

# Abbeville School District v. The State of South Carolina

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Direct Examination of  
Walter Edgar, PH.D.

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# Dr. J. H. Thornwell's Letter, 1853

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- The law is not only inadequate, but there is a very extraordinary discrepancy between the law and the practice, which increases the difficulty and has added to the inefficiency of the standing appropriation. It is clear from the face of it that the Act of 1811 was designed as the first step towards the establishment of a system of common schools that should bring the means of elementary education within the reach of every child in the State. It was not intended to be a provision for paupers.
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# South Carolina State Constitution of 1868

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## Article X, Section 3

"The General Assembly shall...provide for a liberal and uniform system of free public schools throughout the State."

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Abbeville v. State  
515 S.E.2d 535, 540 (S.C. 1999)

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- “Since the education clause uses the term “shall”, it is mandatory. *See also Washington v. Salisbury*, 306 S.E.2d 600 (1983) (“The plain language of the [the educational clause] places the responsibility for free public education with the General Assembly...”)”
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# South Carolina State Constitution of 1895

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## Article XI, Section 4

"The salaries of the State and County school officers and compensation of County Treasurers for collecting and disbursing school money shall not be paid out of the school funds, but shall be otherwise provided for by the General Assembly."

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# 1897 Mayfield Report to the South Carolina House and Senate

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The promises to the people to give them good schools should be redeemed, and to do so the State should at this session make provision for State aid sufficient to bring up all of the country schools to a standard sufficient to meet the requirements of the people.

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# Gov. Miles McSweeney

## 1903 General Assembly Address

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- Yet the bare facts of the condition of the average school in some counties are shocking.
  - If the Legislature will discharge its responsibility to the cause of education in its entirety in the State, there must be State aid to the public schools.
  - The truth is, that a legislative appropriation should be made along the lines prescribed by the Constitution to bring up the deficiency schools to a minimum standard.
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# Gov. Coleman Blease

## 1913 Second Inaugural Address

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If you will travel through the country and see the unclean, uncomfortable, ragged and unpatched – to express it in a word, most miserable looking buildings, that are called school houses, and not feel ashamed of what your State is doing for the education of her future citizens, then surely you have no sense of shame. Gentlemen, I can not paint the picture too black – school houses with holes in the walls and floors and roofs, where children have to huddle together to keep warm; school houses so small and so crowded that children must be so close together they actually have to breathe into their lungs the breath which comes from the bodies of others.

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# World War I Teachers

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- Wil Lou Gray, a young Laurens county teacher described her first teaching job: “Jones School was a typical South Carolina rural school of the time. There was only one teacher for ten grades. The physical plant was uninspiring with a potbellied stove for heat in winter, painted planks for blackboards, wooden benches for seats and a building under which hogs had wallowed all summer. There was not even an outhouse....”
  - Mamie Garvin Fields of Charleston taught on Johns Island: “The school was just an old wooden house with two rooms. The benches inside had no backs. There was no black board or any other supplies. The county gave you a big bold brass bell with a black handle.... Our school equipment was the bell and a rollbook.”
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# 6-0-1 Act Debate, The State Newspaper, 1924

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Advocates declared the Act was “bottomed upon the ‘sound policy of taxing the property where it may be found and of educating the children where they are.’ The time had come, it was declared, to ‘settle the educational policy of the state for once and all,’ and to do so it became necessary to ‘forget county lines’ and to think no more of the amounts ‘each county must give and take.’”

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# 1932 James Hope Superintendent General Report

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Until the problem is solved, South Carolina will never realize for her children the ideal that should be the goal in every democracy—equality of educational opportunity for every child.

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# Status of South Carolina Education at the Outbreak of World War II

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- 56.6% of Blacks rejected by draft for education or health deficiencies
- 33.9% of Whites rejected by draft for education or health deficiencies

South Carolina In the Modern Age,  
Walter B. Edgar, p. 81

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# 1947 Ransome J. Williams

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- The children of South Carolina are her most valuable investment and priceless resource. They are the very foundation of our future, and we can make no better investment than to see that the children of our State are kept healthy, and are properly educated to cope with the problems of tomorrow. I need not call to your attention the gravity and the immensity of the problem of education.
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## Abbeville v. State

515 S.E.2d 535, 539 (S.C. 1999)

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- “The purpose of providing a public education is to benefit not just the individual receiving it, but also the public at large.”
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# James F. Byrnes, 1951

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- I am sure you and all other South Carolinians were humiliated recently to read that during a three-months period last fall the rejection rate of draftees for military service, due to mental causes, was higher in South Carolina than in any other State in the Union. More than 60 percent of the men examined in this State were rejected. The rejection rate was 35 percent for the rest of the South.
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Journal of the House,  
James F. Byrnes, Jan. 12, 1955

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Of course, this revolutionary program has cost a lot of money. We are doing in a few years what our fathers and grandfathers should have done during the past 75 years.

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Journal of the House,  
Robert E. McNair, Jan. 15, 1969

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Despite our increased commitment to education, we know that only one of every two children who enters the first grade in South Carolina will graduate from high school. Statistics tell us that one out of every ten children entering the first grade is so poorly prepared he will repeat that grade.

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# 2001 Edition Ranking of Counties and School Districts

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Percentage of Students who enter the first grade, but don't graduate from the twelfth.

- Dillon 2      52.4%
  - Allendale      57.0%
  - Lee      60.7%
  - Hampton 2      61.9%
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Richard W. Riley, Jan. 11, 1984

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Industrial development truly begins in the classroom. Being 50<sup>th</sup> in support of education sends a message: it tells potential industries that we don't expect much from ourselves or our future. It says that Georgia and North Carolina have more confidence in their children than we do.

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# State of South Carolina Mottos

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- Prepared in Mind & Resources
  - While I breath, I hope
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