



Fast Facts

South Carolina Policy Council

1323 Pendleton St., Columbia, SC 29201 • 803-779-5022 • scpolicycouncil.com

Online Learning: A Solution for South Carolina

*Online learning allows the public education system to move beyond brick and mortar buildings and **connect with students on a one-to-one basis** – making a high-quality education accessible to students in high-poverty and rural areas, and giving dropouts a second chance.*

What Is Online Learning?

Online learning takes many forms, including full-time programs, blended learning programs, and supplemental course offerings. South Carolina's online learning options include:

- Five online charter schools, with a sixth scheduled to open this year. These are full-time, accredited, diploma-granting institutions.
- The state also operates a Virtual Schools Program that allows students to take online courses in an otherwise traditional setting.

Why Online Learning for South Carolina?

Online learning is being used to:

- Meet the needs of at-risk students not excelling in traditional classroom settings.
- Deliver high-quality courses to students in rural and high-poverty areas.
- Offer a wider array of advanced and technical courses to all students, including gifted students and those wishing to take Advanced Placement courses.

Online learning can also help address **South Carolina's high dropout rate**. The vast majority of dropouts – 88 percent – don't drop out because of failing grades; they do so because they are not mentally engaged with what's happening at school.

- Nearly a third of South Carolina students – including many minority students – are already using online learning to graduate on time.
- 20 percent use online schooling to take courses not offered at their school.
- Student enrollment in the state's online charter schools has more than tripled in three years.
- Student success and completion rates are very high for online learning courses, with 88 percent of students passing their chosen online course.
- Online learning is cost-effective. Per pupil costs at the state's virtual charter schools are an estimated 25 percent to 65 percent lower than at traditional public schools.

Online learning is the future. The danger is that policymakers will think of online learning as a luxury – an option that, however helpful to some, doesn't merit the same support as brick-and-mortar schools. But online learning is an essential part of the solution to our educational challenges – and an additional choice in a system that desperately needs it.