

Strategic Spartanburg Community Indicators

2008

An Evaluation of Community Indicators Goal 1: The Status of Kindergarten Through High School Education in Spartanburg County

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A LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

On behalf of Spartanburg County, the United Way of the Piedmont, The Spartanburg County Foundation, and the University of South Carolina Upstate, partners in *Strategic Spartanburg: Community Indicators VI*, I am pleased to provide you the first in-depth assessment of an Indicator goal. Produced by the Metropolitan Studies Institute of USC Upstate, this document builds upon previous Community Indicator reports by providing a quantitative, comprehensive examination of Indicator Goal 1: "Our children will excel academically through the provision of quality education." The information contained in this report is informed by the many subject matter experts in our community who influence the achievement of our goal.

Please take the opportunity to review this information and consider its observations relative to the achievement of academic excellence for our children. In the coming months, community discussions focused on the findings of this report will be initiated. At these meetings you will be asked to not only contribute your commentary but also to help engage the appropriate action in response to the data and discussion. Subsequent to this report, a report for each Indicator goal will be produced by the MSI so that our community remains fully informed of the measures that reflect upon our progress.

This report could not have been accomplished without support from all of the community partners, funders, and experts in our community who commit the time and effort to advance understanding of the issues that affect our County. Thanks to all of you. I would also like to thank Dr. Kathleen Brady at the Metropolitan Studies Institute of USC Upstate for her work to produce this report. This document represents more than just data. It represents a fundamental advancement in our Community Indicator effort. Valid, objective data underpinning discussion of issues in our community profits us all.

Sincerely,

Tom Gates
Cabinet Chair

Strategic Spartanburg: Community Indicators VI

The University of South Carolina Upstate

USC Upstate defines itself as a “metropolitan university.” It is a member of the international Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities; and, similar to the missions of its fellow members, USC Upstate regards its relationship to Spartanburg and Greenville and to the Upstate’s I-85 corridor communities as of fundamental importance to its purposes and future.

Our recent establishment of “The Metropolitan Studies Institute” as a regional research enterprise is a direct expression of that relationship.

As the fastest growing university in South Carolina over the past ten years reflecting the growth of the Upstate, and enrolling the second largest number of South Carolina students among the State’s ten comprehensive universities, USC Upstate aims to be regarded as one of the leading metropolitan universities in the Southeast.

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The Metropolitan Studies Institute at USC Upstate

The mission of the Metropolitan Studies Institute (MSI) is to support research efforts between USC Upstate and the community that enhance relationships, promote the reciprocal flow of information and ideas, assist community and economic development, and increase the strategic use of the University’s scholarship and outreach capabilities. The MSI engages in selected community-based research and assessment projects, most notably the Spartanburg Community Indicators Project, and partners with community agencies to undertake program evaluations, needs assessments, feasibility studies, and data management projects.

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Executive Summary

In 2005, the Spartanburg County Foundation and the United Way of the Piedmont released *Community Indicators VI: Strategic Spartanburg*. The sixth edition was a culmination of many hours of discussion and research which has resulted in a community-wide project focused on the quality of life for all citizens in our community. Transitioning the data collection and assessment component of the Community Indicators Project to the Metropolitan Studies Institute has allowed for a more comprehensive assessment of the status of each goal, via examination of a wider variety of indicators.

Originally, the Community Indicators Project identified four indicators relative to goal 1, “Our children will excel academically.” In the current iteration, indicators for goal 1 have been added or deleted from prior versions of the Community Indicators Project depending on the assessed strength, accessibility, or validity of the information they provide. For example, the current list does not include Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) scores as an indicator for goal 1 since this instrument is not expected to be used in the future and, therefore, does not allow for collection of longitudinal data. However, this iteration does provide data for first time indicators including school readiness, attendance, school performance, graduation to post-secondary school, additional teacher credentials, per pupil expenditure, school variety, and English as a second language instruction for a total of 17 indicators. Additionally, goal 1 has been broadened in this report to state, “Our children will excel academically *through the provision of quality education*” in order to capture more fully the impact of the educational system on academic performance.

Each indicator is thought by subject matter experts, namely the seven Spartanburg County School District Superintendents, to be a useful and valid reflection of goal 1, providing assessment of kindergarten through 12th grade education for Spartanburg County in as comprehensive fashion as possible. Because community leaders from all sectors are in general agreement that education impacts every measure of community status, goal 1 has been selected as the inaugural topic for in-depth study of Community Indicators Project goals for 2008.

This report provides an overview of the educational attainment and status of the education system for Spartanburg County’s children and youth. A variety of sources of educational data were examined in order to obtain the broadest picture of the status of goal 1. Original data sources were used for the most part and were obtained primarily from the S.C. Department of Education (unless otherwise noted). Much of the information relative to individual school districts was found in 2007 Annual District Report Cards.

For comparison purposes, school district data from communities with similar population demographics are supplied where possible. Data were obtained from Greenville County, Richland County, and Charleston County, South Carolina, and, in some cases, from Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. South Carolina state data and national data are provided where possible and as appropriate.

Results of indicator analyses reveal that Spartanburg County schools are doing very well on most measures when compared to S.C. peer counties. Readiness, ACT and SAT scores, and graduation rates are highest, or among the highest, of any counties. However, Spartanburg county students fall below their peers in continuing their education in post secondary institutions, despite their demonstrated ability to succeed at this level.

Goal 1 Indicator	At or Above the Average of Comparable Counties/State*
School Readiness	✓
Attendance	✓
Enrollment	N/A
HSAP Passage Rate	✓
SAT Scores	✓
ACT Scores	✓
AP Exams	✓
Gifted and Talented Programs	✓
Dropout Rates	✓
Graduation Rates	✓
Graduation to Post-Secondary Education	No
School Performance	N/A
Teacher Credentials	✓
Per Pupil Expenditure	No
English as a Second Language	N/A
Students with Disabilities	N/A
School Variety	N/A

**N/A ratings are for indicators where comparisons are irrelevant, or where valid comparative data are not available*

School quality measures, as reported in the annual district report cards, are not predictive of student success, nor are per pupil funding and differences in teacher certification. Conversely, socio-economic status and race are predictors of lower test scores and lower graduation rates. These predictors and discrepancies should be addressed in order to improve overall school, district, and county success in terms of educational status.

Spartanburg County demographics indicate that the county has the lowest percentage of high school and college graduates for persons age 25 and over, as well as the lowest per capita and household median income among peer counties. Degree attainment, in large part, drives per capita and family income, community economic development and quality of life. Community Indicators Project stakeholders should capitalize on the success of Spartanburg County students and facilitate transition to the post-secondary level.

Strengths and Challenges

Upon examination of the data for each indicator and other data relevant to the status of education for grades K-12 in Spartanburg County, there are a number of positive findings. Primary among these are:

- Spartanburg is above state and peer county average for kindergarteners' readiness for first grade on all English-language arts measures.
- Spartanburg is above state and peer county average for kindergarteners' readiness for most mathematics measures.
- Spartanburg is above state and peer county average for kindergarteners' readiness for all personal and social development measures.
- Spartanburg is lower than the state average for failure in the first three grades.
- Spartanburg County composite for exit exam passage rates is higher than rates for comparison counties.
- Average composite SAT and ACT scores for Spartanburg County exceed state average scores. Of peer counties, Spartanburg composite scores are second (after Greenville).
- Spartanburg's 2007 composite SAT and ACT scores are higher than 2006 composite scores.
- Spartanburg County students scored highest among their counterparts on 2007 AP exams.
- Spartanburg County has had the lowest dropout rates among peer counties each year for the last four years.
- Spartanburg has the highest high school graduation rate among all counties.
- Spartanburg students have access to three high-performing vocational / technical centers.

Assessment of the indicators also results in a number of negative findings. These are:

- Spartanburg has the lowest percentage of high school graduates by county population, age 25 and over, of any of the peer counties, the S.C. average and the U.S. average.
- Spartanburg has the lowest percentage of residents holding bachelor's degrees by county population than any of the peer counties, the S.C. average and the U.S. average.
- Spartanburg County has the lowest median household income and the lowest per capita income of the peer counties, the S.C. average and the U.S. average.
- There is disparity in school readiness by race and by gender on all 70 areas of measure.
- Although three Spartanburg districts scored above the average national 2007 SAT composite score, the Spartanburg County district average score was below the national average score.
- No Spartanburg district scored at or above the national 2006 or 2007 ACT average composite score.
- There is wide variance in exit exam passage rates and ACT / SAT scores by district in Spartanburg County.

- There is wide variance in dropout rates and graduation rates by district for Spartanburg County.
- Dropout rates are not decreasing consistently in six of the seven Spartanburg districts.
- Spartanburg County high school graduates enter college at a rate lower than their counterparts in two of three comparison counties.
- Spartanburg high school graduates enter college at a rate lower than the state average.

Several findings pertain to general strengths and challenges for S.C. which likely pertain to Spartanburg as well. These include:

- S.C. students take SAT and ACT exams at a rate greater than the national average.
- ACT and SAT scores have been improving over the past four years in S.C.
- S.C. students do not demonstrate readiness for college curricula, falling below the national average for this measure in all five categories of assessment.
- Black / African-American students score significantly lower on college entrance exams than do their white and other race counterparts.
- It does not appear that per pupil funding, school ratings or teacher certification status has any direct bearing on graduation rates in any of the S.C. counties examined.
- Socio-economic status is the strongest predictor of graduation rate.

Demographic Profile

Spartanburg County comprises 819 square miles in the northwest quadrant of South Carolina. Its county seat, Spartanburg, is the most populous of the county's cities and towns and is located centrally in the county. Spartanburg County has grown in population consistently each year since 2000, as have comparison counties and the state average population.

Spartanburg County is divided into seven public school districts, each with its own superintendent and school board.

District	Enrollment	Location of District Office	# Schools
Spartanburg 1	4,866	Campobello	11
Spartanburg 2	9,587	Boiling Springs	14
Spartanburg 3	3,095	Glendale	8
Spartanburg 4	3,033	Woodruff	4
Spartanburg 5	7,019	Duncan	11
Spartanburg 6	9,934	Roebuck	17
Spartanburg 7	7,816	Spartanburg	5
Total:	45,350	Total:	70

Spartanburg County can be compared to demographically similar counties in South Carolina, including Greenville, Richland and Charleston. It can also be compared on certain indicators to Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, which is 75 miles to the north along the I-85 corridor.

The data in Table 2 demonstrate that, in terms of educational attainment, Spartanburg ranks lowest among all comparison counties, as well as the state and national averages, for high school and college completion. Further, Spartanburg County has the lowest median household income and per capita income of all comparison counties, lower in fact than the S.C. and U.S. averages. However, there is a higher percentage of families who fall below the poverty level in Greenville, Charleston, and S.C. on average. A higher percentage of individuals fall below the poverty level in Greenville, Richland, and Charleston. There is also a higher percentage of individuals below the poverty line in the U.S. on average than in Spartanburg County. Spartanburg County also has the highest median population age of all counties and the state and national averages.

Table 2. Demographics of Comparable Cities*(From the 2006 American Community Survey)*

	Spartanburg	Greenville	Richland	Charleston	Mecklenburg	S.C.	U.S.
Average household size	2.46	2.48	2.36	2.33	2.41	2.52	2.61
Percent high school graduates	79.3%	81.6%	87.4%	86.3%	87.8%	81.3%	84.1%
Percent holding bachelor's degrees	19.2%	27.1%	35.5%	36.1%	38.1%	22.7%	27.0%
Percent foreign born	5.0%	7.4%	4.6%	4.8%	12.7%	4.1%	12.5%
# in labor force, age 16+	64.8%	66.2%	68.3%	64.1%	73.9%	63.1%	65.0%
Median household income *	\$39,694	\$41,850	\$45,370	\$43,857	\$51,945	\$41,100	\$48,451
Per capita income *	\$21,610	\$23,926	\$23,730	\$28,551	\$30,556	\$21,875	\$25,267
Families below poverty level	9.9%	10.8%	9.8%	12.9%	8.4%	11.9%	9.8%
Individuals below poverty level	12.7%	13.6%	13.5%	18.1%	11.3%	15.7%	13.3%
Median age	37.3	36.9	34.4	36.0	35.0	36.4	36.4
White	75.7%	76.2%	48.6%	63.7%	60.1%	67.3%	73.9%
Black or African-American	20.4%	18.0%	45.7%	31.9%	30.1%	28.6%	12.4%
Hispanic or Latino	4.5%	6.2%	3.3%	3.3%	9.8%	3.4%	14.8%

* in 2006 inflation adjusted dollars

Readiness, Attendance, and Enrollment

Both school readiness for first grade and attendance have been demonstrated to be predictors of educational success.

School Readiness

Since 2001, the S.C. Readiness Assessment has been administered by kindergarten and first grade classroom teachers to assess students' skills necessary for success in learning and, thereby, readiness to progress to first and second grades. This assessment is an unobtrusive measure that relies on teacher observation and documentation of personal and social development, math and English/language arts knowledge, and skills tied to the state academic standards.

Table 3 demonstrates that Spartanburg kindergarteners score consistently higher than their counterparts in other counties and higher than their S.C. counterparts on average in all but four categories for readiness. Because Spartanburg County has the lowest percentage of children over-age for grade 3 (12.6%), readiness data reflected in Table 4 are consistent with research findings that kindergartener readiness is a predictor of academic success in the early grades.

Table 3. Kindergarten Assessment of Readiness for First Grade by County, 2007					
	Spartanburg	Greenville	Richland	Charleston	S.C. Average
English-Language Arts					
Communication	74.8%	70.1%	68.3%	71.9%	68.5%
Reading	82.5%	80.8%	74.9%	77.8%	77.9%
Writing	75.9%	73.2%	68.9%	73.1%	70.5%
Mathematics					
Mathematical Processes	87.3%	85.6%	82.3%	83.3%	83.6%
Number and Operations	74.6%	79.9%	71.5%	79.2%	78.0%
Patterns, Relationships, and Functions	75.8%	73.9%	68.9%	73.9%	72.0%
Geometry and Spatial Relations	81.4%	81.8%	77.3%	82.6%	79.0%
Measurement	82.8%	82.6%	77.2%	81.2%	79.6%
Data Collection and Probability	69.7%	66.7%	62.0%	70.5%	65.4%
Personal and Social Development					
Self Concept	83.6%	83.8%	79.0%	81.2%	80.7%
Self Control	88.2%	86.8%	82.3%	84.5%	84.3%
Approaches to Learning	86.9%	84.4%	80.7%	82.8%	82.5%
Interaction with Others	80.3%	75.9%	67.4%	77.0%	74.2%
Social Problem Solving	78.0%	74.1%	63.5%	77.7%	72.0%

S.C. Kids Count, 2007

above the Spartanburg County rating

Table 4. Readiness Through Third Grade, S.C. Counties, 2007					
	Spartanburg	Greenville	Richland	Charleston	S.C.
Children not consistently ready for first grade	21.4%	22.9%	22.9%	20.7%	24.2%
Children failing first grade	3.2%	5.5%	4.8%	4.4%	5.4%
Children failing second grade	1.5%	2.3%	2.1%	3.1%	2.5%
Children failing third grade	1.2%	1.2%	1.5%	1.8%	1.7%
Children over-age for third grade	12.6%	17.0%	12.7%	15.4%	16.3%

S.C. Kids Count, 2007

When readiness is considered by ethnicity, Spartanburg kindergarteners scored higher than the state average in 2007 on 66 of 70 areas of measure for preparedness for first grade. (See Table 5)

Table 5. Spartanburg Kindergarteners' Readiness for First Grade					
	White Male	White Female	African-American/ Other Male	African-American/ Other Female	Total
ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS					
Communication					
Spartanburg County	73.9%	86.3%	59.9%	72.8%	74.8%
South Carolina	68.8%	79.7%	56.6%	68.7%	68.5%
Reading					
Spartanburg County	79.8%	90.5%	69.9%	87.0%	82.5%
South Carolina	75.8%	89.3%	65.2%	81.4%	77.9%
Writing					
Spartanburg County	74.2%	86.9%	60.7%	76.6%	75.9%
South Carolina	70.4%	82.8%	57.1%	71.6%	70.5%
MATHEMATICS					
Mathematical Processes					
Spartanburg County	86.1%	94.0%	77.6%	88.5%	87.3%
South Carolina	83.9%	91.6%	74.6%	84.2%	83.6%
Number and Operations					
Spartanburg County	82.1%	85.6%	60.1%	76.1%	74.6%
South Carolina	80.5%	88.9%	65.5%	78.2%	78.0%
Patterns, Relationships, and Functions					
Spartanburg County	76.9%	86.6%	59.3%	72.9%	75.8%
South Carolina	74.2%	84.2%	58.1%	71.1%	72.0%
Geometry and Spatial Relations					
Spartanburg County	81.3%	89.9%	68.8%	80.5%	81.4%
South Carolina	80.9%	88.6%	67.7%	78.4%	79.0%
Measurement					
Spartanburg County	83.4%	91.7%	69.2%	81.4%	82.8%
South Carolina	81.4%	89.3%	68.0%	79.4%	79.6%
Data Collection and Probability					
Spartanburg County	73.3%	79.9%	54.3%	62.6%	69.7%
South Carolina	71.6%	76.7%	52.0%	60.0%	65.4%
PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT					
Self Concept					
Spartanburg County	85.8%	89.9%	73.1%	80.4%	83.6%
South Carolina	84.5%	88.3%	71.2%	78.2%	80.7%
Self Control					
Spartanburg County	90.6%	94.2%	78.3%	84.3%	88.2%
South Carolina	87.7%	91.7%	75.0%	82.1%	84.3%
Approaches to Learning					
Spartanburg County	90.4%	94.0%	74.3%	82.2%	86.9%
South Carolina	86.8%	90.8%	72.3%	79.1%	82.5%
Interaction with Others					
Spartanburg County	83.3%	88.3%	67.2%	75.1%	80.3%
South Carolina	79.4%	84.0%	62.5%	70.0%	74.2%
Social Problem Solving					
Spartanburg County	82.2%	88.0%	61.2%	71.5%	78.0%
South Carolina	77.0%	83.1%	59.6%	67.3%	72.0%

S.C. Kids Count, 2007

below S.C. average

Attendance

Reported student attendance rates by district for 2007 varied within 3.4 points from a high of 97.6% in Richland District 2 to a low of 94.2% in Spartanburg District 7. This is not a significant point spread.

Enrollment

District enrollment varies within Spartanburg County from a low of 3,033 in District 4 to a high of 9,934 in District 6, reflecting the population demographics of district catchment areas. Spartanburg, Richland and Charleston Counties are of similar size in terms of total student enrollment. Greenville County, however, has significantly larger enrollment.

Spartanburg 1	4,866
Spartanburg 2	9,587
Spartanburg 3	3,095
Spartanburg 4	3,033
Spartanburg 5	7,019
Spartanburg 6	9,934
Spartanburg 7	7,816
Spartanburg County	45,350
Greenville County	67,966
Richland 1	24,822
Richland 2	22,590
Richland County	47,412
Charleston County	42,488



