EVERY STORY HAS A BEGINNING.

The Spartanburg Academic Movement (SAM) introduced itself to Spartanburg County in May 2014 with the publication of the SAM Preface, a document that charted the territory of the Movement. You can find the entire 50-page document on our website LearnWithSAM.org.

SAM Preface defines the Spartanburg Academic Movement as an all-in partnership across Spartanburg County committed to increasing the importance we place on academic achievement for every child, from cradle to career ... pre-school through post-secondary.

The Preface outlines the brief history of the Movement, defines how it operates, profiles the County’s seven school districts and the education community, identifies the critical stages of learning and their measurement, and targets increasing academic accomplishments both near and long-term. It also introduces the “collective impact” model of change within which SAM works and explores SAM’s national connections with the StriveTogether® Partnership.

NOW COMES SAM CHAPTER 1

Chapter 1 documents the many faces of change: changing ambitions, changing lives, and a changing future for Spartanburg County.

And, as with any real story, the first chapter introduces a very serious complication that challenges the narrative to come. In the case of this story, that complication is the complete restructuring of academic assessment across Spartanburg County and the State of South Carolina.

All of the targeted academic accomplishments that SAM anticipated in the Preface are based upon assessment models undergoing change. New models that provide for national comparability are being adopted by the State Legislature and the State Department of Education; and more importantly, are already being put in place across Spartanburg County’s seven public school districts.

These changes are good and important; however, they will require the redefinition and recalibration of SAM’s achievement targets. This process will take time, unfolding through SAM Chapter 2 (2016), and perhaps into SAM Chapter 3 (2017) as well.

Chapter 1 will introduce these assessment changes and the reasons for them in its concluding pages.

BUT, FIRST THINGS FIRST ....
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THERE IS REAL REASON FOR OPTIMISM

Spartanburg County’s bachelor degree holders have increased at a faster relative rate over the past four years than state and national averages. And, if our percentages continue to increase at the same relative rate, Spartanburg County will overtake the state’s average by 2021, and the national average by 2028, positioning us near the ranks of the economic “high flyers” across the United States in 2030.

More and more of our children are growing up with the expectation of going to college. And they are increasingly well-prepared to realize their ambition. Their faces are changing. Their futures are changing. The Spartanburg Academic Movement is gaining momentum. And the future of Spartanburg County is promising.

Has there been improvement?

YES. FOUR YEARS LATER, 2013... NOT 19.2%, BUT 23.3% OF SPARTANBURG COUNTY RESIDENTS 25 AND OLDER HOLD A BACHELOR’S DEGREE OR HIGHER...

A 21% INCREASE IN FOUR YEARS!

Put in a state-wide perspective, Spartanburg County’s 23.3% continues to fall short of the state’s percentage, up from 22.7% in 2009 to 26.1% in 2013; or the 29.6% of adult Americans holding a bachelor’s degree, up from 27%; or, most especially, those cities and regions across the country boasting high-flying economies and bachelor’s degree rates among adults approaching 40%.

THE FACES OF CHANGE

From recognition to action.

In 2009, the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce concluded a study noting that “too few citizens in Spartanburg County, South Carolina were sufficiently well-educated to assure competitiveness in the knowledge economy of the 21st century.”

The most striking piece of evidence supporting the Chamber’s concern was the percentage of adults in the County, 25 and older, holding bachelor’s degrees: 19.2%.

Even the state average was higher at 22.7%; and the national average stood at 27%.

This came as a shock to the system ... Spartanburg County with its seven colleges, its seven public school districts having historically strong reputations, and its private and charter schools all offering unique missions and strengths, yet with bachelor’s degree achievement rates a drag on the average of the State!

The Spartanburg County Foundation took up the cause, establishing and funding “The College Hub,” a non-profit charged to address this single benchmark.

The College Hub Board of Directors, however, soon began to recognize that the bachelor’s degree achievement rate could not be turned around unless all points on the academic continuum were advancing at the same time ... from early childhood education to post-secondary completion ... from cradle to career.

So, in 2012, everything changed for The College Hub ... the challenge, the model, the goals, the strategies, the metrics, the objectives, the funding, the staffing ... even the name. No longer just “college.” No longer a “hub” ... but a “movement.” The Spartanburg Academic Movement.

NO EXCUSES.

Every child must be ready for success in kindergarten; reading to learn by third grade; succeeding in eighth grade math; graduating high school prepared to succeed in college and career.

In May 2014, the Spartanburg Academic Movement published SAM Preface, charting the cradle to career territory, identifying benchmarks, setting targets.

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PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS 25 YEARS OR OLDER WITH A BACHELOR’S DEGREE


There is real reason for optimism

Spartanburg County’s bachelor degree holders have increased at a faster relative rate over the past four years than state and national averages. And, if our percentages continue to increase at the same relative rate, Spartanburg County will overtake the state’s average by 2021, and the national average by 2028, positioning us near the ranks of the economic “high flyers” across the United States in 2030.

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THE CHALLENGES OF CHANGE

BEHIND EVERY DATA POINT, THERE IS A CHILD.

As with all else in life, meeting each educational achievement challenge builds on accomplishment of the one before.

Perhaps the biggest challenges of all are not those facing children, but those facing adults.

Are we ready to recognize that the demands of the 21st century economy have escalated dramatically since we were in school? Are we ready to commit to the academic achievement of all Spartanburg County’s children, not just our own?

Having been raised in a prevailing culture of high self-esteem and different academic standards, can we as adults come to terms with the reality that other nations are surpassing us, and that our children are being challenged to academic achievement beyond what we may recall from our own experience?

Are we ready to align resources behind quality early childhood education; to support the crucial commitments of our schools to success in third grade reading, eighth grade math, and college/career ready high school graduation; to expect all our high school graduates to complete post-secondary education?

These are the challenges we face, challenges to the importance we in Spartanburg County place on high academic achievement.

THE “40/30 CHALLENGE”

In 2009, the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce recognized the need for a value shift in a study it undertook of the economic impact of educational achievement on Spartanburg County. Concerned about the low percentage of our adult population holding bachelor’s degrees, the Chamber proposed the adoption of a bold target for the future of the County, naming it “The 40/30 Challenge.” This ambitious challenge called for doubling bachelor’s degree attainment by 2030, from less than 20% to 40%.

SAM Partners are persuaded that this generational goal is within our reach. We also believe that its achievement depends upon our commitment to addressing the challenges leading up to the “40/30 Challenge,” from kindergarten success onward.

IS A BACHELOR’S DEGREE FOR EVERYONE?

No. However, nearly all jobs paying a living wage require a significant level of post-high school education and training. In the emerging knowledge economy, post-secondary certification of some character is an essential prerequisite for the career opportunities of every high school graduate.
MEETING THE CHALLENGE

CAN WE MEET THE “40/30 CHALLENGE”?

To do so, we will have to sustain and accelerate our trend line in bachelor’s degree achievement rates.

How do we make sure this happens? Asked another way: “Why have Spartanburg County’s academic achievement rates been climbing over the past four years?” It is no accident.

Consider four trends that are contributing importantly to Spartanburg County’s growing ability to meet the academic achievement challenge.

1. County-wide, public high school graduation rates continue to rise.
   They have increased yearly since 2006-07, then at 7.6.1%, and the percentage of students graduating with a regular diploma within four years of entering ninth grade have climbed again in 2013-14 to 83.4%. Our trend line is accelerating beyond the state’s current graduation rate of 80.1%.

2. There has been a phenomenal increase in dual college enrollment across County high schools in recent years, giving young people a head start on a college education. An informal survey of the 7 districts reflects thousands of post-secondary degree hours earned by high school students. This has been matched by growth in Advanced Placement enrollment with a 34% increase from 2009-12 in students taking AP exams, a 20% increase in the number of exams given, and a 22% increase in college credit eligible scores.

3. Spartanburg County schools are currently producing a far richer pipeline of post-secondary bound high school graduates than in earlier times. Enrollment of 2014 high school diploma recipients in all post-secondary programs (technical, associate, bachelor) reflects a 10% increase over 2012, the baseline year for data reported in the SAM Preface.

4. Post-secondary persistence ... that is, completing college after having once enrolled ... is showing signs of improving across Spartanburg County’s colleges. Freshman to sophomore persistence rates at USC Upstate, for example, increased from 66.3% in 2011-12, to 73.1% in 2013-14.

Remember, however ... post-secondary achievement rates will not continue to improve unless all points on the academic continuum are advancing at the same time... from cradle to career.

Is College Worth the Cost?

The pay gap between those with degrees and those without reached a new high in 2014. “Americans with four-year college degrees made 98% more an hour than people without a degree, up from 69% five years earlier, 85% a decade earlier, and 64% in the 1980’s” (Economic Policy Institute).

Much of the debate over the value of college stems from the immediate cost of tuition, not the long-term benefit. Tuition may be high, but the real value measured in earnings over a working lifetime is much higher.

Real value far outweighs the cost, with cost measured as tuition plus wages lost while in college. The average college grad “recovers the cost by age 40 ... after that earning over $800,000 more than the average high school graduate by retirement age” (Federal Reserve Bank of SF Economic Letter, 5/5/14).

Yes, there are stories of people who have skipped college and achieved financial success, but for most, the path to higher earnings involves a degree.

College doesn’t guarantee success ... nothing does. But a decision not to attend because it might not pay off does not add up.
THE SOUTH CAROLINA READ TO SUCCEED ACT (2013-2014)

This aims to increase the number of students reading on grade level by the end of the third grade. It requires districts to have readiness screening for all first-time students in public pre-K and kindergarten, summer reading camps for pre-K through 2nd graders who face reading challenges, retention of 3rd graders reading substantially below grade level, and a comprehensive reading proficiency plan for pre-K through 12th grade. A statewide “Read to Succeed Office” has been established to implement the act, and “literacy add-on” endorsements are now required for early childhood and elementary teachers.

NEW ACHIEVEMENT ASSESSMENTS

New achievement assessments are being introduced in the state to measure academic performance from elementary grades through high school.

SAM Chapter I discusses these new measures in depth on pages 28-31; and, though they introduce a serious complication in measuring targets established in SAM Preface, they will prove extremely beneficial in the long run, providing for comparability of our students’ performance with other students across the nation.

THE HOUSE EDUCATION POLICY REVIEW AND REFORM TASK FORCE

Appointed early this year in response to the state Supreme Court’s ruling last November regarding underfunding of South Carolina’s poorer rural districts, and at work under the leadership of Spartanburg County’s own Representative Rita Allison - is to report by January 2016 on solutions for simplifying how schools are funded; staffing schools with qualified teachers; improving facilities; ensuring emphasis on technology, math, and science; and consolidating or eliminating mandates.

THE PROFILE OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA GRADUATE

The Profile is perhaps the most important state-wide academic achievement initiative. A collaboration of the State Superintendent’s Roundtable and State Chamber of Commerce, this Profile is built on three foundations: World Class Knowledge, World Class Skills, and Life and Career Characteristics. All of Spartanburg County’s seven school districts are aligning curricula – K-12 – with the Profile.

WORLD CLASS KNOWLEDGE

» Rigorous standards in language arts and math for career and college readiness
» Multiple languages, science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), arts and social sciences

WORLD CLASS SKILLS

» Creativity and innovation
» Critical thinking and problem solving
» Collaboration and teamwork
» Communication, information, media and technology
» Knowing how to learn

LIFE AND CAREER CHARACTERISTICS

» Integrity
» Self-direction
» Global perspective
» Perseverance
» Work ethic
» Interpersonal skills

WHAT ARE EEDA AND IGPSS?

THE SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACT (EEDA)

Passed in 2005, this legislation addresses workforce development through education reform. It is predicated upon the belief that if all public schools and other stakeholders - parents, business partners, and community members - engage together, more of our state’s students will complete high school better prepared to transition into college and careers.

INDIVIDUAL GRADUATION PLANS (IGPs)

These are among the more important components of the EEDA, requiring schools to align curricula with 16 career clusters; and to work with parents and students to develop Individual Graduation Plans (IGPs) for each student beginning in the 8th grade, introducing them to career oriented counselors, and with business engagement in advisory capacities to career cluster programs.
IT IS NO ACCIDENT THAT POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT AND PERSISTENCE RATES ARE CLIMBING.

Over the past five years, schools in Spartanburg County have been delivering the message of academic achievement – including post-secondary achievement – with increasing urgency.

THE REAL STORIES OF CHANGE

All 7 school districts earned an “excellent” rating on state report cards in 2014, according to the State Department of Education, the top score on a five-tier scale. While these ratings are informative, they don’t tell the whole story.

The real stories are scattered all across the County … US News and World Report best high school rankings … national blue ribbon schools … Palmetto’s Finest Schools … more “Transform SC” schools than any other county in the state … mobile learning devices in the hands of more and more students … Washington Post’s Most Challenging Schools in the Nation … two Stephen Covey “Leader in Me” schools (among 100 internationally) … expanding 3K and 4K opportunities in primary school settings … increasing graduation rates across the board … teachers going the extra mile … every ounce of energy dedicated to growing opportunities for all our children.

It is exciting to walk through the elementary and middle schools of Spartanburg County and see the message of post-secondary achievement posted everywhere – on bulletin boards, doors, and hallways; to see eighth graders getting serious about their “Individual Graduation Plans”; and to witness the emphasis our high school counselors are placing on post-secondary readiness for all our high school graduates.

WHAT MIGHT IT BE LIKE TO LIVE IN THE BEST EDUCATED COUNTY IN SOUTH CAROLINA? WITHIN THIS GENERATION, IT IS WELL WITHIN OUR GRASP. THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT CULTURE IN SPARTANBURG COUNTY IS ADVANCING, AND OUR SCHOOLS ARE LEADING THE WAY!

Spartanburg’s 7 school districts are writing new success stories every day, constantly innovating to meet the unique needs of the students they serve.

Yes, they compete, but they also collaborate, learning from constant communication and shared innovation, tailoring successful practices to meet the unique needs of their own students.

School boards know and represent their communities well, providing guidance and support to their administrations, rarely confounded by political agendas.

Even with 7 districts, administrative overhead cost per student is lower than the state average. Faculty-to-student ratios are richer. Faculty salaries, though not great, exceed state and neighboring county averages.

Each district constantly evolves to meet the unique needs of communities it serves. Each learns from the others, focusing strategy with a clarity that goes well beyond the capacity of an organizational monopoly … say, for example, a county-wide school district.

Finally, all 7 school districts share an overarching commitment to a single big vision … the vision of SAM.
COLLECTIVE IMPACT AND THE WORK OF SAM

AS IMPORTANT AS THE SCHOOLS ARE, LEARNING DOESN’T BEGIN AND END IN THE CLASSROOM.

KIDS FACE CHALLENGES.

They may not be prepared for success in kindergarten. They may lose ground during summer months unattended by learning support and opportunity. They may struggle with math and drop out of high school.

To address these inherent obstacles, educational non-profits step forward. Typically, each non-profit identifies a specific need and creates services to meet that need. They demonstrate results and scale services to more people, anticipating even more positive change. These non-profits are almost always doing very good and important work.

THE COLLECTIVE IMPACT MODEL OF CHANGE

The collective impact model capitalizes on the work of these non-profits, with a unique twist. It sets a big goal (for example, doubling bachelor’s degree achievement by 2030), and begins by building a roadmap for its achievement with shared targets and measures of student success along the way.

It assembles networks of related non-profits – together with schools, businesses, philanthropies, faith communities, and community leaders – to help reach these targets.

These networks are fundamental to the collective impact model of change. And it is through these networks that SAM adds value …

» Measuring accomplishment from cradle to career,
» Setting achievement targets that escalate annually,
» Aligning efforts in their pursuit, and
» Reporting progress with persistent regularity.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT AND THE WORK OF SAM

SHIFTING THE FOCUS

SAM shifts the focus from isolated impacts on localized challenges to collective impact on big targets. The work continues to be done where it is done best … by the community of educational non-profits. The Spartanburg Academic Movement ensures that a shared vision focuses the work of these non-profit partners on the stages of academic achievement that the community has agreed are the most critical … learning from one another … sharing best practices … increasing the tempo of change.

THE SIX STAGES OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

SAM, working together with Spartanburg County’s school districts, has identified six stages of academic achievement for which success is necessary in order to reach the “big goal.”

1. Readiness for kindergarten success
2. Third grade reading success
3. Eighth grade math success
4. HS graduation college and career ready
5. Post-secondary enrollment
6. Post-secondary persistence to graduation

SAM’S WORK

For each stage, SAM forms a “collaborative action network” to assure a vigorous collective emphasis on the importance of academic achievement from cradle to career. This is the work of SAM.

And the alignment of resources and best practices, translating emphasis into impact … this is the strategy of SAM.

This graphic is drawn from Multnomah County Oregon’s “All Hands Raised Partnership” (Winter 2015). It illustrates the transition from minimum communication across educational non-profits to maximum communication and common purpose, all aiming toward collective impact on specific learning outcomes and the continuous improvement of each.”

Collective Impact | 13
The StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network is a national alliance of community partnerships working to improve education success for every child by bringing together cross-sector partners around a common vision. There are dozens of these partnerships across United States building local collaborative action infrastructures to improve education outcomes for every child.

StriveTogether supports these partnerships with resources designed to help them create a civic infrastructure that unites stakeholders around shared goals, measures, and results. Communities implementing the StriveTogether® framework have seen improvements in kindergarten readiness, standardized test results, and college admission and retention.

StriveTogether has developed a theory of action built upon four key principles: community engagement, minimizing disparities, continuous improvement, and leveraging existing assets to get the job done.

With these principles in mind, community partnerships like the Spartanburg Academic Movement are able to chart a path through a series of gateways in StriveTogether’s Theory of Action, from the early stages of formation through systems change and ultimately proof point, i.e., sustained behavior change with targeted achievement outcomes improving year over year.

Among the nation’s 61 StriveTogether partnerships, 15 have thus far reached the “Sustaining Gateway.” Sam is one of the 15.
SAM INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

MEASURING THE WAY TO SUCCESS.

The roadmap to student success is a lifelong journey that begins long before a child ever sets foot in a classroom and continues long past high school graduation.

These are the key indicators that StriveTogether partnerships nationwide are pursuing. Each one is supported by research as being the most critical learning stages for the achievement of cradle to career vision and goals.

These indicators are also the “community level outcomes” of the Spartanburg Academic Movement. They represent the critically important “learning stages” in the lives of our young people by when academic success must be achieved, or the consequences will be negative and life-altering. For each, SAM is forming a “collaborative action network” of non-profits and educators to achieve the outcome.

SPARTANBURG COUNTY LEVEL OUTCOMES

1. Every child enters kindergarten prepared to succeed.
2. Every child is reading to learn by 3rd grade.
3. Every child succeeds in 8th grade math.
4. Every student graduates high school, college and career ready.
5. Every high school graduate enrolls in post-secondary education.
6. Every post-secondary student persists to completion.
KINDERGARTEN READINESS.

During the critical formative years leading up to kindergarten enrollment, children begin to explore and discover the world, learn language, understand that letters form words, and relating words to things he or she sees. Letter and number recognition, verbal skills, language complexity, empathy, cooperation … these are examples of readiness skills that prepare a child to succeed in kindergarten.

Kindergarten readiness is a tough but important variable to measure. Linguistic capacity seems to be the most susceptible to measurement as well as the most likely predictor. See pages 24-25 for more information.

8TH GRADE MATH.

This is the critical gateway to advanced math and science in high school. It is also an important indicator of persistence through high school graduation. Often referred to as a “gatekeeper” subject, middle school math – typically algebra – correlates highly with college and career success, providing students with a sense of mathematical and intellectual achievement.

We face challenges with this outcome. About 74.4% of all Spartanburg County children are proficient in eighth grade math, while only about 65.8% of kids from lower income households (students on subsidized meal plans) are doing so. We’ve got some ground to cover.

3RD GRADE READING.

This is an especially crucial milestone. It is imperative that, rather than learning to read, a child be reading to learn by third grade. Research makes clear that disparities in literacy in the early grades are linked to persistent achievement gaps throughout school. Students who do not read at grade level by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers.

About 79.6% of Spartanburg kids are reading proficiently in third grade, while about 72.7% of children from lower income households (students on subsidized meal plans) are doing so. We’ve got some ground to cover.

POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT.

Whether achieving with technical certification, apprenticeship, associate’s degree, or bachelor’s degree, young people must be prepared with specialized knowledge and skill to flourish in today’s and tomorrow’s economy.

Managing the critical transition from high school to post-secondary enrollment is challenging, especially for low-income students or first generation college students.

Our county’s on-time graduation rates have increased steadily over the past ten years, now standing at 83.4% compared with a statewide average of 80.1%.

This is good, but not enough. We must have assurance also that graduating students are prepared for the post-secondary achievement essential to 21st century careers.

POST-SECONDARY COMPLETION.

Post-secondary enrollment is one thing. Completion is another. In the pursuit of both associate’s and bachelor’s degrees, persistence into the sophomore year is the most reliable predictor of completion.

Freshman-to-sophomore persistence rates vary, ranging across Spartanburg County higher education institutions from 51% to 89%. Freshmen students in four-year programs who do not immediately persist into the sophomore year are 3 times less likely to complete in six years than those who do.

High school graduation is essential to all measures of academic, personal, and social welfare. No upward mobility is likely in the absence of a high school diploma. Unemployment rates among non-graduates are very high, and every other measure of social well-being – health, mortality, teen childbearing, marital outcomes, crime – are seriously compromised as well.

OUR COUNTY’S SIX INDICATORS

POST-SECONDARY

COMPLETION.

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This transition will benefit from focused attention on boosting multiple application rates, FAFSA filings, and other supportive interventions.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

COLLEGE AND CAREER READY.

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Spartanburg Academic Movement
SAM Chapter 1, 2015

Academic Achievement Indicators
There are many variables that intersect with academic achievement, each creating challenges to success: parental education, single parent households, neighborhoods, extended families, race, life experiences, access to books and internet and other resources. However, none are as profound in their impact on academic achievement as a widening “opportunity gap” within our society and its negative consequences for children’s educational and social mobility. No one paints this picture more clearly (or more apolitically) than Robert Putnam in his newly published book, Our Kids – The American Dream in Crisis (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), a book we should put on our “must read” list to inform ourselves and each other about the odds for and against academic achievement across Spartanburg County.

TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT...

Confronting the poverty gap

There are many variables that intersect with academic achievement, each creating challenges to success: parental education, single parent households, neighborhoods, extended families, race, life experiences, access to books and internet and other resources. However, none are as profound in their impact on academic achievement as a widening “opportunity gap” within our society and its negative consequences for children’s educational and social mobility. No one paints this picture more clearly (or more apolitically) than Robert Putnam in his newly published book, Our Kids – The American Dream in Crisis (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), a book we should put on our “must read” list to inform ourselves and each other about the odds for and against academic achievement across Spartanburg County.

Spartanburg County Residents in Poverty

In SAM Preface, we identified “household income” as the major “cross-cutting” indicator interfering with children’s academic progress.

According to the most recent U.S. census data, 15.8% of the nation’s population had incomes below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). In Spartanburg County, 19.1% lived below the FPL, while 28.5% of the county’s children under age 18 lived below the FPL.

Students Eligible For Meal Subsidy

The most reliable indicator of low economic status among our public school children is the number for whom family income makes students eligible for free or reduced meal plans. The percentages vary across the County’s seven districts; however, the numbers range above 50% in each district, with a county-wide average of 59%, very near the state average.

A PURPLE PROBLEM

“In our increasingly ‘red’ versus ‘blue’ America, [the opportunity gap] is the ultimate ‘purple’ problem. Some causes are seen more clearly through the ‘red’ conservative lenses, while others are accentuated by ‘blue’ lenses. Our civic leaders will need to reach across boundaries of party and ideology if we are to offer more opportunity to all our children. In addressing the opportunity gap, we must consider the full spectrum of potential solutions.”

ENROLLMENT IN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS SUBSIDIZED MEALS

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<td>65%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: State Department of Education, 180 Day Headcount, Pre-K through Grade 12, July 2014.
## Poverty in Spartanburg County

**Both a Predictor of and a Product of Educational Attainment.**

### Predictor

**Unemployment by Educational Attainment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than High School</td>
<td>14.2% (16.3% in 2012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate /GED</td>
<td>9.4% (10.7% in 2012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College or Associate's Degree</td>
<td>8.9% (6.6% in 2012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>3.2% (3.1% in 2012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Product

**Median Earnings by Educational Attainment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than High School</td>
<td>$16,647</td>
<td>($20,640 in 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate /GED</td>
<td>$25,461</td>
<td>($26,422 in 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College or Associate's Degree</td>
<td>$31,955</td>
<td>($29,872 in 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>$46,214</td>
<td>($43,513 in 2012)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that the percentages of adults in Spartanburg County with “some college” and “bachelor’s degrees” are increasing year over year, along with earnings for these categories; though earnings for “high school” or “less than high school” are decreasing year over year.

---

“Social air bags offer the same kind of protection as car air bags: in a collision, you walk away unharmed. When affluent kids stumble, a parent or someone else often jumps in to help … by hiring a lawyer, paying for therapy … finding a tutor. A lot of poor kids don’t have access to help.”

(Doyle McManus @ latimes.com)

“Social air bags offer the same kind of protection as car air bags: in a collision, you walk away unharmed. When affluent kids stumble, a parent or someone else often jumps in to help … by hiring a lawyer, paying for therapy … finding a tutor. A lot of poor kids don’t have access to help.”

(Putnam, pp. 242-3)
COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORKS

The Work of SAM.

The “collaborative action network” (or CAN as we call it) is fundamental to the collective impact model of change and, consequently, to the work of SAM.

The Kindergarten Success CAN

This is our first CAN. It is a network of nonprofits, agencies, schools, and other early childhood organizations aligned to ensure every child enters kindergarten prepared to succeed.

Using a “Six Sigma” model of continuous improvement, this network is identifying opportunities to collectively improve kindergarten readiness county-wide, researching and identifying factors that influence the likelihood of a child entering school ready for success, and evaluating measures of readiness upon kindergarten entry.

Currently, the Kindergarten Success CAN is assessing many potential influencing factors in order to assure that resulting action will be data-driven.

The Kindergarten Success CAN is the pioneer in collective impact for Spartanburg County and is thoughtfully and systematically creating a template for other collaborative action networks to follow. The Kindergarten Success CAN has been formed with the Mary Black Foundation serving as convening partner, given the Foundation’s widely recognized county-wide leadership role in early childhood education.

This CAN is operating with the benefit of a continuous improvement facilitator (a Six Sigma Master Black Belt) provided by sponsoring corporate partner BMW Manufacturing.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENT

Beginning in Fall 2014, South Carolina’s Legislature required that all students entering a publicly funded pre-kindergarten or kindergarten be administered a one-on-one readiness assessment called CIRCLES, measuring critical skills for early language and literacy. This assessment is likely to provide, for the first time, a useful metric to assess kindergarten readiness.
“Nothing has provided as much potential for change as SAM’s collective impact approach to academic achievement from cradle to career. Today’s third graders are tomorrow’s employees. The more effective SAM is today, the more effective we will be tomorrow in addressing our workforce challenges. The Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce is deeply committed to The Movement because it is critical to our county’s economic future.”

Allen C. Smith, President & CEO
Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce

The College and Career Readiness CAN

SAM has most recently formed The College and Career Readiness CAN in collaboration with the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce as convening partner. This CAN includes representatives from the school districts, USC Upstate, Spartanburg Community College, Economic Futures Group, Workforce Investment Board, Contec Industries, and the Upstate South Carolina Regional Education Center. The work of this CAN is heavily influenced by the “Profile of the SC Graduate” (see page 9), a product of “Transform SC” and the South Carolina Council on Competitiveness. The “Profile” identifies the “world class knowledge,” “world class skills,” and “life and career characteristics” that students need in order to be prepared for post-secondary education and jobs of the future.

This collaborative action network will soon broaden to include numerous community based organizations, schools, agencies, and others working together to identify opportunities to improve college and career readiness for all students in Spartanburg County. This CAN will also operate with the benefit of a continuous improvement facilitator provided by sponsoring corporate partner BMW Manufacturing.

OTHER CANS TO LAUNCH IN 2015-17

Over the coming two years, SAM will launch four additional collaborative action networks:

» Third grade reading
» Eighth grade math
» Post-secondary enrollment
» Post-secondary persistence and completion

Image courtesy of Spartanburg Community College.
THE CHANGING FACE OF ASSESSMENT

IN OPENING THIS CHAPTER, WE NOTED THAT A VERY SERIOUS COMPLICATION WAS IN THE WORKS THAT WOULD CHANGE THE SAME NARRATIVE TO COME.

The implementation of this change began during the 2014-15 academic year. The state level “report cards” that rate each South Carolina school district on a five-tier scale from “at risk” to “excellent” will not be used for two years while the State implements new testing procedures. (It is satisfying to note that, with the last such report, all seven Spartanburg districts rated “excellent.”)

Beginning this year, however, all bets are off.

The old South Carolina “report cards” were based on students’ scores earned on the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SC PASS), given to students in grades 3-8; 4 year and 5 year graduation rates; end of course exams; and the High School Assessment Program (HSAP).

New regulations passed by the South Carolina General Assembly have resulted in new tests being first administered during the spring of 2015. SC PASS for English and Math will no longer be given in grades 3-8 and the last administration of HSAP was in the summer of 2014.

WHY THE CHANGE?

Both the SC PASS and the HSAP tests are “state developed measures,” meaning – among other things – that their results are not generally comparable with national measures. Therefore, it has been difficult to determine how South Carolina students or schools rank nationally.

Consistent with actions of the General Assembly and the Governor, the South Carolina Department of Education, together with educators around the state, have passed new “college and career ready standards” in English Language Arts and Mathematics, with the intent of putting these new standards in place for the coming academic year. 2015-16. This development has been in the works for some time, with transitional implementation having begun as early as 2011-12.

In fact, in the past year, adjustments have been made in the degree of difficulty of the old SC PASS tests anticipating these new and more rigorous standards. These adjustments explain a decline in SC PASS test scores across both Spartanburg County and South Carolina in the past year.
NEW ASSESSMENTS

Three assessments – ACT Aspire®, The ACT®, and ACT WorkKeys® – are designed to help students prepare for future life success. These assessments form a connected system of evaluation to monitor the educational progress of students from grades 3 onward.

ACT ASPIRE®
Grades 3 through 8 take ACT ASPIRE English, Math, Reading, and Writing.

- Connects academic progress from one grade to the next to determine if students are on track for college and career.
- Highlights gaps between what students have learned and what they need to learn.
- Gives parents and students easy-to-understand reports on student achievement.

- Predicts how students will perform across grades and on The ACT.
- Gives students in grade 8 and above an indicator of progress toward career readiness.

Learn more at www.discoveractaspire.org

ACT WORKKEYS®
All students in grade 11 take ACT WORKKEYS.

- Offers comparability. Taken by more than 1.8 million students each year.
- Accepted by all two-year and four-year US colleges and universities, including highly selective schools.
- Measures knowledge in English, math, reading, science, and writing.

- Offers education and career planning sections.
- Shows a student’s readiness for college and career.
- Accepted for many scholarship opportunities such as the SC Carolina Life and Palmetto Fellows Programs.

Learn more at www.actstudent.org

THE ACT®
All students, in grade 11 take the ACT.

- Offers comparability. Taken by more than 1.8 million students each year.
- Accepted by all two-year and four-year US colleges and universities, including highly selective schools.
- Measures knowledge in English, math, reading, science, and writing.

- Offers education and career planning sections.
- Shows a student’s readiness for college and career.

In fact, among school districts in Spartanburg County, the ACT tests have already been introduced to help students get a head start.

Testing will be different … paper and pencil only in 2015-16, but thereafter on-line. Tests will be timed. All students take all tests.

The ACT tests are timed.

“Take your time and do your best” will be replaced by “keep up the pace and finish on time.” As a result, there is unease among teachers, students, and parents, especially in the first year of testing. Nevertheless, teachers in Spartanburg County are doing their best to make sure students are prepared, including getting students used to timed testing.
WHAT TO EXPECT IN CHAPTER 2

SAM PREFACE.

SAM Preface, published in May 2014, launched the Spartanburg Academic Movement and established the baseline levels of academic achievement across Spartanburg County, using scores on the SC PASS and the HSAP exams. Further, the SAM Preface identified targets for three-year improvements in these scores.

SAM CHAPTER 1

This current chapter has explored the face of change in K-12 public education across the State of South Carolina, particularly with regard to academic achievement assessment. This change is both unsettling and positive.

Unsettling for SAM … in that year-to-year comparisons are not now possible. New baselines will have to be established based on results of the various ACT test scores administered in the spring of 2015, with new targets for improvement projected.

Positive for SAM … in that it provides much timelier and more relevant progress reports distributed across elementary and middle school levels; plus college, career, and workforce readiness. It will also make possible the comparison of Spartanburg County achievement with national levels of achievement.

SAM CHAPTER 2

SAM Chapter 2 will be transitional.

Of course, it will continue to monitor the work of existing collaborative action networks (CANs), and launch the work of others.

And, it will examine the county-wide results of our students’ performance on the new ACT series of assessments, and begin again to establish county-wide baselines and targets for levels of academic achievement; but this time drawing upon a more systematic series of assessments with national as well as statewide comparability.

Candidly, we also expect that, with these new tests, student scores are not likely to be as strong in year one as otherwise because of the substantial changes confronting teachers, students, and parents.

And, finally, given that all ACT test scores will be reported by late summer and early fall, we expect that SAM Chapter 2 will be published in January 2016, when the data are “ fresher,” rather publishing in May.

So, SAM Partners can expect a roll-out of SAM Chapter 2 in January 2016, and a six-month convening of the SAM Partnership Roundtable at the end of the school year in May, a pattern that SAM anticipates will continue into the future.

WHAT IS “THE MOVEMENT”?

IT IS A CULTURAL SHIFT.

We are asking ourselves as citizens of Spartanburg County to rethink the value we place on academic achievement for life and work in the 21st century.

We are asking ourselves to imagine what it takes to shift from an economy that uses labor to generate value to an economy that uses knowledge to generate value.

NO EXCUSES.

Every child must be ready to learn to read when they enter school. They must be reading to learn by third grade. They must succeed in eighth grade math to manage the rigors of high school math and science. They must graduate high school prepared to achieve a post-secondary credential enabled to fulfill career ambitions.

Fortunately for us, the schools of the seven districts of Spartanburg County, together with our private schools and colleges, are fully alert to the challenges of the knowledge economy. Their culture is changing. They are on the move … innovating, reinventing, accelerating, supporting.

The Spartanburg Academic Movement calls upon the rest of us – children, parents, neighbors, faith communities, small and large employers, non-profits, foundations – all of us in Spartanburg County to join as partners in the Movement, awakening to the crucial importance of academic achievement for every child, cradle to career.

MAKE YOUR RESOLUTION TO BE A SAM PARTNER.

Join in the Spartanburg Academic Movement!

JOIN THE MOVEMENT!

VISIT OUR WEBSITE LEARNWITHSAM.ORG

Click “Join the Movement!” to download a “Partnership Agreement” and consider joining as a:

» Corporate Partner
» Business Partner
» Non-Profit Partner
» Individual Partner
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VISION PARTNERS: $50,000 AND UP
- American Credit Acceptance*
- JM Smith Corporation*
- Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System*

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- Johnson Development Associates, Inc.*
- OTO Development*
- Spartanburg County School Districts*

STRATEGIC PARTNER: $10,000 AND UP
- Bank of America
- The Barnett Foundation Trust*
- Why Not? Fund

TACTICAL PARTNERS: $5,000 AND UP
- Inman Riverdale Foundation*
- Pricewaterhouse Cooper*
- Spartanburg County Public Libraries*
- Wels Fargo Bank

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- Palmetto Bank*
- John Stockwell & Diane Vecchio*

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- William Lawndes
- Swaim Brown PA*
- Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce*

* Amounts received from asterisked Funding Partners represent one-third of a three-year commitment.

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- BMW Manufacturing*
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- Carolina Alliance Bank
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- Chapman Cultural Center / The Arts Partnership
- Citizen Scholar Program
- City of Spartanburg
- City of Woodruff
- Come Closer Spartanburg
- Converse College
- Duke Energy
- The Early Learning Center at Park Hills
- Fairway Outdoor Advertising
- First African Methodist Church
- Whitney Fiber
- Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church
- Girl Scouts of SC – Mountains to Midlands
- Help Me Grow
- Help Up Works, Inc.
- Mary Lou Hightower
- Hope Center for Children
- Junior Achievement of Upstate SC

* BMW is a major in-kind contributor of expert support to SAM’s Collaborative Action Networks.
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