

- Richland One supports the General Assembly in identifying additional revenue or revenue-producing opportunities to increase funding for K-12 education, such as reducing sales tax exemptions or increasing the use tax on tobacco sales.

EDUCATOR QUALITY

- Because the quality of teachers in our classrooms impacts student achievement, Richland One believes that a competitive statewide salary schedule, statewide initiatives and innovative incentives should be developed to recruit, employ and retain the highest-quality teachers.
- Richland One supports differentiated compensation or state teacher salary schedules to attract staff to consistently low-performing or hard-to-staff schools to ensure the highest-quality teachers for all students.
- Richland One supports legislation that would provide college tuition assistance and tax credits to families for students pursuing teaching certification in critical needs areas, including math, science, foreign language, speech therapy and special education. The legislation should exempt the work experience requirement for those seeking alternative certification.
- Richland One supports statewide legislation that would increase the maximum number of sick days attributable to the retirement system (above 90 days), which we believe will have a positive impact on teacher attendance and an ultimate impact on student achievement.

GOVERNANCE

Richland One supports local control in the governance of school districts:

- Richland One opposes the takeover of schools, school districts and locally-raised revenues and opposes legislative efforts to remove, diminish or interfere with the authority of local governing school district boards.
- Richland One believes that local school boards should determine open enrollment and school choice options within their districts.
- Richland One believes that consolidation of schools and/or school districts should be under the control of local school boards.
- Richland One opposes transferring schools under a local school district’s control to a state-defined school district (i.e. a “turnaround district”).
- Richland One believes that local school boards should establish the school calendar, including the school start date, without limitations from state government.

LITIGATION

- Richland One believes that the General Assembly should prohibit lawsuits from any child and/or adult (including school district employees) who believes that he/she contracted COVID-19 while at school, on a school bus or working in some capacity for a school district. Currently, South Carolina school districts are not being provided with liability insurance coverage in this regard.
- Richland One supports school district exemption from mandatory mediation.
- Richland One does not support increases to the S.C. Tort Claims Act without research-based data to ensure that changes in the cap will not impact the financial status of a school district.

SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY

- Richland One supports safe, secure and positive learning environments in all of our schools and asks that the General Assembly fully fund school resource officers (SROs) and mental health professionals for all schools.

VOUCHERS AND TAX CREDITS

- Richland One believes that public tax dollars should not be used to support non-public schools through vouchers, tax credits or any other methods, but if state tax dollars are used for such purposes, those non-public schools should be subject to all the state testing and accountability requirements of the public schools. Taxpayers are entitled to know what they are getting for their money and that includes paying for private schools.

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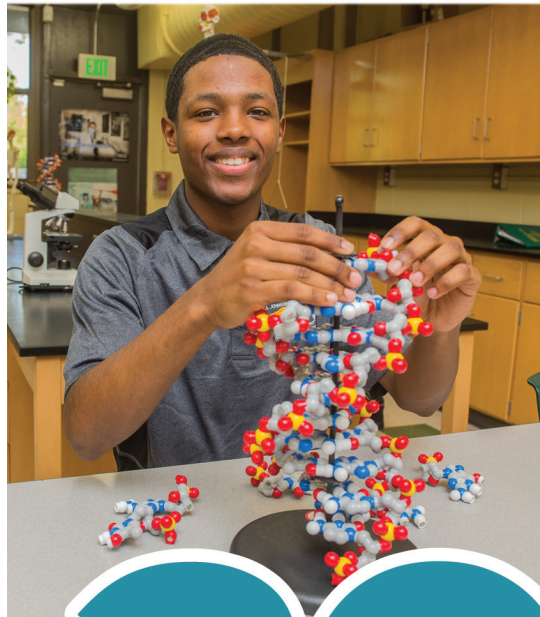
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RICHLAND ONE
ENGAGE • EDUCATE • EMPOWER

Mission Statement

We are Richland One, a leader in transforming lives through education, empowering all students to achieve their potential and dreams.



2023

LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

FOCUS ISSUES FOR THE 2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The following position statements address six key issues that Richland One urges the General Assembly to act on during the 2023 legislative session:

- Richland One opposes the takeover of schools, school districts and locally-raised revenues and opposes legislative efforts to remove, diminish or interfere with the authority of local governing school district boards.
- Richland One supports legislation allocating state funding for the expansion of broadband statewide to ensure that every student has access to the Internet at sufficient speed and affordability for remote learning.
- Richland One opposes legislation that would require third-graders to be retained based on a score on the state test. Research indicates that student retention can be detrimental to future success for some students.
- Richland One believes that the General Assembly should fully fund K-12 education every year based on the new funding formula.
- Richland One believes that the General Assembly should prohibit lawsuits from any child and/or adult (including school district employees) who believes that he/she contracted COVID-19 while at school, on a school bus or working in some capacity for a school district. Currently, South Carolina school districts are not being provided with liability insurance coverage in this regard.
- Richland One believes that local school boards should establish the school calendar, including the school start date, without limitations from state government.

Following are the district’s positions statements on other key education-related legislative issues:

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Richland One opposes legislation that mandates formative assessments a certain number of times a year under the penalty of losing a percentage of funding and requires the sharing of those formative assessments with the S.C. Department of Education.
- Richland One opposes legislation that would require third-graders to be retained based on a score on the state test. Research indicates that student retention can be detrimental to future success for some students.
- Richland One believes that testing should be kept to a minimum, meeting federal requirements only, and that it be robust enough to provide instructional information on all students.
- Richland One believes that all districts should be provided flexibility in meeting seat time requirements through innovative practices.
- Richland One opposes requiring students who are enrolled in a non-diploma track (i.e. self-contained special education students) to take the state end-of-course assessments. Requiring students to take an assessment for which they have not taken the academic course is a practice that we cannot support, as it is not in the best interest of the students.
- Richland One believes that students who receive short-term special services from facilities (i.e. Hall Institute) that are located within our geographic boundaries and do not physically attend our regular schools should not be included in our state and federal accountability measures. Richland One supports raising the compulsory school attendance age from 17 to 18. We believe that any increase in the compulsory school attendance age should be supported by retention and dropout prevention policies to create a comprehensive approach to support learner success.

BROADBAND EXPANSION

- Richland One supports legislation allocating state funding for the expansion of broadband statewide to ensure that every student has access to the Internet at sufficient speed and affordability for remote learning.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

- Richland One supports authorizing a charter school sponsor to retain a percentage of a charter school’s state funding for administrative purposes.
- Richland One supports clarification of the local district’s roles and responsibilities, particularly relating to special education.

- Richland One supports review of the reporting process for charters, including giving sponsors some level of enforcement for charter school compliance.
- Richland One opposes any legislation that would lower the vote requirements for parents of a traditional public school to convert to a charter school by a “majority of returned pre-mailed ballots issued to those who are eligible to vote.”

- Richland One opposes any legislation that would allow conversion charter schools to have free use of district buildings, equipment and supplies.

- Richland One opposes any legislation that would allow parents to force a school to convert to a charter school or transform under a turnaround, restart or transformation model. We believe that the local school board should determine and approve any changes to a school’s structure.

- Richland One believes that district-sponsored charter schools should adopt compensation and leave policies, procedures and guidelines consistent with those of the sponsoring district and necessary for compliance and reporting.

- Richland One opposes current legislation that requires school districts to offer charter schools a first right of refusal before school district property can be sold to anyone else and further supports rescission of the current legislation. Further, Richland One does not support any additional legislation regarding the sale of its property to charter schools.

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

- Richland One believes that conducting criminal background checks on school volunteers and other persons who work with or around students is a critical safety precaution. Richland One supports legislation that would provide mandates for free initial and random criminal background checks for school employees and volunteers.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- Richland One believes that child development programs for four-year-olds are essential to overall academic progress in the state. The General Assembly should enact legislation to provide full funding to ensure that all four-year-olds in South Carolina have the opportunity to participate in a full-day, accredited child development program.
- Richland One supports the creation and implementation of effective instructional support models and readiness programs to help ensure that all students are reading on grade level by third grade.

EDUCATION FUNDING

- Richland One opposes any and all unfunded or underfunded state and federal mandates. Because of such mandates and other needs of the district given its diverse population, including students in poverty, students with limited English proficiency and students with special needs, Richland One further opposes any reduction in local funding that would reduce additional services for students. Those additional services include services provided by interventionists and social workers, as well as special programs that support the needs of the students we serve. For example, for fiscal year 2023, the state moved EIA funding for at-risk students to the General Fund at approximately 65 percent, instead of at 100 percent as EIA funding
- Richland One believes that the state should provide funding to public schools to evaluate private school students and charter school students as identified under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – Section 612(a)(10)(A).

Changes to the property tax system over the years have created numerous challenges for schools to meet high standards set by the state and federal government.

- Richland One supports legislation that would provide funding to purchase buses so that all state buses will be within the required 15 years of age or under.
- Richland One supports the elimination of the salary cap for retired classroom teachers. South Carolina, like most states in the country, is facing a major teacher shortage. The group of teachers who are eligible or near eligibility for retirement is quickly becoming the largest group within the state’s teacher force. As the teacher supply and demand gap continues to widen, school districts will need the option for recruiting retired teachers to return to the classroom, especially for critical needs subjects or in high-need areas.
- Richland One supports legislation that would increase the percentage of state funding for teacher salaries and provide full funding for teacher salaries to meet or exceed the southeastern average.
- Richland One supports legislation that would provide additional funding for classified staff including, but not limited to, social workers and mental health professionals.

- Richland One opposes any legislation to decentralize student transportation and turning over the operations and financial responsibility to the school districts. Transferring the responsibility of operating the school bus transportation system from the state to the local school districts does not address the real issue which is a lack of sufficient funding to honor the statutorily mandated 15-year replacement cycle for school buses. With decentralization, equity of service would no longer be achievable as it is currently with the state-run transportation system. Transferring this responsibility without addressing sufficient funding could translate into reduced funds going to the classroom.

- Richland One supports legislation that would provide a temporary means for determining the Index of Taxpaying Ability (ITA) prior to the February deadline. The value of owner-occupied property must be included in the calculation of the ITA until a permanent change in the method of computation of the ITA is enacted by the General Assembly. Imputing the equivalent assessed value to equate the reimbursement on owner-occupied property to school districts as it is currently done for industrial property under fee-in-lieu of agreements would be a temporary approach for adjusting the ITA.
- Richland One supports legislation that would reform the state’s education funding structure to include more stable revenue sources or more diversified sources. The current system is funded through an unbalanced and unfair revenue and distribution system that results in tremendous disparity in property tax rates and per-pupil revenue. Act 388 is in need of reform or repeal in order to make it work for public education and taxpayers. Any revision should be based on the current education funding formulas and their ability to equalize educational opportunities statewide and a realistic means of computing the base student cost which is aligned with performance expectations.

- Expand local district revenue-raising authority.
- Generate revenue that is adequate, stable and recurring.
- Continue to include state-driven initiatives to ensure that every public school student has the opportunity to learn in permanent school facilities that are safe, structurally sound and conducive to a good learning environment.
- Include weighting for poverty based on the free and reduced-priced lunch population.
- Provide funding to meet instructional, transportation, co-curricular and facility needs; “minimally adequate” funding is no longer constitutional, per the State Supreme Court.

- Richland One supports legislation that would return lottery funds and other funding that was reduced to increase funding for general fund education programs or services. Over the years, the proportionate share of lottery funds that have been allocated for K-12 education programs and services has declined as lottery funds have grown. Funding swapped to increase the Base Student Cost does not constitute an increase in state funding, including amounts reduced without any increases, such as Aid to Districts and technology funding.

- Richland One supports legislation that would provide full funding every year for K-12 education based on requirements and standards that have increased annually under the No Child Left Behind Act and guarantee that funding will not be less than what has been committed through the Education Finance Act, Education Improvement Act and the Education Accountability Act. These requirements have remained while funding has decreased; therefore the legislature should continue to fund education and increase funding based on these requirements.

- Richland One supports legislation that would ensure that the State of South Carolina continues to participate in the Medicaid program on a national level and receive the 3-to-1 federal match, so that Medicaid funds not be jeopardized at the state level. This will ensure that Medicaid dollars are available to Richland One students who are in need of services.

- Richland One supports legislation that would provide funding to districts to implement innovative STEM/STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) programs and initiatives designed to prepare students for college and careers.

- Richland One supports legislation that would provide funding for dropout prevention to allow districts to increase alternative educational delivery options for students to re-engage them in schools such as evening high schools, Saturday schools, mall schools and more virtual schools. Funding is needed to support these options, as required by Section 117.36 general provisions.

- Richland One supports legislation that would provide funding for transportation related to the implementation of the Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA) and the expansion of school choice. Also, it should be required that all city and rural transit services be free to students with school identification. If this funding is not provided, then the implementation of cluster choice should be delayed until funding can be provided for transportation.

- Richland One supports legislation that would establish a supportable ongoing stream of revenue to school districts to support the repair, maintenance and renovation of existing facilities.

- Richland One believes that districts should be provided more funding and greater funding flexibility to meet the requirements of Read to Succeed for all grade levels.