

# Voting for Justice in Education

**2022 Candidate Profiles for Governor and  
State Superintendents in the South**



# Voting for Justice in Education

Voters across the South head to the polls in November to cast ballots in local, state, and federal elections. The winners of some of these statewide races will have a direct impact on the implementation of future pre-K–12 and higher education policies in the southern region.

The Southern Education Foundation is providing voters with the following profiles of candidates in nine southern gubernatorial races and three races for state superintendent of education. While SEF approaches elections from a nonpartisan perspective, the 155-year-old nonprofit organization advocates for progress on issues of justice in education.

SEF asks voters to consider these key questions for any leader whose position has oversight or influence in public schools:

- Will the candidate push to provide additional resources for schools based on the number of students living in low-income households?
- Does the candidate oppose classroom censorship and support factual classroom lessons on race and inequality?
- Is this candidate focused on addressing other key long-term issues in education?
  - School funding that supports a high-quality education for every student
  - Access to high-quality pre-K and other early-childhood programs for every family
  - Ensure public funds are not diverted to private schools through school privatization efforts
  - Improving non-academic supports such as access to mental health services and nutritious meals
  - Improving digital infrastructure so that all students, especially those that live in rural settings, can access digital instruction
  - Diversifying the educator workforce
  - Addressing equity, especially racial equity in the public education system.



## Why gubernatorial and state superintendent races matter for education:

Governors and state superintendents of education can have high levels of influence and power on critical decisions in education, including statewide education budgets, school funding systems, curriculum and instruction, and the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers and principals. Many of these governors and state superintendents also have the authority to appoint individuals to key positions who set important education policies. Their decisions and political office influence the size and scope of public investments in the education system.

# Key Issues in 2022

The 2022 general elections could reshape the education landscape in much of the country. Education issues continue to be a top priority among candidates and the public. This year, SEF sent a questionnaire to every candidate for governor and state superintendent of education (where elected) in the southern states—asking for their positions on critical education policies that affect students in schools that have faced historic underinvestments.



## Early childhood

A full range of high-quality early learning opportunities should include access to affordable, high-quality programs for infants, toddlers, and young children. We assess whether candidates promise to invest in early childhood education, such as universal pre-K for all 3- and 4-year-olds, home visiting programs that connect early care professionals with new parents, more affordable high-quality childcare options, and improved professional learning opportunities and equal pay for early childhood educators.



## Equitable K-12 school funding/ resource equity

To meet the demands of the 21st Century economy, today's learners require additional and targeted investments to meet every student's unique academic and youth development needs. States' education funding systems should account for the comprehensive needs of students of color, students from low-income families, and other student subgroups who have been historically underserved. This section of the profiles shows the commitments gubernatorial and state education superintendents support to improve the education funding system.



## School privatization

School vouchers, education savings accounts, tax credit scholarships, and other school privatization efforts send public funds to private schools, diverting critical resources from public schools and the students who attend them. This section shows candidates' positions on school privatization programs.



## Whole child supports

A whole-child approach to teaching and learning supports and nurtures all areas of a student's development and learning, from social-emotional and cognitive skills to academic proficiency. The intentional integration of services such as health care, nutrition, and social-and-emotional support is now a necessity for schools in many communities. This comprehensive, integrated system of support boosts overall student success, allowing students to develop fully. This particular section of the profiles provides an overview of the non-academic youth development priorities of gubernatorial and state superintendent candidates.



### **Distance learning infrastructure**

Anytime, anywhere learning should be a priority for every federal and state policymaker due to the unpredictable impact of ongoing pandemics and natural disasters that can eliminate the option of in-person instruction. This comparison section shows how statewide candidates plan to support the necessary digital infrastructure so all students can access their coursework online.



### **Classroom censorship**

Some states and school districts are passing laws or policies to restrict teaching about race and inequality. Research shows that students of color perform better when they see themselves reflected in the curriculum. Curriculum that serves a diverse student population and teaching practices that affirm students' identities and experiences can provide a more engaging, deeper learning environment for students. This section reviews whether candidates support restrictions on long-standing academic curricula on these topics.



### **Diverse teacher recruitment and retention**

Recruiting more high-quality educators into teaching—especially people of color, ensuring teachers are well-prepared for the profession, and opportunities for professional growth and advancement can help reduce the teacher shortages in many states. This profile comparison analyzes each candidate's commitment to recruit and diversify the teacher workforce.



### **Teacher pay**

Public schools perform better when states invest in strong preparation and continued support for educators. These investments should include better educator pay, affordable health insurance, and other benefits. In this section of the candidate profiles, we assess the candidates' commitment to increasing teacher wages and benefits.



### **Investing in HBCUs**

Historically Black colleges and universities are critically important in educating low-income students and students of color in the South. This section shows candidates' interest in correcting historic under-investments in these institutions.

*This candidate profile project was last updated Sept. 15, 2022. Any changes to candidates' websites or new position statement published after Sept. 15, 2022 are not included in this analysis.*

# Quick Guide to the Candidate Profiles

Click on the buttons below to jump to each section and state in the candidate profiles.

**State superintendent of education candidate profiles by state:**

**Gubernatorial candidate profiles by state:**

# State Superintendent Candidate Profiles



## Georgia

Neither of these candidates responded to the Southern Education Foundation's survey seeking their positions on key education issues. The information below is based on SEF's review of the candidates' campaign websites or from other public resources hyperlinked below.

Alisha Thomas Searcy (D) - Consultant	Richard Woods (R) - Incumbent
<p><b>Alisha Thomas Searcy</b> was born in Georgia. Ms. Searcy earned her bachelor's degree from Spelman College in Atlanta and a graduate degree from Kennesaw State University. She has owned an education consulting business. Throughout her career, she has served as a school board member, school board coach and mentor, and school superintendent. For 12 years, she also served as the Georgia House of Representatives member for District 39.</p>	<p><b>Richard Woods</b> currently serves as the Georgia Superintendent of Schools. Superintendent Woods received his bachelor's degree from Kennesaw State University and his master's degree from Valdosta State University. His career in education has spanned more than 25 years, including 14 years as a high school teacher. He spent an additional eight years as a school administrator, serving as an assistant principal and alternative school director.</p>
<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Ms. Searcy's top <a href="#">education priorities</a> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increasing teacher retention,</li> <li>• providing mental-health services to students and school personnel,</li> <li>• providing wraparound services to students,</li> <li>• leveraging technology for 21st Century learning, and</li> <li>• developing a relevant curriculum.</li> </ul>	<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Woods' top <a href="#">education priorities</a> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• addressing school safety,</li> <li>• reducing high-stakes testing,</li> <li>• promoting literacy attainment,</li> <li>• increasing students' access to the arts, and</li> <li>• support for rural schools.</li> </ul>
<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>During the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education's <a href="#">Critical Issues Forum</a>, Ms. Searcy said she wants to increase funding for pre-K programs and increase compensation and training for pre-K educators so that Georgia's 4 year olds are better prepared for school.</p>	<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Woods' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing pay for childcare and pre-K professionals and improving access to affordable, high-quality pre-K settings for all children in Georgia.</p>
<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>"It's time to revamp our funding mechanism in Georgia to focus on students. Our <a href="#">Quality Basic Education</a> (QBE) formula is outdated and complicated," Ms. Searcy said in an <a href="#">interview</a>. She added that "we have to ask (school) districts to look at district budgets and see what they're prioritizing."</p>	<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Woods <a href="#">proposes</a> to modernize <a href="#">Georgia's K-12 education funding formula</a> by increasing school-transportation funding, enhancing non-academic support for students, expanding resources for school support staff, and adjusting funding levels to address the rising costs of resources, support, and personnel.</p>

# State Superintendent Candidate Profiles

## Georgia

Alisha Thomas Searcy (D) - Consultant	Richard Woods (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>During a recent debate with Superintendent Woods, Ms. Searcy said, "I'm a proud supporter of public school choice as a parent of three school-aged children. I know more than anyone else what's best for my children, and I believe that parents should have that option."</p>	<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Woods' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on school privatization measures such as school vouchers, education savings accounts, or tax-credit scholarship programs.</p>
<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Ms. Searcy <a href="#">says</a> she is passionate about providing mental health services for students and school personnel and wraparound services for students.</p>	<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Woods <a href="#">supports</a> the Georgia Department of Education <a href="#">Office of Whole-Child Supports</a>, which assists schools, districts, and communities in identifying and addressing non-academic barriers to students' success.</p>
<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Ms. Searcy's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on additional funding to extend access to high-speed broadband and guarantee that every student has access to a device for virtual learning.</p>	<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Woods, alongside Gov. Brian Kemp, <a href="#">allocated \$6 million</a> of Georgia's CARES Act funds to provide school districts with the resources to connect students to the internet. "This initiative will ensure schools and districts are prepared if distance/virtual learning is needed in the future, but will also expand the horizons of thousands of students long after the pandemic ends," Mr. Woods <a href="#">said</a>.</p>
<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>In <a href="#">an interview</a>, Ms Searcy said the following, "Critical race theory is a political distraction. It's not taught in schools, and we all know that as a former legislator, I know that politicians tend to focus on distractions when they don't have solutions for how we solve education problems in our state. What I do believe is that education should be culturally relevant. It ought to reflect the students, the teachers, and the educators who are in the system. And so my position is clear. I think we ought to stop talking about distractions and focus on the things that really matter when it comes to children."</p> <p><i>Note: Critical race theory is an academic and legal framework that provides a race-conscious approach to understanding structural racism. Critical race theory is introduced mainly in graduate school-level courses. Critical race theory is <b>not taught</b> in the K-12 public education system.</i></p>	<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Woods says critical race theory "has no place in our schools and classrooms." According to his <a href="#">campaign website</a>, he does not support adopting critical race theory in state standards or applying for or accepting funding that requires the adoption of these concepts.</p> <p><i>Note: Critical race theory is an academic and legal framework that provides a race-conscious approach to understanding structural racism. Critical race theory is introduced mainly in graduate school-level courses. Critical race theory is <b>not taught</b> in the K-12 public education system.</i></p>

# State Superintendent Candidate Profiles

## Georgia

Alisha Thomas Searcy (D) - Consultant	Richard Woods (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>In <a href="#">an interview</a>, Ms. Searcy said: "As a state, we need to recruit teachers like the NFL recruits football players. Imagine what the teaching force would look like if we celebrated them and honored them the way we do celebrities and athletes."</p>	<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>On State Superintendent Woods' <a href="#">campaign website</a>, he says that to recruit and retain teachers, Georgia must expand annual step raises throughout a teacher's career.</p>
<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Ms. Searcy said in <a href="#">an interview</a> that Georgia's educator-compensation structure needs revamping to help increase educator retention. She also supports raising the starting salary for Georgia educators to \$65,000 and providing raises within their first three to five years.</p>	<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Woods <a href="#">supports</a> increasing teacher pay and expanding annual salary step raises throughout an educator's career.</p>



# State Superintendent Candidate Profiles



## Oklahoma

Neither of these candidates responded to the Southern Education Foundation’s survey seeking their positions on key education issues. The information below is based on SEF’s review of the candidates’ campaign websites or from other public resources hyperlinked below.

Jena Nelson (D) - Educator	Ryan Walters (R) - Current State Secretary of Public Education
<p><b>Jena Nelson</b> is a sixth- and seventh-grade middle school English teacher. Ms. Nelson has taught in the Deer Creek School District based in Edmond, Oklahoma, for the past five years and has spent 16 years in public education, teaching English, theater, and other subjects. She currently serves as the Student Support Coordinator and teaches academic enhancement at Deer Creek Middle School.</p>	<p><b>Ryan Walters</b> grew up in McAlester, Oklahoma, and attended Harding University before returning to teach at McAlester High School. He was McAlester’s Teacher of the Year and a finalist for 2016 State Teacher of the Year. He was appointed the executive director of Oklahoma Achieves, a nonprofit education organization created by the State Chamber of Oklahoma. Mr. Walters currently serves as the Secretary of Public Education for the State of Oklahoma, a position appointed by the governor, and is running for the elected position of state superintendent.</p>
<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Ms. Nelson’s main <a href="#">education priorities</a> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• keeping public funds in public schools,</li> <li>• ensuring teacher retention through improved compensation structures,</li> <li>• improving mental-health services for students, and</li> <li>• expanding broadband access to better serve rural schools and communities.</li> </ul>	<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Secretary Walters’ <a href="#">campaign website</a> says his education priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• banning any curriculum that includes elements of critical race theory,</li> <li>• keeping schools open for in-person instruction, and</li> <li>• increasing teacher pay.</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: Critical race theory is an academic and legal framework that provides a race-conscious approach to understanding structural racism. Critical race theory is introduced mainly in graduate school-level courses. Critical race theory is <b>not taught</b> in the K-12 public education system.</i></p>
<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Ms. Nelson’s campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increased pay for childcare and pre-K professionals or improved access to affordable, high-quality pre-K settings for all children in the state.</p>	<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Secretary Walters’ campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increased pay for childcare and pre-K professionals or improved access to affordable, high-quality pre-K settings for all children in the state.</p>

# State Superintendent Candidate Profiles

## Oklahoma

Jena Nelson (D) - Educator	Ryan Walters (R) - Current State Secretary of Public Education
<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>Ms. Nelson’s campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on changing Oklahoma’s primary K-12 school funding formula by allocating additional resources for students from low-income families compared to those from higher-income families.</p>	<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>Secretary Walters’ campaign website or current public statements do not indicate a position on changing Oklahoma’s primary K-12 school funding formula by allocating additional resources for students from low-income families compared to those from higher-income families.</p>
<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Ms. Nelson’s <a href="#">campaign website</a> shows that she opposes the use of public funds for private schools. “I believe wholeheartedly that our public dollars should remain in our public schools,” she says.</p>	<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Secretary Walters has publicly <a href="#">advocated</a> for school privatization programs such as school vouchers, education savings accounts, and tax-credit scholarship programs.</p>
<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Ms. Nelson’s campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing funding for whole-child support policies that prioritize the full scope of a student’s developmental needs.</p>	<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Secretary Walters’ campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing funding for whole-child support policies that prioritize the full scope of a student’s developmental needs.</p>
<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Ms. Nelson’s <a href="#">campaign website</a> outlines her plan to protect rural schools and communities, expanding broadband internet access to every rural school and community to ensure learners can thrive in the 21st Century.</p>	<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Secretary Walters’ campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on additional funding to extend access to high-speed broadband and guarantee that every student has access to a device for virtual learning.</p>
<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Ms. Nelson’s campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on classroom censorship policies, such as state or district efforts that limit discussions about race, gender, sexuality, or systemic inequality in K-12 classrooms.</p>	<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>“As state superintendent, I promise to advocate for” the removal of critical race theory “from any curriculum that comes from the State Board of Education,” Secretary Walters <a href="#">says</a>.</p> <p><i>Note: Critical race theory is an academic and legal framework that provides a race-conscious approach to understanding structural racism. Critical race theory is introduced mainly in graduate school-level courses. Critical race theory is <b>not taught</b> in the K-12 public education system.</i></p>

# State Superintendent Candidate Profiles

## Oklahoma

Jena Nelson (D) - Educator	Ryan Walters (R) - Current State Secretary of Public Education
<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Ms. Nelson's <a href="#">campaign website</a> says that if elected state superintendent, she would make teacher retention a top priority. She would work to end and reverse “teacher flight” by compensating education professionals as professionals, reducing the “endless new mandates,” and allowing educators to do what they do best—teach.</p>	<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>“As state superintendent, I will do all I can to lift up our quality teachers and attract and retain the best and brightest to serve our students in every classroom,” Secretary Walters <a href="#">says</a>.</p>
<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Ms. Nelson says she <a href="#">believes</a> that teachers are professionals and should be treated and compensated like professionals. “To reverse this ‘teacher flight,’ we need to reduce class sizes and pay these professionals like professionals,” she said.</p>	<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>“As (the current) Secretary of Education, I am working with Governor Stitt and legislative leaders on legislation that would create a pathway for our best teachers to make six-figure salaries,” Secretary Walters <a href="#">says</a>.</p>



# State Superintendent Candidate Profiles



## South Carolina

Candidate Ellis responded to the Southern Education Foundation's survey request for education policy information, and her profile description reflects her answers to SEF's candidate questions. Ms. Weaver did not respond to SEF's request for information. Ms. Weaver's comparison description is either sourced directly from her campaign websites or from other public resources hyperlinked below.

Lisa Ellis (D) - Educator	Ellen Weaver (R) - Nonprofit Leader
<p><b>Lisa Ellis</b> was born in Columbia, South Carolina. She earned a bachelor's degree from the College of Charleston in 1997, and graduate degrees from Clemson University in 2001 and Columbia College in 2018. She is the founder and a board member of <a href="#">SC for Ed</a>, an organization of South Carolina teachers advocating on behalf of students and educators to put the best teachers in every classroom in the state.</p>	<p><b>Ellen Weaver</b> was born in Greenville, South Carolina, and graduated from Bob Jones University. She is the president and CEO of the <a href="#">Palmetto Promise Institute</a>. Before serving as the Institute's founding president and CEO, Ms. Weaver worked in a wide variety of roles in U.S. Senator Jim DeMint's offices in Washington, DC, and South Carolina.</p>
<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>In Ms. Ellis' response to the SEF candidate survey, she said her three main priorities for K-12 education are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ increase teacher recruitment and retention,</li> <li>▪ reduce high-stakes testing, and</li> <li>▪ address the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of students.</li> </ul>	<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Ms. Weaver's <a href="#">education priorities</a> in South Carolina are built on three principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ flexibility,</li> <li>▪ responsibility, and</li> <li>▪ fairness.</li> </ul> <p>She believes "every student deserves access to a high-quality education, in a learning environment that best supports their needs, free from political indoctrination."</p>
<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>In response to SEF's candidate survey, Ms. Ellis says that if elected, she would work to increase pay for childcare and pre-K professionals and improve access to affordable, high-quality pre-K for all children in South Carolina.</p>	<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Ms. Weaver's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing pay for childcare and pre-K professionals and improving access to affordable, high-quality pre-K settings for all children in South Carolina.</p>
<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>In response to SEF's candidate survey, Ms. Ellis says that if elected, she would support changing South Carolina's primary K-12 funding formula by allocating additional funding for students from low-income families compared to those from higher-income families.</p>	<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>Ms. Weaver's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on changing South Carolina's primary K-12 funding formula by allocating additional funding for students from low-income families compared to those from higher-income families.</p>

# State Superintendent Candidate Profiles

## South Carolina

Lisa Ellis (D) - Educator	Ellen Weaver (R) - Nonprofit Leader
<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>In response to SEF’s candidate survey, Ms. Ellis says she would not support, or plan to develop or expand, school-privatization initiatives such as school voucher programs.</p>	<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>“Parents of every income level should be empowered to find the right educational environment for their child’s unique needs. This includes creating school choice scholarships, supporting public charter schools, expanding public school open enrollment, allowing tax credits for homeschool expenses, growing high-quality online course access programs, and allowing new innovations like learning pods and micro-schools to develop without bureaucratic red tape,” Ms. Weaver <a href="#">says</a>.</p>
<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Ms. Ellis says she would support or commit to increasing funding for whole-child support policies that prioritize the full scope of a student’s developmental needs.</p>	<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Ms. Weaver’s campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing funding for whole-child support policies that prioritize the full scope of a student’s developmental needs.</p>
<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>In response to SEF’s candidate survey, Ms. Ellis says that as State Superintendent of Education, she would support additional funding to extend access to high-speed broadband and guarantee that every student has access to a device for virtual learning.</p>	<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Ms. Weaver’s campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on additional funding to extend access to high-speed broadband and guarantee that every student has access to a device for virtual learning.</p>
<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>In response to SEF’s candidate survey, Ms. Ellis says she does not support classroom-censorship policies such as state or district efforts that limit discussions on race, gender, sexuality, or systemic inequality in K-12 classrooms.</p>	<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Ms. Weaver <a href="#">says</a> that “ideologies such as ‘critical race theory’ under any name or guise are wrong. These political philosophies form a worldview that attempts to indoctrinate students in a biased version of reality, usurp parental authority and values, and distract from the real purpose of education. They have no place in South Carolina’s K-12 classrooms and should not be forced on teachers as ‘professional development.’”</p> <p><i>Note: Critical race theory is an academic and legal framework that provides a race-conscious approach to understanding structural racism. Critical race theory is introduced mainly in graduate school-level courses. Critical race theory is <b>not taught</b> in the K-12 public education system.</i></p>

# State Superintendent Candidate Profiles

## South Carolina

Lisa Ellis (D) - Educator	Ellen Weaver (R) - Nonprofit Leader
<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>In response to SEF’s candidate survey, Ms. Ellis says she would support and plan steps to recruit and retain a more diverse educator workforce in South Carolina.</p>	<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Ms. Weaver <a href="#">says</a> that “recruiting and retaining great public school educators is essential.” She <a href="#">proposes</a> reforming South Carolina’s current pay scale to raise teacher salaries to the national average within five years and to help keep educators in the classroom. She also supports new ways to attract new teachers to the profession.</p>
<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Ms. Ellis <a href="#">proposes</a> a push for higher salaries for essential school staff, including paraprofessionals, bus drivers, substitute teachers, school nurses, and custodians. She says she would use South Carolina’s budget surplus to honor the state’s Education Finance Act by meeting or exceeding the average teacher salary in the Southeast.</p>	<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Ms. Weaver supports reforming South Carolina’s current teacher pay scale and <a href="#">proposes</a> raising teacher salaries to the national average within five years.</p>



# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles



## Alabama

Neither of these candidates responded to the Southern Education Foundation's survey seeking their positions on key education issues. The information below is based on SEF's review of the candidates' campaign websites or from other public resources hyperlinked below.

Yolanda Flowers (D) - Educator	Kay Ivey (R) - Incumbent
<p><b>Yolanda Flowers</b> was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama. She earned an associate degree in speech therapy in 2004, a bachelor's degree in audiology from the University of Tennessee in 2007, and a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from the University of Tennessee in 2009. She has worked as a speech, language, and pathologist assistant for the Blount County schools and Alcoa City schools, and as a vocational rehabilitation counselor for the state <a href="#">Division of Rehabilitation Services</a> in Tennessee.</p>	<p><b>Governor Kay Ivey</b> serves as the <a href="#">54th Governor of Alabama</a>. Born in Camden, Alabama, she graduated in 1967 from Auburn University with a degree in secondary education. After teaching high school in California for a few years, Gov. Ivey entered politics in 1979, working for Democratic Governor Forrest James as an executive assistant for social services. Gov. Ivey was elected lieutenant governor in 2010, becoming the first Republican woman to hold the office in Alabama's history. In 2014, she also became the first Republican lieutenant governor re-elected to the office. She became governor when her predecessor resigned in 2017, and she was elected to a full term in 2018.</p>
<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Ms. Flowers' <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says she wants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide more funding for public schools,</li> <li>recruit and retain highly-trained teachers, and</li> <li>increase teacher and student diversity within schools.</li> </ul>	<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Gov. Ivey's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says she wants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure "students have the resources they need for a strong start in life."</li> </ul>
<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Ms. Flowers' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increased pay for childcare and pre-K professionals or improving access to affordable, high-quality pre-K programs for all children in her state.</p>	<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Gov. Ivey's <a href="#">Strong Start, Strong Finish Pre-to-Three initiative</a> is focused on providing first-class pre-K programs statewide, with research-based home visiting programs for children up to 3 years old, increasing children's pre-K readiness.</p>
<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>In Ms. Flowers' <a href="#">campaign platform</a>, she proposes using lottery funds toward better-built schools with clean and filtered water, cleaner air systems, and two nutritious meals per day.</p>	<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>Gov. Ivey signed the <a href="#">2023 Education Trust Fund</a> bill into law, increasing the K-12 Foundation Program that provides state funding to school districts based on enrollment to \$4.2 billion, a \$222 million increase over last year.</p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Alabama

Yolanda Flowers (D) - Educator	Kay Ivey (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Ms. Flowers' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on school-privatization measures such as school vouchers, education savings accounts, or tax-credit scholarship programs.</p>	<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Gov. Ivey signed <a href="#">Senate Bill 261</a> into law, expanding the state's tax-credit scholarship program by increasing the cap on individual and corporate tax credits for gifts to the program. Families can use the tax-credit scholarships to pay for private-school costs.</p>
<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>In Ms. Flowers' campaign platform, she proposes to offer every student a psychological evaluation to diagnose any learning disabilities by the age of 5 and implement targeted curricula for students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).</p>	<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Gov. Ivey's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing funding for whole-child support policies that prioritize the full scope of a student's developmental needs.</p>
<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>In Ms. Flowers' <a href="#">campaign platform</a>, she proposes to use Alabama's lottery proceeds to increase broadband access in all rural counties and for small businesses.</p>	<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Gov. Ivey has <a href="#">awarded</a> more than \$26 million in state grants to organizations providing broadband services in Alabama, offering nearly 15,000 additional households, businesses and public facilities—including schools—broadband services.</p>
<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Ms. Flowers' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on classroom censorship policies, such as state or district efforts that limit discussions about race, gender, sexuality, or systemic inequality in K-12 classrooms.</p>	<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Gov. Ivey <a href="#">stated</a> that critical race theory currently isn't being taught in Alabama classrooms. She nonetheless voted in favor of a state Board of Education resolution "that would ban some concepts or tenets that promote the controversial critical race theory"</p> <p><i>Note: Critical race theory is an academic and legal framework that provides a race-conscious approach to understanding structural racism. Critical race theory is introduced mainly in graduate school-level courses. Critical race theory is <b>not taught</b> in the K-12 public education system.</i></p>
<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>In Ms. Flowers' <a href="#">campaign platform</a>, she proposes raising teacher pay to attract more educators. She also wants to strengthen the capacity of the Alabama Education Association to help ensure teachers are supported and treated fairly.</p>	<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Gov. Ivey's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on efforts to recruit or retain a more diverse teacher workforce in Alabama.</p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Alabama

Yolanda Flowers (D) - Educator	Kay Ivey (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>In Ms. Flowers' <a href="#">campaign platform</a>, she proposes using Alabama's lottery proceeds to provide additional aid to schools and increase teacher pay.</p>	<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>In her <a href="#">State of the State address</a>, Gov. Ivey called for 4% raises for teachers and annual increases in minimum teacher salaries (rather than every three years).</p>
<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Ms. Flowers' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on investing in HBCUs.</p>	<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>The Governor's Office of Minority Affairs established the <a href="#">Alabama HBCU Initiative</a> to ensure HBCUs are viable options and sustainable institutions in the state of Alabama.</p>



# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles



Neither of these candidates responded to the Southern Education Foundation’s survey seeking their positions on key education issues. The information below is based on SEF’s review of the candidates’ campaign websites or from other public resources hyperlinked below.

Chris Jones (D) - Engineer	Sarah Huckabee Sanders (R) - Politician
<p><b>Chris Jones</b> <a href="#">was born</a> and raised in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in physics and mathematics in 1999 from Morehouse College in Atlanta, a Master of Science degree in nuclear engineering/technology and policy in 2003 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and a Ph.D. in urban planning from MIT. His career experience includes work as a physicist, minister, and nonprofit organization leader.</p>	<p><b>Sarah Huckabee Sanders</b> was born in Hope, Arkansas. She <a href="#">earned</a> a bachelor’s degree from Ouachita Baptist University. Ms. Sanders was the press secretary for President Donald Trump, a founding partner of Second Street Strategies, campaign manager for her father and former Governor Mike Huckabee’s 2016 presidential campaign, a senior advisor for Mr. Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign, a senior advisor to former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s 2012 presidential campaign, and the national political director of former Gov. Mike Huckabee’s 2008 presidential campaign.</p>
<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Mr. Jones’ <a href="#">education priorities</a> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ expanding preschool to all families,</li> <li>▪ ensuring all children are reading at grade level by third grade,</li> <li>▪ supporting all colleges and universities (technical colleges, community colleges, and four-year universities)</li> <li>▪ expanding broadband access for every home in the state, and</li> <li>▪ increasing teacher pay to improve retention and retirement benefits.</li> </ul>	<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Ms. Sanders says she wants to <a href="#">focus</a> on providing quality education to children in Arkansas by empowering parents and preparing students for the workforce.</p>
<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Mr. Jones’ <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he believes all Arkansans deserve access to affordable and high-quality pre-K. To improve and expand pre-K access, he <a href="#">proposes</a> to reallocate state funding into pre-K subsidy programs for low- and middle-class families, use public funds to support and stabilize existing childcare centers, ensure pay equity for pre-K educators, and leverage public-private partnerships to extend the reach of federal grant dollars in early childhood care and education.</p>	<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Ms. Sanders’ campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increased pay for childcare and pre-K professionals or improved access to affordable, high-quality pre-K settings for all children in her state.</p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Arkansas

Chris Jones (D) - Engineer	Sarah Huckabee Sanders (R) - Politician
 <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b> In his <a href="#">campaign platform</a> , Mr. Jones says he wants to increase public funding for education to address long-standing concerns about outdated facilities and inadequate classroom supplies, and to increase teacher pay.	 <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b> Ms. Sanders' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on changing Arkansas' primary K-12 school funding formula by allocating additional resources for students from low-income families compared to those from higher-income families.
 <b>School Privatization</b> Mr. Jones' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on school-privatization measures such as school vouchers, education savings accounts, or tax-credit scholarship programs.	 <b>School Privatization</b> Ms. Sanders has <a href="#">said</a> she supports school choice and would expand a publicly funded program that allows parents to send their children to schools outside their designated school district.
 <b>Whole Child Supports</b> Mr. Jones' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing funding for whole-child support policies that prioritize the full scope of a student's developmental needs.	 <b>Whole Child Supports</b> Ms. Sanders' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing funding for whole-child support policies that prioritize the full scope of a student's developmental needs.
 <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b> In his <a href="#">campaign platform</a> , Mr. Jones says he believes that all Arkansans deserve efficient and equitable access to broadband service so they can connect to educational opportunities. To improve and expand broadband access, he <a href="#">plans</a> to create training programs through community colleges to increase the number of workers able to install fiber cables, fund programs that improve broadband services, and incentivize broadband service providers.	 <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b> Ms. Sanders' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on additional funding to extend access to high-speed broadband and guarantee that every student has access to a device for virtual learning.
 <b>Classroom Censorship</b> Mr. Jones' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on classroom censorship policies, such as state or district efforts that limit discussions about race, gender, sexuality, or systemic inequality in K-12 classrooms.	 <b>Classroom Censorship</b> Ms. Sanders' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on classroom censorship policies, such as state or district efforts that limit discussions about race, gender, sexuality, or systemic inequality in K-12 classrooms.

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Arkansas

Chris Jones (D) - Engineer	Sarah Huckabee Sanders (R) - Politician
<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>In his <a href="#">campaign platform</a>, Mr. Jones says he wants to attract highly qualified teachers by offering more competitive salaries. He says he would work toward steadier accrual patterns and expand benefits to all teachers.</p>	<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Ms. Sanders' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on efforts to recruit or retain a more diverse teacher workforce in Arkansas.</p>
<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>In his <a href="#">campaign platform</a>, Mr. Jones focuses on increasing teacher pay, <a href="#">saying he would</a> immediately raise starting teacher pay to \$46,000 (and to \$50,000 by 2027) and the statewide average teacher salary to \$50,000.</p>	<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Ms. Sanders' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing teacher pay.</p>
<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Mr. Jones' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on investing in HBCUs.</p>	<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Ms. Sanders' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on investing in HBCUs.</p>

Candidate Sanders released her education positions on her campaign website in October, following SEF's analysis of all candidates in September. See Ms. Sanders' education positions [here](#).



# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles



## Florida

Neither of these candidates responded to the Southern Education Foundation's survey seeking their positions on key education issues. The information below is based on SEF's review of the candidates' campaign websites or from other public resources hyperlinked below.

Charlie Crist (D) - Former U.S. Representative	Ron DeSantis (R) - Incumbent
<p><b>Charlie Crist</b> represented Florida's 13th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives until he resigned in August to run for governor. He had held the seat since 2017. He earned his undergraduate degree from Florida State University and his law degree from Samford University Cumberland School of Law in Alabama. He began his political career as a Republican, serving in the Florida Senate from 1993 to 1999, then as Florida Education Commissioner from 2001 to 2003, and Florida Attorney General from 2003 to 2007. Then he was elected the <a href="#">44th Governor of Florida</a>, serving from 2007 to 2011. In December 2012, he joined the Democratic Party.</p>	<p><b>Governor Ron DeSantis</b> serves as the <a href="#">46th Governor of Florida</a>. Born in Jacksonville, he grew up in Orlando and Dunedin, Florida. He graduated from Yale University in 2001 and Harvard Law School in 2005. He served in the U.S. Navy from 2004 to 2010 and was a federal prosecutor before being elected in 2012 to the U.S. House of Representatives to represent Florida's 6th Congressional District, a position he held until running for governor in 2018.</p>
<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Rep. Crist's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he wants to increase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• availability of full-day pre-K,</li> <li>• investments in per-student spending, and</li> <li>• teacher pay.</li> </ul>	<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Gov. DeSantis' <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he wants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protect parental rights in education,</li> <li>• expand "school-choice" initiatives, and</li> <li>• invest in students and teachers.</li> </ul>
<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>In his <a href="#">campaign platform</a>, Rep. Crist says he would expand investments in the state's voluntary pre-K program and increase the availability of full-day pre-K classes.</p>	<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Gov. DeSantis <a href="#">signed</a> the budget for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 that included more than \$453 million for Florida's Voluntary Pre-K Program.</p>
<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>In his <a href="#">campaign platform</a>, Rep. Crist says he wants to increase per-student spending and invest billions of additional dollars to expand curricula and make classrooms safer.</p>	<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>Gov. DeSantis <a href="#">designated</a> \$24.3 billion in the current <a href="#">state budget</a> for elementary, middle, and high school education. Per-student funding has increased by \$385, from \$7,760 to \$8,143, during his time in office.</p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Florida

Charlie Crist (D) - Former U.S. Representative	Ron DeSantis (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Rep. Crist's campaign website or current public statements do not indicate a position on school-privatization measures such as school vouchers, education savings accounts, or tax-credit scholarship programs.</p>	<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Gov. DeSantis signed <a href="#">House Bill 7045</a> into law, significantly increasing the size and scope of several school privatization initiatives in Florida. In addition, Gov. DeSantis <a href="#">expanded</a> the state's private-school voucher program by \$200 million in 2021.</p>
<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Rep. Crist's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing funding for whole-child support policies that prioritize the full scope of a student's developmental needs.</p>	<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Gov. DeSantis' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing funding for whole-child support policies that prioritize the full scope of a student's developmental needs.</p>
<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Rep. Crist's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on additional funding to extend access to high-speed broadband and guarantee that every student has access to a device for virtual learning.</p>	<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Gov. DeSantis signed <a href="#">House Bill 1239</a>, known as the <a href="#">Broadband Deployment Act</a>, providing grant funding to applicants working to expand broadband service to underserved areas of Florida.</p>
<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Rep. Crist's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on classroom censorship policies, such as state or district efforts that limit discussions about race, gender, sexuality, or systemic inequality in K-12 classrooms.</p>	<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Gov. DeSantis <a href="#">signed</a> into law the <a href="#">"Stop WOKE Act,"</a> or <a href="#">House Bill 7</a>, which bans educators from teaching on certain topics related to race.</p> <p><i>Note: Critical race theory is an academic and legal framework that provides a race-conscious approach to understanding structural racism. Critical race theory is introduced mainly in graduate school-level courses. Critical race theory is <b>not taught</b> in the K-12 public education system.</i></p>
<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>In his <a href="#">campaign platform</a>, Rep. Crist says he would declare a teacher-shortage emergency and aggressively begin recruiting teachers and support staff to fill 9,000 classrooms and other critical education positions.</p>	<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Gov. DeSantis <a href="#">announced</a> three proposals for the 2023 Legislative Session to help support and grow Florida's teacher workforce. They <a href="#">include</a> recruiting retired first responders and veterans into teaching through fee waivers and bonuses, an apprenticeship program for teachers, and scholarships to help K-12 teachers earn master's degrees.</p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Florida

Charlie Crist (D) - Former U.S. Representative	Ron DeSantis (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>In his <a href="#">campaign platform</a>, Rep. Crist says he wants to invest more than \$5.5 billion to increase teacher pay to the national average and raise starting salaries to at least \$47,500.</p>	<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Gov. DeSantis <a href="#">announced</a> he will approve \$800 million in the state's new <a href="#">budget</a> to raise the average minimum teacher salary to at least \$47,500.</p>
<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Rep. Crist's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on investing in HBCUs.</p>	<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Gov. DeSantis' campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on investing in HBCUs.</p>



# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles



## Georgia

Neither of these candidates responded to the Southern Education Foundation's survey seeking their positions on key education issues. The information below is based on SEF's review of the candidates' campaign websites or from other public resources hyperlinked below.

Stacey Abrams (D) - Attorney	Brian Kemp (R) - Incumbent
<p><b>Stacey Abrams</b> is an attorney, earning her bachelor's and law school degrees from Yale University. She is an author and a nationally known advocate for <a href="#">voting rights</a>. She <a href="#">served</a> in the state House of Representatives from 2007 to 2017, and from 2011 to 2017 was the House Minority Leader. She was the Democratic nominee for governor in 2018, <a href="#">becoming</a> the nation's first African-American female major-party gubernatorial nominee. After her unsuccessful 2018 gubernatorial campaign, she founded <a href="#">Fair Fight Action</a>, an organization that works to combat voter suppression.</p>	<p><b>Governor Brian Kemp</b> serves as the <a href="#">83rd Governor of Georgia</a>. Gov. Kemp is a graduate of the University of Georgia. Before entering politics as a Georgia state senator in 2002, he owned several agribusinesses, and financial services and real estate companies. Gov. Kemp served as a member of the Georgia Senate from 2003 to 2007. He served as the Secretary of State for eight years, from 2010 to 2018.</p>
<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Ms. Abrams' 2022 platform prioritizes access to <a href="#">childcare and high-quality education</a> for all children. According to her <a href="#">campaign</a>, she wants to update and fully-fund the state's Quality Basic Education Act (QBE) formula, build out a strong early childhood education system, and implement nearly a dozen other education policies.</p>	<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Gov. Kemp's budget proposal for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 provides <a href="#">Georgia's public schools with \$10.7 billion, a \$493 million increase</a> above current funding levels. This proposed increase would be a historic investment to the Quality Basic Education (QBE) funding formula, the state's K-12 public education funding mechanism. The budget proposal also commits to raise teacher salaries.</p>
<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Ms. Abrams' <a href="#">platform</a> says education and public investment should prioritize early childcare and pre-K programs. Per her <a href="#">campaign website</a>, she supports providing high-quality, affordable childcare to all families.</p>	<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Gov. Kemp's <a href="#">early childhood education platform</a> includes reducing the pre-K waiting list by preserving lottery funding for the Georgia Pre-K Program, protecting parent choice by opposing efforts to eliminate privately run pre-K and childcare centers, and establishing a statewide literacy coordinator for early childhood programs.</p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

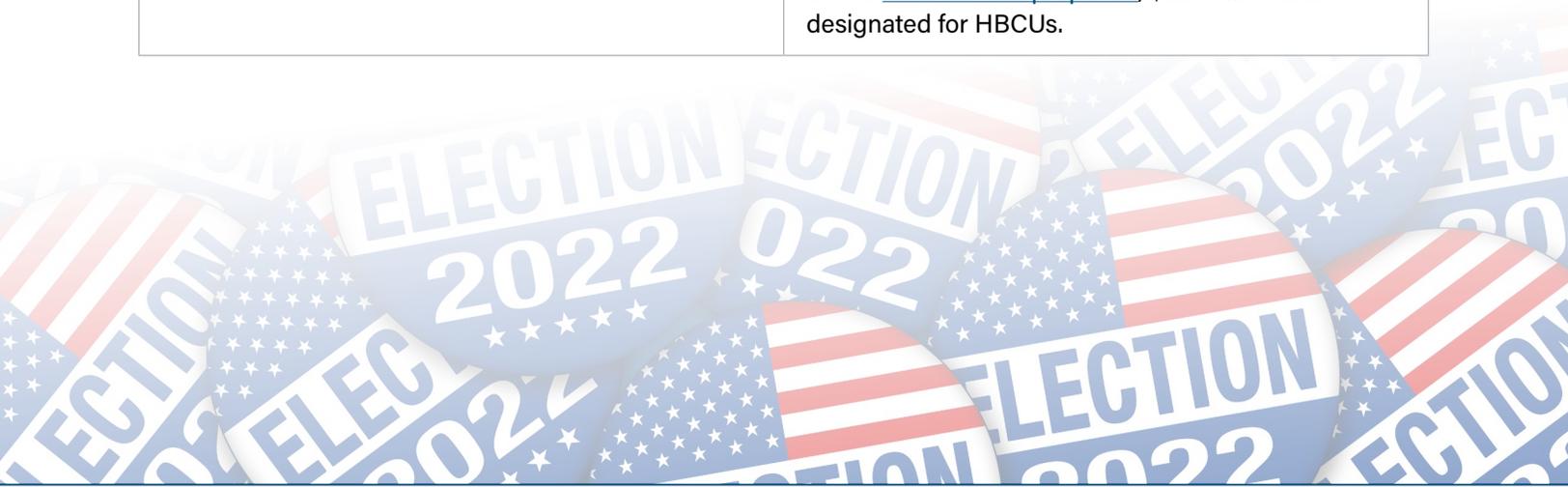
## Georgia

Stacey Abrams (D) - Attorney	Brian Kemp (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>Ms. Abrams promises to transform <a href="#">public education</a> by updating and fully-funding the QBE formula. She also <a href="#">plans</a> to address rural disparities, access to school counselors and nurses, school transportation costs, and funding for students living in low-income households.</p>	<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p><a href="#">Gov. Kemp's FY 2023 budget proposal</a> includes \$425 million to “fully fund” the QBE formula. He used the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER) to support <a href="#">K-12 schools and higher education</a> institutions. He also awarded more than \$15 million to K-12 schools for classroom grants to help educators pay for classroom expenses. According to the <a href="#">Accounting Fiscal Year 2022 and the FY 2023 budgets</a>, Gov. Kemp helped direct an additional \$1.4 billion in direct funding for K-12 schools.</p>
<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Ms. Abrams vows to end “<a href="#">backdoor vouchers</a>” if she’s elected governor. Her <a href="#">campaign</a> says she opposes private-school tax credits and school vouchers to fund private schools.</p>	<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>In spring 2022, Gov. Kemp signed <a href="#">legislation</a> that increased the cap of the <a href="#">Georgia Qualified Education Expense Tax Credit Program</a>, a state school privatization program, from \$100 million to \$120 million annually.</p>
<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Ms. Abrams supports investing to meet the needs of the whole child. Accordingly, she hopes to <a href="#">increase student access to school counselors</a>, telemedicine, and other mental health-related types of support.</p>	<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Gov. Kemp used \$6 million of GEERs funding to expand mental health services in schools. In his 2018 campaign, he made mental health and school safety major priorities in his platform. Gov. Kemp also <a href="#">proposed</a> a budget amendment for Fiscal Year 2019 that included \$8.4 million for the <a href="#">Georgia Apex Program</a> to add more <a href="#">mental health professionals</a> in public high schools to supplement existing counseling services.</p>
<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>“We must invest in broadband for affordable, high-speed internet access that connects rural Georgia with marketplaces and expands opportunities for students. I support the Georgia Department of Transportation exploration of broadband expansions on rights-of-way, and as governor, will make such expansions a priority,” Ms. Abrams said in the 2018 <a href="#">Georgia Chamber gubernatorial candidate assessment</a>.</p>	<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Gov. Kemp and state school Superintendent Richard Woods allocated \$6 million of the state’s federal CARES Act funding to provide school districts with resources to <a href="#">connect students to the internet</a>. The funding was used to purchase equipment for students who may not have adequate access at home.</p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Georgia

Stacey Abrams (D) - Attorney	Brian Kemp (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Ms. Abrams <a href="#">said</a> she would work to repeal House Bill 1084, now a state law. She believes the law is “mandating that educators mislead or lie by omission to students about history related to slavery, bigotry or discrimination.”</p>	<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Gov. Kemp <a href="#">signed House Bill 1084</a>, codified as parental rights legislation. This bill limits how educators can discuss race and racism in school classrooms. He <a href="#">promised</a> to push back against “those who want to divide our kids along political lines, push partisan agendas, and indoctrinate students from all walks of life.”</p>
<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Ms. Abrams <a href="#">proposes</a> increasing the state’s base salary for teachers from \$39,092 to \$50,000. “Gov. Kemp’s \$5,000 across-the-board increase is not enough to recruit new teachers and retain current teachers,” she <a href="#">said</a>.</p>	<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Gov. Kemp signed <a href="#">Senate Bill 88</a>, designed to help recruit, retain, and better equip educators in Georgia.</p>
<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Ms. Abrams <a href="#">proposes</a> raising the state’s average teacher salary from \$62,500 to \$73,500.</p>	<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Gov. Kemp signed a <a href="#">2023 budget</a> that included <a href="#">teacher raises</a>. The budget continues \$5,000-a-year raises for state and university employees and a \$2,000 raise for K-12 educators.</p>
<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Ms. Abrams <a href="#">supports</a> developing more innovative approaches to teacher preparation in coordination with Georgia’s HBCUs.</p>	<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Gov. Kemp signed an amended budget that includes special funding for <a href="#">Georgia’s 10 HBCUs</a>. His FY 2023 budget <a href="#">proposes more than \$632.6 million in new funding to the Board of Regents</a> for University System of Georgia institutions. The funding is for student instruction and to establish or operate other initiatives that promote, support, or extend student learning. Of the <a href="#">total amount proposed</a>, \$1.5 million was designated for HBCUs.</p>



# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles



## Maryland

Neither of these candidates responded to the Southern Education Foundation's survey seeking their positions on key education issues. The information below is based on SEF's review of the candidates' campaign websites or from other public resources hyperlinked below.

Wes Moore (D) - Author	Dan Cox (R) - State Delegate
<p><b>Wes Moore</b> was born and raised in Takoma Park, Maryland. He earned his associate degree from Valley Forge Military College in 1998 and his bachelor's degree from Johns Hopkins University in 2001. He went on to serve as a captain and paratrooper with the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division. His professional experience includes working in the finance sector for Deutsche Bank and Citigroup, as the CEO of the <a href="#">Robin Hood Foundation</a>, and as an author.</p>	<p><b>Delegate Cox</b> was born in Washington, DC, and lives in Frederick County, Maryland. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in political science and government in 2002 from the University of Maryland University College and a law degree from Regent University in 2006. His career experience includes working as an attorney with The Cox Law Center, as an associate civil litigation attorney with the Law Offices of John Seipp, and as a high school teacher with Walkersville Christian Family Schools. Delegate Cox is a current member of the <a href="#">Maryland House of Delegates</a>, representing District 4.</p>
<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Mr. Moore's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure the <a href="#">Blueprint for Maryland's Future</a> is fully funded and implemented,</li> <li>expand educator mentorship programs,</li> <li>raise educator wages, and</li> <li>make childcare and early childhood education more affordable and accessible.</li> </ul>	<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Delegate Cox's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he wants to focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>protecting parental rights, and</li> <li>increasing school privatization initiatives.</li> </ul>
<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Mr. Moore's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he would ensure that every young child has access to free pre-K classes, and he would make early childhood education more affordable and accessible by fully funding and streamlining the state's <a href="#">Child Care Scholarship fund</a>.</p>	<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Delegate Cox's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing pay for childcare and pre-K professionals or improving access to affordable, high-quality pre-K settings for all children in his state.</p>
<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>Mr. Moore's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he would ensure <a href="#">Maryland's Blueprint for Education</a> is fully funded and implemented, and that he would provide dedicated funding for the Blueprint's Accountability and Implementation Board to assess progress and provide technical support to local school districts.</p>	<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>Delegate Cox's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on changing Maryland's' primary K-12 school funding formula by allocating additional resources for students from low-income families compared to those from higher-income families.</p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Maryland

Wes Moore (D) - Author	Dan Cox (R) - State Delegate
<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Mr. Moore's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on school-privatization measures such as school vouchers, education savings accounts, or tax-credit scholarship programs.</p>	<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Delegate Cox's <a href="#">campaign</a> shows that he supports the expansion of school privatization efforts.</p>
<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Mr. Moore's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he would prioritize students' social-emotional well-being by expanding community schools, increasing the number of education support professionals in schools, and ensuring that schools adopt inclusive, trauma-informed policies and practices.</p>	<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Delegate Cox's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing funding for whole-child support policies that address the comprehensive needs of students and families.</p>
<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Mr. Moore's campaign platform <a href="#">says</a> he would deliver universal broadband access, especially for low-income families, and would work to ensure every student has access to educational devices in their home. He would use the \$100 million provided by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to achieve these goals.</p>	<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Delegate Cox's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on additional funding to extend access to high-speed broadband and guarantee that every student has access to a device for virtual learning.</p>
<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Mr. Moore's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on classroom censorship policies, such as state or district efforts that limit discussions about race, gender, sexuality, or systemic inequality in K-12 classrooms.</p>	<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Delegate Cox's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he "stands against critical race theory and gender indoctrination, and defends parental involvement in their children's education."</p> <p><i>Note: Critical race theory is an academic and legal framework that provides a race-conscious approach to understanding structural racism. Critical race theory is introduced mainly in graduate school-level courses. Critical race theory is <b>not taught</b> in the K-12 public education system.</i></p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Maryland

Wes Moore (D) - Author	Dan Cox (R) - State Delegate
<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Mr. Moore's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he would expand Maryland's "Grow Your Own" teacher-preparation program to create a steadier pipeline of talented educators in the state. He would also explore opportunities to fund a marketing campaign for recruiting a more diverse pool of educators, provide teacher-exam stipends, build specialized mentorship programs, and provide job placement services.</p>	<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Delegate Cox's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on efforts to recruit or retain a more diverse teacher workforce in Maryland.</p>
<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Mr. Moore's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he would ensure that educators' voices are heard and would work to make teaching a more appealing career by supporting pay raises.</p>	<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Delegate Cox's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing teacher pay.</p>
<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Mr. Moore's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he would work to expand partnerships with Maryland HBCUs for recruiting, preparing, and supporting diverse teacher candidates to create pipelines into schools and classrooms.</p>	<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Delegate Cox's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on investing in HBCUs.</p>



# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Oklahoma

Neither of these candidates responded to the Southern Education Foundation's survey seeking their positions on key education issues. The information below is based on SEF's review of the candidates' campaign websites or from other public resources hyperlinked below.

Joy Hofmeister (D) - State Superintendent	Kevin Stitt (R) - Incumbent
<p><b>Joy Hofmeister</b> was born and raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in home economics from Texas Christian University and holds teaching certificates in English and elementary education. She is currently earning her master's degree in education administration with a specialty in education policy and law from the University of Oklahoma. State Superintendent Hofmeister served on the <a href="#">Oklahoma State Board of Education</a> from January 2012 through April 2013 as an appointee of <a href="#">Governor Mary Fallin</a>. State Superintendent Hofmeister was elected <a href="#">Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction</a> in January 2014.</p>	<p><b>Governor Kevin Stitt</b> serves as the <a href="#">28th Governor of Oklahoma</a>. Gov. Stitt was born in Milton, Florida, and spent his early years in Wayne, Oklahoma. He graduated from Oklahoma State University in 1996 with a bachelor's degree in accounting. He founded and was president of Gateway Mortgage, a nationwide company. In July 2017, he announced his candidacy for the Republican nomination for governor. He defeated the Democratic nominee, former Attorney General Drew Edmondson. Gov. Stitt is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and the second Native American to be elected governor in the United States.</p>
<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Hofmeister's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says she wants to solve the teacher shortage, partner more with parents, support students' mental health and wellness, extend childcare and early learning opportunities, and prepare students to enter the workforce.</p>	<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Gov. Stitt's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he is committed to improving Oklahoma's education system by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ giving educators recognition and benefits,</li> <li>▪ holding schools accountable for their spending, and</li> <li>▪ ensuring that transparency is maintained.</li> </ul>
<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Hofmeister's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says she wants to increase partnerships with Early Head Start programs, private daycares, SoonerStart, public preschools, and health-care providers to support families and children's readiness for school.</p>	<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Gov. Stitt's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increased pay for childcare and pre-K professionals or improve access to affordable, high-quality pre-K settings for all children in his state.</p>
<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Hofmeister's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on changing Oklahoma's primary K-12 school funding formula by allocating additional resources for students from low-income families compared to those from higher-income families.</p>	<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>Gov. Stitt <a href="#">signed House Bill 2078</a> to modernize the state's school funding formula and match enrollment counts more accurately. The law changed the funding formula by allowing funding to follow the student within the public education system and gave schools more flexibility in using carryover funding.</p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Oklahoma

Joy Hofmeister (D) - State Superintendent	Kevin Stitt (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Hofmeister <a href="#">opposed Senate Bill 1647</a>, a school voucher bill. “Gov. Stitt’s voucher scheme is a rural school killer that will decimate funding for all children in public schools. Simply put, vouchers are wrong for Oklahoma kids,” she said.</p>	<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>In his most recent <a href="#">State of the State address</a>, Gov. Stitt <a href="#">urged</a> legislators to provide Oklahoma families with a significant expansion of school vouchers. He <a href="#">vowed</a> to “support any legislation that gives parents more school choice.”</p>
<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Hofmeister’s <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says she wants to increase mental health and substance abuse resources for students and families. In 2021, State Superintendent Hofmeister <a href="#">prioritized \$70 million</a> in local and federal pandemic relief funds to increase the number of school counselors and expand mental health support in schools.</p>	<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Gov. Stitt’s campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing funding for whole-child support policies that prioritize the full scope of a student’s developmental needs.</p>
<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Hofmeister’s <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says she wants to provide broadband connectivity at home for all students and families.</p>	<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Gov. Stitt <a href="#">signed House Bill 3363 into law</a>, a measure to bring high-speed Internet access to 95% of Oklahomans by 2027.</p>
<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>“I am opposed to critical race theory in schools and the adoption of any radical political agenda as part of the K-12 curriculum,” State Superintendent Hofmeister <a href="#">said</a> in reference to <a href="#">House Bill 1775</a>.</p> <p><i>Note: Critical race theory is an academic and legal framework that provides a race-conscious approach to understanding structural racism. Critical race theory is introduced mainly in graduate school-level courses. Critical race theory is <b>not taught</b> in the K-12 public education system.</i></p>	<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Gov. Stitt signed <a href="#">House Bill 1775</a> into law, which bans public schools from teaching specific topics on race and sex and prohibits sexual diversity training at colleges and universities.</p> <p><i>Note: Critical race theory is an academic and legal framework that provides a race-conscious approach to understanding structural racism. Critical race theory is introduced mainly in graduate school-level courses. Critical race theory is <b>not taught</b> in the K-12 public education system.</i></p>
<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Hofmeister’s <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says she wants to work with regional universities to diversify and expand the teacher pipeline.</p>	<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Gov. Stitt says he wants to increase teacher pay and educator retention. “One of my priorities this year is to unleash some pay for performance. We want to keep our best and brightest in the classroom,” Gov. Stitt <a href="#">said</a>.</p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Oklahoma

Joy Hofmeister (D) - State Superintendent	Kevin Stitt (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Hofmeister’s <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says she wants to provide nationally competitive salaries and benefits for educators.</p>	<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>In his most recent <a href="#">State of the State speech</a>, Gov. Stitt <a href="#">called</a> for public school teachers to make six-figure salaries, saying that a <a href="#">funding mechanism</a> he introduced in 2022 would designate state funds for local school districts to make this possible for their best teachers.</p>
<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>State Superintendent Hofmeister’s campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on investing in Oklahoma’s only HBCU, Langston University.</p>	<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Gov. Stitt’s campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on investing in Oklahoma’s only HBCU, Langston University.</p>



# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## South Carolina

Neither of these candidates responded to the Southern Education Foundation's survey seeking their positions on key education issues. The information below is based on SEF's review of the candidates' campaign websites or from other public resources hyperlinked below.

Joe Cunningham (D) - Attorney & Former Congressman	Henry McMaster (R) - Incumbent
<p><b>Joe Cunningham</b> was born and raised in Caldwell County, Kentucky. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering from Florida Atlantic University and a law degree from Northern Kentucky University. His career experience includes working as a lawyer and as an ocean engineer for government agencies. Mr. Cunningham served as the <a href="#">U.S. Representative from South Carolina's 1st Congressional District</a> from 2019 to 2021. He is affiliated with the Charleston Lawyers Club, Charleston County Bar Association, South Carolina Young Lawyers Division, and the American Bar Association.</p>	<p><b>Governor Henry McMaster</b> serves as the <a href="#">117th Governor of South Carolina</a>. Born in Columbia, South Carolina, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from the University of South Carolina and a law degree from the University of South Carolina School of Law. After law school, he worked as a legislative assistant and an attorney in a private practice. He was appointed a U.S. attorney in 1981 by President Ronald Reagan. From 1993 to 2002, he was chairman of the <a href="#">South Carolina Republican Party</a>. He was first elected attorney general of South Carolina in 2002 and served two terms. He then worked at the South Carolina Ports Authority before being elected lieutenant governor in 2014.</p>
<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Mr. Cunningham's <a href="#">education priorities</a> include ending the teacher shortage in South Carolina by focusing on recruiting and retaining quality educators.</p>	<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Under Gov. McMaster's leadership, South Carolina has made <a href="#">investments</a> in the classroom by expanding full-day pre-K classes, raising K-12 teacher pay, and placing a school resource officer in every school.</p>
<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Mr. Cunningham's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing pay for childcare and pre-K professionals or improve access to affordable, high-quality pre-K settings for all children in South Carolina.</p>	<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Gov. McMaster and the South Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council announced the launch of <a href="#">First Five SC</a>, a free online platform that connects families to resources and information on childcare, health, services for children with special needs, early intervention, and more. Gov. McMaster <a href="#">said</a>: "This is another step toward the state's goal of ensuring all South Carolina kids are prepared for success when they enter kindergarten."</p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## South Carolina

Joe Cunningham (D) - Attorney & Former Congressman	Henry McMaster (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>Mr. Cunningham's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on changing South Carolina's primary K-12 school funding formula by allocating additional resources for students from low-income families compared to those from higher-income families.</p>	<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>Gov. McMaster's <a href="#">Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Executive Budget</a> proposed redefining South Carolina's funding strategy, allocating \$120 million for K-12 education funding reform.</p>
<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Mr. Cunningham, via Twitter, <a href="#">expressed his opposition</a> to Gov. McMaster's voucher plan: "If the governor is sincere in his attempt to help low-income students, he should instead focus on better funding our public schools; where ... an overwhelming majority of them attend."</p>	<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Gov. McMaster <a href="#">supports</a> school vouchers and other school privatization initiatives. In his 2022 <a href="#">State of the State</a> address, he said: "I am proposing \$20 million be used to create education savings accounts which, by the way, have been available to parents in 'red' and 'blue' states for years." Gov. McMaster also <a href="#">proposed</a> to use \$32 million from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds in the CARES Act to initiate a school voucher program.</p>
<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Mr. Cunningham's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing funding for whole-child support policies that address the comprehensive needs of students and families.</p>	<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Gov. McMaster's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing funding for whole-child support policies that address the comprehensive needs of students and families.</p>
<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>As a state representative, Mr. Cunningham served as a member of the <a href="#">Rural Broadband Taskforce</a>. In this role, he worked on legislation to improve access to broadband for students and families. The proposed legislation included provisions to expand the E-Rate program so schools can receive funding to provide Wi-Fi service to students on school buses and federal funding for more hotspots.</p>	<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Gov. McMaster's <a href="#">FY 2022-2023 Executive Budget</a> <a href="#">proposed</a> increasing access to broadband throughout the state. "This year, we have provided an additional \$400 million in federal ARPA funds to continue the expansion of broadband into all parts of our state through public and private partnerships," he <a href="#">said</a>.</p>
<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Mr. Cunningham's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on classroom censorship policies, such as state or district efforts that limit discussions about race, gender, sexuality, or systemic inequality in K-12 classrooms.</p>	<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Gov. McMaster <a href="#">urged</a> the South Carolina Department of Education to remove a book about gender identity from school shelves, calling it "obscene and pornographic," and for the agency to "investigate" similar content.</p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## South Carolina

Joe Cunningham (D) - Attorney & Former Congressman	Henry McMaster (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Mr. Cunningham’s <a href="#">plan</a> “invests not only in existing teachers, but in recruiting more talent into the classroom by expanding existing scholarship programs.” He <a href="#">proposed</a> increasing the Teaching Fellows Scholarship Program from 200 recipients to 600 recipients, increasing the scholarship for future teachers from \$3,000 per semester to \$9,000 per semester, and expanding the number of colleges and universities that offer the program.</p>	<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Gov. McMaster’s campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on efforts to recruit or retain a more diverse teacher workforce in South Carolina.</p>
<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Mr. Cunningham <a href="#">proposed</a> giving every teacher and instructional aide an immediate 10% raise. “Over the course of my term as governor, we will raise the starting teacher salary to \$50,000,” he said.</p>	<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Gov. McMaster <a href="#">proposed</a> to raise the state’s minimum teacher salary as part of a plan that would rework the state’s education funding formulas.</p>
<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Mr. Cunningham’s campaign website or current public statements do not indicate a position on investing in HBCUs.</p>	<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>In 2020, Gov. McMaster <a href="#">announced</a> he would allocate \$2.4 million from the GEER fund to the state’s eight HBCUs. The funding supported online instruction at each institution by upgrading hardware and purchasing software, e-learning resources, and digital textbooks.</p>



# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Tennessee

Neither of these candidates responded to the Southern Education Foundation's survey seeking their positions on key education issues. The information below is based on SEF's review of the candidates' campaign websites or from other public resources hyperlinked below.

Jason Martin (D) - Physician	Bill Lee (R) - Incumbent
<p><b>Dr. Jason Martin</b> was raised in southern Alabama and graduated from Tulane University in New Orleans. He went to medical school at the University of South Alabama, completing his residency and fellowship at Vanderbilt University. Upon his last year as a resident, he was the Chief Resident at the <a href="#">Nashville Veterans Affairs Medical Center</a>. Later, he joined the Meharry Medical College and Nashville General Hospital to train new health-care professionals.</p>	<p><b>Gov. Bill Lee</b> serves as the <a href="#">50th Governor of Tennessee</a>. Gov. Lee graduated from Auburn University with a degree in mechanical engineering. Before he was elected governor, he served as a representative for the <a href="#">7th Congressional District</a> to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and as a member of the Board of Trustees at Belmont University. Gov. Lee also served as president of Tennesseans for Economic Growth and chairman of the YMCA of Middle Tennessee. Gov. Lee also served as the CEO and president of his family business in comprehensive mechanical construction, Lee Company, from 1992 to 2016.</p>
<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Dr. Martin's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he wants to reevaluate the state's <a href="#">Basic Education Program</a> and increase the necessary resources schools rely on to keep students healthy, educated, and safe.</p>	<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Gov. Lee's <a href="#">campaign prioritizes</a> expanded career training, technical and agricultural education training for middle and high school students, increased STEM educational opportunities, and increased educator pay.</p>
<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Dr. Martin's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increased pay for childcare and pre-K professionals or improve access to affordable, high-quality pre-K settings for all children in his state.</p>	<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Gov. Lee's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increased pay for childcare and pre-K professionals or improved access to affordable, high-quality pre-K settings for all children in his state.</p>
<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>Dr. Martin <a href="#">proposes</a> to reevaluate the state's education funding formula. "We need a better way to fund our schools, taking into account the different economies across communities and the different resources needed in each school district," he <a href="#">said</a>.</p>	<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>Gov. Lee signed into law a revised school funding formula for Tennessee's K-12 education system. Gov. Lee's <a href="#">Fiscal Year 2023 budget</a> proposes more than \$1 billion for public schools across Tennessee.</p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Tennessee

Jason Martin (D) - Physician	Bill Lee (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Dr. Martin opposed Gov. Lee's school voucher program, <a href="#">saying</a>: "Gov. Lee's failed voucher program steals control from local governments and directs funds away from our public schools."</p>	<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Gov. Lee <a href="#">proposed and implemented</a> a long-blocked education savings account program, which is a form of a school voucher. Gov. Lee said, "We will work to help eligible parents enroll this school year, as we ensure Tennessee families have the opportunity to choose the school that they believe is best for their child." In Tennessee's <a href="#">education savings account program</a>, eligible families can use up to approximately \$7,000 in public funds for private-school tuition and other pre-approved expenses.</p>
<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Dr. Martin <a href="#">proposes</a> to increase the necessary resources schools once depended on to keep kids healthy, educated, and safe—such as social workers, after-school programs, guidance counselors, and other mental health supports.</p>	<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Gov. Lee's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on increasing funding for whole-child support policies that prioritize the full scope of a student's developmental needs.</p>
<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Dr. Martin's <a href="#">campaign website</a> says he supports increasing broadband access. He says that Tennessee needs high-quality infrastructure in the form of highways, bridges, sewer and stormwater systems, roads, and universal broadband.</p>	<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>During his third <a href="#">State of the State address</a>, Gov. Lee <a href="#">proposed</a> a one-time, \$200 million investment in rural broadband, an increase from \$15 million in 2020. In 2022, Gov. Lee and the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development announced that the state will award \$447 million in grants to expand internet access to over 150,000 homes across the state.</p>
<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Dr. Martin's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on classroom censorship policies, such as state or district efforts that limit discussions about race, gender, sexuality, or systemic inequality in K-12 classrooms.</p>	<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Gov. Lee signed <a href="#">Senate Bill 623</a> into law, limiting how educators can discuss race and racism in classrooms.</p> <p><i>Note: Critical race theory is an academic and legal framework that provides a race-conscious approach to understanding structural racism. Critical race theory is introduced mainly in graduate school-level courses. Critical race theory is <b>not taught</b> in the K-12 public education system.</i></p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Tennessee

Jason Martin (D) - Physician	Bill Lee (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Dr. Martin's campaign website or current public statements do not indicate a position on efforts to recruit or retain a more diverse teacher workforce in Tennessee.</p>	<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Gov. Lee's campaign website or current public statements do not indicate a position on efforts to recruit or retain a more diverse teacher workforce in Tennessee.</p>
<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Dr. Martin <a href="#">proposes</a> prioritizing education by valuing educators and paying them a fair salary.</p>	<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Gov. Lee has <a href="#">proposed</a> investing an additional \$125 million for pay increases for educators. He <a href="#">stated</a> that "in our updated funding formula, we will ensure that a teacher raise is a teacher raise."</p>
<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Dr. Martin <a href="#">proposes</a> to invest in and strengthen Tennessee's HBCUs so that students have access to equal opportunities.</p>	<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Gov. Lee announced <a href="#">plans</a> to invest \$250 million for infrastructure improvements and repairs at Tennessee State University, the long-underfunded public HBCU in Nashville.</p>



# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles



Neither of these candidates responded to the Southern Education Foundation's survey seeking their positions on key education issues. The information below is based on SEF's review of the candidates' campaign websites or from other public resources hyperlinked below.

Beto O'Rourke (D) - Former Congressman	Greg Abbott (R) - Incumbent
<p><b>Beto O'Rourke</b> was born in El Paso, Texas. He earned a bachelor's degree in English from Columbia University in 1995. His career experience includes co-founding the information-technology consulting company Stanton Street. Mr. O'Rourke was then elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2012 and served until 2018. In 2018, he sought the U.S. Senate seat held by Republican U.S. Senator Ted Cruz, running a competitive campaign that drew national attention. Despite losing by 2.6%, he set a record for most votes cast for a Democrat in a midterm election in Texas.</p>	<p><b>Governor Greg Abbott</b> serves as the <a href="#">48th Governor of the State of Texas</a>. Gov. Abbott was born in Wichita Falls and raised in Duncanville, Texas. After graduating from The University of Texas at Austin, he earned a law degree from Vanderbilt University Law School. Before his election as governor in 2014, he was elected the 50th and longest-serving attorney general of Texas, serving from 2002 to 2015. Gov. Abbott also served as a Justice of the Texas Supreme Court from 1996 to 2001 and as a state district judge in Harris County.</p>
<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Mr. O'Rourke's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he wants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fully fund public schools and reject any effort to take public tax dollars out of schools,</li> <li>recruit and retain the best and brightest educators, and</li> <li>end the state's over-reliance on high-stakes standardized testing.</li> </ul>	<p> <b>Main Education Priorities</b></p> <p>Gov. Abbott's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he wants to elevate and improve Texas' education system by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recruiting and retaining the best educators by increasing teacher pay,</li> <li>increasing the quality of early childhood education initiatives, and</li> <li>providing more school privatization programs.</li> </ul>
<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>Mr. O'Rourke's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he wants to invest in and expand full-day universal pre-K. "It's time that we finally guarantee full-day, universal pre-K across Texas," he said.</p>	<p> <b>Early Childhood Education</b></p> <p>In his 2015 <a href="#">State of the State speech</a>, Gov. Abbott designated early childhood education as one of five emergency items. The Governor's <a href="#">goals</a> include providing funding to districts that implement a gold standard, high-quality, accountable pre-K program with the goal of demonstrating long-term pre-K success.</p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Texas

Beto O'Rourke (D) - Former Congressman	Greg Abbott (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>In 2019, Mr. O'Rourke <a href="#">proposed</a> a plan to address structural inequality in education. The plan includes the creation of a \$500 billion "Permanent Fund for Equity and Excellence" to close the funding gap between predominantly white and non-white school districts in Texas.</p>	<p> <b>Equitable K-12 Funding</b></p> <p>Gov. Abbott's campaign website or current public statements do not indicate his position on changing Texas' primary K-12 school funding formula by allocating additional resources for students from low-income families compared to those from higher-income families.</p>
<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Mr. O'Rourke has <a href="#">opposed</a> school vouchers. "School choice' isn't really about choice—it's a ploy to funnel funds reserved for public education into private schools," he has said.</p>	<p> <b>School Privatization</b></p> <p>Gov. Abbott has voiced <a href="#">support</a> for school privatization. "Empowering parents means giving them the choice to send their children to any public school, charter school or private school with state funding following the student," he <a href="#">said</a>.</p>
<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Mr. O'Rourke's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on if he would commit to increasing funding for whole-child support policies that address the comprehensive needs of students and families.</p>	<p> <b>Whole Child Supports</b></p> <p>Gov. Abbott's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on whether he would commit to increasing funding for whole-child support policies that address the comprehensive needs of students and families.</p>
<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Mr. O'Rourke's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on additional funding to extend access to high-speed broadband and guarantee that every student has access to a device for virtual learning.</p>	<p> <b>Distance Learning Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Gov. Abbott signed <a href="#">House Bill 5</a> and <a href="#">Senate Bill 507</a>, establishing new approaches to expanding broadband access, adoption, and use across Texas.</p>
<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Mr. O'Rourke's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on classroom censorship policies, such as state or district efforts that limit discussions about race, gender, sexuality, or systemic inequality in K-12 classrooms.</p>	<p> <b>Classroom Censorship</b></p> <p>Gov. Abbott signed <a href="#">House Bill 3979</a>, a law that dictates how Texas educators can talk to their students about current events and the history of racism. "House Bill 3979 is a strong move to abolish critical race theory in Texas, but more must be done," he <a href="#">said</a>.</p> <p><i>Note: Critical race theory is an academic and legal framework that provides a race-conscious approach to understanding structural racism. Critical race theory is introduced mainly in graduate school-level courses. Critical race theory is <b>not taught</b> in the K-12 public education system.</i></p>

# Gubernatorial Candidate Profiles

## Texas

Beto O'Rourke (D) - Former Congressman	Greg Abbott (R) - Incumbent
<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Mr. O'Rourke's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he will recruit and retain the best and brightest educators by raising teacher pay, strengthening educators' health care and retirement benefits, and treating educators with respect.</p>	<p> <b>Diverse Teacher Recruitment and Retention</b></p> <p>Gov. Abbott directed the <a href="#">Texas Education Agency</a> to create a <a href="#">task force</a> to examine the teacher shortage in Texas. "This task force should work diligently to ensure that best practices and resources for recruitment and retention are provided to districts," Gov. Abbott <a href="#">said</a>.</p>
<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Mr. O'Rourke's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> proposes to raise educators' pay and strengthen their health care and retirement benefits.</p>	<p> <b>Teacher Pay</b></p> <p>Gov. Abbott's <a href="#">campaign platform</a> says he wants to create a pathway for the very best educators in Texas to earn the most in the nation.</p>
<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Mr. O'Rourke's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on investing in HBCUs.</p>	<p> <b>Investing in HBCUs</b></p> <p>Gov. Abbott's campaign website and current public statements do not indicate a position on investing in HBCUs.</p>



# Appendix A

## SEF's Candidate Survey Request for Information

1. Please outline your three main K-12 education priorities and the top education initiative or issue you would want to advance if elected.
2. As state superintendent or governor, would you work to increase pay for childcare and pre-K professionals and improve access to affordable, high-quality pre-K settings for all children in your state?
3. As state superintendent or governor, would you support changing the state's primary K-12 funding system by allocating additional funding for students from low-income families compared to those from higher-income families?
4. As state superintendent or governor, would you support or plan to develop or expand school privatization initiatives, such as school vouchers, education savings accounts, and tax-credit scholarship programs?
5. As state superintendent or governor, would you support or commit to increasing funding for whole-child policies that prioritize the full scope of a student's developmental needs?
6. As state superintendent or governor, would you work to extend access to high-speed broadband and guarantee that every student has access to a device for virtual learning?
7. As state superintendent or governor, are you in support of classroom censorship policies or state or local efforts that limit discussions about race, gender, sexuality, or systemic inequality in K-12 classrooms?
8. As state superintendent or governor, would you fund or make funding recommendations in your budget to recruit or retain a more diverse teacher workforce in your state?
9. Historically Black colleges and universities are critically important in educating low-income students and students of color in the South. What are your positions on correcting historic underinvestments in these institutions?



The Southern Education Foundation, founded in 1867, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization supported by partners and donors working for justice in education, especially for students of color and students living in low-income families across the South.