



**PALMETTO
PROMISE**
INSTITUTE

SOUTH CAROLINA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL COVID-19 IMPACT SURVEY

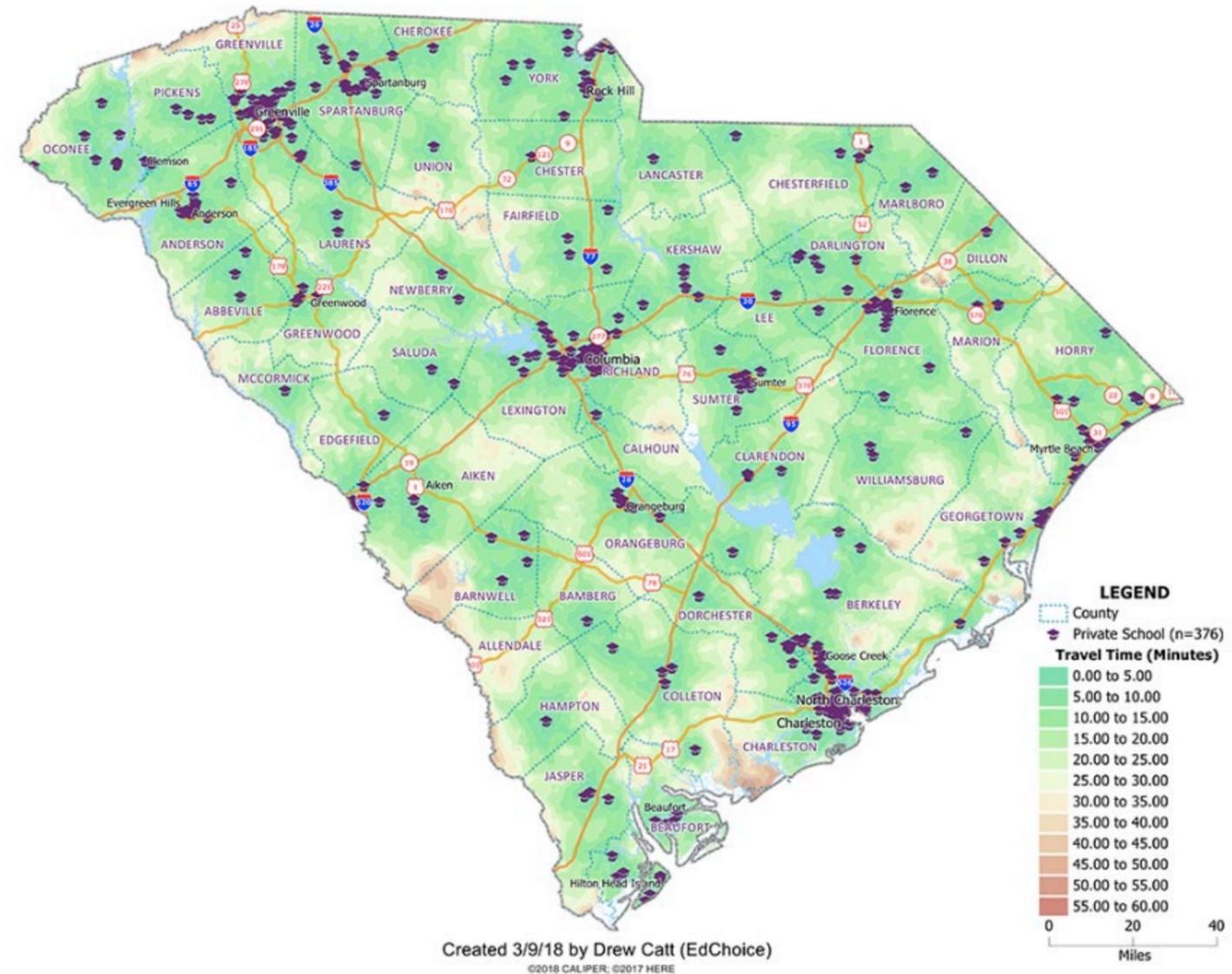
**CONDUCTED ONLINE
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In partnership with the SC Association of Christian Schools (SCACS), the Catholic Diocese of Charleston, the South Carolina Independent School Association (SCISA), and the Palmetto Association of Independent Schools (PAIS)

INTRODUCTION TO SC'S INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

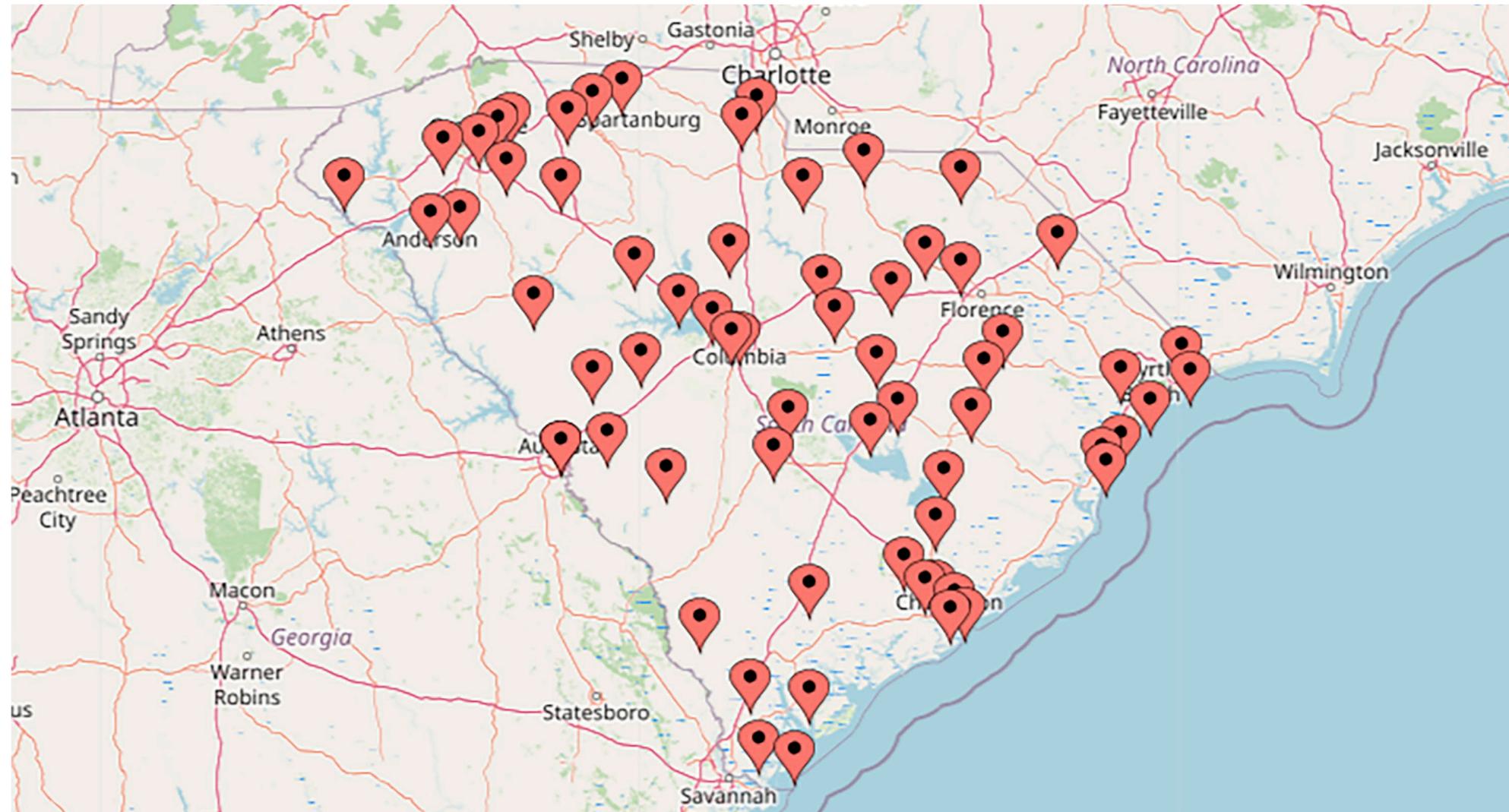
There are around **350 independent schools** in South Carolina, serving between **50,000 and 60,000 students**. This represents **6-8%** of South Carolina's total student population.

- Nearly **100%** of South Carolina students **live within a 30-minute drive** of at least one independent school.
- **79%** serve students with **special needs**.
- **57%** provide some form of **financial assistance** to students.
- The median **cost of combined tuition and fees is \$5,210/year**.



COVID-19 SURVEY PARTICIPATION

A total of **220 schools** received the survey. **157 schools** from every corner of the state responded for a **71% participation rate**.



COVID-19 IMPACT ON LEARNING

100% of South Carolina independent schools surveyed are engaged in some form of interactive distance learning.

School Association	School Survey Responses	Students Represented by Survey	Paper Packet Only	eLearning: Live & Pre-Recorded	Blended: Paper Packet + eLearning	Other
SCACS	40	6,380	0	9	31	0
SCISA	74	19,313	0	25	48	1*
PAIS	10	5,006	0	7	3	0
Catholic	33	7,895	0	5	28	0
TOTAL	157	38,594	0%	29%	70%	1%

*Other = Montessori Materials Bins

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING



I had a school head call me and tell me how proud he was of his teachers and their support for the school's virtual learning platform. What was most telling about this story was that the head stated that the teachers that had resisted implementing this type of initiative into their traditional instructional pedagogy, were the first to embrace this new platform. When asked why they were so willing to implement this new protocol, they stated, "We will do whatever it takes to make sure our students get what they need to be successful."

This is a perfect example of why independent education is so great. Our instructors, schools, and parents love our students so much, they will sacrifice whatever they need to in order to provide outstanding academics and services to all of the students they serve.

– Dr. Spencer Jordan, Executive Director of SCISA

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING

Many independent schools serve children that without significant assistance would not otherwise be able to attend. These families that sacrifice and struggle to earn enough to feed their children in many cases do not have adequate internet coverage, if any.

Mary Margaret Martin, Principal of St. Anthony of Padua School, Greenville, SC:

St. Anthony of Padua Catholic School, with 92% of its students eligible for free and reduced lunch, embraced virtual education with more barriers than anticipated. We quickly provided all students in our school a Chromebook or iPad. These same families needed food and secure internet access. Each family was paired with a local foodbank or Catholic Charities to ensure their nutrition needs were adequately met. In addition, we had to cover the internet expenses for a significant portion of our families that had fallen behind on their bills for several months. We continue to provide online speech therapy and other ABA therapies to students for our exceptional learners.

ESTIMATED FINANCIAL IMPACT

CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR

145 schools provided estimated financial losses for the 2019-20 school year.

- Projected losses range from **\$1,000 to over \$5 million** for individual schools or school systems
- The combined projected loss is currently **\$19.7 million**

MOST CITED IMPACTS:

- Loss of before- and after-school (“extended care”) and summer camp programs
- Tuition refunds
- Tuition non-payment/Increased financial aid to families
- Student withdrawals
- Maintaining payroll for non-teaching and extended care staff
- Cancelled fundraising events
- Increased technology & other distance learning costs
- Additional cleaning expenses
- Food service programs
- Exceptional SC (ECENC) shortfall
- Reduced philanthropic donations
- Cancelled athletic events

ESTIMATED FINANCIAL IMPACT

NEXT SCHOOL YEAR

135 schools provided estimated financial losses for the 2020-21 school year.

- Most schools project a **10-20% reduction in enrollment**
- Projected losses range from **\$5,000 to over \$5 million** for individual schools or school systems
- The combined projected loss was **\$33.6 million**

MOST CITED IMPACTS:

- Decrease in enrollment due to family finances (attrition)
- Decrease in new students and auxiliary programs
- Ongoing cleaning costs
- Anticipated reduction in philanthropic giving
- Technology upgrades to continue distance learning
- Significant need for teacher professional development for distance learning
- Anticipated restrictions of number of students in classrooms due to social distancing rules:
 - Possible need for additional teachers/staff, or
 - Potentially having to turn students away
- Possible maintaining of non-teaching staff during distance learning times
- Remedial education for lost learning time
- Increased student aid requests

COVID-19 IMPACTS ON EMPLOYMENT

10 schools have **laid off administration**

11 schools have **furloughed faculty**

31 school have **laid off staff**

At least **45 schools** answered “**not yet**” to some potential combination of **future administrative/faculty/staff job cuts.**

NEEDS-BASED FINANCIAL AID

20% of the students represented in this survey **already receive some form of needs-based financial assistance.**

Family and school budget crunches, paired with an expected decrease in philanthropic support, pose a real threat to these children continuing to receive the education their parents believe best meets their needs.

IMPACT ON STATE & LOCAL BUDGETS

Shrinking enrollment and potential school closures also impact public education budgets. Impact projection scenarios range from **\$31 million to over \$100 million.**

Average federal, state, and local public school spending for the 2019-20 school year is estimated at **\$14,383 per pupil.** (SOURCE: SC Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs)

State	Private School Enrollment, 2017-18	Estimated marginal cost for enrollment increase in public system (state plus local)	10% of private enrollment	Projected increase on state only (10% migration)	Est. total cost increase (state plus local) to absorb increase in students (10% migration)
South Carolina	49,788	\$11,772	4,979	\$31,421,096	\$58,610,226

Source: The K-12 Financial Cliff: What States Could Face If Students Switch Schooling Sectors, EdChoice

PK-12 Student Enrollment				Expenditure	Fiscal Impact of Private School Students Entering Public Schools by %		
Private School	Public School	Total	% Private School Students		Figures in Dollars		
				Average Per Pupil	5%	10%	20%
62,830	763,533	826,363	8%	11,306	\$35,516,812	\$71,033,624	\$142,067,249

SOURCE: How do COVID-19 private school closures impact all students?. ExcelinEd (2020)

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP?

- At least **89 schools surveyed** have applied for the SBA's **Paycheck Protection Program**, with varying degrees of success.
- Under the CARES Act, South Carolina will receive significant Education Stabilization funds:
 - **\$204 million** allocated specifically **for Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief**. The law states that private school students must have equitable access to services provided by these funds, which will flow through the South Carolina State Department of Education (SDE) to local districts (known as Local Education Authorities or LEAs). It will be up to the LEA's to ensure that private school students receive the "equitable services" the law dictates.
 - **\$47 million** is designated to the **Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund** (GEER). This fund could be a critical lifeline directly to private schools, because it grants the Governor flexibility to include "education-related entities" and protect "education-related jobs," including those at independent schools.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP?

- Provide private school **teachers** access to the same **professional development opportunities** around distance learning that may be provided to public school teachers.
- Create more **virtual learning opportunities**, such as [Online Course Access](#), that could benefit *all* South Carolina students, including those at independent schools.
- Create **sustainable funding mechanisms** to support qualified students' ability to attend a school of their choice, which empirical studies in states like Florida have shown [improve public education and save the state money](#).

‘WE’LL FIND A WAY’



Jessica Bell, left, and Sandra Coffman, owners of Split Creek Farm in Anderson, hold day-old kids.

PHOTOS BY KEN RUINARD/GREENVILLE NEWS

Coronavirus pandemic hits award-winning Split Creek Farm at worst possible time

Lillia Callum-Penso Greenville News
USA TODAY NETWORK - SOUTH CAROLINA

Though she remained out of sight, Loud Mouse made her presence known. The resident goat at Split Creek Farm didn't care one way or another about the coronavirus, she wanted food and she wanted to be milked.

In normal times, Sandra Coffman and Jessica Bell, who co-own the 30-some acre goat farm and Grade A dairy in Anderson County, would welcome the goat's pleas for milking, which in springtime increases twofold.

Normally, more milk production means the farm increases production of Split Creek's products like fudge, yogurt and the farm's award-winning cheeses. Increased production normally means more product to sell to the farm's more than 60 restaurants and grocery wholesale accounts throughout South Carolina and Georgia during a time when demand is highest.

But these are not normal times. "The highest point of production is in two weeks," said Bell, who has worked on the farm for nearly three decades. "We've got the most product we will have all year long now, and we have nowhere to go with it."

In a mere six weeks, Coffman and Bell have seen their farm's livelihood brought to the brink, watched the successful wholesale business they spent the last three years building to nearly 70% of their revenue come to a near standstill.

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Coffman is greeted by 6-day-old kids in a closed area on the deck of the store at the farm.

Private schools applying for loans

Coronavirus threatens enrollment in state

Ariel Gilreath Greenville News
USA TODAY NETWORK - SOUTH CAROLINA

At least 89 private schools across South Carolina have applied for federal small-business loans through the Paycheck Protection Program as the coronavirus pandemic leaves school leaders wondering what impact the virus will have on enrollment.

Like public schools, private schools across the state also closed their doors when Gov. Henry McMaster closed school buildings in March.

Of more than 300 private K-12 schools in South Carolina, 145 reported collective losses of about \$20 million this year according to a survey from the Palmetto Promise Institute, a conservative thinktank that conducted the survey with help from several private-school associations in the state.

Spencer Jordan, director of the South Carolina Independent Schools Association, said most of that revenue decline comes from auxiliary funds related to canceled fundraisers and events, though he said some of it is also likely from families being unable to pay tuition.

"From my schools, SCISA schools, there's only been about 5% of children who have dis-enrolled at this time," Jordan said.

Jordan said SCISA and three other private-school organizations in the state have projected a worst-case scenario next year based on school feedback and national reports that show a 20% drop in enrollment if the economy doesn't start bouncing back.

Christ Church Episcopal School in Greenville has projected about two dozen scenarios of what its fall enrollment could look like, ranging from single-percent drops to a 20% drop.

"That would be just horrifying," said Leonard Kupersmith, head of Christ Church Episcopal School.

Ellen Weaver, president of the Palmetto Promise Institute, said state and local budgets could be impacted by \$31 million to \$100 million if students leave private schools for free, public ones next year.

For many private schools, a 20% drop in enrollment would be devastating.

"This has, for all of us, posed some

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Can vitamins C and D treat COVID-19?

Doctor spreading 'dangerous' claims

Stephen Gruber-Miller
USA TODAY

Despite a lack of evidence that vitamins are effective against the novel coronavirus, a doctor with a history of making misleading claims said they are being used as a treatment for the virus.

An April 7 article by Dr. Joseph Mercola headlined "Vitamins C and D finally adopted as coronavirus treatment" claims that "vitamins C and D are now (finally) being adopted in the conventional treatment of novel coronavirus."

Mercola is a doctor of osteopathy

who promotes alternative medicines. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has issued Mercola at least three warning letters over the years, accusing him of making "false or misleading claims" about products he has promoted on his website. Medical experts have also criticized Mercola for sharing dangerous information.

"The information he's putting out to the public is extremely misleading and potentially very dangerous," Dr. Stephen Barrett told Chicago Magazine for a 2012 article about Mercola. Barrett runs QuackWatch.org, a medical watchdog website. "He exaggerates the risks and potential dangers of legitimate science-based medical care, and he promotes a lot of unsubstantiated ideas

and sells [certain] products with claims that are misleading."

Mercola's claim about vitamins and the coronavirus cites a New York Post article from March 24 which describes the use of vitamin C by Northwell Health, a New York hospital system, to treat patients with coronavirus.

Northwell spokesperson Jason Molinet said "vitamin C was one of many therapies employed at the discretion of physicians in our health system."

Molinet declined to answer follow-up questions about how widespread the use of vitamin C was, what the results of the treatment were and what studies or data Northwell relied on when deciding whether to use vitamin C as part of COVID-19 treatment. He also declined to

make a doctor available to speak about the treatment, saying that "that's the extent of our statement on this."

Dr. William Schaffner, medical director for the National Center for Infectious Diseases and a professor of infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University's School of Medicine, said he's heard claims that vitamins C and D can be used either to prevent disease or to treat it, but said there's no evidence.

"I sure wish they were true but there's no evidence to support either of those vitamins being an effective either preventive or treatment in any dose," he said.

"If that were true, believe me it would be headline news and we would all be recommending it."

Specifically, the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases said it's a myth that extra vitamin C will prevent COVID-19.

Schools

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financial difficulties that I know will be very difficult for some of our schools to overcome," Jordan said. "We have quite a few schools that are very concerned that if the economy doesn't open back up, then their school may not be in existence."

Officials with several Upstate schools said they are not anticipating such a drastic decline, but they are budgeting for the possibility of fewer students and contributions.

Sam Barfell, superintendent of Southside Christian School in Greenville, said tuition makes up nearly 100% of the school's budget, so officials look at enrollment numbers daily to get an

idea what next year's budget will look like.

"We track that as diligently as you would imagine when it's your only revenue stream," Barfell said.

The school has two additional students enrolled for the fall semester compared to last year, Barfell said, but inquiries dropped off significantly in March when schools closed.

The school had kicked off a capital projects fundraising campaign that would have gone toward a new education building and gym, but Barfell said officials decided to push that campaign back by at least a year.

Kupersmith said Christ Church has revised its budget to show a lower enrollment for the first day of school. Of the 1,030 students that could return next year, 950 have re-enrolled, Kupersmith said, and 104 new students have

committed.

"If we were to judge by the metrics right now, we would be pretty optimistic about the opening in August, but I think the summer is going to be a significant period of re-evaluation," Kupersmith said. "Because we approach planning very conservatively, particularly financial planning, we have steered ourselves for setbacks."

Patti Wilusz, communication coordinator with First Presbyterian Academy in Greenville, said enrollment at the school was higher than last year in January when the re-enrollment period ended, and she said those numbers have not changed.

Wilusz said the school was in the first wave of businesses applying for the federal small business loans intended to help businesses stay afloat during the pandemic.

"We were approved very rapidly," Wilusz said.

South Carolina received \$3.8 billion out of \$350 billion made available nationwide in the first round of PPP loans earlier in April before the fund quickly ran out. The loans are intended to cover a company's payroll for eight weeks and will be forgiven if owners can prove they retained their employees during that time.

About 23,000 South Carolina businesses were able to receive loans in that first round, while the U.S. Small Business Administration opened up another round of loans Monday.

Ariel Gilreath is a watchdog reporter focusing on education and family issues with The Greenville News and Independent Mail. Contact her at agilreath@gannett.com and on Twitter @ArielGilreath.

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