



**The School District
of Greenville County**
Board of Trustees

September 25, 2012

The Honorable Dennis Thompson
Chairman, South Carolina Board of Education
Post Office Box 961
Varnville, South Carolina 29944

Dear Mr. Thompson:

As elected members of the Greenville County Schools Board of Trustees, we are compelled to express our concern with the State Department of Education's Proposed Educator Evaluation and Support Guidelines, as well as the process through which they were developed. While we strongly support a comprehensive evaluation system that uses student growth data as one evaluation component, we believe that the current proposal lacks the educator input, understanding and support necessary for successful implementation.

In addition, we believe that further evaluation of the proposal is necessary to determine if it is a fair, accurate and legally defensible evaluation tool.

With that in mind, we wish to express our gratitude to the members of the State Board of Education for advocating for an open and thorough discussion of this proposal, and we encourage you to use your authority to ensure that any proposal adopted as a state regulation regarding teacher and principal evaluations include the following:

Broad Input from Teachers, Principals and District Administrators

Our teachers and principals are professional educators who work tirelessly to ensure that our students excel academically, recognize their own unique talents and are prepared to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world. They not only understand the importance of an objective evaluation process, but in districts like ours, have been invaluable in the development and implementation of the evaluation model. The vital role played by teachers, principals and district administrators in the creation, endorsement and execution of any evaluation process cannot be overstated. Therefore, we encourage you to insist that any proposal regarding teacher and principal evaluation be thoroughly vetted by teachers, principals and district administrators before consideration for adoption by the State Board of Education.

Allows for Local Flexibility

As a Board of Trustees, we support local control and flexibility. Every district in our state, just like every school in our district, is unique with its own strengths and weaknesses. We ask that you ensure that any evaluation model adopted by the State Board of Education allows for local school districts to continue to

use their own evaluation models if they are successful and meet reasonable, accepted criteria. In Greenville County, our standards-based model has proven highly effective in identifying levels of performance among professionals and was produced in consultation with external experts, principals, teachers, district office staff and other stakeholders. Professional portfolios, interviews and observations, student performance data, and various other criteria are used to determine an individual's performance rating and plan for continuous professional improvement. It is important to note that student achievement growth has been a part of our teacher and principal evaluations since 2004.

No Additional Cost for Local Districts

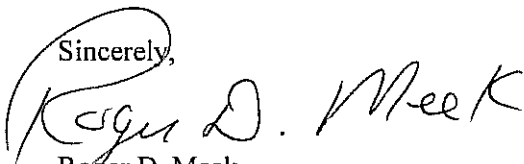
One of our most important tasks as Board Members is to adopt a balanced budget for the operation of the school district. This has been particularly difficult over the past few years as we have faced tremendous cuts in revenue from the state. Any evaluation model that requires additional testing for students, significant retraining of staff, additional staff, and additional materials or supplies will result in an unfunded mandate for school districts. We have done everything we can during this economic downturn to protect our students, teachers and their classrooms. We simply do not have the administrative staff available to take on any additional responsibilities mandated by the state.

We ask you to ensure that any proposal considered for adoption regarding teacher evaluation be revenue neutral to protect both school districts and the taxpayers who fund them from any further unfunded state mandates.

Again, we thank you for your willingness to examine the Proposed Educator Evaluation and Support Guidelines in a deliberate, open and transparent manner. We are confident that with your leadership, input from professional educators from across our state, opportunities for local flexibility, and consideration of any financial impacts to districts, a teacher and principal evaluation model which can positively impact student achievement and professional standards across our state can be adopted.

Your dedicated service to our state is greatly appreciated by us all. Please know that we, the Board of Trustees of Greenville County Schools, stand ready to assist you in whatever way possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger D. Meek". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "R".

Roger D. Meek
Chairman

CC: Dr. Mick Zais, State Superintendent of Education
Greenville County Legislative Delegation