



Executive Summary

Spartanburg County School District #2

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Introduction

Every school system has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school system makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school system stays faithful to its vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the school system, and the kinds of programs and services that a school system implements to support student learning.

 The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a school system with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the community will have a more complete picture of how the school system perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school system to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.

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Description of the School System

Describe the school system's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school system serves?

Spartanburg County School District Two, one of the premier school districts in South Carolina, is located in a picturesque area of the Piedmont nestled in the shadow of the Blue Ridge foothills. Encompassing the city of Chesnee, the community of Boiling Springs, and the intervening rural regions of approximately 134 square miles in the northeastern portion of Spartanburg County from I-85 to the North Carolina state line, the district has an estimated population of 65,000 and a school population of 10,137. The area offers abundant opportunities for educational, recreational, spiritual, and cultural growth. Our schools boast impressive academics, dedicated faculty and staff, a supportive community, a committed administration, and motivated students.

District Two has, in two attendance areas, seven elementary schools, one intermediate school, three middle schools, a ninth grade campus and two high schools. Swofford Career Center is shared with adjoining Spartanburg School District One. The McCarthy-Teszler School for students with severe disabilities and the Whitlock Flexible Learning Center are shared with all seven Spartanburg school districts. Two other programs shared with the seven districts are housed at local colleges: the Scholars Academy at the University of South Carolina Upstate and the Early College program at Spartanburg Community College. The districts have also collaborated to provide the Spartanburg County Public Virtual School which is in its fourth year of existence. District Two provides primary support for the Upstate Family Resource Center, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization housed in a former school; it provides adult education and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, family therapy opportunities, food/clothing/utilities assistance and a myriad of other programs germane to our area's needs.

The district educates 9,778 students in grades K-12 and another 359 in pre-school classes. The student population is about 72% white, 11% African American, 9% Hispanic, 4% Asian, 3% mixed race, and 1% other. Students are 52% male and 48% female. We have 56% of our students qualifying for free/reduced price lunches and 44% categorized as full pay.

A problem this creates for us is that as people move to the area in search of jobs, many choose to live in our school district which serves as a bedroom community to the industrial areas. Realtors tell us that potential buyers with children often come here asking about homes in District Two as they understand our schools are very good.

Our Board of Trustees and administration are in the process of adding a new elementary school. We are exploring options regarding the idea of building a third high school in the district. We would also like to build another intermediate to reduce our current school populations in several feeder schools. Our goal is to do this with a minimum of cost to our taxpayers and within the 8% bonding limit making a referendum unnecessary. To this point in our history, we have been able to meet our facility needs in this manner.

An obstacle in this process is the current education funding mechanism in South Carolina. In 2006, our legislature passed Act 388 into law which eliminated property tax on primary residences for school districts' general funds and replaced with a one cent increase in the sales tax. The swap worked for one year, but when the recession hit, the wisdom of replacing the stable property tax funding stream with a volatile sales tax inflicted much damage on our school revenues. We are attempting to work with professional education organizations, our local legislative delegation and others around the state to replace our antiquated and convoluted system with something more stable and reasonable. Of the 85 school districts in South Carolina, we are 84th in expenditures per pupil and class size.

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Another challenge the funding issue presents is our ability to keep up with advances in classroom technology. We have added Promethean Boards, laptop labs, classroom computers, wireless connectivity, a multitude of servers, increased bandwidth and are making our first forays into iPad computing by beginning a 1:1 plan for middle and high school students.

One may ask how we have been able to sustain solid academic results with such a meager funding stream. Much of our success rests on two primary factors: an outstanding system with strong leadership and classroom teachers and a supportive community. Many of our students come from two-parent families, and the area is a highly faith-based type of community; good families help make good schools. Spartanburg Two, striving for continuous improvement, is a wonderful place to live, work and go to school.

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System's Purpose

Provide the school system's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school system embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.

In Spartanburg School District Two, "Our mission is to prepare our students for tomorrow's world by providing effective and innovative educational practices in a safe and supportive environment." Undergirding our purpose statements and practices is the Core Principle of "Students First" and our Vision to "unlock the full potential of every student." We believe that one will find that our district epitomizes and emphasizes teaching and learning for all students through innovative instructional methods and that our mission statement and other purpose statements clearly define, shape, and describe our district culture:

Vision Statement:

Unlock the full potential of every student.

In pursuit of this vision, our schools are committed to
inspiring life-long learners,
progressing technologically,
motivating students and staff,
fostering a student-centered culture,
providing a safe, equitable learning environment,
welcoming parent and community involvement,
teaching life skills necessary for success,
cultivating responsible citizens, and
improving continually.

Beliefs:

All students can learn.
Learning is a life-long process.
Everyone is unique and has value.
Individuals must be prepared for a global society.
A safe and supportive environment nurtures growth.
Decisions must be based on what is best for all students.
Education is a joint school, family, and community venture.

Learner Expectations:

We expect students to become
self-directed learners,
adept users of technology,
innovative problem solvers,
competent in foundational skills,
quality producers and performers,
confident and effective collaborators and communicators, and
contributing citizens able to succeed in a changing society.

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Our inviting, family-friendly schools set the stage for positive learning experiences. We believe that a combination of safe environments and high expectations provide a solid foundation and focus for the work of our system.

Our core principle, mission statement, vision, beliefs, and learner expectations guide the philosophy and operation of the district. All school improvement plans align with these values. Progress toward accomplishment of the system's goals is constantly monitored, and adjustments are made as needed. A report that outlines our achievement levels is published annually and provided to the Board of Trustees and the community.

Information regarding the district's foundational principles are communicated through such avenues as the district website, publications, reports to the Board of Trustees, data displayed in the schools and District Office, the Superintendent's Advisory Council meetings (teachers, support staff, parents, students, business/community), communication with the media, and faculty/staff meetings.

District Two schools model the importance of beginning with the end in mind by ensuring that each student, even in 4K, knows the date that he/she will graduate from high school. This simple practice lays the groundwork for a future of educational successes for the students of Spartanburg District Two.

The educational opportunities provided by Spartanburg District Two center around a high degree of student involvement, rigor and relevance. District teachers have collaborated to produce curriculum guides that reflect the approaches to instructional delivery aligned with district expectations. In addition, the collaborative curriculum provides consistency in instruction across the district. Technology is used to support real-world learning and to meet the unique needs of each student. One of our schools, Hendrix Elementary, is an International Baccalaureate School.

Numerous opportunities are provided for students to grow as local and global citizens. Activities such as canned-food drives, recycling events, Relay for Life, Walk to School Day, Habitat for Humanity involvement, and various other school efforts encourage students to learn about giving to others. Life Skills are taught and practiced in all schools. In addition, Boiling Springs Intermediate School emphasizes the tenets of Stephen Covey's "The Leader in Me" program. Special needs students learn life skills in the PAES Lab (Practical Assessment Exploration System) housed at the Upstate Family Resource Center.

Extracurricular activities encourage students to participate in areas of interest outside the school day. Spartanburg District Two has a strong athletic program beginning at the middle school level. Students can participate in football, baseball, basketball, golf, volleyball, soccer, wrestling, cross country, tennis, and cheerleading. Seven of our eight elementary schools have been selected for funding and participation in the Professional Golf Association's youth development program, The First Tee.

Additional non-traditional opportunities are offered in an effort to meet the diverse needs of the learners of Spartanburg District Two. The Spartanburg County Public Virtual School provides opportunities for students to participate in online courses. Students can take one course or enroll full-time.

Dual Credit opportunities are provided in our high schools. For example, the Scholars Academy was developed for students who excel academically. Through a partnership between Spartanburg County Schools and USC Upstate, the program allows students to take college courses and advanced high school classes while continuing to participate in classes and extracurricular activities at their own schools.

The program offerings in Spartanburg District Two enable each student to find a niche to address his/her interests, further illustrating our vision of unlocking the potential of each student. The district's focus is on providing exemplary learning environments in order to develop

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students who are responsible and productive citizens through academic, exploratory, extracurricular, civic, and athletic opportunities.

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Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement

Describe the school system's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school system is striving to achieve in the next three years.

Spartanburg Two is a goal-oriented district, striving for continuous improvement. Our primary goals are posted in the Board Room for us to see each time it is used for staff development and any type of meeting whether for our internal or external publics. It is a visible way of holding ourselves accountable for the academic achievement of our students. You will see them during your visit. The Superintendent also writes a blog and posts results not only of those measures, but of other accomplishments of staff and students, as well.

Hitting some of the highlights, our High School Assessment Program (HSAP) passage rate on both the reading and math on first attempt by our sophomores was 82.9%.

Forty-eight of the 135 students who qualified for the Scholars Academy at USC Upstate are from Spartanburg District Two.

Our ACT scores improved from 20.5 to 21.1 compared to the state average of 20.2, and above the national average of 21.0. Our SAT scores improved from 1459 to 1472 compared to the state's 1431 but still below the national average of 1498. Both of those gaps have closed significantly the past few years.

Our scholarship total grew from \$17,745,803 to \$18.5 million earned by the class of 2014.

A figure we are most proud of, our graduation rate increased from 80.2% to 82.9%! We are setting our sights on a 90% graduation rate next.

The state's ESEA waiver Report Card ranked Spartanburg Two as an "A" district, scoring a 90.1 on a 100 point scale, effectively rating us as 14th among the state's 85 school districts. In addition all four of the district's Title I schools were identified as a Title I Reward School based on ESEA calculations.

There are other student accomplishments that indicate excellence in our extracurricular programs. The Chesnee and Boiling Springs BETA Clubs have consistently earned accolades at the state and national levels for their skits and have had several students earn leadership positions at those levels. Our athletic programs are becoming more and more competitive. For example, the Boiling Springs High School Golf team won the 4A State Championship. Several other Eagle and Bulldog athletic teams, JROTC drill teams, and both bands and orchestras fared well in numerous competitions. The Bulldog Marching Band placed 27th in the country at the Bands of American Grand National Championship in Indianapolis.

How are we getting these results? It is every employee, especially our teachers, striving for continuous improvement, collaborating with one another and with leadership, focusing on implementing the curriculum written for each class using the instructional strategies we advocate, and adjusting instruction according to the daily formative assessment of their students' understanding. It is each one of us working with families and caring enough about our students to walk the second mile to meet their needs. Because of our people, Spartanburg Two is a wonderful place to live and work!

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Additional Information

Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.

School Safety

As our district mission statement indicates, the Spartanburg Two school community realizes that a safe and supportive environment is necessary for academic excellence to thrive. Every parent who entrusts a child to us depends on us to keep him or her safe at school and we realize the need for a comprehensive approach to safeguard our schools. Realizing that no one solution is the fail-proof answer for all situations, we continue the ongoing process of reviewing and upgrading school security and procedures.

In addition to the district crisis plan, each school has an individual plan tailored to its specific needs; these emergency plans and procedures include a perpetual "protective lockdown" in which classroom and perimeter exterior doors are locked or monitored at all times, and lockdown as well as fire/evacuation and natural disaster drills are practiced regularly. Quick reference cards for the school office and red and green reference cards for teachers were developed and implemented in 2010.

Our most valuable resource for ensuring student safety is school staff, through prevention, swift and appropriate response, and mitigation. School Resource Officers review crisis team assignments and lockdown procedures with schools. School Safety is a frequent topic on Principals Meeting agendas. A Safe Schools Committee meets annually to review concerns and vulnerabilities, and the Superintendent's Advisory Groups are asked for their input; an extensive list of school safety measures now in place can be attributed to suggestions from these various perspectives. Eight School Resource Officers are stationed at secondary schools and are assigned to specific elementary school campuses (within three minutes response time). SROs may ultimately be stationed at all schools; meanwhile, we have recently secured off-duty officers to be present on elementary campuses during arrival and dismissal times for the remainder of the school year. The Sheriff's Office and county Emergency Management Office have provided personnel to present to staff on topics such as gang prevention, crisis response, and passive alcohol sensors. The Emergency Management Office has entered the school and mobile phone numbers of administrators into their Emergency Notification System (ENS), an automated phone calling system, to alert us during severe weather/other emergency events. This telephone notification serves as a means of warning in addition to our alert monitors.

In the past five years, cameras have been added and upgraded, older entrances have been redesigned for security (airlocks or buzzer systems), bus drivers and classroom teachers have access to communication in case of emergency, nurses are in all schools, administrators and SROs have cell phone access to student emergency information via PowerSchool, School Messenger has been upgraded to reach parents quickly in case of a crisis, and Versatrans transportation software along with new bus procedures (including picture/address labels for younger students for the first few days of school) help to ensure that bus riders are loaded on the correct bus and safely delivered to their home. Campuses are designed with or have been improved with safety in mind. Keyless entries, Buzz-in Systems and panic buttons have been recently added to tighten building security.

School safety is one of those areas where we can never do enough, especially with limited resources, but vigilance is a must, and we will continue to consider our circumstances and the most practical measures to address potential vulnerabilities, while maintaining a welcoming and family-friendly environment.

Though our growth leveled off somewhat with the recession (and allowed us to focus on upgrading current facilities), we, along with the consultant who made projections for us, expect families to continue to be attracted to our communities and schools for the foreseeable future, and we look forward to welcoming them with a clean, safe, and challenging learning environment!

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