

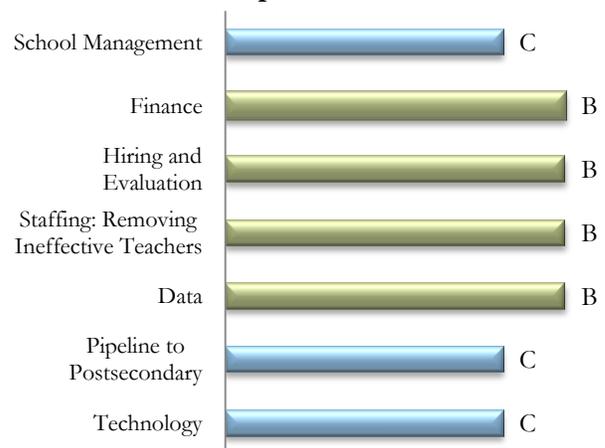
SOUTH CAROLINA'S RANKING FOR EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

An Executive Summary of "Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Innovation" by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Introduction

In a November, 2009 research report by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Center for American Progress and the American Enterprise Institute, South Carolina ranks 17th in the country for educational innovation¹. With above average rankings in four of the seven categories measured and average rankings in the other three measures, South Carolina has advanced considerably from 34th place since the last "Leaders and Laggards" report of 2007². The map on the following page shows the overall "School Management" scores for the United States. While South Carolina received an overall school management grade of "C," no school in the nation received an "A" grade. Specifically, the report notes South Carolina's successes in staffing, hiring, evaluation, removing ineffective teachers, school finance and the state education data system.

South Carolina Educational Innovation Report Card Scores



Teacher Staffing

South Carolina was ranked 9th in the nation for its teacher hiring and evaluation system and 12th for its policies concerning removing ineffective teachers. According to the authors, "the systems and practices now used to bring talent into the classroom are largely antiquated," but South Carolina received high marks for requiring teachers to pass basic skills and knowledge tests, having strong teacher evaluations and accommodating interstate portability requirements for teacher recruitment. The authors also praise states that allow teachers to enter the profession through alternative certification programs, allowing for a teacher workforce from diverse backgrounds; however, they indicate South Carolina could improve for this measure.

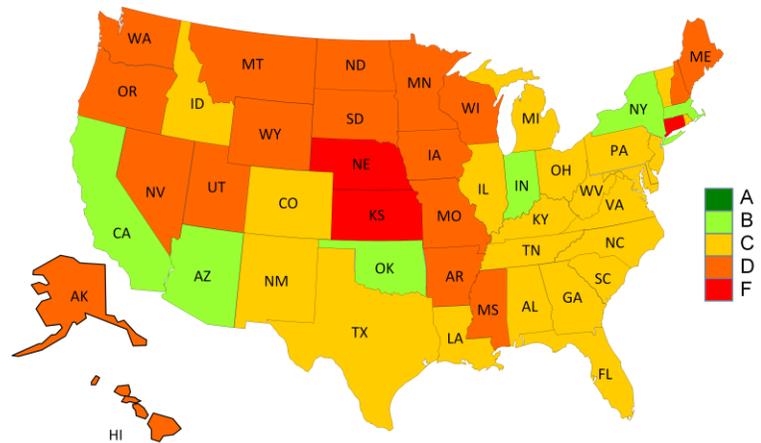
¹ U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Center for American Progress, and Frederick Hess at the American Enterprise Institute, *Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Innovation*, November 2009. http://www.uschamber.com/assets/icw/09reportcard/09_leadersandlaggards.pdf

² U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Institute for a Competitive Workforce, *Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Effectiveness*, February 2007. <http://www.uschamber.com/icw/reportcard/default>

School Finance

The authors value states' and school districts' initiatives to reward teachers based on evidence of student achievement. For the transparency and accessibility of its financial data and pay for performance programs for teachers, South Carolina rates highly in the school finances category. While 97 percent of South Carolina's principals report a major amount of influence or autonomy over their school budgets, the state could improve in the finance rankings by allowing school districts to exercise full authority over teacher pay. Also, South Carolina received a low mark for the complexity of the state's funding mechanism for education, based solely on the number of line item expenditures in the state education budget as a proxy for the total number of state funding programs for education.

National Educational Innovation Report Card Grades



Data Availability

Although “high-quality data systems are rare in education,” South Carolina received a “B” grade for its use of educational data to drive policies and programs. The report notes the state’s ability to match and track both teacher and student records from year to year, to allow for analysis of teacher and student performance over time. According to the authors, this capability is critical to “understand what types of teacher training and expertise have the greatest impact on student learning outcomes.” South Carolina would have fared better in the data category with the availability of a longitudinal data system, pre-school to post-secondary, and college remediation data for use in measuring school accountability; however, very few states have developed either of these capabilities.

Other Measures

In the School Management category, South Carolina receives high marks for clear and well-designed state standards and rewards and sanctions to drive school performance. The report notes that South Carolina has “solid academic standards.” However, based on the 2007-2008 Schools and Staffing Survey results, teachers indicate there is room for streamlining state imposed bureaucracy to reduce administrative burden and improve South Carolina’s education system.

South Carolina received a “C” for developing the pipeline to postsecondary education and employment. Although the state performed better than average for the percentage of students passing an AP test and the percentage of schools reporting dual enrollment programs, South Carolina could improve in the rankings by offering college- and career-ready diplomas and exams that gauge college and career readiness. In the technology ranking, South Carolina’s virtual school program is recognized, but the state does not offer computer-based student assessments for students or technology testing for teachers.