



THE SOUTH CAROLINA  
SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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## For Immediate Release

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### SCSBA releases statewide 'School Board Member Return-to-School' survey results

**Columbia, S.C.** — On Wednesday, May 27, 2020, South Carolina School Boards Association (SCSBA) President Chuck Saylor and Executive Director Scott Price held a press conference to release the results of a survey of local school board members statewide, gauging how they believe school districts should proceed to safely and effectively resume normal operations and how their schools have fared during months of e-learning and other methods used to instruct students at home as a result of COVID-19 closures.

From May 5-14, SCSBA surveyed 591 board members governing the state's 79 local school districts. Fifty-two percent (or 310 school board members) responded, representing each of the state's 46 counties.

As the state develops its guidance for the reopening of school, board members want a range of options, not universal mandates, so that school districts can do what best meets the needs of their students and their communities.

They support the following provisions:

- Flexibility to prepare for their students and teachers to safely return to the classroom
  - When considering opening schools, 53.23% rank the health of students and staff as the number one priority. Addressing class size to allow for recommended physical distancing and maintaining physical distance on school buses are also at the forefront of their minds, even above making up for missed instruction.
  - Two-thirds (66.77%) believe that partial or split scheduling (for example, some students would attend school on Monday-Wednesday-Friday and some on Tuesday-Thursday, alternating weekly, with online instruction on the days they are not in the building) would be a good option if social distancing restrictions remain. Those opposed to this idea reference the complexity of this plan, noting conflicts with childcare options and lack of internet availability.
  - Only 37.1% would favor the option of beginning the school year early (July) to review instruction provided during the closure, several suggesting that teachers need time to regroup.
- Time at the beginning of the year to review instruction provided during the spring closure and additional instructional time for students at all grade levels who need extra assistance
  - While 68% responded that they believe families in their districts are satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the quality of online and/or paper-based instruction provided during the COVID-19 closures,

they also believe that there is no substitution for the learning experience students receive in the classroom.

- Only 20% believe that online and/or paper-based instruction provided during the COVID-19 closure is equivalent to in-school instruction.
- And while a majority (80.97%) support allowing students to begin the school year at their next level of instruction, 66% support allowing parents the choice for their students to repeat their current school-level grade.
- A waiver to suspend end-of-the year standardized tests so teachers can focus teaching and learning
  - A large majority (82.9%) believe that the state should seek a waiver to suspend student standardized testing again next year to allow educators extra time to focus on student learning.

Finally, school board members are split on the decision of whether parents should have a choice of sending their children back to school for in-person instruction or continuing with online/paper instruction at home, with 49.68% agreeing with this option and 50.32% opposing it, some noting that this option would put an additional burden on classroom teachers.

**The survey findings are attached as a summary and infographic, along with the responses for each question of the board member return-to-school survey with individual comments.**

***Quotes of note from the press conference:***

“We know that school board members are the voice of their local communities and regularly receive feedback from families and students, which is why a survey of the state’s 79 local boards was so important.”

–SCSBA Executive Director Scott Price

“I have spoken to many, many school board members during these past few months, and I can say without hesitation that all of them are focused on the health and safety of their students, staff and their families.”

--SCSBA President and Greenville County Schools Board Member Chuck Saylor

“The main message from school board members is the need for recognition by the state that one-size-fits-all solutions do not work. As the state develops its guidance for the fall, board members have been pretty clear – they want a range of options, not universal mandates, so that their school districts can best meet the needs of their students and communities.”

–SCSBA President and Greenville County Schools Board Member Chuck Saylor

“As school boards and educators must work at the massive task of managing education and continuing learning in a period of unprecedented disruption, we should remember what has always been true: every school is different, and every district is different.”

–SCSBA President and Greenville County Schools Board Member Chuck Saylor

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