



SPARTANBURG ACADEMIC MOVEMENT

**SUPPORTING ACHIEVEMENT COUNTY
WIDE, CRADLE TO CAREER.**

Systems Change

SAM CHAPTER 3 | SPRING 2018





**SPARTANBURG
ACADEMIC MOVEMENT**

Systems Change

SAM CHAPTER 3 | SPRING 2018

Chapter 3 is really the fourth annual report of the Spartanburg Academic Movement.

- » The first, we called **SAM Preface**. Published in Spring 2014, it charted the coming work of of SAM and documented its academic achievement starting points.
- » The second, **SAM Chapter 1 – Faces of Learning**, began tracking the baseline numbers of academic achievement identified in the Preface.
- » **SAM Chapter 2 – Collective Impact**, focused on the power of aligned targets and collaborative action in moving the academic achievement needle.

You can find these three reports in their entirety on SAM's website: learnwithsam.org





The Spartanburg Academic Movement launched in 2013...

SAM envisions a county-wide culture that values academic attainment at every stage of learning and a robust economy that demonstrates that value.

EDUCATION DRIVES THE FORMATION AND FUNCTION OF EVERY SUCCESSFUL SYSTEM WITHIN A COMMUNITY.

Conversely, educational failure within a community predisposes failure across all community systems....economic and civic.

And the commitment to academic achievement begins in the years leading up to kindergarten readiness and sustains through post-secondary completion and beyond.

SAM FOCUSES ON SIX KEY ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OUTCOMES...



**KINDERGARTEN
READINESS**



**COLLEGE &
CAREER READY /
HIGH SCHOOL
GRADUATION**



**EARLY GRADES
READING**



**POST-SECONDARY
ENROLLMENT**



**MIDDLE GRADES
MATH**



**POST-SECONDARY
PERSISTENCE AND
COMPLETION**



Advocacy. This symbol appears periodically throughout this chapter. It indicates efforts SAM is making to influence policy change at local or state levels.

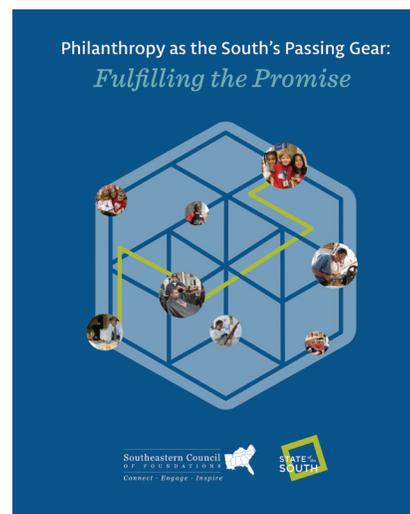


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In 2017, the Southeastern Council of Foundations featured SAM's incubation within the Spartanburg County Foundation as representative of "passing gear" philanthropy. The story provides a look at the driving forces behind SAM.

Take a look at this story at:
www.learnwithsam.org





SYSTEMS CHANGE

This report, Chapter 3, is entitled "Systems Change." Education, cradle to career, involves the interaction of profoundly complicated systems. The seven public school districts across Spartanburg County are the most obvious of these systems, but they do not do the job alone.

Consider, for example, the systems operating to assure that children are ready to learn before they even get to school. Complex systems totally separate from public education are at play in children's early lives to ready them for kindergarten: from healthy pregnancies and birthing to nutrition and health care...from parenting and quality child care to childhood interactions that foster social and emotional development.

Further, reading well by third grade, acquiring skills in basic math in middle school, graduating high school with the personal skills and characteristics that result in college and career readiness... success at all these stages of learning require interactions among complex school and non-school experiential engagements such as sports, arts, camps, travel opportunities and others.

CONSIDER THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON LEARNING.

Across Spartanburg County, academic achievement at every level is directly correlated with wealth disparities. And, poverty often interacts with other disparities to further challenge children's ability to learn: implicit racial biases, language spoken in the home, adverse childhood experiences, and others.

We attempt to find interventions to address these systemic disparities, though if untested, interventions can sometimes be the enemy of continuous improvement.

Effective systems change differs from untested interventions. True systems change aims at creating lasting effects by carefully examining the underlying structure that make systems behave in certain ways. It employs continuous improvement tools to systemically test the effects of interventions, then builds on these improvements or replaces them as results warrant.

SYSTEMS CHANGE WORK IS THE WORK OF SAM, AS THIS CHAPTER OUTLINES.





THANK YOU BMW

BMW GROUP
Plant Spartanburg



THIS ANNUAL REPORT IS DEDICATED TO BMW MANUFACTURING. WHY?

BMW taught SAM our earliest and most important lessons in systems change by training our staff in the process improvement methodology abbreviated "DMAIC" ...define, measure, analyze, improve, and control.

Not only have BMW's continuous improvement leaders lent their expertise to co-facilitate SAM's collaborative action networks, they have sponsored the training of two of our staff members to "Black Belt" certification in Lean Six Sigma continuous improvement processes.

"But children are not cars," you rightly say; "nor is academic achievement a manufacturing process." Right again! But the methodological and statistical disciplines that apply in one complex set of systems can apply in another.

So, from the beginning of SAM's work, we have organized "collaborative action networks" that bring together experts in specific stages of learning (as BMW brings together experts in specific stages of manufacturing) and implemented with them the DMAIC process. How?

- » First, by "defining" processes ... for example, the processes of readying children for kindergarten ... identifying the multiple factors at play in those processes and clarifying factors likely to have important impact on readiness to learn. These factors must be defined with sufficient precision to test them in pilot research projects.
- » Second, by "measuring" ... gathering data on the impact of each factor deemed likely to influence the desired result.
- » Third, by "analyzing" the results of pilot testing to identify cause-and-effect relationships among factors (e.g., attendance patterns in pre-school) and kindergarten readiness, to determine what these relationships are, and to search for potential root causes.

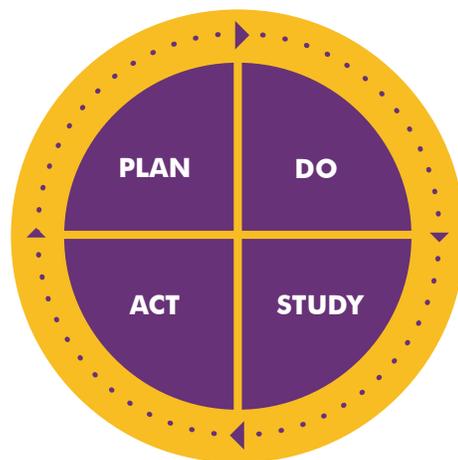
- » Fourth, to "improve" through the implementation of tested interventions addressing a key factor (say "regular attendance in pre-school," for example) in order to support an outcome.
- » Fifth, to "control" by creating a mechanism to sustain and improve the gains.

The DMAIC process helps SAM test the wide range of possible interventions that may influence outcomes. Once having identified important and promising interventions, the question becomes, how best can teachers and other practitioners sharpen interventions that can have the desired result, subject to continuous improvement?

HERE ANOTHER ANAGRAM COMES INTO PLAY: PDSA - PLAN, DO, STUDY ACT.

It's a simple but crucial continuous improvement tool. Teachers or schools "plan" an intervention to improve attendance (again, as an example), they "do" or implement that intervention, "study" its impact, and modify seeking further improvements and best practices.

PDSA's are cyclical and can be applied to every aspect of a system's behavior. Be alert for evidences of PDSA cycles as you read *Chapter 3*.





SAM IN THE NATIONAL CONTEXT



SAM IS POWERED BY THE STRIVE TOGETHER NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AND ITS "THEORY OF ACTION." LAUNCHED A DOZEN YEARS AGO IN CINCINNATI AND NORTHERN KENTUCKY, STRIVE TOGETHER NOW SUPPORTS 68 PARTNERSHIPS NATIONWIDE.

Strive Together's theory of action is built on four key principles:

- » Engaging the entire community
- » Eliminating locally defined disparities
- » Employing continuous improvement
- » Leveraging existing assets

Consistent with these principles, the theory of action builds on accelerating benchmarks of achievement. Progress in achieving these benchmarks is rigorously reviewed by StriveTogether assessment teams; leading to partnerships' escalation through four

certification gateways: "exploring," "emerging," "sustaining," and "systems change."

Partnerships operating in the "systems change" gateway may move in and out of "proof point" from year to year, as the indicators they are tracking are maintaining or improving at a rate of 60% or higher.

SAM is currently under evaluation as a "systems change" partnership, and fully anticipates receiving this certification, together with initial "proof point" validation, in the summer of 2018. The StriveTogether theory of action has been and continues to be the foundation for SAM's strategic and action planning from year to year.

StriveTogether

THEORY OF ACTION ORGANIZATION GATEWAYS



of community partnerships in each gateway according to the StriveTogether Theory of Action



SAM IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT

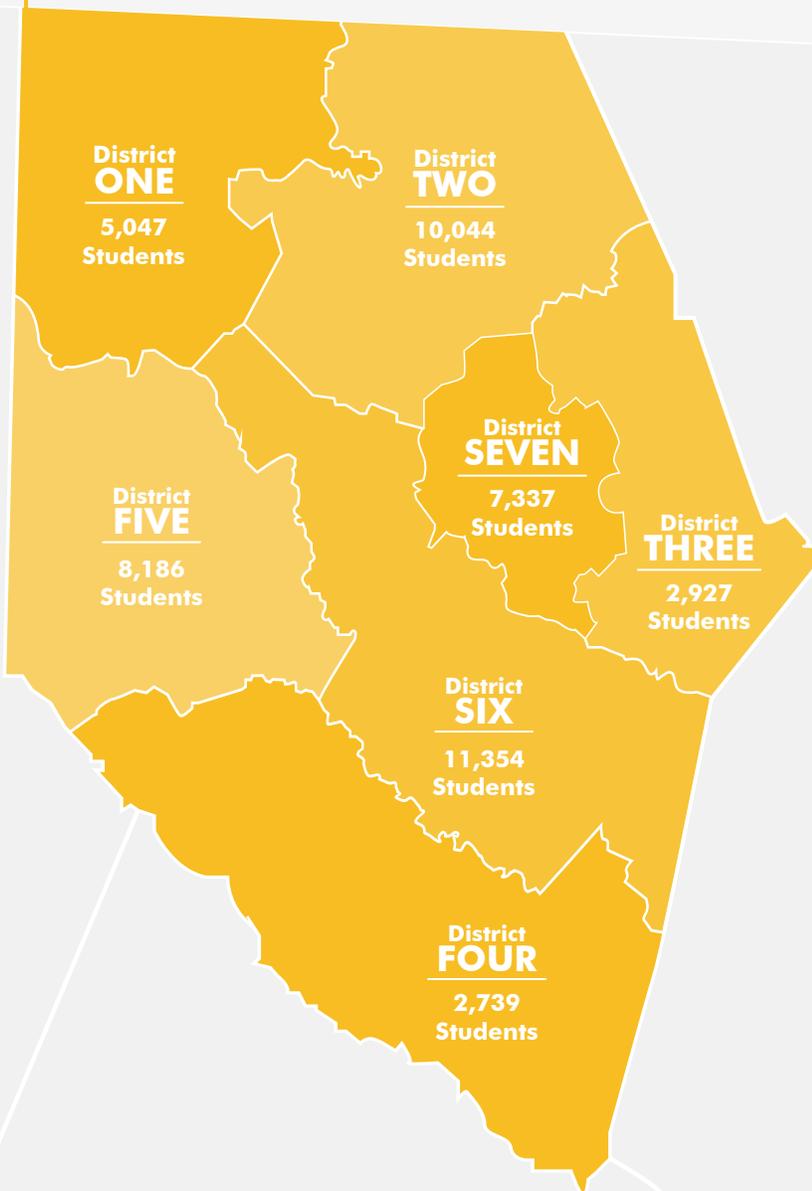
EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS IN SPARTANBURG COUNTY

The key to SAM's capacity to do its work rests in the readiness to collaborate among our seven district superintendents who, through their committed faculty and staff, have direct access to nearly 50,000 Spartanburg County children.

They share recognition that academic achievement is a community enterprise. Continuous improvement cannot be achieved without the active engagement of families, non-profits, social services, churches, employers, and communities.

SAM's work is to support the alignment of these forces, cradle to career.

SYSTEMS ARE CHANGING...





KINDERGARTEN READINESS

CORE OUTCOME

All children will be ready for success in kindergarten.

HOW CAN WE KNOW IF CHILDREN ARE KINDERGARTEN READY?

Numerous important interventions are underway in Spartanburg County designed to support the well-being of children from pre-birth to kindergarten. Recognizing the various interventions and their value, SAM's Kindergarten Success Collaborative Action Network (KSCAN) asked two questions: "How can we know if children are actually ready to learn when they enter kindergarten?" "How can we know if our best efforts in pre-K interventions are targeted where they make the most difference?" These questions are not unique to Spartanburg County. Indeed, South Carolina has not answered them satisfactorily, nor has much of the rest of the nation.

South Carolina is currently using the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) at the beginning of the 5K year, though it is positioned to be of primary use to the kindergarten teacher so that individualized instruction can take place. That is very different from informing the community of kindergarten readiness and the potential impact of interventions.

THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT (EDI)

The KSCAN's research led it to the Early Development Instrument (EDI), developed by researchers at McMaster University in Canada. Employed nationwide in Canada and Australia and some cities in the United States, the EDI captures kindergarten teachers' knowledge gained by having worked with 5K children through the first 2-3 months of 5K. Their knowledge reveals valuable insights into the vulnerabilities with which children entered their 5K classroom. And, importantly, it provides knowledge about these vulnerabilities to the community, which – through its parents, caregivers, non-profits, foundations, churches, and early childhood development centers – can do something about supporting a child's readiness to enter kindergarten through the years from birth to five.

SAM undertook a pilot implementation of the EDI in 2016-17, and has administered it across nearly all of Spartanburg's 5K classrooms this year. With the arrival of results in May 2018, we will have a very clear picture of our children's vulnerabilities upon entering kindergarten. We will have knowledge by census tracts across Spartanburg County helping to guide where specific interventions from birth-to-five are likely to make a difference in readiness to learn.

THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT



CONTRIBUTING INDICATOR: PRE-K ATTENDANCE

We may not think of attendance patterns in pre-school and 4K as related to 5K readiness, but it is. SAM's research demonstrated a clear relationship, for example, between 4K attendance and 5K success. The KSCAN undertook an initiative called **Strive for Five**... a 4K attendance campaign that encourages children and parents to be at school on time all five days of the week.

Spartanburg District Two reported that several schools saw a dramatic decrease in chronic absenteeism of preschool students after implementing the **Strive for Five** campaign.

Most impressively, Chesnee Elementary School's 4K program realized a 67% drop in chronic absenteeism from the baseline after having implemented **Strive for Five**. Other Spartanburg District Two 4K programs that saw significant decreases include Oakland Elementary School with a 64% decrease and Cooley-Springs Fingerville Elementary with a 16% decline.

Each participating school determined its own implementation plan. A **Strive for Five** Toolkit was assembled with ideas for implementing the campaign; however, each participating school planned what they felt would work best with the parents and children they were trying to reach.

The schools also noted that, though attendance policies were in place and enforced at all grade levels, a positive awareness campaign surrounding the value of attendance had not been used, particularly at the 4K level – the prime time for children to develop positive habits.

For some students, drawings for prizes, principal high-fives in the hallways or handprint charts displayed for all to see brought attendance awareness to a new level for many families. In some cases, instead of parents encouraging reluctant children to get to school on time and be present every day, roles reversed and children were reminding parents to be on-time.



SAM's work in the kindergarten readiness stage of learning has pointed the way to active advocacy on two important fronts. First is advocacy for SC Senate Bill 840, filed this spring. SAM has been instrumental in framing this legislation, together with the Institute for Child Success, calling for the assembling of all statewide initiatives supporting children from birth through pre-kindergarten under a single cabinet level position.

Second are SAM's successful efforts and continued pursuits of state funding to expand Spartanburg County's own **QualityCounts** initiative into public 4K classrooms.



Partner Spotlight: QualityCounts



QualityCounts
recognizing excellence in early care & education

QualityCounts is an initiative of *First Steps of Spartanburg County* to both assess and support quality improvement in private child development/care centers across the County. Through SAM, **QualityCounts** has entered a new frontier... supporting the learning environments in public 4K classrooms.

Spartanburg District Seven received a South Carolina Community Block Grant for Education that provided funding for **QualityCounts** to work with the Cleveland Academy of Leadership's 4K program during the 2016-2017 school year.

"THIS APPROACH IS BASED ON BRAIN SCIENCE AND FIELD RESEARCH," SAID BETH THOMPSON, SAM'S DIRECTOR OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.

"The preschool classroom is rich with opportunities to continue to build the foundation for readiness. Cleveland realized phenomenal growth in the quality of their program and incredible results for students," she said.

QualityCounts provides multiple opportunities for professional development of teachers and assistants starting with early childhood brain science and research supporting its standards of quality.

QualityCounts hosted the first ever early childhood track for training the school district's early childhood professionals on early childhood numeracy skills and emergent literacy practices. Cleveland Academy 4K classrooms were assessed using the "Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale - Third Edition" (ECERS-3) to create a base line understanding of the learning environment and the "Classroom Assessment Scoring System" (CLASS) tool to build teacher engagement and interactions with children. Teachers and coaches then re-arranged classrooms and added developmentally appropriate play centers and new materials, provided by grant funds.

Throughout the year, **QualityCounts** technical assistants visited with the teachers discussing the results of the assessment tools, planning and implementing improvement ideas, and creating ongoing continuous improvement opportunities that included professional development on best practice for 4K.

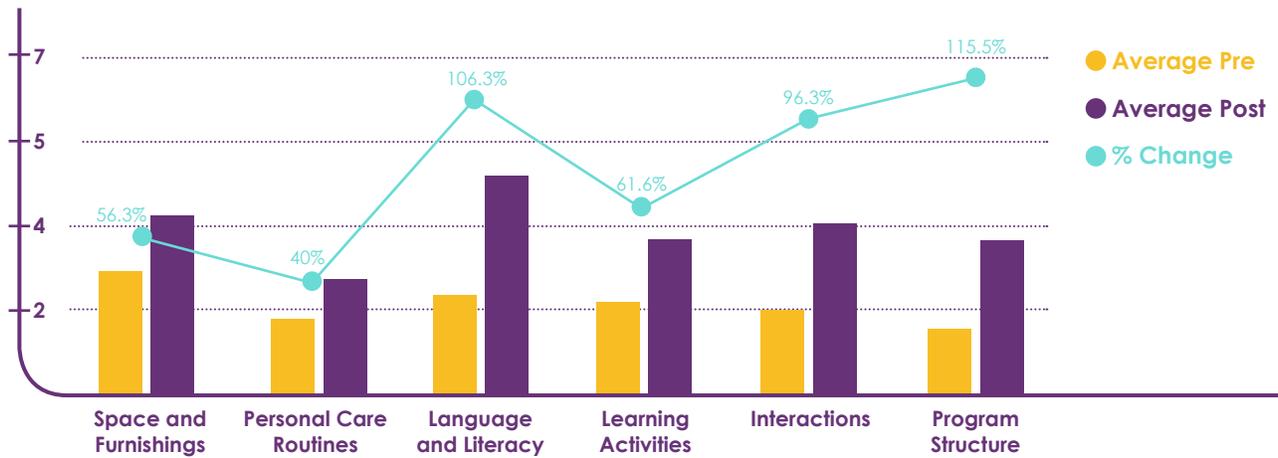
The pairing of **QualityCounts** with public 4K programs has now expanded to Spartanburg District Three through a second grant program, while the partnership with District Seven continues. The quality of early care and education programs makes a tremendous impact on the readiness of children to succeed once they begin their public school education.



PARTNERSHIP IMPACT

QualityCounts assigned a technical assistance provider (TA) to work closely with Cleveland teachers to assess their classroom environments using the evidence-based “Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Third Edition” (ECERS-3). Based on the results of **QualityCounts**’ work with three classrooms at Cleveland, the SC Education Oversight Committee has awarded two additional grants to expand this work to Spartanburg’s District Three and District Seven’s Early Learning Center at Park Hills.

ECERS-3 Growth





EARLY GRADES READING

CORE OUTCOME

All children are proficient in early grade reading skills by the end of third grade.

“READING TO LEARN” IS A GOAL THAT MUST BE ACCOMPLISHED BY GRADE 3.

If children are still “learning to read” in 3rd grade, the odds of achievement are stacked against them. High school graduation and post-secondary completion will be unlikely, according to national studies.

Based upon our high rates of high school graduation, we have strong evidence of Spartanburg County schools’ success in mitigating that national statistic; however, it is still difficult to gain an accurate picture of our students’ grade level at this vital benchmark.

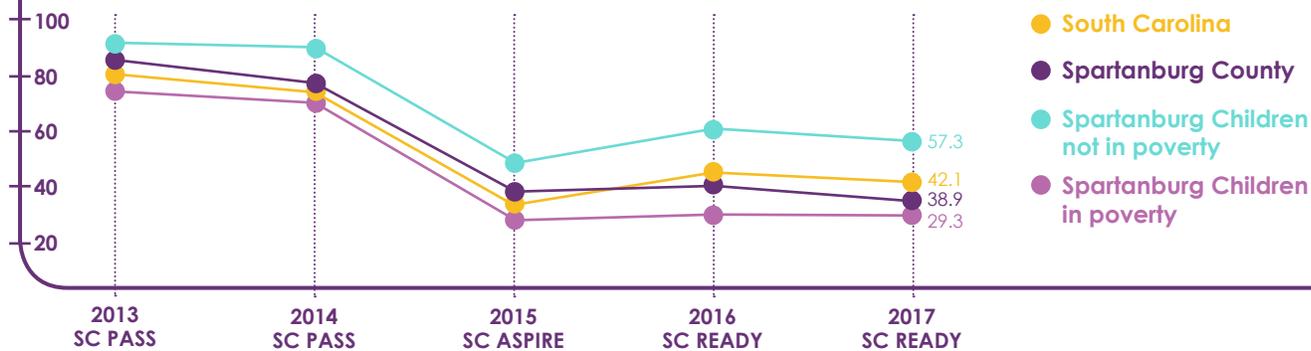
Over recent years, the State of South Carolina has mandated a series of reading assessments that have changed from year to year, setting

proficiency levels that are higher than national grade level measures. Setting high standards is admirable; however, it can be misleading related to actual student skill development and certainly makes it impossible to calculate accurate trends and national comparisons.

Spartanburg County-wide proficiency as measured by the SC-Ready assessment, now in place for two years, is not good... 38.9%.

What appears to be a precipitous decline since 2013 is, however, an artifact of different assessment instruments (SC-PASS, ASPIRE, and SC-READY) and higher standards.

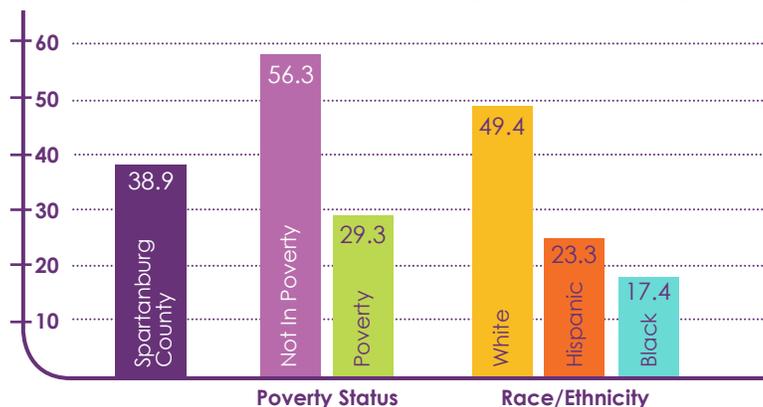
3rd Grade Reading Proficiency



Striking disparities are evident in the results for third grade reading among children in poverty... 29.3%, and even more so for African-American third grade children 17.4%.

Poverty and race are highly correlated in Spartanburg County. These figures assessing third grade reading levels paint a clear picture of where SAM’s energies must be focused.

3rd Grade Reading Demographic Subgroups



ANOTHER WAY TO LOOK AT TRENDS IN 3RD GRADE READING

As of this year, the same 3rd grade reading assessment has been in place for two years and is likely to continue for two years. Hence, in SAM's next annual report and thereafter, we will be able to track trends of actual assessment scores. In the meantime, the graph below for 3rd grade reading and 8th grade math demonstrate "Z Scores."

"Z SCORES"

These are specialized statistics that benchmark our students' scores on various assessments used over the years against the mean/average scores for all the States' students, with the vertical scale noting the standard deviation (-1.0 to +1.0) from the mean.

Over recent years, Spartanburg County children have scored below the state mean on 3rd grade reading assessments.

Children **not in poverty**, however, have generally improved relative to the state mean. Their scores spiked upward in 2015, though this may have been an artifact of the assessment employed that year. Drifting down again somewhat in 2016, they show signs of pushing back up to a point slightly above the state mean in 2017.

However, **children in poverty**, have tended to score notably less well relative to the state mean, and these children show signs of continued decline over the past two years.

If we were able to reverse the decline of children in poverty and see their 3rd grade reading scores equal to children not in poverty, Spartanburg County's 3rd grade reading scores would equal or exceed state mean scores.

3rd Grade Reading



Over the long haul from 2010 through 2017, the averages for **all children** and for **children in poverty** in Spartanburg County are slowly – and unevenly – gaining on the South Carolina average; indeed substantially exceeding the state average among children **not in poverty**.

AGAIN, THE DISPARITIES POINT CLEARLY TO WHERE OUR ENERGIES MUST FOCUS.

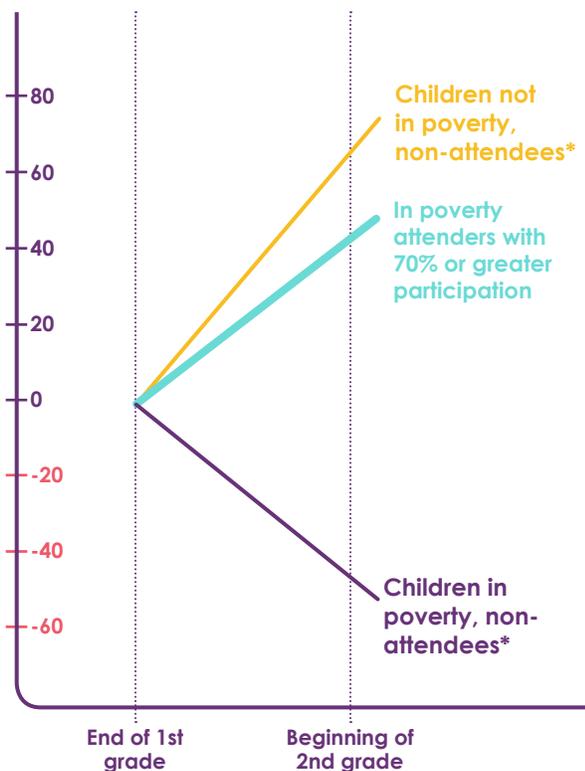
Accelerating the Work in Third Grade Reading

In 2017, SAM was awarded an “accelerator” grant funded by StriveTogether and the Annie E. Casey Foundation providing support and extensive coaching to help push SAM’s 3rd grade work further and faster.

The grant enabled the formation of a 3rd grade reading accelerator team engaging John Stockwell, SAM Executive Director; Glen Carson, SAM Data Manager; Argyl Brewton, Assistant Principal of Houston Elementary; Marquice Clark, Assistant Principal of Cleveland Academy of Leadership, and Heather Witt, Vice President for Community Impact of the United Way of the Piedmont.

Two major accelerator initiatives have been launched.

Summer Camp Impact for Children in Poverty



Source: Stratified random sample of 100 Spartanburg County students' performance on MAP between Spring 2015 & Spring 2016.

ACCELERATOR INITIATIVE 1:

SUMMER READING CAMPS FOR RISING 2ND GRADERS

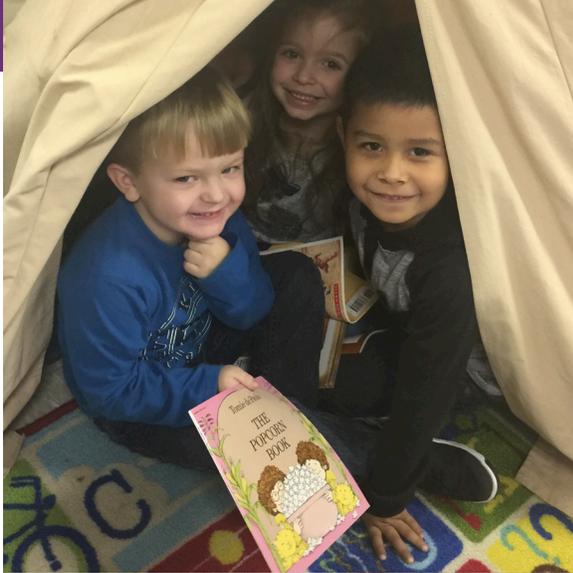
“Summer Slide” is a commonly used term to explain the learning losses that occur among students over the vacation gap from spring to fall. In early grades reading, this slide is especially problematic given the State’s “Read to Succeed” legislation that requires reading at proficiency by grade 3.

SAM’s research shows summer slide across all the early grades; but, surprisingly, a precipitous drop among children in poverty after the first grade. It appears that children not in poverty, having learned basic reading skills in first grade, take advantage of books and opportunities available to them to actually accelerate their reading capacity in the post-first grade summer. Their reading capacity doesn’t “slide,” it “climbs.” The opposite occurs for children in poverty.

Ironically, state funding is available for summer reading camps after the second and third grades, when it is arguably too late. Funding is not offered for camps after first grade, when it may be most needed. SAM employed its “accelerator” funding for a pilot project across six of our seven school districts to offer summer reading camps for children in poverty.

- Spring to fall scores among rising second grade children not in poverty and not attending summer reading camps escalated substantially during the summer.
- Skills for children in poverty but not in the reading camps are substantially lower.
- Scores for all children in the summer reading camps who attended 70% or more of the sessions escalated nearly to the skill level of children not in poverty!

In the summer of 2018, post-first grade “Summer Climb Reading Camps” are being expanded county-wide, enrolling six times the number of children enrolled in the 2017 pilot program. Using PDSA strategies, we will learn much more about the role of regular attendance, teaching strategies, and program design.



ACCELERATOR INITIATIVE 2:

THE FOUR SCHOOLS PROJECT

A request from two school superintendents to focus research and intervention in the four elementary schools with the highest poverty levels launched **The Four Schools Project**.

The Accelerator Team took 190 teaching staff, principals, and superintendents through a poverty simulation and discussion. All then participated in an analysis process to determine what factors, mostly outside of school, might be affecting students' success. Leadership teams from the four schools and the Accelerator Team refined the identified factor list and began looking for means of addressing those factors having the strongest correlation with performance.

School principals and Accelerator Team members visited the school district of Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, which has demonstrated remarkable gains through implementation of a Continuous Improvement (CI), model empowering every staff member and student with tools for tracking progress toward goals. That training has set the team to work on a plan to implement CI techniques across the four schools, to assess factor-specific interventions designed by The Four Schools leadership team.

As the work in this specific cohort of schools and educators unfolds, key learnings will be shared across district lines, diffusing the positive outcomes expected from focused engagement.

"The simulation left me wanting to know what we can do in the classroom to help these students overcome the setbacks of poverty."

Participant in the launch of The Four Schools Project

"I have firsthand knowledge of what it is like to go without. One thing that caught my attention was how little educators know about how families have to struggle to obtain resources."

Participant in the launch of The Four Schools Project



MIDDLE GRADES MATH

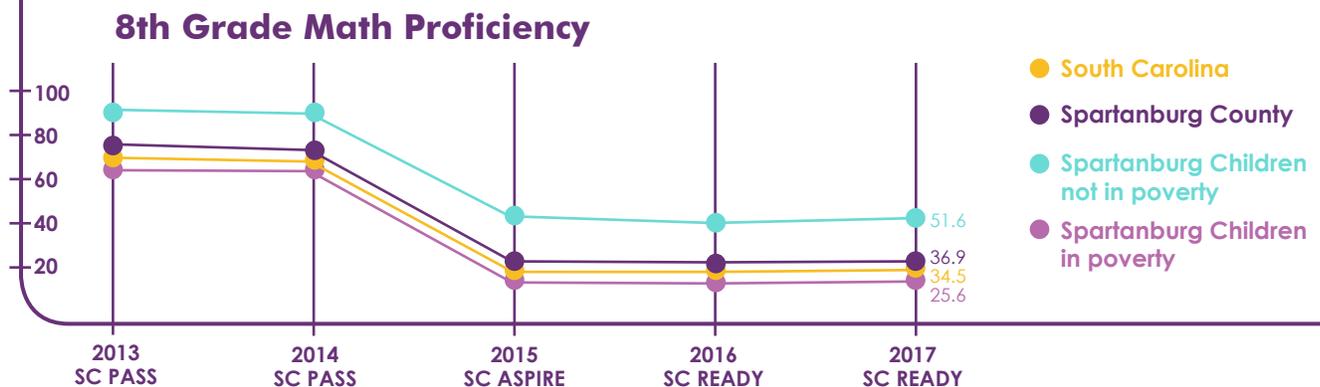
CORE OUTCOME
All students are proficient in math by the end of 8th grade.

8TH GRADE MATH IS CRITICAL FOR SUCCESS IN ADVANCED MATH AND SCIENCE IN HIGH SCHOOL AND BEYOND.

Reaching math proficiency at this point enables students to connect with advanced math and STEM careers. Even more to the point, math is not just a tool. As Jason Marshall, Ph.D. researcher points out, it is "... a mental playground supporting the development of creative and critical thinkers ... just as play on an actual playground develops physical capabilities"

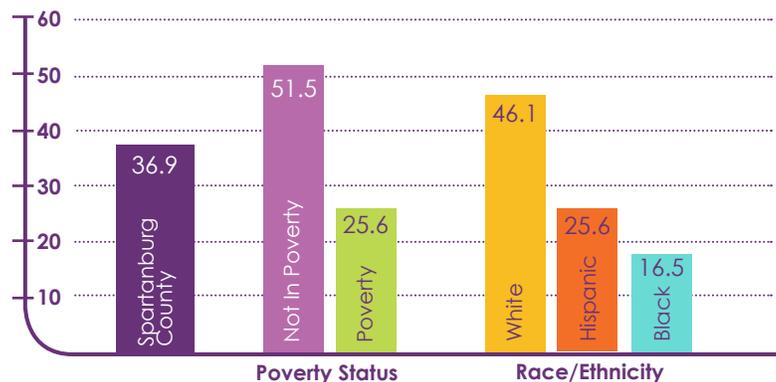
As with early learning and reading development, poverty interacts importantly with middle grades math success, as local data illustrate. These performance trend lines in middle grades math illustrate virtually no change in relative performance over recent years, except as an artifact of assessment instrument changes and higher standards required to meet "proficiency" between 2014 and 2015.

It is critical to recognize, however, that poverty is again – as with early grades reading – a powerful variable in the mix of middle grade math performance, demonstrating with striking clarity where the work of SAM and its partners must focus.



SAM will launch a collaborative action network late in 2018. This network will draw heavily on the expertise of community non-profits that are or can engage in math and STEM support, particularly on behalf of children in poverty households.

3rd Grade Reading Demographic Subgroups



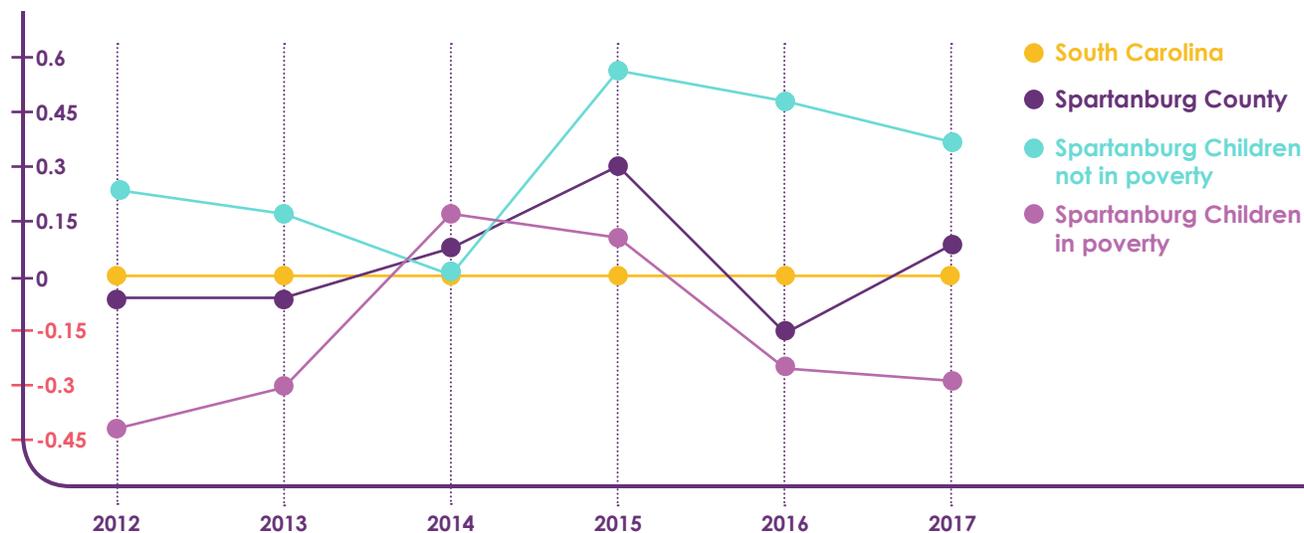
ANOTHER WAY TO LOOK AT TRENDS IN 8TH GRADE MATH

Again, as with third grade reading, statewide assessment protocols have shifted from year to year as standards have been raised. Consequently, eighth grade math performance trend lines are difficult to interpret. "Z Scores" provide some assistance, illustrating where Spartanburg County's eighth grade math results stand relative to the state average over the most recent six-year span.

- Math scores for children **not in poverty** are one-third standard deviation above the state average for all children.
- Scores for children **in poverty** are trending upward relative to the state average for all children, but remain one-third standard deviation below.
- Average scores for **all** Spartanburg County children are at or slightly above the state average and trending upward relative to that average.



Poverty and 8th Grade Math





BRIDGING DATA

EARLY DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT (EDI)

Following 3 months of experience with children in 5K classrooms, kindergarten teachers complete a one hundred item assessment of each child, yielding measures of vulnerability across five developmental domains and multiple sub-domains, critical to kindergarten readiness.

These vulnerabilities are geo-mapped by census tract, guiding the investment of **community interventions in the pre-birth to five-year-old space**. The EDI not only guides interventions by census tract, but **provides the means for assessing the impact of these interventions on later learning**.



Three major structures in place to support evidence-based improvement in Cradle to

STUDENT LEVEL DATA

Data sharing agreements between seven of Spartanburg County providing SAM with necessary data from kindergarten

Determining Community Investments in the Birth-to-Five Space

Assessing Investment Effectiveness in the Early School Years



Massive data are now in support SAM's need continuous capacity: Career

DATA 5K THROUGH 12

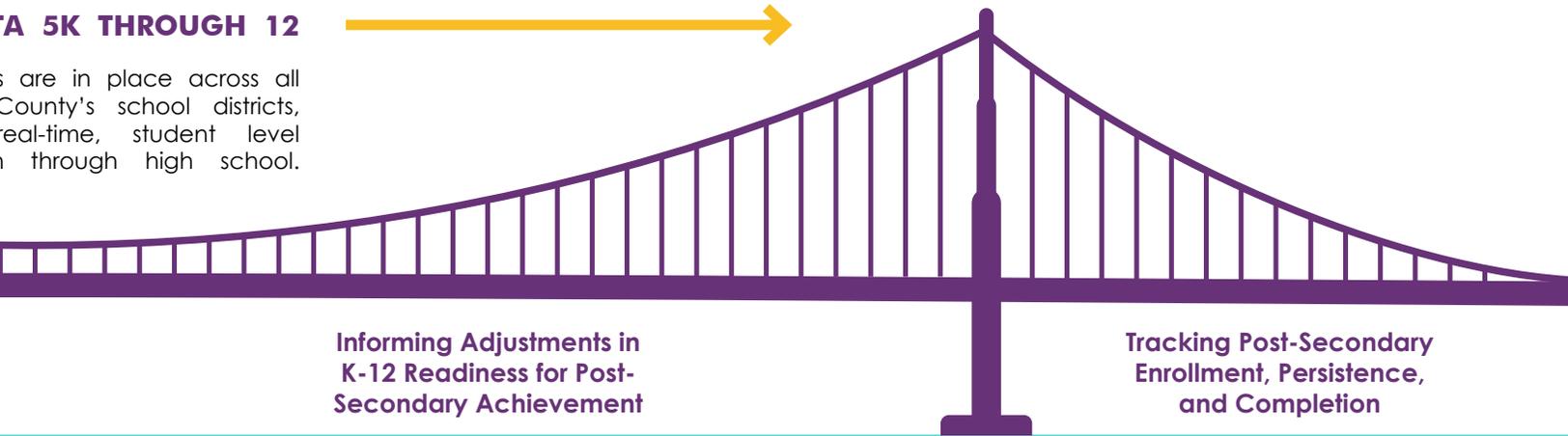
are in place across all County's school districts, real-time, student level through high school.



STUDENT DATA TRACKER

Through the National Student Clearinghouse, and by agreement with seven school districts, SAM has access to the post-secondary matriculation of Spartanburg County's high school graduates for eight years beyond graduation across the nation's post-secondary institutions, public and private, from technical certifications through baccalaureate degrees.

This student level post-graduation data provides the **Student Tracker** capacity to **track graduates' enrollment, persistence, and completion of post-secondary study**; and it **informs adjustments in K-12 preparation in support of readiness for post-secondary achievement**.



Informing Adjustments in K-12 Readiness for Post-Secondary Achievement

Tracking Post-Secondary Enrollment, Persistence, and Completion





COLLEGE AND CAREER READY/ HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

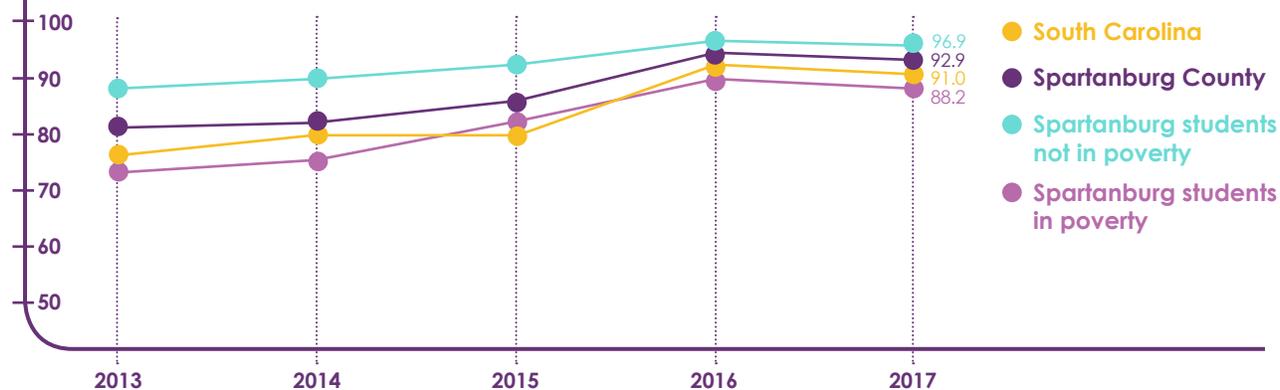
CORE OUTCOME

All students will graduate high school on time, college and career ready.

SPARTANBURG COUNTY'S FOUR YEAR ON-TIME GRADUATION RATES CONTINUE TO IMPROVE.

Throughout this report, SAM's focus has been on academic achievement disparities reflective of race and poverty. These data reporting on-time high school graduation rates suggest reasons for optimism. Over the past several years, on-time graduation rates have steadily climbed, exceeding statewide averages; and the gap between students in poverty and those not is narrowing year after year.

Poverty and Graduation Rates



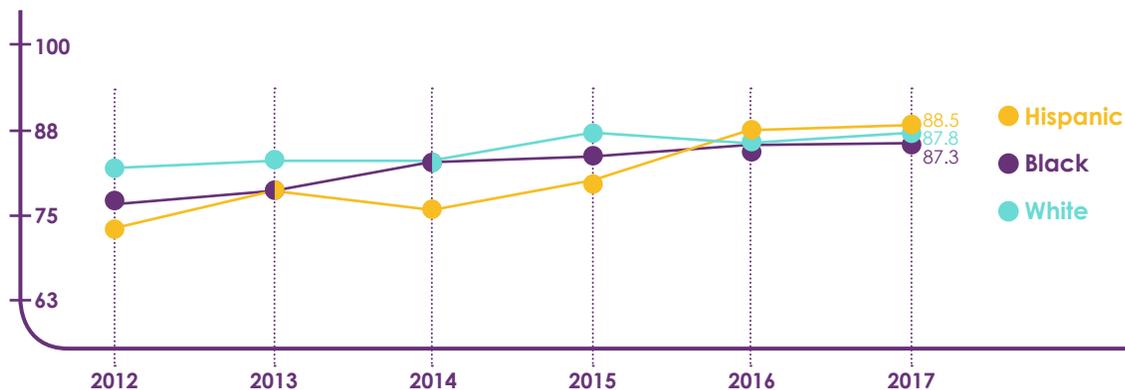
"The economic viability of Spartanburg County going forward is dependent on disparity gap closures, and our schools are increasingly leaning into and living up to this necessity. In doing so, they are fulfilling the best promise of public education, and they deserve our encouragement and support."

John Stockwell

SAM Executive Director

OVER THE PAST SIX YEARS, THE ETHNIC DISPARITY GAP IN GRADUATION RATES AMONG BLACK, WHITE, AND HISPANIC STUDENTS HAS DECREASED FROM 9.2% TO 1.2%. RATES FOR ALL STUDENTS ARE CLIMBING.

Spartanburg Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity



These data push back on myths that “disparities are destinies,” and that our schools cannot support closure of these racial and poverty gaps while advancing achievement upward at the same time. They can and they are.



“These data illustrate the reality that, though disparity gaps in academic performance may be striking as children enter school and through their early and middle grades, the trend as students persist toward graduation is distinctly upward, with performance disparities by poverty and ethnicity closing dramatically.”

Dr. Darryl Owings

*Superintendent,
Spartanburg District 6*

SOFT SKILLS AND THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE

Ask employers what they are looking for in employees and you will most often hear: "soft skills." SAM recognizes that social/emotional skill development begins long before young people approach high school graduation. They begin to take shape in the earliest years of life. The EDI is now giving us insight into how skills begin to develop as the youngest children learn to persevere, play together, self-direct, communicate, create, relate to others, and solve problems. Indeed, gaining the early rudiments of these "soft skills" is essential to their continuing development through the K-12 continuum. These same social and emotional skills are also essential for college level achievement.

THE "PROFILE OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA GRADUATE"

Developed by the State's Council on Competitiveness, Transform SC, and the South Carolina school superintendents, the "Profile" is now written into State law as the target for attainment by high school graduates. It outlines the knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics to be developed throughout the years of schooling and assessed at intervals along the way.

WORLD CLASS KNOWLEDGE

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

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



Partner Spotlight: OneSpartanburg

In 2017, the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce launched an ambitious strategic plan for the future of the County. One of the dominant components of the plan, labeled **OneSpartanburg** is "talent development." The Chamber has charged SAM with the key role in addressing this college and career ready talent initiative.



Funded by the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce and the County's seven school districts, SAM is organizing the "College/Career Ready Collaborative Action Network" with the specific purpose of aligning resources – non-profit, corporate, and academic-aimed at the development of these social/emotional skills in our high school graduates. By the next annual report of the Spartanburg Academic Movement, we anticipate that much will have been accomplished by the C/CR CAN, including strategies for strengthening and assessing social/emotional skills and characteristics, from birth through high school graduation.





POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT

CORE OUTCOME
All students enroll in a post-secondary program of study.

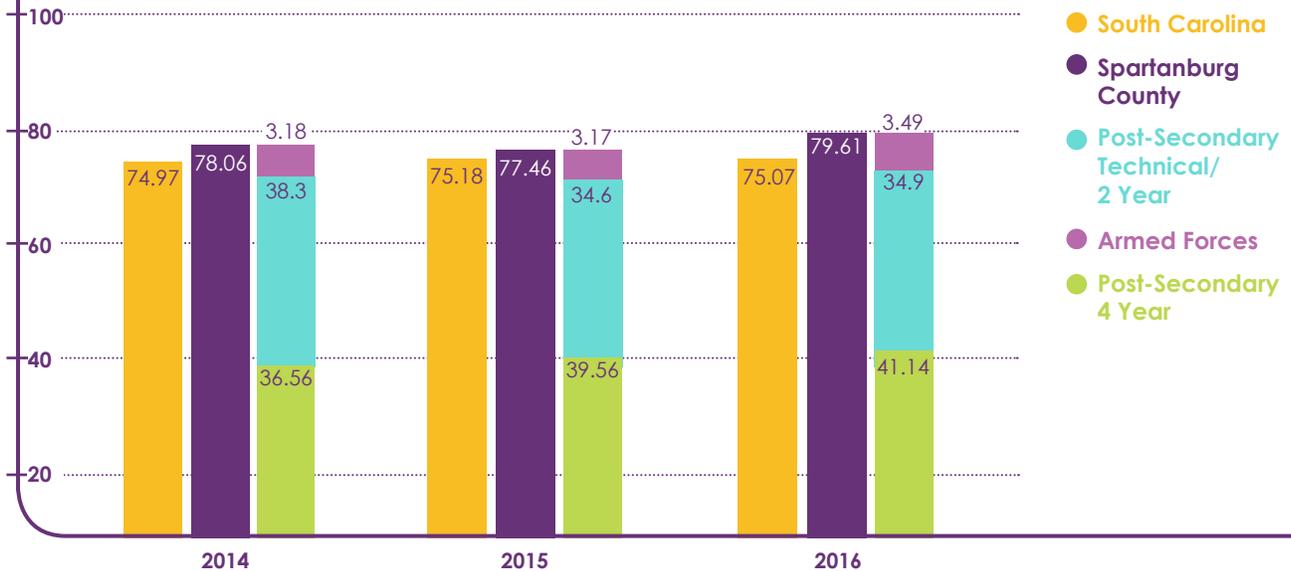
In addition to substantially increasing high school graduation rates and gap closing across racial groups, post-secondary enrollment rates among Spartanburg County high school graduates are climbing to and remaining above South Carolina averages.

The County's post-secondary enrollment gain on state averages has been one of SAM's goals since the outset. Exceeding national averages is another. We are moving past the benchmark on the first. We have serious ground to cover to reach the second.

There are some promising indications that reaching and surpassing the national average is within our grasp, however. Among County high school graduates, 76% are entering two or four-year post-secondary institutions immediately upon graduation. Another 3% enter the military.

Enrollment in four-year colleges has climbed from 35% to 40%. Increasing numbers of two-year college enrollees are transferring upon completion to four-year degree programs.

High School Graduate Post-Secondary Enrollment and Focus



Source: Compiled from SCDOE College Freshman Report

ADVANCED PLACEMENT PARTICIPATION

Spartanburg County's well-earned reputation in Advanced Placement coursework is continuing to escalate, not only in the numbers of student enrolled in various AP courses (from 1,056 in 2010 to 1,653 in 2017); but also in the number of AP exams taken (increasing from 1938 to 2,618 over the same period.)

More importantly (and counter-intuitively), as the numbers of AP participants and exams have increased, so too have the success rates.

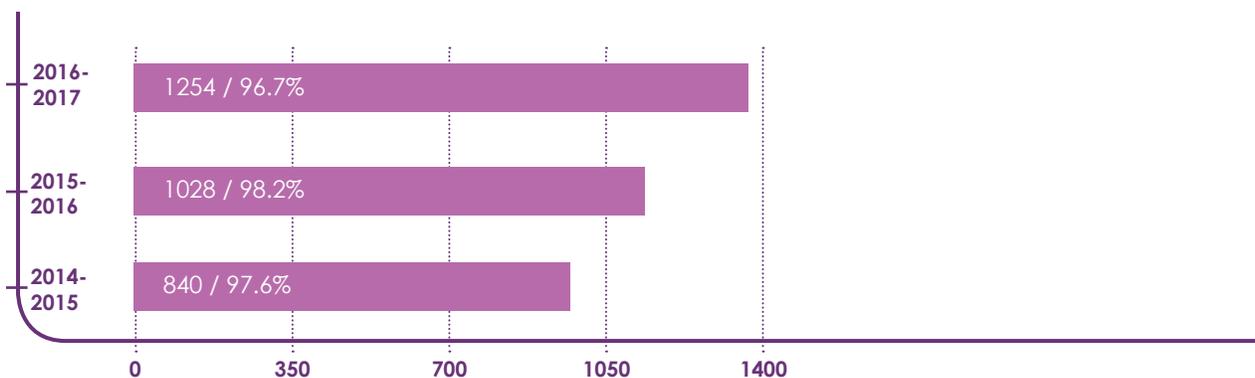
Spartanburg County AP Participation/Success



DUAL HIGH SCHOOL/COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Earning college credit while still in high school was unknown in 2010. Now it is increasingly commonplace. Growing numbers of high school students are gaining important experiences with college level expectations, together with opportunities to earn college credit through dual enrollment well before they graduate. The number of students in our high schools enrolled in dual college courses has grown from 840 in 2014-15 to 1,254 in 2016-17, with courses completed at passing grade rates upwards of 96% annually.

Spartanburg County Dual Enrollment Participation





POST-SECONDARY PERSISTENCE AND COMPLETION

CORE OUTCOME

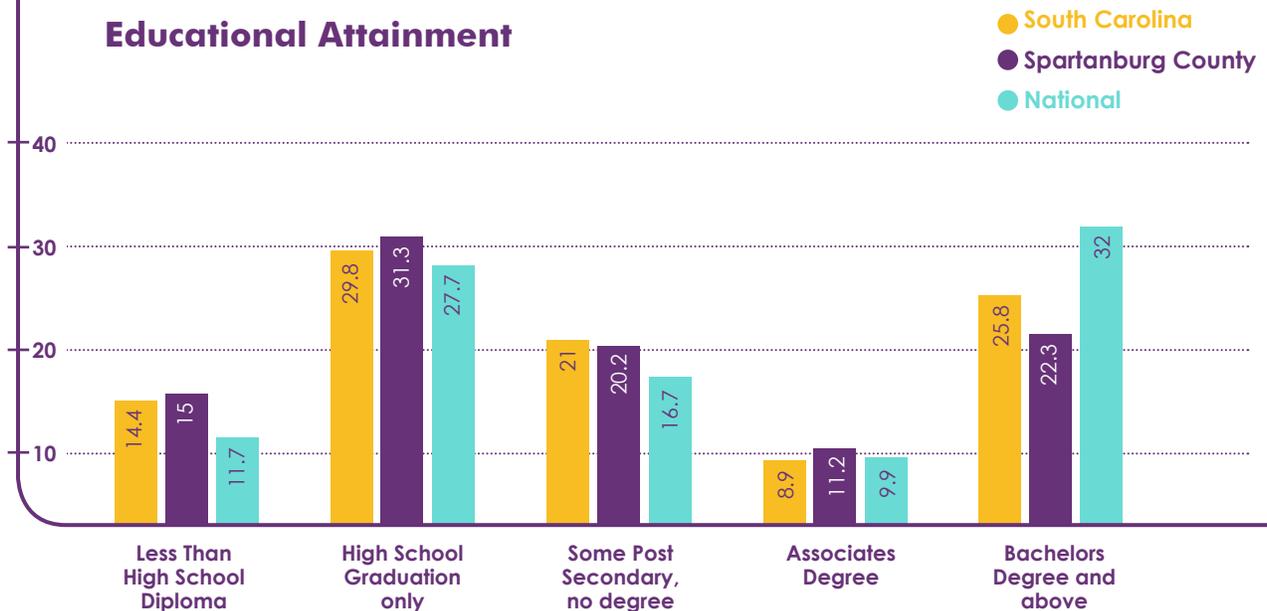
All students enrolled in a post-secondary program complete their chosen field of study within six years.

Student Tracker puts SAM in a position – beginning with students graduating in 2014 and thereafter – to follow the enrollment, persistence and completion patterns of all Spartanburg County high school graduates.

The data that are at SAM's disposal indicates that 79% of these students have persisted beyond their freshman year of study. This is a positive indicator, particularly when this percentage is contrasted with the 59% of students across two-thirds of post-secondary students nationwide that fail to complete their programs of study (Education Next, 4/24/2018).

However, we have a long road ahead, given the state and national comparisons below ... particularly with regard to bachelor's degree and graduate degree achievement in Spartanburg County.

Educational Attainment

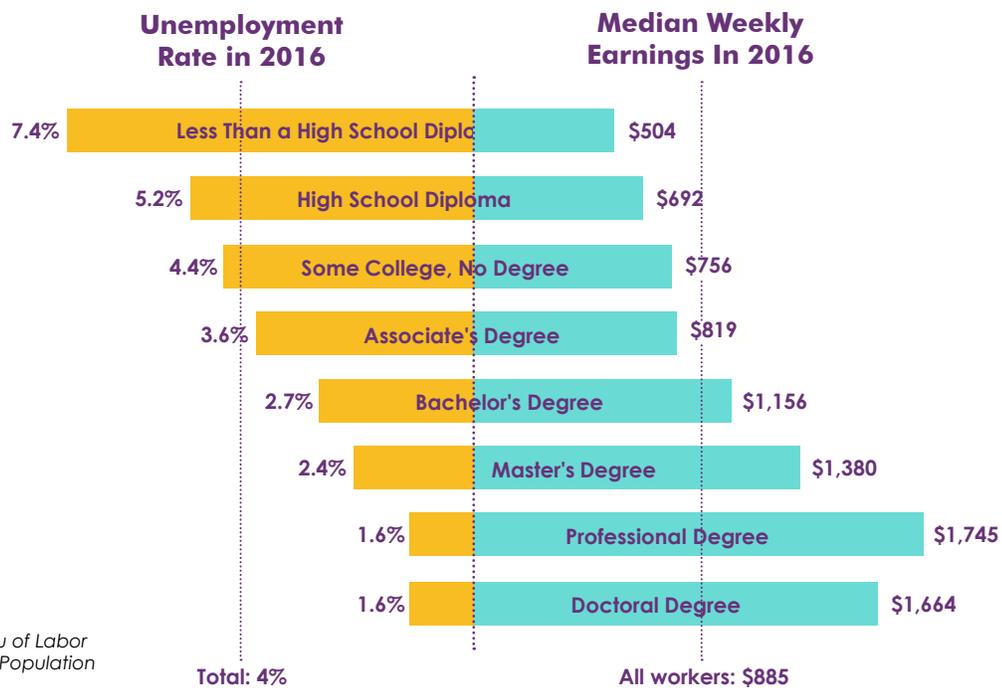


FOR THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE CURVE IN SPARTANBURG COUNTY TO BEND UPWARD TO 40% BY 2030, OTHER VARIABLES MUST ENTER THE MIX.

The five year strategic plan of the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce focuses heavily on building a diverse and burgeoning talent pool by incorporating not only the "talent development" work of SAM and our schools and colleges, but on the additional challenges of "talent retention" of college graduates and the "talent attraction" of fresh, well-educated energy to the County from other places.

WHY IT MATTERS

Earnings and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment



Data from: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.



IS THE “40/30 CHALLENGE,” FIRST CALLED FOR IN A CHAMBER STUDY IN 2010 ATTAINABLE....40% BACHELOR’S DEGREE HOLDERS BY 2030?

We have to be patient, of course, but there are real reasons for optimism.

Interventions in the early stages of learning such as kindergarten readiness and third grade reading “bend” the improvement curve rather quickly. For example, we can witness the impact of summer reading interventions on performance in succeeding academic years, almost immediately.

However, the curve upward in post-secondary degree achievement across Spartanburg county will “bend” upward very slowly in the early years of SAM because it takes so long for the interventions in earlier stages of learning to pay dividends at distant levels of accomplishment, like college graduation. However, we can predict that the post-secondary degree achievement curve will begin to bend much more sharply in coming years, given interventions in the early years now well underway.

WHY?

First, a culture shift within our seven school districts has taken hold, emphasizing the importance of post-secondary achievement from the earliest days of schooling onward. “Going to college or technical school” has become an assumption of everyday school life for a new generation of children, from the early grades onward.

The importance of a culture change in how we in Spartanburg County value higher education is an essential ingredient in transitioning from a labor intensive economy to a knowledge economy... and our schools are leading the way in changing that culture.

We can be very optimistic in anticipating the appearance of that “upward curve” in post-secondary achievement sooner rather than later... for a variety of documentable reasons.





LOCAL DATA, LOCAL RESEARCH, LOCAL ACTION

SAM works with Spartanburg County's public schools and non-profit providers to determine where interventions are needed, plan and follow the effectiveness of these interventions, and continuously improve interventions as data warrant. As continuous improvement cycles move to the "control" phase and beyond, the results of data-informed interventions can be shared for wider adoption.

In January 2018, SAM began releasing Research Briefs. These summaries of specific interventions at outcome levels along the cradle to career continuum focus on local action in response to specific need. Each Research Brief reflects key findings relating to the impact of a focused intervention, pointing the way to further refinements (continuous improvement), and application by other community partners seeking to align their action with SAM's research.

SAM's Research Briefs can be found on SAM's website: www.learnwithsam.org/research



TURNING SUMMER SLIDE INTO SUMMER CLIMB

Provides the data analysis of efforts taken in a 2017 pilot program to improve reading outcomes for rising second graders through summer reading camps. A forthcoming research brief will provide an analysis of the second and expanded level of intervention, taking place in Summer 2018.



QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN PUBLIC 4K CLASSROOMS

Provides an analysis of the implementation of the **QualityCounts** coaching and continuous improvement program in public school 4K settings.



DMAIC TO PDSA... GETTING TO COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Provides an outline of the continuous improvement models being used by SAM and how they can be deployed by community partners to expand the impact of future efforts.



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» ...cont. on next page

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^M Milliken Employees donated more than \$60,000 to SAM's efforts through a year-long employee campaign. These funds were matched by the Milliken Foundation, making their total collective gift \$131,752.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

American Anthropologist





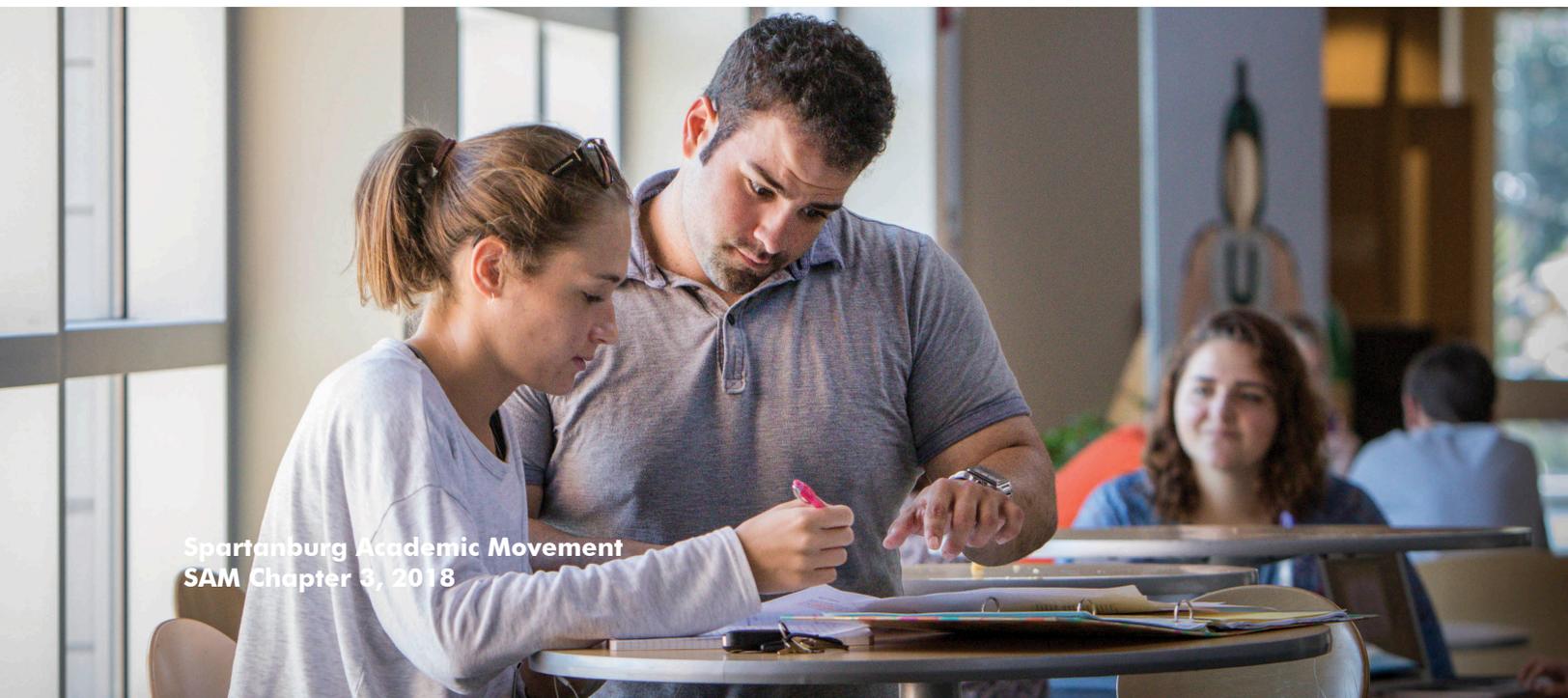
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● **SAM Executive Director, John Stockwell (center) was presented the prestigious Cradle to Career Champion Award by *StriveTogether* Board member Denae Davis (left) and Strive Together Network Navigator Bridget Jancarz (right) at the 2017 "Be the Change" convening of the national members of the *StriveTogether* movement.**



Representatives from StriveTogether and Bridgespan visited SAM in the summer of 2017 for a deep dive into SAM's work. Over 30 partners participated.

"I was so encouraged by the commitment of such a broad cross-section of the community and the willingness to have courageous conversations about disparities and the impact of issues of race and poverty on the work you are doing to improve outcomes."

Jennifer Blatz

President/CEO, *StriveTogether*



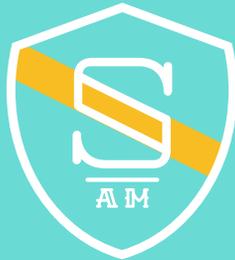


**SPARTANBURG
ACADEMIC MOVEMENT**

Systems Change

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