



## **Executive Summary**

### **Spartanburg County School District #4**

Dr. W. Rallie Liston, Superintendent  
118 McEdco Rd  
Woodruff, SC 29388-9693

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Description of the School System.....	2
System's Purpose.....	4
Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement.....	7
Additional Information .....	10

## **Introduction**

Every school system has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the school system makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a school system stays faithful to its vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the school system, and the kinds of programs and services that a school system implements to support student learning.

The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a school system with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the community will have a more complete picture of how the school system perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the school system to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.

## **Description of the School System**

**Describe the school system's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the school system serves?**

Spartanburg County School District Four is simultaneously the smallest and largest district of the seven school districts in Spartanburg County. It is the smallest district in terms of enrollment with a student population of approximately 2,800. It covers the largest geographic area, as it encompasses 163 square miles in southern Spartanburg County. District Four borders two other Spartanburg districts, Districts 5 and 6, as well as the counties of Greenville, Laurens, and Union. District Four is strategically located along Interstate 26, which runs from Charleston to North Carolina, allowing easy access to Columbia at a distance of approximately 85 miles. It is located in close proximity to I-385/I-85, which leads to Greenville and Atlanta. With transportation so accessible and other infrastructures in place, Spartanburg County officials project that the next area of significant growth will include Spartanburg District Four.

District Four is located in the small town of Woodruff, which has approximately 4,000 residents. The district serves students who live within the city of Woodruff and in the surrounding rural communities, including Cross Anchor, Enoree, Green Pond, Crescent, and Switzer. Since all schools are located within the city limits, the district operates 21 buses to transport students to and from these rural communities each day.

Student counts have remained steady over the last three years at approximately 2,800 students enrolled in preschool through twelfth grades. District Four serves students in four schools, which are located in close proximity to the District Office and each other. The four schools include Woodruff Primary School (PreK3 - 2nd grade), Woodruff Elementary School (3rd - 5th grades), Woodruff Middle School (6th - 8th grades), and Woodruff High School (9th - 12th grades). High school students may enroll in courses at R.D. Anderson Applied Technology Center, which is shared by Spartanburg Districts 4, 5, and 6. Students may participate in dual credit classes and earn college credits on coursework prior to high school graduation. They are encouraged to enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Woodruff High School emphasizes inclusion in these rigorous courses and maintains a high percentage of students enrolled in AP courses.

In addition to the four schools that serve the PreK3 - 12th grade student population, other programs and services are available in Spartanburg Four. The Woodruff Childcare Center located at Woodruff Primary School serves infants and toddlers. It is funded through Early Head Start in collaboration with Spartanburg County First Steps. The Spartanburg County Adult Education program is also housed at Woodruff Primary School. It serves adults who are pursuing their GEDs or high school diplomas. It offers morning sessions on Mondays - Thursdays and two evening sessions to accommodate the needs of the adult learner. In addition, a Family Literacy Program is available to parents enrolled in Adult Education classes. This program allows parents to enroll their children in the Woodruff Childcare Center during the hours the parents are in class. Parents also participate in weekly parenting sessions and monthly parent-child literacy times.

District Four provides programs for students who may need additional supports outside of the regular school setting. These programs include H.E.L.P. or Fresh Start at the Spartanburg District Four Learning Center located next to Woodruff High School. Students receive individualized, computer-based instruction. Students may also be served at the Spartanburg County Alternative School. Special education students are served at the students' home schools, various satellite schools, McCarthy-Teszler, the Charles Lea Center, or the SC School for the Deaf and Blind depending on the identified needs. All programs are located within the Spartanburg County school districts.

In addition to its rigorous academic programs, Spartanburg District Four offers 32 athletic teams for its middle and high school students. Over 45% of students in grades 7-12 participate in a sport. District Four sponsors the Woodruff Youth Football League (WYFL) for students in

## Executive Summary

### Spartanburg County School District #4

---

grades 1-6. This program averages 200 football players and 100 cheerleaders each year. Athletic teams are routinely competitive for conference and regional championships. In addition to athletic teams, District Four has award-winning arts programs. The visual arts program recently produced the SC Archibald Rutledge winner and runner up for the state. The performing arts program routinely qualifies for the SC AA Marching Band Competition. In addition, the schools offer numerous clubs and programs to meet the various interests of students, including Beta Club and National Honor Society.

According to the SC Department of Education 135 Day Count for 2014 - 15, the student population of 2,783 represented 49% females and 51% males. Students identified in the following race and/or ethnic groups: African American - 16%; American Indian - 0.2%; Asian/Pacific Islander - 1%; Hispanic - 9%; White - 74%. These percentages have been relatively stable over the last three years with only a 1 percent decrease in the White population and a 1 percent increase in the Hispanic population.

Meal status indicates 64.8% of students qualified for free (57.6%) or reduced (7.2%) meals. This is up from 58% of students qualifying for free/reduced meals in 2012-13. The increase occurred between the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years and remained steady into 2014-15. By including Medicaid eligibility, the 2014 Poverty Index for District Four was 74.82 with the schools' poverty indices ranging from 66.36 at Woodruff High School to 83.10 at Woodruff Primary School.

District Four employs 360 employees, including certified and non-certified staff members. Of the 162 teachers, 67.9% percent of the teaching staff hold advanced degrees. In 2014, teachers participated in 10.6 professional development days. Continuing contract teachers make up 89.1% of the teaching staff, and 93.3% of them returned to their positions from the previous year. The student-teacher ratio in core subjects was 24.9 to 1 in 2014.

Based on the 2014 Kids Count data for Spartanburg County, the median family income for 2009 - 2013 was \$49,604.00 and the 2014 unemployment rate was 6.3% (Annie E. Casey Foundation and Children's Trust of South Carolina). Given the high poverty index in District Four, it is evident that family income is lower in Woodruff and surrounding communities than Spartanburg County as a whole. While families enjoy making their homes in Spartanburg District Four, many parents must drive outside of the attendance zone for employment in Spartanburg, Greenville, Laurens, and Union Counties. Local businesses and organizations, such as churches, grocery stores, pharmacies, restaurants, banks, police departments, fire departments, medical offices, and dental offices provide goods and services to the local community. However, there is a lack of industry in the area that would serve to employ large numbers of people and expand the tax base for the district.

Given the funding structure of schools in South Carolina, the expansion of the tax base is important. Financing high quality programs continues to be the greatest challenge for Spartanburg District Four, as programs require additional personnel, upgrades to facilities, and expanding technologies.

District Four has a unique structure that results in significant benefits. It is considered a single attendance area district where all students attend the single school within a particular grade band and progress through the system together. This structure results in a close-knit community because students graduate with classmates they have known since preschool. This sense of family and community causes graduates of Woodruff High School to return to Spartanburg District Four to raise their families years later. They value the high expectations, quality education, strong work ethic, and traditional values of District Four, the very qualities they want instilled in their children.

## **System's Purpose**

**Provide the school system's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the school system embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.**

Spartanburg School District Four exists to impact and empower students for the future through high expectations, academic rigor, supportive relationships, and the development of a strong work ethic in a safe and orderly environment.

### **Mission**

Spartanburg School District Four...

Impacting and empowering students for the future through high expectations, academic rigor, supportive relationships, and the development of a strong work ethic in a safe and orderly environment.

### **Vision**

We envision a district where...

- Student learning is a priority.
- Decisions are made in the best interest of students.
- Students graduate with skills necessary for the next phase of life.
- Staff and students feel safe, respected, and valued.
- Educators, families, and the community work together to educate our students.

### **Beliefs**

We believe...

- Student achievement based on high expectations is our priority.
- Decisions should be made in the best interest of students.
- Students deserve highly qualified, motivated, and professional educators who are engaged in continuous improvement.
- Preparation for life-long learning in a global society is our purpose.
- Supportive, nurturing relationships maximize learning.
- Safe, well-maintained facilities enhance the learning environment.
- Family and community involvement are essential for student success.

District Four's purpose drives decision-making and is evident in numerous programs and structures throughout the district.

**Safe Schools** - District Four goes to great lengths to ensure that schools are safe places for students to learn. Learning environments must be physically and emotionally safe in order for students to learn at optimal levels. In order to create safe schools, Crisis Plans have been specifically designed for each school by a School Resource Officer (SRO) in consultation and collaboration with local law enforcement. These plans include procedures for emergency situations, including weather and security threats. They include protocols for specific personnel. The SROs train employees on these protocols each year.

**Full-day Preschool (3K & 4K)** - District Four believes success in the early years impacts achievement throughout the school career and life. In order to ensure success, full day preschool programs are offered to three- and four-year olds in the district. From 2006 through 2013, the district primarily funded this program. In 2014-15, the district qualified as a SC Child Development Education Program (CDEP) district and

## Executive Summary

Spartanburg County School District #4

---

began receiving state funding for its 4K program.

**Traditional Schedule** - While many high schools across South Carolina have implemented the block schedule, Woodruff High School operates under the traditional schedule with a six-period day. Most courses are year-long courses. Students must enroll in six classes with no study hall or early dismissal (shortened school day) options. We believe this full-day schedule with rigorous courses better prepares students for college and careers beyond high school.

**Curriculum and Assessment Program** - A challenging curriculum aligned with the SC College and Career Ready Standards has been developed by the teachers and administrators at each school. Teachers create engaging and relevant lessons for students that are standards-based. They utilize formative and summative assessments to measure students' attainment of the standards and to plan for individualized instruction. Administrators provide instructional feedback to teachers based on their classroom observations and use school level data in making program decisions.

**Interventions, After School Programs, and Summer Programs** - Intervention services are provided at all schools. Students at Woodruff Primary School (K-2) participate in tiered intervention services based on literacy data. Students at Woodruff Elementary School receive interventions and additional supports in literacy and math through its Rising Star Program. Students with more serious reading challenges participate in the Scholastic Read 180 program. Read 180 continues into Woodruff Middle School. Woodruff High Schools offers Language Arts Enrichment and Freshman Problem Solving for students who enter below proficiency in literacy and math. All schools offer after school programs each spring and summer. Selection for these programs is based on student achievement data.

**Special Education Services** - While offering a continuum of services for special needs students in District Four and throughout Spartanburg County, we believe most students are best served in the mainstream setting. It is our goal to keep students in their regular education classrooms and provide resources or other services throughout the day. For children who are better served in self-contained programs, they are mainstreamed as schedules and needs allow. Students with special needs have Individualized Education Plans (IEP), which include their specific goals.

**Gifted and Talented/Advanced Programs** - Second grade students take the qualifying assessments for South Carolina's gifted and talented programs, which begin in third grade at Woodruff Elementary School. Students in third through fifth grades attend the SOAR program taught by a teacher with gifted certification one day per week. As students progress into Woodruff Middle School, they are grouped into advanced coursework and are able to enroll in English I and Algebra I and earn high school credits in 8th grade. At Woodruff High School, students may enroll in college prep or honors classes. Juniors and seniors are encouraged to enroll in dual placement and Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

**ESOL Program** - District Four's English Language Learners (ELLs) primarily speak Spanish as their initial language. A teacher with ESOL certification works with students and their classroom teachers to meet the various needs of students outlined in students' accommodation plans.

**Athletics, Arts, and Extra-Curricular Opportunities** - The district offers 32 sports teams over the fall, winter, and spring seasons for students in grades 7-12. Over 45% of students in these grades participate in at least one sport. The district sponsors the Woodruff Youth Football League (WYFL) for students in grades 1-6. Over the last several years, approximately 200 students participate in football and 100 students participate in cheerleading. The athletic program is very successful routinely producing conference and regional champions along with many scholar athletes.

The district places special emphasis on fine arts programs. Woodruff High School has a designated Fine Arts wing that houses its visual and

## Executive Summary

Spartanburg County School District #4

---

performing arts classes. The District Administrative Office proudly displays decades of Howell Art Purchase Awards, artwork purchased from students. The quality of the visual arts program is recognized across the state as Woodruff High School students consistently compete for top honors. In 2014-15, the SC Archibald Rutledge winner (highest visual arts award in SC) and the runner up were from District Four. The performing arts program produces a marching band that consistently rates high in marching band competitions and qualifies to compete in the SC AA Marching Band Competition. The choral program performs to high ratings each year at the Carowinds Choral Festival. In addition to these programs, each school offers numerous clubs and organizations to meet the varied interests of students.

Community Service - District Four models community service. The district currently holds the United Way of the Piedmont trophy for the highest rate of giving. We collaborate with the faith-based community to host Great Start Woodruff, a back-to-school event that provides bookbags filled with school supplies for students who need them. Although many of our families can benefit from additional help, we teach our students the importance of giving to others in need. Individual schools host various fundraisers and drives for projects meaningful to their students. Schools have held canned food drives to support Helping Hands Ministries in Woodruff, an organization that provides food and other supplies to families. Woodruff Primary School sponsors St. Jude Trike-A-Thons to raise awareness and donations for cancer research.

District Four has been successful in communicating its high expectations for students as evidenced by students' academic achievements and their athletic, artistic, and program successes. Stakeholders, particularly students and staff, acknowledge the district's high expectations at all schools and in all programs. District Four's purpose is clearly and frequently communicated through a variety of means, including daily conversations, formal and informal meetings, websites, handbooks, and newsletters. Administrators and teachers set high expectations for themselves and their students. They realize the importance of establishing goals, expectations, and challenges for students in order to maintain excellence and to fulfill our purpose.

## **Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement**

**Describe the school system's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the school system is striving to achieve in the next three years.**

Spartanburg School District Four is a high-achieving school district with award winning schools. Notable achievements over the last three years are listed below.

### Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Rating

- 2014 Federal ESEA Rating: A/93.3 (#1 in South Carolina)
- 2013 Federal ESEA Rating: A/92.7 (#3 in South Carolina)
- 2012 Federal ESEA Rating: A/90.8 (#21 in South Carolina)

Each school also posted high ESEA ratings in 2014 with Woodruff Primary School rating 93.8/A, Woodruff Elementary School rating 94.9/A, Woodruff Middle School rating 91.5/A, and Woodruff High School rating 94.4/A. Three of the four schools rated "A"s in 2013, and two schools posted "A"s in 2012.

### SC Annual District Report Card Performance

- 2014 Absolute Rating: Excellent
- 2014 Growth Rating: Good
- 2013 Absolute Rating: Excellent
- 2013 Growth Rating: Excellent
- 2012 Absolute Rating: Excellent
- 2012 Growth Rating: Good

In addition to these strong ratings on the SC Annual District Report Card, Woodruff Primary School, Woodruff Elementary School, and Woodruff High School rated "Excellent" on SC Annual School Report Cards for 2012, 2013, and 2014. Woodruff Middle School rated "Good" on the School Report Cards for the same years. A rating of "Excellent" indicates that performance substantially exceeds the standards toward progress. A rating of "Good" indicates that performance exceeds the standards toward progress.

South Carolina recognizes schools with high academic achievement by presenting Palmetto Gold and Palmetto Silver awards. Schools with grades that participate in state-mandated testing are eligible for these awards. In 2014, Woodruff Elementary School was awarded the Palmetto Gold Award for Academic Achievement. In 2013, Woodruff Elementary School was awarded the Palmetto Gold Award for Academic Achievement and the Palmetto Silver Award for Closing the Achievement Gap. Woodruff Middle School received the Palmetto Silver Award for Closing the Achievement Gap in 2013 and 2014. It also received the Palmetto Silver Award for Academic Performance in 2013. Woodruff High School has received the Palmetto Gold Award for Academic Achievement for 12 of the last 13 years. It is the only high school in Spartanburg County to achieve this level of performance.

Additional assessments produce impressive results for the schools and individual students. Over the last three years, Woodruff Middle School has identified 45 Junior Scholars based on PSAT scores. It has also had a passing rate of 100% on English I End of Course (EOC) and 99% on Algebra I EOC that are administered to eighth graders.

## Executive Summary

Spartanburg County School District #4

---

Woodruff High School has a high participation rate of Juniors and Seniors enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses (2013: 42.9%; 2014: 33.9%; 2015: 30.7%) with the percentage of Seniors passing an AP exam with a score of 3 or higher during their high school careers at 21.8% in 2013, 24.4% in 2014, and 19.0% in 2015. Three students received the Advanced Placement Scholars Award in 2014 and five students received the award in 2015.

Woodruff High School has a high percentage of seniors receiving scholarships (2013: 69%, 2014: 69%, 2015: 65%). In South Carolina, students are eligible for various levels of state scholarships if they meet the qualifying criteria. Students may receive the LIFE Scholarship (2013: 70 students; 2014: 77 students; 2015: 60 students), the HOPE Scholarship (2013: 17 students; 2014: 20 students; 2015: 10 students) or the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship (2013: 6 students; 2014: 9 students; 2015: 8 students).

District Four's fine arts programs also produce outstanding results. Students receive numerous awards and scholarships, such as the Golden Key recipients (2013: 4 students; 2014: 8 students; 2015: 6 students), Winner of prestigious Archibald Rutledge Visual Arts Scholarship (2013: 1 student; 2015: 1 student), and First alternate to Archibald Rutledge Visual Arts Scholarship (2014: 1 student; 2015: 1 student). The WHS Marching Cadets routinely qualify for State competitions based on their performance in Upper State competitions. In 2013, the Marching Cadets placed 7th in Upper State and 13th at State. In 2014, the Cadets placed 8th in Upper State and 16th at State. In 2015, they placed 5th in Upper State and 13th at State. The Choral program receives ratings of "Excellent" at the Carowinds Choral Festival.

Students excel on the athletic field as well as in the classroom. Woodruff High School had numerous teams to win region championships: 2013 (1 team), 2014 (2 teams), and 2015 (3 teams) and runner-up region championships: 2013 (3 teams), 2014 (2 teams), and 2015 (5 teams). Woodruff Middle School teams achieved championships in these sports: Volleyball (2014), Football (2013, 2014), Basketball Girls (2013, 2014), and Basketball Boys (2013).

District Four's ultimate purpose is to empower students for the future. Our success toward that purpose is evident in the 2014-15 Freshman College Report, which indicates that 87.5% of our 2013-14 high school graduates enrolled in a 4-college, 2-year college, or a technical college. The remaining students enrolled in certificate or license programs to learn a trade, entered the armed services, or entered gainful employment.

Several schools in Spartanburg District Four recently received state and national recognition. Woodruff Primary School holds national accreditation (2015 - 2020) through the National Associate for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), which sets the standard of quality in early childhood education. The onsite program evaluation revealed that nine of the ten program standards achieved ratings of 100% while one standard received a rating of 95%.

Woodruff Elementary School was selected as a 2014-15 Palmetto's Finest Finalist in the state of South Carolina. It was among five elementary schools in the state to receive this honor. The South Carolina Association of School Administrators (SCASA) presents the awards each year to schools that offer the best in innovative, effective educational programs.

Woodruff Elementary School was also recognized as a 2015 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence (one of five in South Carolina). It was awarded in the category of Exemplary High Performing School based on overall academic achievement. Each year, the US Secretary of Education invites each State Superintendent to nominate five schools that meet the criteria for recognition.

National publications acknowledge the rigorous academic programs at Woodruff High School. The Washington Post ranked it as one of America's most challenging high schools in their top 1600 rankings (2013: #671, 2014: #1014, 2015: #1481). The US News and World Report ranked Woodruff High School among America's best high schools (#1,623 out of approximately 21,000 US public high schools and #12 among South Carolina's 227 public high schools).

## Executive Summary

Spartanburg County School District #4

---

We have experienced some changes in recent years. Most of them have centered around the changes to the standards and assessments. We are currently in our initial year of implementation of new South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards for ELA and Math. For the third consecutive year, we will have a different statewide assessment to measure growth on ELA and Math standards. We administered SC PASS in 2014 and ACT Aspire in 2015. We will administer SC Ready in 2016. It is challenging to determine progress and make program decisions with the standards and measures changing so frequently. Therefore, we continue the process of reviewing and revising curriculum guides and lessons to ensure alignment to the SC College and Career Ready Standards.

We are particularly focused on the literacy needs of our students and are developing plans to ensure literacy growth at every level. Plans include the use of the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) into upper elementary levels, the use of leveled text and guided reading instruction in third grade, re-structuring of the middle school ELA schedule, and increased leveled reading opportunities at the high school. There will be an emphasis on grammar and writing instruction at all levels. Professional development will be provided according to each school's identified needs.

The Read to Succeed Act has been in place since the 2014-15 school year. It is a comprehensive law that includes eight components to address the literacy needs throughout South Carolina. It involves the training of literacy coaches to work with classroom teachers, Summer Reading Camps for K-3 students, literacy competencies and literacy endorsements for educators, early childhood readiness assessments, reading interventions, and the creation of district and school literacy plans. While fully supportive of the Read to Succeed Act and its goals, the requirements to meet the comprehensiveness of this law have been a challenge. Also, many parts of the law do not allow local district flexibility. It can be disheartening to identify the district's needs in one area while funds are designated to areas of less need.

District Four has already implemented many components of the Read to Succeed Act, including training of literacy coaches, Summer Reading Camps, coursework toward literacy endorsement, reading interventions, early childhood readiness assessments. The next emphasis will be to create district and school literacy plans (PreK-12). A committee of educators from each school will develop these plans to ensure continuity and alignment. These plans will become part of the District Strategic Plan and School Renewal Plans.

While much money, time, and effort have been committed to improving the technology infrastructure, installing additional devices, and addressing instructional technology needs, the ever-evolving nature of technology leaves additional work to be done and identifies technology as an ongoing need. As we go forward, we will consider our technology needs (infrastructure and instructional) along with the needs of information services in order to address the particular needs of each school.

## **Additional Information**

**Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.**

Governed by a 9-member Board of Trustees elected at large, Spartanburg School District Four steadfastly focuses on its purpose to impact and empower students for the future. These nine members come together as one entity to make decisions solely with the needs of the students in mind. Based on that directive and the Board's high expectations, the Superintendent and his leadership team adhere the highest standards of professional conduct and academic excellence. This sets the standards for all professionals throughout District Four. It also sets the tone for collaboration with various groups throughout Spartanburg County for the benefit of students.

The seven Spartanburg County Superintendents work closely together as they collaborate and share resources. They meet formally once per month to address the broader needs of the districts and implement state initiatives. Seven distinct districts that reflect the characteristics of their communities are able to provide services closer to the families and students being served. There is great value and accountability in leaders being accessible to the public that they serve.

For these reasons and the fact that some studies show the optimal size of a school district to be between 1,000 and 3,500 students (The Center for Policy Research at Syracuse University, 2001), we believe that Spartanburg County provides the ideal model of local control yet collaborative spirit. This combination of close connections to stakeholders and access to a broad array of resources provides families and students with the best of both worlds. Furthermore, we believe Spartanburg District Four is a fine example of the optimal-sized school district evidenced by its excellent achievement, abundance successes, and connection to its community. Students are truly empowered for the future in Spartanburg District Four.