

“There is not just a need for education. It will take a partnership of teachers, parents and administrators to improve student achievement. No one and no thing can accomplish this monumental task alone.”

“Treat all students equally, provide high-quality teaching, have high expectations and students will succeed.”

“In today’s world it is absolutely necessary for students to achieve at the highest level their ability allows, and then go beyond.”

# PRIMARY SOURCES: AMERICA’S TEACHERS ON AMERICA’S SCHOOLS

## SOUTH CAROLINA

A PROJECT OF SCHOLASTIC AND THE BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

“Everyone should finish high school and move on to something higher. I think they all can.”

“Give them standardized tests, but not all the time, and their lives shouldn’t depend on it; and neither should ours.”

“Learning is a lifelong project and all students

are capable

being lifelong learners.”

BILL & MELINDA  
GATES foundation

“How do we prepare students for jobs that don’t yet exist?”

“If states shared common expectations for testing and standards, everyone would be prepared for the 21st Century. Students need to be successful whether they are learning in South Carolina or New York. We need to close the achievement gaps across the board.”

– *Middle School Teacher in South Carolina*

***Primary Sources: South Carolina* is meant for use in conjunction with the complete *Primary Sources* report available at [www.scholastic.com/primarysources](http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources).**

# A NOTE FROM SOUTH CAROLINA AND THE BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

In March 2010, Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation released the landmark study, *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools*, placing the views of our nation's public school teachers at the center of the discussion on education reform.

More than 40,000 teachers participated in the survey – from every state and at every grade level – and the unprecedented size and scope of the study allows for the release of new, state-level data from South Carolina. *Primary Sources: South Carolina* is based on the responses of nearly 700 public school teachers across South Carolina who participated in the national survey.

We asked teachers about the state of American education, the challenges facing students and the variety of supports and tools that teachers need to tackle those challenges. They responded with powerful, nuanced opinions on a number of issues, from student and teacher performance, to classroom innovation and academic standards, to the importance of the school-to-home connection.

Similar to their peers nationwide, teachers from South Carolina had important opinions about the critical issues in education at the national and state levels. Specifically, teachers in South Carolina:

- Are more open to standards-based reform efforts than teachers nationwide—particularly efforts that relate to common standards and common assessments across states.
- Are more open to innovative compensation policies compared to teachers nationwide and more likely to say that these policies can make a strong impact on student achievement and teacher retention.
- Say standardized tests must be used as part of a well-rounded system of evaluating both student achievement and teacher performance and they identify many other performance measures as being more important and more accurate than standardized tests.

It is important to note that *Primary Sources: South Carolina* is a small subset of the data we collected on South Carolina's teachers. Although we have selected the most statistically significant and state-relevant data for inclusion in this mini-report, we encourage you to look at the additional data on South Carolina available in the appendices of the complete *Primary Sources* report.

While *Primary Sources: South Carolina* reflects the wide range of voices and opinions of teachers across the state, one thing is constant: Teachers teach for the love of their students and the chance to make a difference in those young lives. Our goal should be to do all we can to support them in this endeavor.

Sincerely,



**Margery Mayer**

President, Scholastic Education, Scholastic Inc.



**Vicki L. Phillips**

Director of Education, College Ready, United States Program

# THE CHALLENGE

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## South Carolina's Teachers Recognize the Challenges Facing Their Students

Teachers in South Carolina are keenly aware of the limitations of a high school diploma and the disconnect between students' current levels of achievement and the levels at which they must perform to achieve success beyond high school.

Specifically, in South Carolina:

- Teachers say that a high school diploma is not enough for today's students. Ninety-three percent of teachers in the state say that the most important goal of schools and teaching is to prepare students for success beyond high school (93% nationally).
- Nine out of 10 teachers say that not all their students could leave high school prepared to succeed in a 2- or 4-year college (91% nationally).
- Fewer than one fifth (14%) of teachers strongly agree that their students enter their classroom prepared for on-grade-level work and an additional 43% "somewhat agree" (in comparison to 16% and 44%, respectively, among teachers nationwide).
- Only 26% of teachers rate student academic achievement at their schools as "Excellent" (28% nationally).
- Fewer than half (42%) of teachers in the state say that more than three quarters of their students could leave high school prepared to succeed in a 2- or 4-year college.

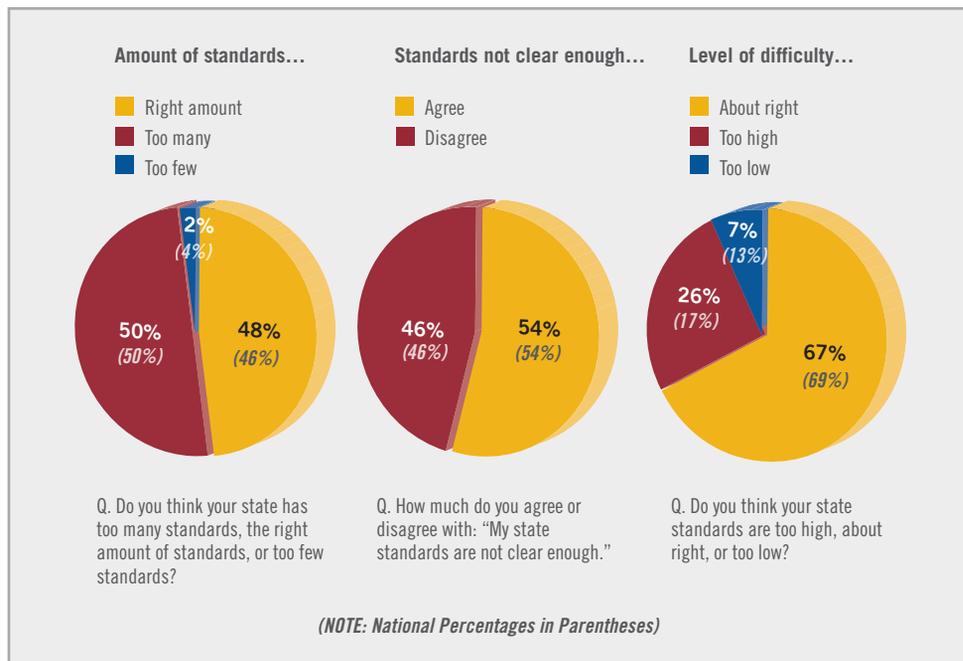
# STATE AND NATIONAL STANDARDS

## South Carolina Teachers' Views on Current South Carolina State Standards

Like their peers across the nation, teachers in South Carolina recognize the role of academic standards in improving student achievement and preparedness. They are divided, however, in their opinions on the amount and clarity of their state standards:

- Teachers are split in their opinions on the amount of state academic standards, with half saying that South Carolina has too many standards (50%) and just under half saying that the number of standards is “about right” 48%; (50% and 46% nationally, respectively).
- As with their peers nationwide, a very small number of teachers in South Carolina (2%) believe that the state has too few standards (4% nationally).
- Teachers are split in their opinions on the clarity of state academic standards, with 54% saying that South Carolina’s standards are not clear enough and 46% saying they are.
- While most teachers (about seven in 10) say the rigor of their state standards is about right, the remaining three in 10 teachers are more likely to say standards are too high (26%), rather than too low (7%).

## Teachers' Views on South Carolina State Standards



## South Carolina Teachers Support Clearer Standards, Common Across States

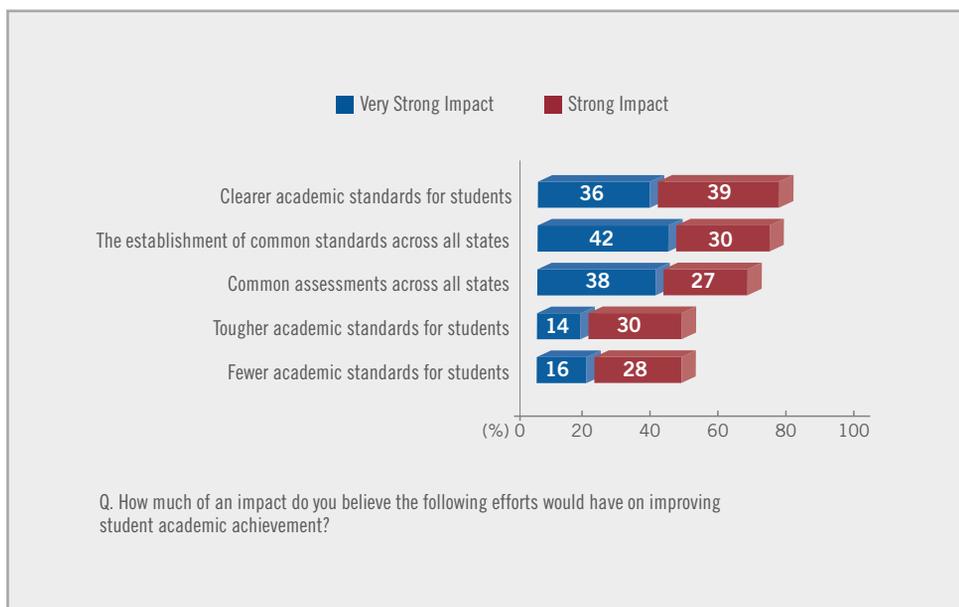
In nearly all cases, South Carolina’s teachers support standards-related reform efforts more than teachers at the nationwide level do, with the most dramatic differences occurring in their views on common standards and common assessments. It should be noted that clearer, common standards, along with common assessments across all states are supported by far more teachers than are efforts related to tougher and fewer standards.

In South Carolina, most differences are revealed at the “very strong” rating level, with the following percentages of teachers saying each would make a very strong impact on improving student achievement:

- Clearer academic standards for students (36% in South Carolina, 30% nationally)
- The establishment of common standards across all states (42% in South Carolina, 24% nationally)
- Common assessments across all states (38% in South Carolina, 20% nationally)

Additionally, 44% of teachers in South Carolina say fewer academic standards for students would make at least a strong impact on improving student achievement (34% nationally).

### South Carolina Teachers’ Views on the Impact Changes to Current Standards Would Have on Improving Academic Achievement



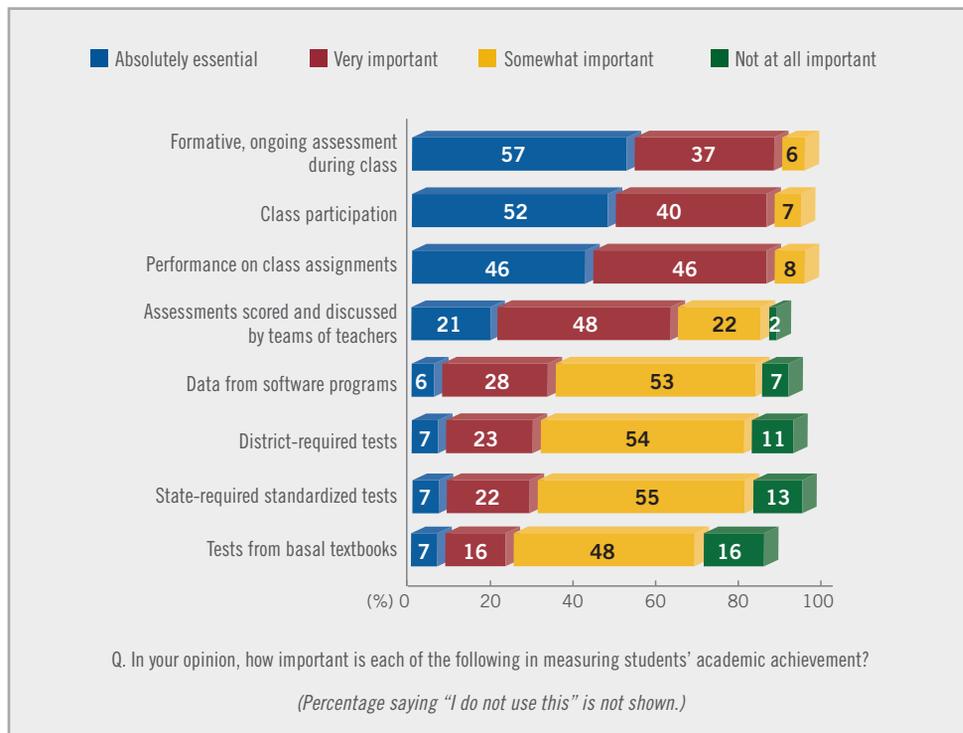
# EVALUATING STUDENT AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE

## South Carolina Teachers' Views on Evaluating Student Performance

South Carolina's teachers are similar to the nation's teachers in their firm belief that student assessment should be driven by in-classroom experiences, including formative ongoing assessments, class participation and performance on class assignments.

Teachers in South Carolina also see value in standardized tests as a way to evaluate student performance. Only 11% and 13% of teachers say district- and state-required tests, respectively, are "not at all" important in measuring student academic achievement (11% and 16% nationally).

## South Carolina Teachers' Views on Importance of Student Performance Measures



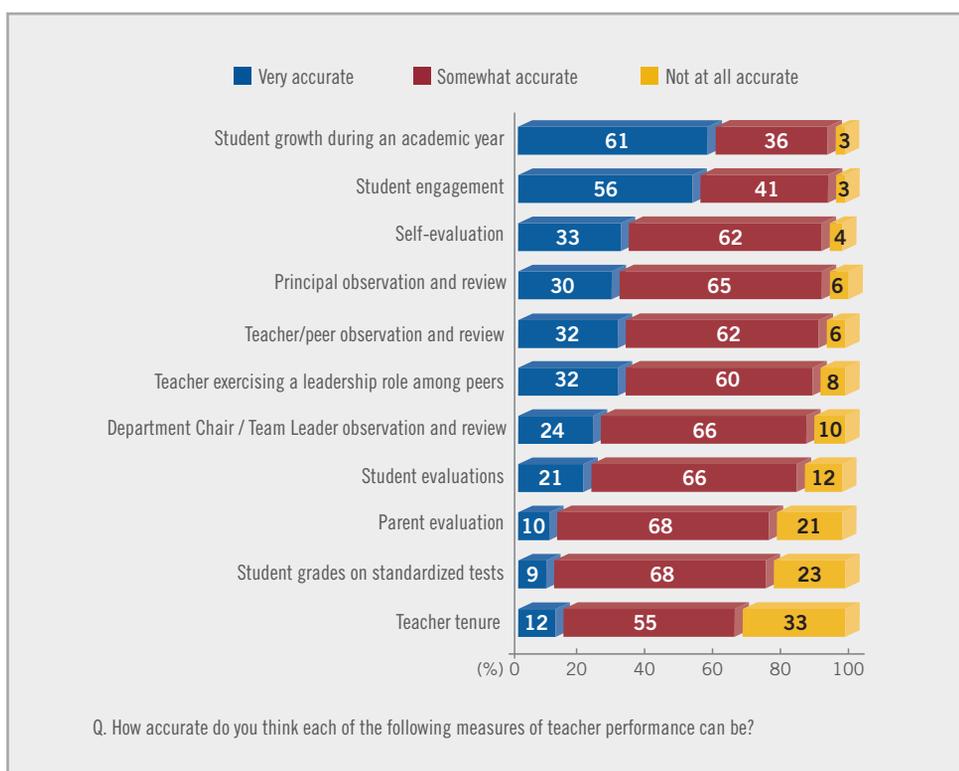
## South Carolina Teachers' Views on Measuring Teacher Performance

In qualitative conversation, teachers stress a desire for their performance to be based on factors they can impact directly—like student growth and student engagement—and not on factors that fail to consider the realities of individual students in individual classrooms.

This is clearly borne out in *Primary Sources* data at both the national and South Carolina levels. By far, teachers say that student growth over the course of an academic year and student engagement are the most accurate measures of teacher performance.

Given South Carolina's teachers' strong support for common standards and common assessments across states, it should be noted that teachers in South Carolina are somewhat more likely than teachers nationwide to say that student performance on standardized tests is at least somewhat accurate in measuring teacher performance (76% vs. 69%).

### South Carolina Teachers' Views on the Degree of Accuracy of Measures of Teacher Performance



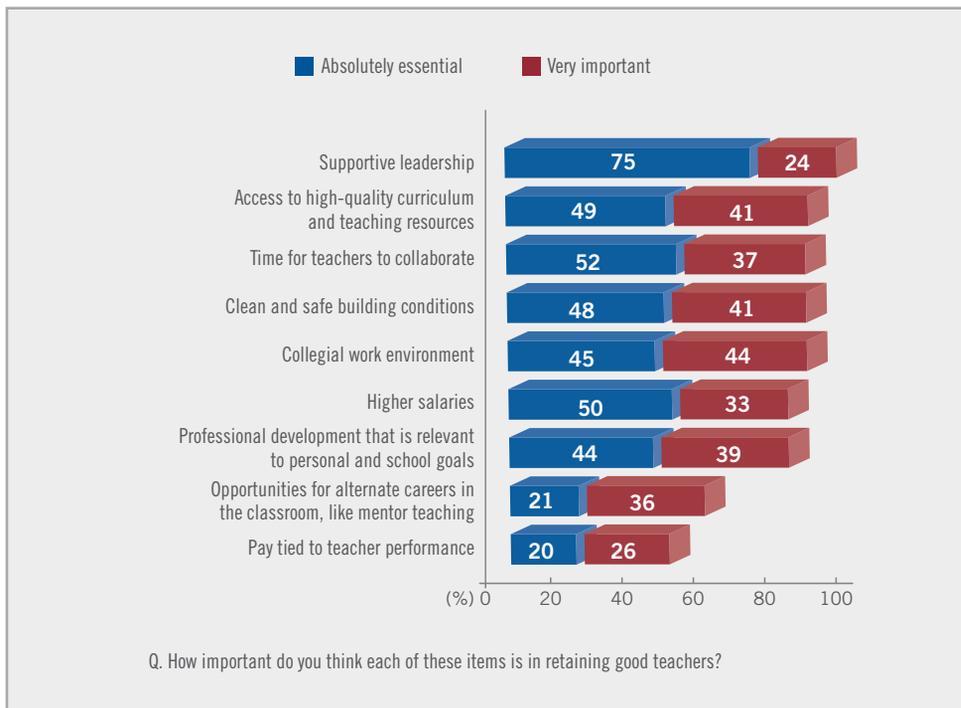
# TEACHER RETENTION

## South Carolina Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention

Overall, South Carolina's teachers feel similarly to their peers nationwide when it comes to the importance of various factors in retaining good teachers.

In nearly every single state in the nation, supportive leadership is by far the most important factor in retaining good teachers, and South Carolina is no exception. In fact, supportive leadership is deemed important by an even larger percentage of teachers in South Carolina than teachers nationwide: 75% of teachers in South Carolina say this is “absolutely essential” in retaining good teachers (the national average is 68%).

## South Carolina Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention

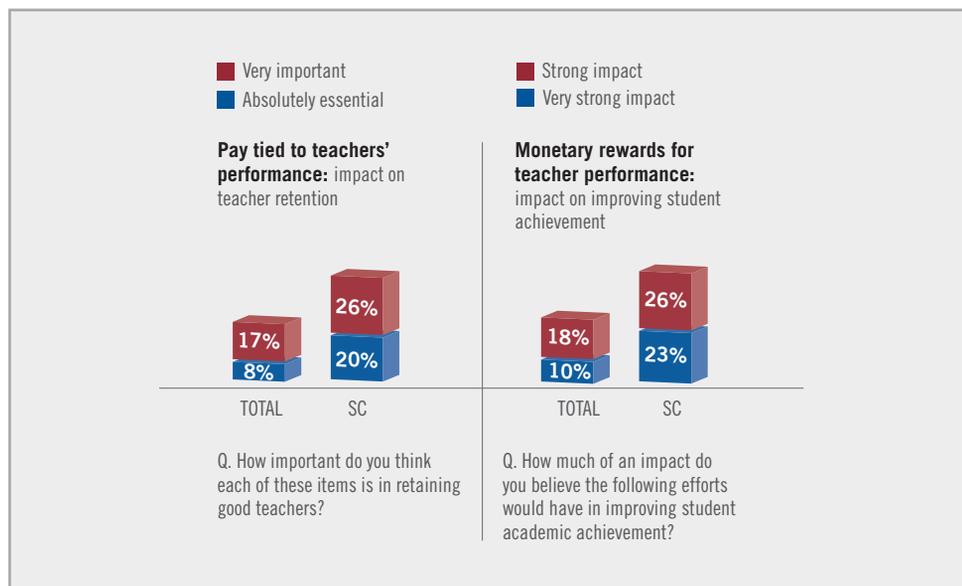


## South Carolina Teachers' Views on Monetary Compensation

Overall, South Carolina teachers' views are in sync with the views of teachers nationally in terms of the importance of various factors in retaining good teachers, with two exceptions—higher salaries and pay tied to teacher performance. Teachers in South Carolina are slightly more likely than teachers nationwide to say that higher salaries are “absolutely essential” to retaining good teachers. (50% in South Carolina, 45% nationally). Additionally, it seems that South Carolina’s teachers are more open to innovative compensation policies when compared to their peers nationwide:

- While pay tied to teacher performance ranks last in importance to retaining good teachers in South Carolina (as it does in nearly every state), far more teachers in the state say it is an absolutely essential or very important factor in retaining teachers (46% in South Carolina, 26% nationally).
- South Carolina’s teachers are also far more likely to believe that monetary rewards for teacher performance would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student academic achievement (48% in South Carolina, 28% nationally).
- Ratings in South Carolina for pay for performance as making both a positive impact on teacher retention and for improving student achievement are among the five highest ratings across all states in the nation.

### South Carolina Teachers' Views on Monetary Issues



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## **Methodology**

This report is based on the responses of the 692 teachers in South Carolina who participated in the national survey for *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools*. The data reflect a cross-section of South Carolina's teachers across many teacher and school characteristics, including grade level(s) taught, years of teaching experience and community income.

The fieldwork for this survey was conducted in March through June of 2009 by phone (n=245) and online (n=447). For more details on the methodology of this study, please see the full *Primary Sources* report at: [www.scholastic.com/primarysources](http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources).

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“This job doesn't pay much but I always want to go to work”

“Teaching is not like any other job. It's a passion.”

“Standards are about equity and expectation.”

“Value should be placed on education. Every job, career, and occupation starts here.”

**PRIMARY SOURCES** is the beginning of an ongoing dialogue with America's Teachers.

We welcome your thoughts and opinions on the report at [www.scholastic.com/primarysources](http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources).

“If you're not tech-savvy, you can't compete in the global marketplace.”

“Role model the skills, believe in the students, and never give up.”

“If we are going to compete as a nation we should be learning as a nation.”

“We have a great system for getting them through the system. We don't have a great system to teach them to think outside the box.”