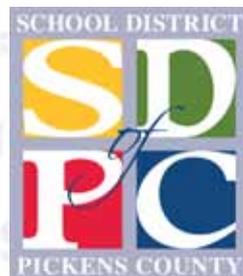


Report to the Community 2013-2014

Building success
beyond the classroom





Our District Our Year



The School District of Pickens County is a county-wide system located in northwestern South Carolina. The district is composed of five attendance areas: Dacusville, Daniel, Easley, Liberty, and Pickens. We serve approximately 16,600 students. Accredited through AdvancED, SDPC is recognized nationally and internationally as a “Quality School System.”

Our Vision

The School District of Pickens County will strive to provide a quality 21st century education that prepares all students for success beyond the classroom.

Our Mission

The School District of Pickens County promotes high achievement, personal responsibility, and character development to prepare students for college, career, and citizenship opportunities.

Our Goals

- Student Achievement • Each student will be academically challenged to reach his or her individual potential growth.
- Learning Environment • Students will be provided safe, supportive environments for learning.
- Quality Personnel • Quality personnel will be recruited, developed and retained in all positions.
- Communications • Clear, frequent communications will increase stakeholders’ knowledge and support.
- Resource Management • All resources will be managed effectively to provide a quality learning environment.

Our Beliefs

- Students are our first priority.
- The pursuit of excellence is essential.
- A safe, caring learning environment must be provided for all students and staff.
- Learning and education are life-long processes.
- All students must have equitable educational opportunities.
- All people are unique and valuable.
- All people can learn and contribute to society.
- Education is a shared responsibility.
- Education is the key to success.
- Cultural diversity promotes full development of the individual and society.
- The “parent” is a child’s first teacher.
- Today’s schools shape tomorrow’s workforce.

The 2013-2014 school year was a year of accomplishment in the School District of Pickens County. SDPC was reaccruited by AdvancED for another five years, ensuring that our graduates will continue to be accepted into the top colleges and universities in the world.

Our district continued our strong emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Education with the Second Grade Sailboat Challenge, Fifth Grade JetToy Competition, and Eighth Grade Glider Challenge. In fact, our students won international recognition for their STEM skills when a team from Forest Acres Elementary took first place in the Accuracy portion of the International JetToy Competition in Detroit, competing against 125 other teams from around the world. We also continued the expansion of our middle school STEM programs with the addition of Gateway to Technology classes at Pickens Middle School.

SDPC also rose to the challenge of innovating ways to put technology in the classroom by unveiling a district-wide Bring Your Own Device Program. The program allows students to use their own mobile devices to uncover new ways of learning. Teachers were trained on how to use emerging online tools like Safari Montage to integrate digital media into their curriculum, and the district installed more than 1,550 wireless access points to ensure that our internet connections meet the needs of the Information Age.

The district also distinguished itself in its commitment to the health and safety of our students. SDPC was named a Partner in Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse by the Darkness to Light organization for training more than 90 percent of our staff how to prevent, recognize the signs of, and react to child sexual abuse. Also, West End Elementary and A.R. Lewis Elementary were recognized by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation for fighting childhood obesity.

Finally, 2014 saw the end of the district’s \$377 million Building Futures construction program with the move of Gettys Middle School to a newly renovated campus. We were excited to begin the 2014-2015 school year knowing that every student will learn in a portable-free, technology-rich environment.



Dr. Daniel B. Merck, Ed. D.
Superintendent



Our Achievement



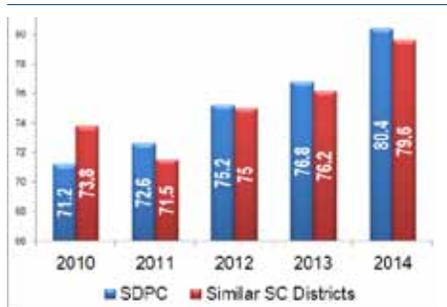
Federal Report Card

The school district earned a "B" with a score of 86.2, which exceeds the state's expectation for performance.

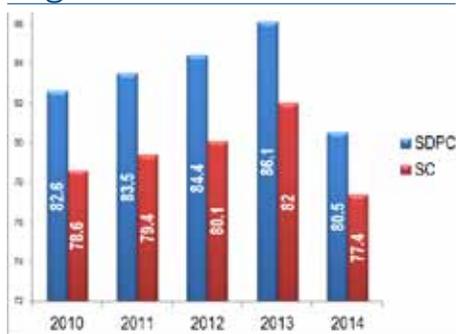
State Report Card

The school district earned an Absolute rating of "Excellent" and a Growth rating of "Good." The Absolute rating compares the district to a statewide standard, while the Growth rating compares the district to its own achievement in the previous year.

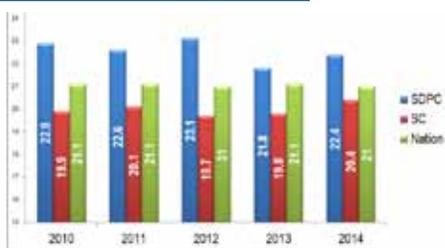
Graduation Rate



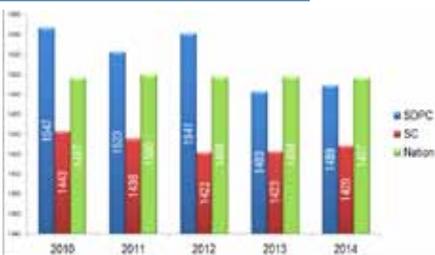
High School Exit Exam



ACT Trend



SAT Trend



About Our High Schools

The board of trustees has set the district's top instructional goal to be an 80 percent on-time graduation rate, which we achieved in 2014. High School Exit Exam (HSAP) scores declined. However, South Carolina discontinued the HSAP as a graduation requirement shortly after the test was administered.

Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS)

PASS tests are taken by our 3rd-8th grade students and are the primary means of assessing our students' academic performance by the state. In 2013-2014, students were taught according to the Common Core state standards in ELA and Math, as opposed to the SC standards used in 2012-2013. South Carolina is continuing to use Common Core for the 2014-2015 school year, but will have new SC standards in 2015-2016.

PASS will be replaced by a new assessment, ASPIRE, for ELA and Math beginning in the spring of 2015.

Subject	2012-2013 SDPC	2013-2014 SDPC	2013-2014 SC Average
English Language Arts	80%	76.3%	73.3%
Math	75.2%	73.1%	71.5%
Science	78.3%	75.3%	69.2%
Social Studies	78.3%	77.6%	75%
Writing	80.2%	79.9%	76%

Key Areas of Achievement:

- A higher percentage of SDPC students met proficiency compared to the state average in 28 of 30 grades and subject areas.
- 8th grade SDPC students posted gains in English, Math, Science, and Writing, despite 8th graders statewide declining in every subject area.

Key Areas for Focus:

- A lower percentage of SDPC student met proficiency compared to 2013 scores in 23 of 30 grades and subject areas.
- Declines in 3rd and 6th grade scores were generally steeper than the statewide trend.

Points of Pride



Points of Pride

- The district's on-time graduation rate rose for the fifth consecutive year to 80.4 percent, again surpassing the average rate for South Carolina districts with a similar poverty rate.
- The district was given an absolute rating of "Excellent" on the SC Annual District Report Card, which is the highest rating a district can earn from the state. The report card also gave SDPC a growth rating of "Good."
- Every SDPC school scored Average or above on the SC Annual School Report Card's absolute ratings. 12 schools scored Excellent, six scored Good, and eight were Average.
- The district improved its score from the previous year on the Federal School Report Card. The score rose to 86.2 in 2014, up from 83.7 in 2013.



We achieved our goal of an 80 percent on-time graduation rate!



- Four Title I schools earned awards due to their Federal School Report Card scores. A.R. Lewis Elementary School, Liberty Elementary School, and West End Elementary School were all named Title I Reward Schools for Performance. McKissick Elementary School was named a Title I Reward School for Progress.
- SDPC remained the top county-wide district in the state for ACT scores, and had the fourth-highest scores of any traditional public school district in the state with a composite score of 22.4.
- SAT scores improved in the district from the previous year, and remained well above the state average.

ACT



- Daniel High School earned the highest scores of any traditional public high school in SC on both the ACT and the SAT.
- AdvancED (formerly SACS) recommended the district for reaccreditation through 2018.



Our Opportunities



STEM Learning



Giving students a competitive edge in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) is a high priority in Pickens County. In addition to highly qualified teachers and rigorous standards



at all of our schools, eight of our elementary schools also feature dedicated STEM labs. Our curriculum includes three district-wide assignments that integrate STEM skills with project-based learning: the 2nd grade Sailboat Challenge, the 5th grade JetToy Challenge, and the 8th grade Glider Challenge. Also, our students have the opportunity to be a part of teams competing in both VEX and FIRST robotics tournaments.

Several of our middle and high school classes are part of Project Lead The Way, a nationally recognized model for STEM education programs. Four of our middle schools offer PLTW Gateway to Technology classes, introducing students to engineering and biomedical science. High school PLTW courses allow students to apply their STEM skills toward complex, open-ended problems in a real-world context.

The Pickens County Career & Technology Center is also a key component of our high school STEM program. The mechatronics program in particular has earned accolades both through national competition and through partnerships with the local business community. The PCCTC helps our students convert classroom knowledge into marketable job skills. The School-to-Registered Apprenticeship program is a perfect example of how the PCCTC not only teaches our students the skills to get ahead, but helps place them in businesses where they can begin a career.

Cultivating the Arts

Our schools offer opportunities for students to express their talent and creativity at every level of schooling, beginning with art and music classes at all of our elementary schools, beginning in kindergarten.

At the middle school level our schools offer programs in band, string orchestra, YAMS (Young Appalachian Musicians), and chorus, in addition to fine arts clubs. Our high schools are home to award-winning bands, orchestras and choirs. In 2013-2014 our schools won honors including:

- Daniel High School and Easley High School band programs earned the prestigious 2014 Outstanding Performance Award given by the South Carolina Band Directors Association, the highest award the organization can give.
- Gettys Middle School orchestra members earned 25 Superior ratings at the South Carolina Solo & Ensemble Competition
- The Liberty High School Marching Band won 1st place in music and percussion at the Loy E Wagner marching Invitational.
- Daniel High School student, Morgan Summerlin, was awarded with "Best In Show" at the Annual Upstate High School Art Exhibition.
- The Easley High School Band earned 1st place at State Winterguard Championships
- 70 Gettys Middle School band students received Superior ratings at the South Carolina Solo and Ensemble competition.



Our Finances

The School District of Pickens County received an “unmodified opinion” on the FY 2014 financial audit. This is the highest opinion a school district can receive.

General Fund – This is the operating fund of the district. Most revenues come from local property taxes and state support.

REVENUE

Local Property Tax	\$30,370,991
State Contribution	68,243,851
Other Sources	1,949,213
Total Revenue	\$100,564,055

EXPENDITURES

Instruction	\$64,577,080
Support Services – (This includes administration, electricity, maintenance, media, guidance, etc.)	37,214,484
Other including Community and Intergovernmental	176,356
Debt Service	32,750
Total Expenditures	\$102,000,670

OTHER FINANCING SOURCES (USES)

Proceeds from Sale of Capital Assets	
.....	\$169,775
Transfers In	3,471,791
Transfers Out.....	(170,104)
Total Other Financing Sources (Uses)	\$3,471,462
NET CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES	\$2,034,847

Special Revenue Fund – This fund is used to identify other sources of revenues, most of which come from the Federal Government. The Special Revenue fund also includes revenue from the Education Improvement Act which is funded from a 1 cent sales tax that replaced the residential property tax.

REVENUE

Federal Government	\$8,160,609
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State	11,015,211
Other Local and Intergovernmental.....	2,271,898
Total Revenue	\$21,447,718

EXPENDITURES

Instruction	\$12,021,727
Support Services	5,801,414
Community and Intergovernmental Services	559,929
Total Expenditures	\$18,383,070

OTHER FINANCING SOURCES (USES)

Proceeds from Sale of Capital Assets	\$0
Transfers In	735,848
Transfers Out	(3,818,803)
Total Other Financing Sources (Uses)	(\$3,082,955)
NET CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES	(\$18,307)

Debt Service Fund – This fund is used to pay interest and principal on long-term debt.

REVENUE

Local Property Taxes	\$23,288,784
State and Other Local	2,700,446
Total Revenue	\$25,989,230

EXPENDITURES

Principal Retirement	\$13,134,647
Interest, Bond Issuance, and other Fees	15,546,392
Total Expenditures	\$28,681,039

OTHER FINANCING SOURCES (USES)

Proceeds from Sale of Capital Assets	\$0
Transfers In	24,063,871
Transfers Out	(24,068,425)
Total Other Financing Sources (Uses).....	(\$4,554)
NET CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES	(\$2,696,363)

School Building Fund - This fund is used to account for expenditures that are restricted, committed, or assigned for capital

outlay related to equipment, site acquisitions and construction. These expenditures include the Educational Facilities Corporation (EFC) which was funded by bond proceeds in FY 2006-2007.

REVENUE

Local	\$240,432
Total Revenue	\$240,432

EXPENDITURES

Support Services	\$4,511,194
Capital Outlay	11,010,654
Total Expenditures	\$15,521,848

OTHER FINANCING SOURCES (USES)

Proceeds from Sale of Capital Assets	
.....	\$314,100
Transfers In	174,658
Transfers Out	(0)
Total Other Financing Sources (Uses).....	\$488,758
NET CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES	(\$14,792,658)

School Food Service - This fund is used to account for revenue and expenditures related to the school food service program. The majority of the revenue is received from sales to pupils and USDA revenue received from the Federal Government.

REVENUE

Local & State	\$2,405,204
Federal Government	5,444,501
Total Revenue.....	\$7,849,705

EXPENDITURES

Support Services	\$7,214,256
Total Expenditures	\$7,214,256

OTHER FINANCING SOURCES (USES)

Proceeds from Sale of Capital Assets	\$0
Transfers In	0
Transfers Out	(388,836)
Total Other Financing Sources (Uses)	(\$388,836)
NET CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES	\$246,613

About Our Budget

The school district's primary operating fund is the General Fund, which in 2013-2014 totaled \$102,000,670 in expenditures, slightly over our budget of \$101,800,503. About 89 percent of our General Fund Budget goes to salaries and benefits of our employees. Of the remainder of the budget, about 4 percent goes to utility costs, 4 percent to Purchased Services, 2 percent on Supplies, Books, and Equipment, and less than 1 percent on other costs. The efforts of our financial staff to account for every dollar of our funding was rewarded with an “Unmodified Opinion,” the highest rating an organization can receive, from the accounting firm of Greene, Finney and Horton on the district's external audit for the financial year.

Since the recession of 2008-2011, the district maintained a balanced budget each year without raising property taxes. Although both state and local revenue sources are growing again, costs such as state-mandated teacher pay, medical care, retirement, and insurance continue to rise at a faster rate. It is our goal to continue to manage costs in areas over which we have control—such as utilities—without cutting the people and services that impact students.