



Save the Children
Action Network™



SOUTH CAROLINA VOTERS CARE ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

.....Inside:

An in-depth report proves investing in high-quality early childhood education is a top priority for South Carolina voters.



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Current legislators and candidates looking for issues with broad appeal that can meaningfully improve the lives of their constituents should embrace South Carolina-specific policies that invest in our youngest learners and early intervention programs.

Our bipartisan polling team of TargetPoint Consulting, led by Michael Meyers, and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, led by David Walker, was commissioned by Save the Children Action Network to conduct survey research among South Carolina general election voters to gauge their opinions about early childhood education and early intervention policies. In addition to general election voters, we conducted interviews among both Democratic and Republican primary voters.

Education is a leading priority among all voters and especially among Independent and Democratic voters. Voters of all partisan stripes understand the critical importance of years zero through five in a child's development and believe public education should start with preschool and be offered to all 4-year-olds.

Seven out of 10 voters in South Carolina believe improving our education system, including preschool, K-12, and higher education, should be a top priority.

As important as these results are, two discrete findings really stand out. First, voters are willing to put their money where their mouths are, which is to say, voters support additional investments in early childhood education, even when told it means a slight increase in taxes. Second, when voters are told in state-specific detail about the current inadequate financial support for early childhood education and assistance, they respond with real political urgency.

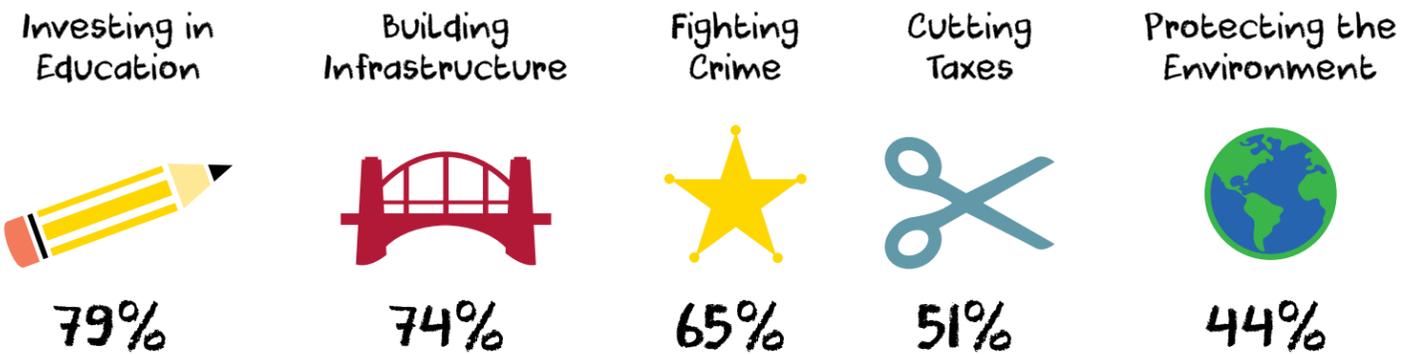
Huge numbers of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents describe themselves as more likely to support a candidate who advocates for investing in early childhood education and child care. Candidates would be wise to listen to these voters.

David Walker is a Vice President at Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, and 2018 marks his 30th year conducting public opinion research. He has worked on campaigns at every level of government, from national elections to local sheriff. He and his firm have extensive experience working on education and early childhood education issues, including work with the National Education Association, Education Minnesota, Colorado Education Association, Achieve, and D.C. Public Schools.

Michael Meyers is President and partner at TargetPoint Consulting. His two decades of experience bring a deep understanding of the views held by the national electorate. His past clients include the presidential campaigns of President Bush, Senator McCain, and Governor Romney. Numerous clients have benefited from his insights as a public opinion researcher, including the Michigan legislature, local ballot initiatives, and presidential campaigns.

Education, Including Preschool, Is the Leading Issue

Voters rank improving South Carolina’s education system—including preschool—as an “extremely or very high priority,” EVEN when compared to other popular issues.



Voters Support Access to Child Care

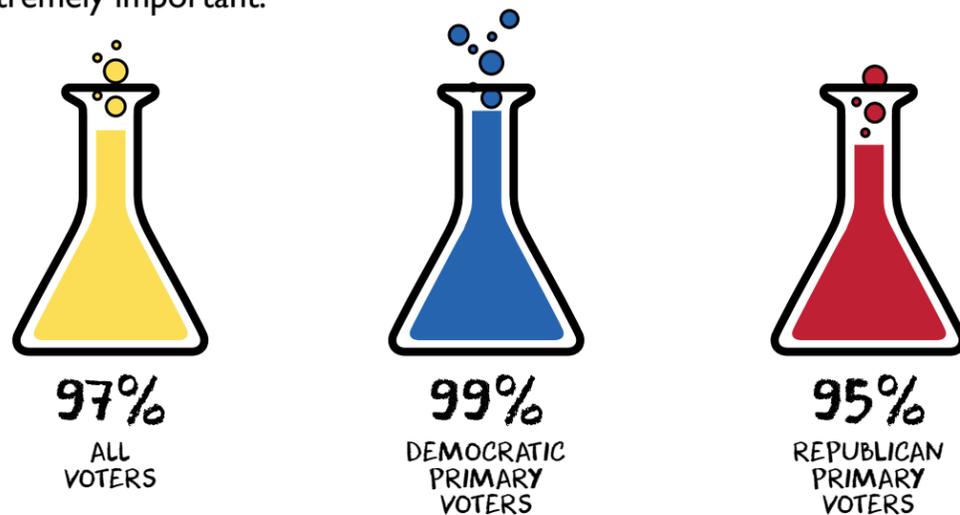


An overwhelming majority of voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who said this about preschool: "Parents have a right to know the child care they use provides a safe, quality environment for their children. South Carolina has an ABC quality rating system for its child care providers that needs to be more widely utilized. We should offer a tax credit for childcare centers that participate in the ABC quality rating system and a different tax credit to childcare teachers who improve their education credentials. As Governor, I would support tax incentive programs for both childcare centers and child care teachers to improve the quality of childcare parents have access to in our state."



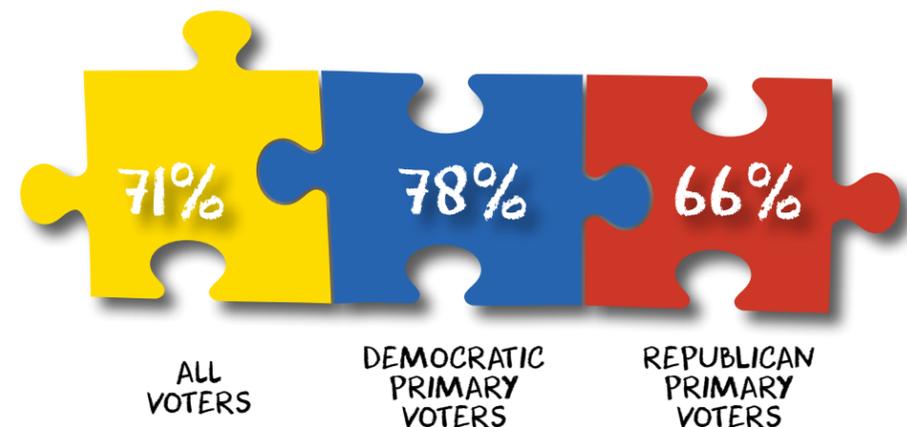
Voters Agree: The Early Years Are Important

Voters recognize the vital role education can play in the early years of development, saying ages 0 to 5 are important, with a majority of voters recognizing that these years are “extremely important.”



Reforming Child Care Assistance: A Bipartisan Issue

There is strong bipartisan agreement on reforming the way South Carolina provides childcare assistance. Majorities in both parties want to eliminate the “cliff effect” in which families who reach a certain income level get cut off from all assistance. Instead, they want a gradual phaseout of benefits as incomes increase, so we can break the cycle of poverty and move more families into the middle class.



MESSAGE GUIDANCE FOR CANDIDATES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The six statements below are powerful messages that resonate with South Carolina voters to support new investments in early childhood education. At least 74 percent of voters say these statements are convincing arguments in favor of early childhood care and education.

Below are the top three messages ranked in order of most powerful for each target audience of voters, color coded to correspond with the message chart on page 6.

85%

High-quality early childhood education exposes kids to reading earlier in life and results in increased literacy rates for participants by third grade.

85%

It is ultimately the responsibility of parents to raise and instruct their children, but early childhood education programs can assist families, particularly those facing tough times, so that all children have an equal opportunity to succeed in life.

79%

Our public school system is in desperate need of reform, and any effort to fix our state's public schools needs to include investments in high-quality early childhood education as a part of such larger education reform.

78%

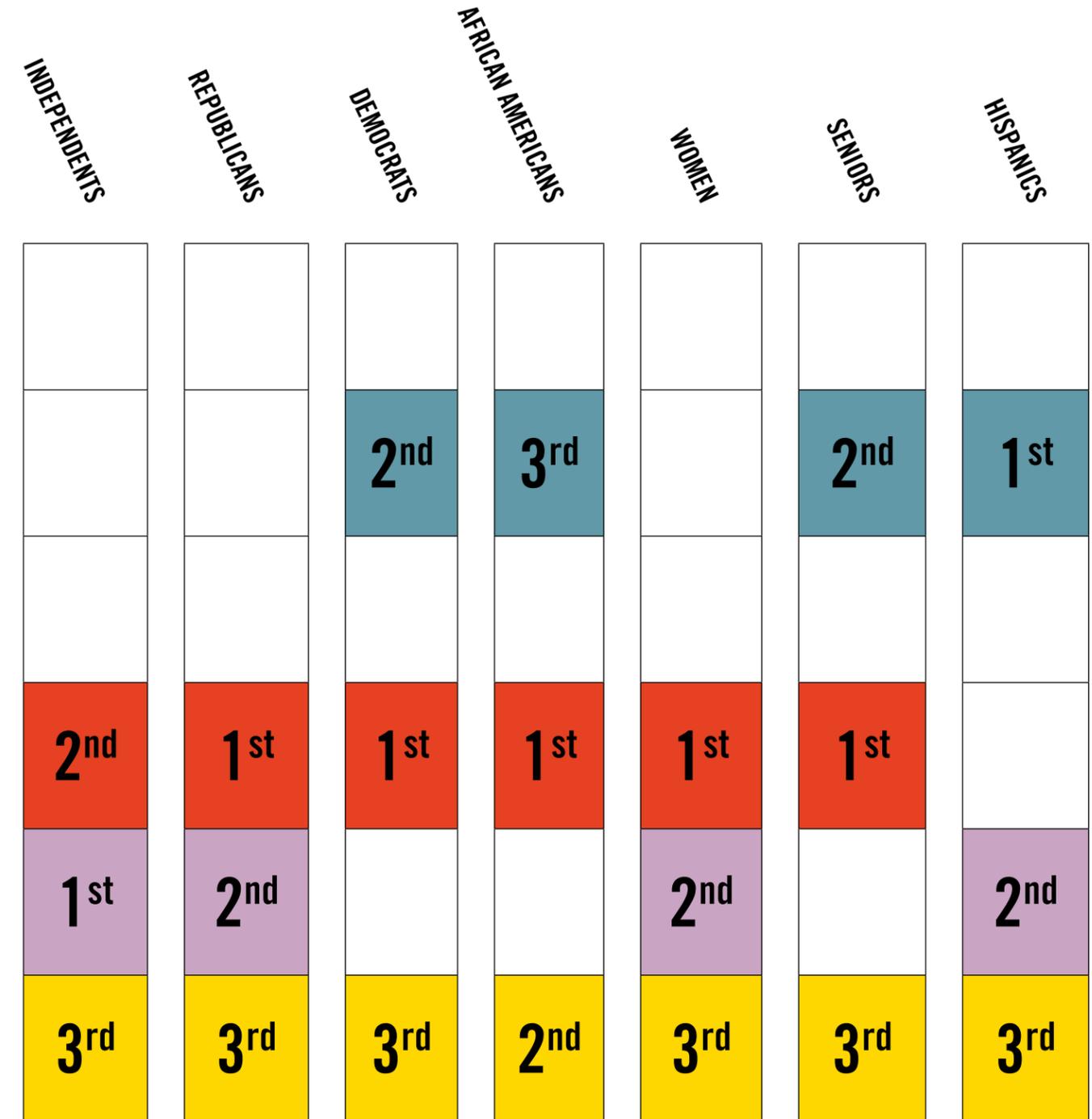
In science and math scores, American children are falling behind students around the world because other countries are investing in high-quality early education programs. It is time we put American children on a level playing field by investing in early childhood education programs.

78%

Scientific studies show the human brain develops most rapidly in the earliest years between birth and age 5, but almost all the public money we invest in children happens after the age of 5. We should change this and invest more in high-quality early childhood education.

74%

A recent national news report on early childhood education cited positive long-term outcomes, including less grade repetition, lower high school dropout rates, and fewer teen pregnancies.



POLICY THAT ADVANCES HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

SUMMARY: PRESCHOOL SHOULD BE UNIVERSALLY ACCESSIBLE

A wide majority of South Carolina voters want preschool to be accessible to all families and not be a needs-based assistance program. The proof: 66 percent of South Carolina voters believe public education should start at pre-K and be offered to all 4-year-olds. Only 6 percent say it should be offered to low-income kids, and just 25 percent think it should not be part of public schools.

The following are policy proposals that South Carolina voters overwhelmingly support to expand preschool and invest in early childhood education, ranked in order of popularity. The total percentage is the sum of voters who are "much more" or "somewhat more likely" to vote for a candidate who advocates for these policies during his or her campaign.

Parents have a right to know the childcare they use provides a safe, quality environment for their children. South Carolina has an ABC quality rating system for its child care providers that needs to be more widely utilized. We should offer a tax credit for child care centers that participate in the ABC quality rating system and a different tax credit to childcare teachers who improve their education credentials. As Governor, I would support tax incentive programs for both childcare centers and child care teachers to improve the quality of child care parents have access to in our state.

VOTERS
80%
APPROVED

Only 44 percent of low-income children are being served by preschool programs in South Carolina. That means more than 49 thousand low-income kids who could benefit most from high-quality early education have no access to pre-kindergarten. I want to expand funding so at least the lowest income 4-year-olds who want to attend preschool have access in our state, and help ensure more kids have an equal opportunity to succeed.

VOTERS
74%
APPROVED

POLICY THAT ADVANCES HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Less than three percent of vulnerable parents in South Carolina who need help are getting the services they require. The State of South Carolina can assist families and help parents by providing home visiting programs that strengthen the skills of vulnerable parents in need, such as the program "Parents as Teachers," which provides parent education primarily through home visiting and group meetings. The program targets school readiness, health, and wellness for the children. I support expanding this to reach more families so our children's parents can parent better.

VOTERS
72%
APPROVED

In South Carolina it should pay to work hard. I support changing the way child care assistance vouchers work so that we can end the cycle of poverty. Families that reach a certain income level get cut off from any child care assistance. Instead of a strict cutoff, I believe we should gradually lower the amount of assistance families get so they still have help with child care costs, enabling them to get out of poverty and move into the middle class.

VOTERS
71%
APPROVED

DID YOU KNOW?

Voters Want Investments in Early Education, Even if It Means a Slight Tax Increase

Seventy-one percent of voters said they would support investing in high-quality early childhood education programs and child care, even if it meant a slight tax increase. Among the 71 percent, Republican primary voters are more likely to support this policy by 51 percent, and Democratic primary voters support it by 90 percent.



WHAT SOUTH CAROLINA VOTERS ARE SAYING

"... it's changing families, childcare cost(s) ... there's two parents but you don't see that one because they are working two jobs to pay for that, and it's ridiculous."

DEMOCRATIC VOTER

"There are people that need education earlier ... they need a head start! So the people that need a head start should apply for it, and I think that it should be funded."

REPUBLICAN VOTER

"(It's) important ... for 4-year-olds to have that start in life. So, for me, if they need to take a little more out of my paycheck to help those 4-year-olds get a better start, so that the world is a little bit better place to live in over time, I'm okay with that."

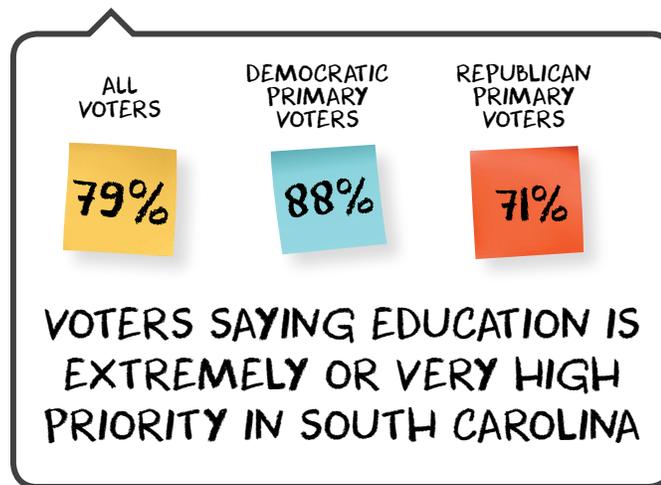
DEMOCRATIC VOTER

"(My friend) was thinking about quitting her job because (she's) paying \$800 a month in daycare; her husband works, but she's working to pay for daycare."

REPUBLICAN VOTER

Save the Children Action Network supports efforts to invest in children from the beginning. By investing in early childhood education, we ensure a strong start for our children and a better future for us all.

INSIDE: Education and early childhood education is a top priority for South Carolina voters across partisan lines.



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