



BEAUFORT COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

CHRISTINA GWOZDZ, MD, CHAIR
District 9
Bluffton, Daufuskie

January, 2020

CATHY ROBINE, VICE CHAIR
District 8
Bluffton, Hilton Head

Dear Beaufort County Legislative Delegation,

WILLIAM SMITH, SECRETARY
District 3
St. Helena Island, Beaufort

In anticipation of the upcoming legislative session the Beaufort County Board of Education would like to share our legislative priorities. We are certain that as elected officials you share our commitment, concern and compassion for public education in the state of South Carolina.

EARL CAMPBELL
District 1
Burton, Dale, Lobeco, Seabrook

- **School Start Date**
House Bills 3477, 3256, 3095*
Senate Bill 240

MELVIN CAMPBELL
District 10
Hilton Head Island

We firmly believe that school start dates should be a local decision. Starting dates affect the school calendar and thus the academic achievement of our students. By eliminating the uniform start date our county can start school earlier. During the past four years our fall semester has been interrupted by mandatory evacuation days due to hurricanes, resulting in a shortened fall calendar. Due to our late start some of our make up days are carried over into the Spring calendar.

JOHN DOWLING, JR.
District 6
Bluffton

By starting school earlier, we can:

TRICIA FIDRYCH
District 4
Port Royal, Beaufort

- Ensure 90 days of instruction prior to winter break
- Enable students to complete exams prior to winter break
- Ensure that students taking dual enrollment courses can begin their new classes on time in January
- Enable early graduates to begin college courses in January

RICHARD GEIER
District 5
Burton, Okatie

* H 3095, although this bill does not grant full local control of the calendar it does allow Districts to vary the start date as much as five days prior to the third Monday in August

JOANN ORISCHAK
District 11
Hilton Head Island

DAVID STRIEBINGER
District 2
Lady's Island, Beaufort

RACHEL WISNEFSKI
District 7
Bluffton

FRANK J. RODRIGUEZ, PH.D.
Superintendent

- **Teacher Salaries**
Teachers are professionals and need to be compensated as such. It's the teacher in the classroom that has the greatest impact on the quality of the instruction provided and the level of student achievement attained. The State of South Carolina needs to demonstrate that we value our teachers by raising their pay at minimum to the national average.

ROBYN CUSHINGBERRY
Executive Assistant to the Board

- **Fully Fund State Mandates**
We believe that the State should provide full funding for all educational programs that it so mandates. In addition, we believe that the SC Constitution should be amended to prohibit state mandates on local units of government unless they are fully funded by the state.
- **SRO and Mental Health Initiatives**
School safety is a top priority of all stakeholders, the Governor has called for an SRO in every school. They must be funded. By placing School Resource Officers in all schools, we send our students and staff the message that we value them. Funding for mental health initiatives must also be increased. Mental health support is paramount to identifying root causes of school violence and increasing safety in schools.
- **Education Funding Reform**
While there are many aspects to funding reform, we believe that there are two extremely critical components necessary to reform. South Carolina must generate revenue that is adequate, stable and recurring and ensure that districts are held harmless from receiving less money through a new funding plan.
- **State Funded Full Day Prekindergarten for Economically Disadvantaged Students**
Economically disadvantaged students typically enter kindergarten with fewer concepts of print and fewer general school skills. They begin kindergarten behind their same age peers. We believe that early childhood education is critical to student academic success. State funded full day prekindergarten for our poorest students will help fill in this gap.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Christina Gwozdz" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christina Gwozdz, M.D., Chair
Beaufort County Board of Education