

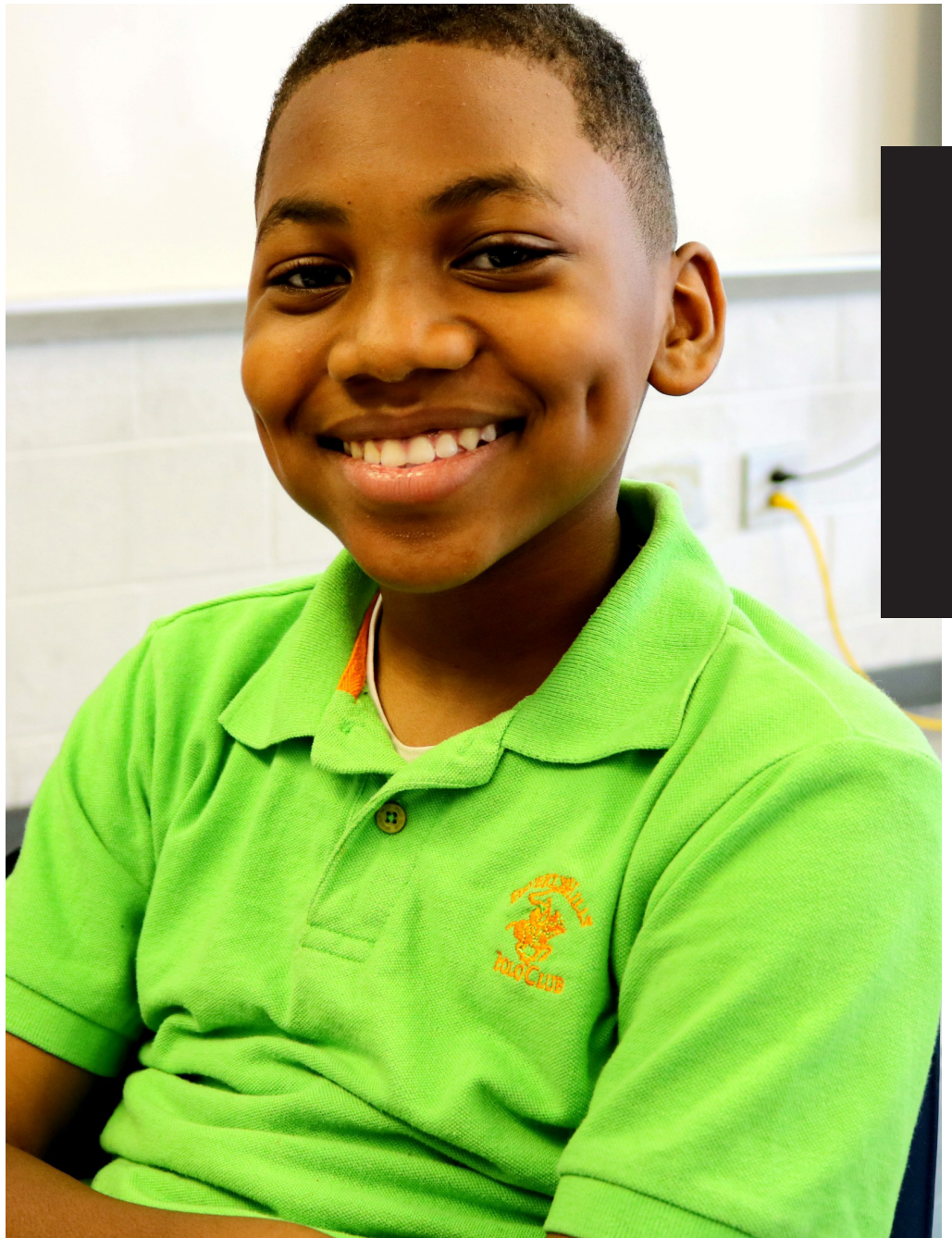
One of the largest barriers faced by students and their families accessing the state's charter schools is the lack of transportation funding and infrastructure. As public schools, charter schools should provide equal access for all students by offering transportation to and from school.

Facility Funding

Facility funding represents a major challenge for charter schools in South Carolina. As a uniquely created statewide school district, the SCPCSD does not have taxing authority like many school districts in the state or an ability to raise funds for capital projects. SCPCSD charter schools are not provided with a public school facility and thus must use operating dollars to finance building ownership or pay for a facility lease. The need to use operating dollars to establish and maintain a facility for SCPCSD charters means that those dollars cannot be spent on hiring teachers or purchasing instructional materials. The SCPCSD is committed to finding creative solutions to address these funding disparities so as to ensure that more dollars will remain in the classroom to serve students.

Charters in rural, urban districts with persistently low-performing schools

This year, South Carolina was ranked 50th out of 50 states in education by *US News and World Report*, and in many areas of our state, including Abbeville plaintiff districts, students who live in poverty do not have access to quality schools. With the right mix of supports and policy improvements—and strict requirements for interested charter operators—charter schools can offer a solution to these longstanding challenges and disparities found within our state.





3710 LANDMARK DRIVE, SUITE 201
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29204

(803) 734-8322 | SCCHARTER.ORG