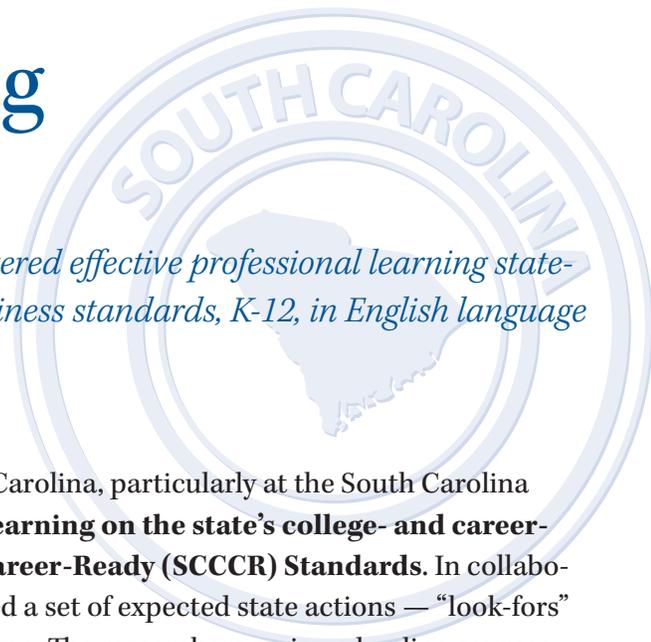


Professional Learning

South Carolina



In 2014-15 and 2015-16, how has South Carolina fostered effective professional learning statewide for all educators on its college- and career-readiness standards, K-12, in English language arts (ELA) and math?

SREB researchers gathered information on efforts in South Carolina, particularly at the South Carolina Department of Education, to foster effective **professional learning on the state’s college- and career-readiness standards, the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready (SCCCR) Standards**. In collaboration with SREB states and national experts, SREB identified a set of expected state actions — “look-fors” — in **four areas of state leadership in professional learning**. The researchers reviewed online sources and interviewed department leaders and educators to assess the state’s efforts.

State efforts in each area fell into one of three levels of implementation:

- **Minimal**, indicating state leadership addresses some of the look-fors
- **Essential**, indicating state leadership addresses the look-fors SREB considers necessary for providing leadership and supporting local efforts
- **Strong**, indicating that in addition to the necessary look-fors, state leadership offers substantial support to foster quality and consistency statewide

The *Project Overview and Look-Fors* document and state profile reports are available on the project [Web page](#).

Highlights for South Carolina

Enhanced focus on providing professional learning and support:

- Since spring 2015, the South Carolina Department of Education has been working intensively to develop resources and professional learning opportunities to support educators in implementing **the new South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards**. The department developed the standards in collaboration with educators and stakeholders in 2014-15. The state board of education adopted the standards in March 2015.
- In summer 2015, the department offered a series of regional face-to-face **Standards Professional Learning Opportunities (PLOs) for district teams** of teachers and school and district leaders. The PLOs continue in 2015-16 and include technical assistance for districts upon request.

1 Establish Clear Expectations

Has the state established clear expectations for high-quality professional learning for all educators on the state college- and career-readiness standards through state professional learning standards or other policy documents?

South Carolina provides essential support in this area.

- South Carolina adopted its Professional Development Standards in 2000 and based them on standards developed by the National Staff Development Council in 1998. The standards require that professional development align to the state student learning standards and address educator and student needs.

2 Provide Guidance, Technical Assistance and Other Support

Does the state education agency provide information, guidance, tools, direct assistance and other support, such as technology and flexibility for innovation, to support local efforts to deliver high-quality, college- and career-readiness standards-aligned professional learning that meets the needs of all teachers in service of all students?

Guidance and tools

South Carolina provides essential support.

- Tools for planning, implementing and evaluating professional learning
 - Archived webinars and materials for schools in need of improvement on creating Challenge to Achieve school improvement plans
 - The South Carolina State Reading Plan, developed according to the 2014 Act 284 (known as the Read to Succeed Act), includes guidance for developing district and school reading plans, and a Local Reading Plan Development Guide
- Professional learning resources and exemplars
 - SCCCR Standards support documents help educators learn about the standards and develop aligned curricula
 - Archived materials from the department’s 2014-15 training on the state’s previous college- and career-readiness standards
- Support for educator induction and mentoring programs
 - State law requires that districts provide an induction program for new teachers and that the department provides an induction program for new principals. The department also provides an optional induction program for assistant principals. To assist local leaders in providing programs that support implementation of the SCCCR Standards and the state teacher evaluation system, the department provides guidelines, regulations, resources and bi-annual mentor training.

Technical assistance

South Carolina provides essential support.

- Following its Professional Learning Opportunity (PLO) trainings on the SCCCR Standards that began in summer 2015, the department began offering onsite and virtual technical assistance to districts upon request.
- To support schools in need of improvement, the department provides monthly technical assistance, annual site visits, and training for local school leaders. The training helps school leaders identify professional learning needs and develop Challenge to Achieve school improvement plans. The department also provides an external review team of a coach and liaison to help monitor implementation of the plans.
- The state’s Regional Centers Consortia offer technical assistance and professional learning to local schools and districts, with the kinds and amounts of assistance varying by region. These consortia meet with the department to share information about local SCCCR Standards implementation and professional learning needs.

“We have professional learning opportunities related to our standards, and we collaborate electronically with educators. Our Edmodo users can share files online, including information for content areas and grade levels and general information about the standards.”

— South Carolina Department of Education staff member

Other support, such as technology and flexibility for innovation

South Carolina provides *essential* support.

- Technology
 - Repositories of online, on-demand professional learning resources: content-area Edmodo groups (2,000 educators registered by the end of 2015), VirtualSC online courses, [eLearningSC](#) and [etvStreamlineSC](#) portals, and Blackboard Collaborate and [Moodle](#) sites
- Policies and opportunities to foster flexibility and innovation in professional learning
 - Charter schools may be approved to waive certain state rules or regulations to improve professional learning.

3 Offer Professional Learning

Does the state education agency offer coordinated professional learning opportunities that develop educators' understanding of the state college- and career-readiness standards and skills to implement them — and that build local capacity to lead high-quality professional learning for all educators?

“We’ve got to meet districts where they are and also provide support for innovation. We’re modeling things like flipped professional learning opportunities and performance task simulations, mirroring instructional practices for the classrooms.”

— South Carolina Department of Education staff member

Context

- The department is the main provider of state-sponsored professional learning and technical assistance for educators, schools and districts in South Carolina. Each member of the state’s Regional Centers Consortia provides some local training as well. To maximize the capacity of its small staff, the department recently focused on developing online professional learning resources that educators can access on demand to meet their particular needs.
- The state board of education previously adopted college- and career-readiness standards in 2010. However, in 2014, the state Legislature passed Act 200 that required the department to develop new college- and career-readiness standards for implementation in 2015-16. Throughout 2014-15, the department collaborated with local educators and stakeholders to develop the new SCCCR Standards, which the board adopted in March 2015. The department began offering training on the new standards immediately following adoption.

South Carolina provides *essential* support.

- Professional learning for teachers
 - In summer 2015, the department offered a series of regional, face-to-face SCCCR Standards PLOs for district teams that include teachers. The PLOs continue in 2015-16 and are complemented by technical assistance offered to districts. The department also provides targeted, ongoing PLOs for teachers and leaders at schools in need of improvement and in alternative schools.
 - In 2015-16, the department began working with SREB to implement Literacy Design Collaborative and Mathematics Design Collaborative training and tools in the state’s lowest-performing schools.
 - The department’s annual, weeklong Research to Practice Conference provides professional learning in reading, ELA, math and science to educators. It also provides training on results-driven Individual Education Plans for special, gifted and general educators.
- Professional learning for school and district leaders
 - In spring 2015, the department provided regional, face-to-face overviews for school and district leaders on the new SCCCR Standards.
 - School and district leaders serve on district teams that participate in the SCCCR Standards PLOs.

Funding for professional learning in 2014-15 and 2015-16:

South Carolina used or is using state funds, including Read to Succeed funds, federal funds and a Mathematics and Science Partnerships grant.

- The department provides various voluntary, cohort-based leadership programs focused on implementing the SCCCR Standards, including the School Leadership Executive Institute for experienced principals, the South Carolina Transformational Leadership Academy, the Institute for District Administrators, and the Tapping Executive Educators program for aspiring district leaders.
- To support local implementation of the Read to Succeed Act, the department provides monthly regional Reading Coach Institutes and online professional development modules for school-based coaches and literacy specialists who assist coaches.

4 Use Data and Accountability for Continuous Improvement

Does the state education agency use data to inform its planning and leadership of statewide professional learning, and does it provide feedback to local leaders and hold districts accountable for excellence in local professional learning?

South Carolina undertakes *essential* work in this area.

- The department uses a centralized approach to data usage. The Profile of the South Carolina Graduate, the state's strategic plan and vision for college and career readiness, guides the department's senior staff, divisions and offices. Department senior staff meet weekly to analyze data, plan state initiatives, and learn through regular professional book clubs. Deputy superintendents and office directors hold regular (usually bi-monthly) staff meetings to monitor progress on state initiatives, problem-solve and develop advice for senior staff.
- The department regularly uses various types of data to inform its work. However, it has not recently conducted comprehensive program evaluations that include rigorous examination of the impacts of professional learning on teacher knowledge and practice or student outcomes, a crucial step in understanding the effects of state efforts.
- In providing feedback to local leaders and accountability for excellence:
 - The department provides feedback to local leaders on their professional learning efforts, including through reviews of district strategic plans and school Challenge to Achieve plans and ongoing assistance for schools in need of improvement.
 - Department leaders expect schools and districts to leverage the support and funding they receive for professional learning to make continuous improvement on school and district professional learning systems.

MOVING FORWARD: *Practices for South Carolina to consider*

- Provide educators with more **online, on-demand tools for planning, implementing and evaluating professional learning** and **exemplars of professional learning**, such as archived materials from high-quality professional learning programs. These tools and exemplars can serve as immediate learning resources and models for local leaders as they develop professional learning systems. See guidance, tools and exemplars noted in the Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland and North Carolina profiles.
- Explore ways to provide more **coordinated, comprehensive technical assistance and professional learning to local leadership teams**. This would support the long-term work of building deep and broad capacity in schools and districts to implement high-quality professional learning for all educators. See work with local leadership teams noted in the Alabama, Delaware, Kentucky and Louisiana profiles.
- Undertake more **comprehensive program evaluations** to analyze the efficacy of professional learning initiatives — in particular, their impacts on teacher knowledge and practice as well as student outcomes — to help identify effective practices and weed out ineffective ones. See program evaluations noted in the Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee profiles.

All related state profiles and reports are on the project [Web page](#).