Rising to Meet This Moment

TFA South Carolina
2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT
“Teaching is the greatest act of leadership. We need as many leaders as possible in this work to meet this pivotal moment for kids right now.”

— Elisa Villanueva Beard
CEO, Teach For America (TFA)
A Letter From the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

The past school year was exceptionally challenging for South Carolina’s public schools. Teacher attrition continued to grow. Many students did not feel safe at school and needed more social-emotional support. School districts lacked a measurable baseline from year-to-year because of testing cancellations in spring 2020.

Teach For America South Carolina (TFASC)’s 10th anniversary coincided with this challenging year. During the 2021-2022 school year, we reflected on why our work was needed in South Carolina over the past decade – recognizing the leaders of our movement who made our impact possible – and why our work is critical to meet this pivotal moment in education today.

Ten years ago, South Carolina’s rural communities were looking for ways to staff their schools with excellent teachers. TFASC created an additional teacher pathway for rural communities – placing energetic, early-career educators in hard-to-staff schools and providing intensive support to retain them. Our movement has grown from 31 teachers in the Pee Dee region during our first year to 767 teachers who positively impacted more than 70,000 students across the state over the past decade.

In the next decade, we must transform the teaching profession to retain more high-quality educators and, ultimately, to provide all children in South Carolina with an excellent education. Teacher attrition negatively impacts student achievement results, but teacher retention improves when we provide educators with targeted support and development.

TFASC is part of the solution to develop and retain high-quality teachers in the state’s most under-resourced schools. In this defining moment for our education system, we’re expanding our decade-long approach from placing teachers in hard-to-staff schools to developing and retaining outstanding teachers beyond our core model – improving more students, teachers, and communities.

While TFASC cannot solely fill more than 1,400 educator vacancies in South Carolina, we are scaling to build capacity for our partner school districts – serving as a lever to support teachers toward certification, provide teachers with intensive training and coaching, and connect teachers with the professional development opportunities that will help them build fulfilling long-term careers in education.

Backed by TFAS’s 30 years of insights and resources, TFASC is bringing its expertise in teacher development to early career and veteran educators in partner school districts – transforming student outcomes where the needs are greatest. Our expanded teacher development programs – SC Impact Fellowship and New Teacher Academy – are featured in this annual report and showcase how we are adapting to meet this moment for our students, teachers, and communities.

Your continued support is crucial to expand our teacher development programs over the next decade. What will be the result of your partnership? We will launch the Ignite Fellowship to increase the state’s pipeline of future educators. We will grow the SC Impact Fellowship to help our teachers pursue mid-level leadership opportunities and build their efficacy to drive systems change. We will expand the New Teacher Academy to increase early career teacher retention and effectiveness in partnership with more school districts. And this is just the beginning of our next decade of impact to develop and retain more high-quality teachers who illuminate the light in every learner.

Your support is an investment in bold leadership and in all that is possible for our students, communities, and future. You are investing in leaders like 2023 South Carolina Teacher of the Year Deion Jamison who shared that TFASC provided him both a pathway into the classroom and with the support to become an effective educator.

Thank you for supporting our past 10 years of intentionality in South Carolina. Most importantly, thank you to our teachers and alumni who work tirelessly to ensure that all students in South Carolina can fulfill their potential and achieve their dreams.

With gratitude,

Courtney Waters
Executive Director

A Pivotal Moment in EDUCATION

South Carolina is ranked 42nd among the states for Pre-K to 12 education.1 Under-resourced schools that serve low-income students and students of color, are not equipped to meet students’ needs, and the pandemic has only widened the disparities in the state’s “minimally adequate” education system.

The results of the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress revealed that academic growth over the last two decades dissipated during the pandemic.2 It also provided more evidence that we are in a defining moment for our education system.

How do we prepare all students for success in a rapidly changing world, especially as we emerge from the pandemic that had an immense impact on learning? It starts with teachers who play a crucial role in a student’s academic, social, and emotional development.

Together SC President and CEO Madeline McGee shared that educating students without teachers is impossible and educating students well without first-rate teachers is even more impossible.

Unfortunately, South Carolina’s public schools are facing worsening teacher shortages. The number of teacher vacancies increased by 39 percent at the start of the 2022-2023 school year compared to the previous year.3

Teacher vacancies vary by school district. Recruiting and retaining high-quality educators is most urgent in schools with the greatest needs.4 If a classroom doesn’t have a teacher, schools often turn to long-term substitutes, cutting courses, or larger class sizes – putting students at risk of not attaining the excellent education they deserve.

“Children in South Carolina deserve to have a qualified educator in their classroom,” said Sherry East, president of The South Carolina Education Association.

In South Carolina, teacher vacancies cannot be filled solely with educators from traditional development programs. Currently, there are not enough education majors at the state’s colleges and universities to account for teacher attrition and K-12 enrollment growth.5 If there aren’t enough traditional teachers to solve the shortage quickly, what is the alternative?

Alternative development programs are part of the solution to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. Benefits of programs like TFA include offering leaders an accelerated pathway to the classroom, placing teachers in hard-to-staff schools and subjects, and providing intensive support to retain teachers.

According to TFA CEO Elisa Villanueva Beard, “Teaching is the greatest act of leadership. We need as many leaders as possible in this work to meet this pivotal moment for kids right now.”

In this pivotal moment, we need to think and act differently – centering on equity – to retain excellent teachers and transform student outcomes in South Carolina. How will those in the education ecosystem come together to advocate for the teaching profession and, ultimately, students?

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2 Beard, Elisa Villanueva. To Fix Our Education System, We Need to Develop Leaders at Every Level Committed to Equity and Excellence.” TFA One Day, December 12, 2022.
3 “South Carolina Annual Educator Supply and Demand Data Tables 2022-2023.” Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, November 2022.
4 Bishop, Joseph, Linda Darling-Hammond, Dan Kim, and Anne Pastides. “Solving the Teacher Shortage: How to Attract and Retain Excellent Educators.” Learning Policy Institute, September 18, 2016.
The State of Education in South Carolina

State Ranking
Source: U.S. News & World Report, 2021
South Carolina’s Ranking of Pre-K to 12 Education Among the States
42nd

Student Poverty Status
Source: South Carolina Department of Education, 2022
68% of third graders not living in poverty met or exceeded expectations on the SC READY Assessment in English language arts.
65% of fourth graders not living in poverty met or exceeded expectations on the SC READY Assessment in math.
31% of fourth graders living in poverty met or exceeded expectations on the SC READY Assessment in math.
37% of third graders living in poverty met or exceeded expectations on the SC READY Assessment in English language arts.

Student Race
Source: South Carolina Department of Education, 2022
30% of Black third graders met or exceeded expectations on the SC READY Assessment in English language arts.
22% of Black fourth graders met or exceeded expectations on the SC READY Assessment in math.
62% of white third graders met or exceeded expectations on the SC READY Assessment in English language arts.
59% of white fourth graders met or exceeded expectations on the SC READY Assessment in math.

Teacher Departures and Vacancies
Source: Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA), 2022-2023
Teacher Departures in South Carolina — a 20% Increase From the Previous Year
8,321

Teacher Vacancies in South Carolina — a 39% Increase From the Previous Year
1,474

Economic Impact
Source: Learning Policy Institute, 2017
$20,000 Average Cost to Replace a Teacher
$166 Million Expense to Fill Positions From Annual Teacher Turnover
Together with schools and school districts – as well as community partners, policymakers, and supporters — TFASC leverages our national resources and our local network to develop educators to best meet the needs of South Carolina’s students and communities. We are working collectively to realize the day when every child has an equal opportunity to learn, lead, thrive, and co-create a future filled with possibility.

Our programs are designed to remove barriers to enter the teaching profession, provide pathways to teacher certification, and support high-quality educators who transform student outcomes in the state’s most under-resourced schools and school districts.

Our proven approach is to recruit, develop, and retain high-quality teachers who transform student outcomes in the state’s most under-resourced schools and school districts.

**OUR MISSION**

To find, develop, and support a diverse network of leaders who expand opportunity for children in classrooms, schools, and every sector and field that shape the broader systems in which schools operate.

**OUR VISION**

One day, all children in South Carolina will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.

**TFA CORPS**

Since 2011, TFA Corps – South Carolina’s premier alternative teacher development program – has provided first- and second-year educators with the professional, social, and financial support needed to launch an impactful career in the classroom.

By joining our movement, corps members make an initial two-year commitment to teach at one of our partner school districts in the Lowcountry, Pee Dee, or Upstate community.

During the 2021-2022 school year, 58 corps members received ongoing training, coaching, and professional development from TFASC that enabled them to positively impact 3,700 students. Their impact was significant. Our teachers were placed at schools where only 30 percent of students met or exceeded grade-level standards. Sixty-two percent of corps members achieved more than a year’s worth of academic growth in their classrooms, bringing their students closer to their on-grade-level peers.

**PROGRAM ELEMENTS**

- Pre-Service, an intensive summer teacher training
- Coaching sessions with veteran educators
- Professional development conferences
- Classroom observations and feedback
- Cohort meetings with teachers across the state
- Teacher certification assistance

**PROGRAM IMPACT**

- 96% of corps members said TFASC’s support and resources contributed to their development as teachers and leaders
- 96% of principals said corps members maintained a positive learning environment
- 91% of principals said corps members were effective at delivering academic instruction

- 62% of corps members achieved over a year's worth of academic growth in their classrooms.
- 3,700 Students Impacted
- 11 School District Partners

**WHAT WE’RE HEARING**

- 96% of corps members said TFASC’s support and resources contributed to their development as teachers and leaders.
SC IMPACT FELLOWSHIP

In 2020, TFASC launched the SC Impact Fellowship to help solve some of the state’s biggest educational challenges: teacher quality and retention.

The purpose of the SC Impact Fellowship is to retain our early career educators following an initial two-year teaching commitment and to recruit our veteran educators from out-of-state. Fellows teach for another two years in one of South Carolina’s most under-resourced schools, and throughout their fellowship, we provide targeted professional development to support our educators in improving their teaching practice.

The SC Impact Fellowship expanded to support 25 fellows during the 2021-2022 school year. Fellows received assistance toward National Board Certification, coaching, professional development, a yearly stipend, and/or a moving stipend if they relocated from outside of South Carolina. These benefits were designed for fellows to develop as leaders and transform student outcomes.

Starting in the 2022-2023 school year, we also offered the Education Leadership track in partnership with The Citadel to provide fellows with a chance to earn their M.Ed. degree in educational leadership.

In the years ahead, fellows can pursue one of three tracks – Education Leadership, Aspiring to Lead, and Innovation in Education – while teaching at one of our partner school districts.

NEW TEACHER ACADEMY

We continued to expand our teacher support programs by piloting the New Teacher Academy during the 2021-2022 school year. TFASC brings our expertise in new teacher development to all first- and second-year educators in partner school districts through this program.

Co-created with our pilot partner, Colleton County School District, the New Teacher Academy curriculum has three foundations: instructional skills and best practices, teacher wellness and emotional resilience, and mentorship and community leadership.

Thirty-four first-year teachers attended ongoing training and cohort meetings where they built competencies that resulted in higher teacher retention and positively impacting 850 students. At the start of the 2022-2023 school year, 74 percent of participants returned to a teaching position in the same school district.

Moving forward, we seek to scale the New Teacher Academy with the goal of providing support to more school districts and early career educators across the state.

PROGRAM TRACKS

Education Leadership: Fellows enroll in The Citadel’s Master’s of Education in Educational Leadership program and receive a 25 percent tuition discount from The Citadel in addition to a tuition contribution from TFASC.

Aspiring to Lead: Fellows receive up to $4,000 to enroll in a master’s program of their choice with a focus in instructional leadership.

Innovation in Education: Fellows develop a grant proposal and receive up to $2,000 in funding for their project to transform student outcomes innovatively.

PROGRAM IMPACT

- 25 Teachers Supported
- 1,375 Students Impacted
- 7 School District Partners

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

- Training sessions with veteran educators
- Cohort meetings with teachers across the district

WHAT WE’RE HEARING

- 100% of fellows said the SC Impact Fellowship supported their growth and development in the work toward educational equity and systems change.
- 100% of fellows said their program track was in direct alignment with their leadership goals.

Amanda Cary
TFASC Teacher, Meeting Street Elementary @Burns

The New Teacher Academy seemed to be exactly what our early career educators needed, especially during an exceptionally hard year in education.

Cliff Warren
Former Assistant Superintendent and Director of Human Resources, Colleton County School District

PROGRAM IMPACT

- 34 Teachers Supported
- 850 Students Impacted
- 1 School District Partner
- 74% of program participants returned to a teaching position in the same school district the following year.

WHAT WE’RE HEARING

- 92% of teachers said the New Teacher Academy supported their growth and development as a professional educator.
Our PARTNERS

We partner with schools and school districts to recruit, develop, and retain high-quality teachers — ultimately to transform student outcomes where the needs are greatest.

The map shows where our teachers made a significant difference in schools or school districts across the state during the 2021-2022 school year.

School and School District Partners

- Aiken County School District (CSD)
- Berkeley CSD
- Charleston CSD
- Clarendon CSD
- Colleton CSD
- Darlington CSD
- Florence 1 School District
- Florence 3 School District
- Georgetown CSD
- Greer CSD
- Horry CSD
- Jasper CSD
- Legacy Early College
- Marion CSD
- Marlboro CSD
- Meeting Street Schools
- Orangeburg CSD
- Richland 1 School District
- Spartanburg 7 School District
- Williamsburg CSD

*Data represents TFA Corps and SC Impact Fellowship participants.

Here is a snapshot of our teachers who made a positive impact in South Carolina classrooms during the 2021-2022 school year.*

*Data represents TFA Corps and SC Impact Fellowship participants.

52% People of Color
51% Low-Income Background
41% Teach Elementary School
29% Teach STEM Subjects
10% Teach Special Education

Our DECADE OF IMPACT

In 2011, TFASC was founded on a belief in the potential of all children and their right to an excellent education in South Carolina. Our movement has grown from placing 31 teachers in the Pee Dee region during our first year to training 767 teachers who positively impacted more than 70,000 students across the state over the past decade.

During the 2021-2022 school year, we launched an anniversary campaign, “10 Years of Intentionality,” to recognize the teachers, alumni, partners, and supporters who made our impact possible over the past decade. We also set ambitious goals to amplify our impact over the next decade — reaching more students, teachers, and communities.

Here is a look at how we are making an impact to help solve the educational challenges in South Carolina.

SINCE OUR INCEPTION IN 2011

- 767 Teachers Recruited and Trained by TFASC
- 70,000+ Students Impacted by TFASC Teachers
- 260,000+ Hours of Teacher Training Provided by TFASC
- 128 Schools Welcomed TFASC Teachers
- 21 School Districts Partnered With TFASC
- 200+ Teachers Supported by TFASC
- 62% First- and Second-Year Teachers Achieved Over a Year’s Worth of Academic Growth in Their Classrooms
- 73% Educators Continued Teaching Beyond Their Two-Year Commitment

Thank you for supporting our past decade of intentional work to retain high-quality teachers and transform student outcomes in South Carolina. Most importantly, thank you to our teachers and alumni who work tirelessly to ensure that every student can fulfill their potential and achieve their dreams.
TFASC’s ongoing support helped me to achieve the best results in my classroom, and their resources proved to be effective every single time.

Deion Jamison
TFASC Teacher, Legacy Early College

INTENTIONALITY

2011
TFA is founded in South Carolina, and the founding cohort of 31 teachers begins their corps experience in the Pee Dee region.

2015
TFASC partners with the Racial Equity Institute (REI) to provide racial equity training to our teachers and staff members. During their training, REI presents a historical, cultural, and structural analysis of racism within societal structures, including the education system.

2015
TFASC launches the RiseSC program to recruit more local, “homegrown” leaders in South Carolina. Over the next three years, our recruitment of homegrown teachers increases by more than 300 percent.

2019
TFASC expands our reach in the Upstate region by launching the Upstate Expansion Initiative. During this pilot year, TFASC places eight teachers at Legacy Early College in Greenville and two teachers at Meeting Street Academy – Spartanburg.

2014
Marlboro County High School English Teacher Vincent Amendolare (TFASC ’12) wins TFA’s prestigious “Sue Lehmann Excellence in Teacher Leadership Award.” His students have a 93 percent pass rate on the statewide exam, which is the best score in his high school by more than 30 points, and his students also make 1.8 years of reading growth in one school year.

2014
TFASC recruits 123 first-year teachers as part of a total cohort of 232 first- and second-year teachers, which is the largest corps size in our history.

2018
TFASC launches The Collective, TFA’s national association for alumni who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), in South Carolina.

2017
TFASC hosts the inaugural ExploreSC to invite select accepted TFA applicants for a weekend visit to South Carolina. During their visit, attendees complete a volunteer project, meet current teachers and alumni to learn about their experiences, and are often inspired to teach in a South Carolina school.
On May 4, 2022, Deion Jamison (TFASC ’17) was named “2023 South Carolina Teacher of the Year” by the South Carolina Department of Education. He is the first Black male, first TFA teacher, and first charter school teacher to receive this prestigious annual award.

As part of this award, Jamison will serve a one-year residency with CERRA and as the state spokesperson for more than 55,000 South Carolina educators during the 2022-2023 school year.

Before his advocacy role, he was a ninth- and tenth-grade English teacher at Legacy Early College in Greenville. Prior to Legacy, Jamison, an Orangeburg native, served as a seventh- and eighth-grade English teacher for the Orangeburg Consolidated School District Five as part of his initial commitment with TFASC.

Jamison received numerous accolades throughout his teaching career. In 2021, he won TFA’s esteemed “Sue Lehmann Excellence in Teacher Leadership Award.” This award was created to honor TFA Board Member and Lifetime Director Sue Lehmann by celebrating exceptional teachers across the nation who are advancing educational equity and systems change. He was also recognized by the National Council of Teachers of English, South Carolina Public Charter School District, and Legacy Early College.

Jamison earned his bachelor’s degree in sociology from Clemson University and his master’s degree in education from Johns Hopkins University. At Clemson, he was a Gates Millennium Scholar.
In celebration of our 10th anniversary, TFASC spotlighted 50 leaders of our movement who made our impact possible to date and created momentum for our next decade of impact in South Carolina. It was our honor to highlight their outstanding work and their shared belief in the potential of all children.

We feature several profiles from our impact spotlight series in the pages that follow. For more impact spotlights, visit tfasc.org/impact-spotlights.

Impact SPOTLIGHTS

“Kindergarten is a ball. Everybody should go to kindergarten at least one day a year,” said Vernesha Williams.

Not long ago, Williams didn’t know she’d love leading a kindergarten classroom. Nearing a bachelor’s degree in English from North Carolina A&T State University, she couldn’t decide what to do next.

Williams went out on a limb and filled out an application for TFA. In 2018, she was placed by TFASC to teach fourth and fifth grades in the Orangeburg County Consolidated School District.

She found her purpose.

“So many of us didn’t set out to teach,” said Williams. “We didn’t know what this journey would be like. TFASC gave us a safety net while we tried something new.”

Williams loved teaching so much that she signed on for an additional two years with TFASC through our SC Impact Fellowship. She transitioned to teach kindergarten classes at Compass Collegiate Academy, a high-quality, tuition-free public charter school in Charleston.

She also found out that she was very good at teaching younger kids.

“We recently took our standardized tests, and my kindergartners really grew,” said Williams. “Sixteen of 20 students met their goals in math and reading, a huge improvement over last year.”

“We even got a trophy for progress! Our mascot is an eagle, and the class got eagle feathers — they’re right on top of my desk, so every kid can see and touch them.”

Williams said her entire school is unique. Her school has no bussing, and it seamlessly blends students from communities all over the Charleston area and across many lines of difference.

“Kids need free play. They need fun. And no nap in school? That’s not realistic. We have to embrace living our lives. We have to have rest and happiness along with our work.”

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Williams said that TFASC’s training while she was still an ingénue set her up for success.

“The best lesson I got? That teaching is about endurance,” said Williams. “It’s a race. And I know that every day is another, bigger race.”

Williams never forgets that one special educator who made a difference for her. “My mom.”

“When I was growing up, Mom hustled to get me the best teachers — even when the systems were working against me,” she said. “Always having someone on the sidelines gave me passion.”

Now, she’s the one cheering on her little learners. And they’re the ones responding with a passion for her classes.

Williams said that she might change one thing in South Carolina’s education system: “A nap now and then might help things.”

“I do not believe it’s completely necessary for kindergarten students to be in school for five days per week,” she said. “Kids need free play. They need fun. And no nap in school? That’s not realistic. We have to embrace living our lives. We have to have rest and happiness along with our work.”

“I see them interact in life while they’re still so innocent,” said Williams. “There’s so much love in my classroom. It doesn’t matter where you’re from — if you’re in a loving classroom, you can do anything.”

She added, “I believe that our values at this school are going to shape the way our students think for their whole lives.”

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RACHEL BRAILOV
TFASC ’15 | Dean of Academics, Compass Collegiate Academy

Rachel Brailov always knew she would be a teacher. She had a passion for teaching and learning as a babysitter, a swim instructor, and a camp counselor. At the University of Iowa, she earned a four-year degree in elementary education.

But what she learned about teaching — and herself — as a teacher for TFASC vaulted her purpose to a whole new level.

“My training taught me how to teach, but TFASC taught me to be an advocate for scholars, families, and communities,” said Brailov. “They helped me realize the power I have as an educator — partnering with families and transforming communities.”

For this revelation, she first had to face the unknown. Orangeburg County, South Carolina was a different universe from Deerfield, Illinois, the Chicago suburb where she grew up.

“I had never lived in a small town, but in 2015, I made a firm commitment to Orangeburg even knowing I was moving across the country without my family and friends,” said Brailov.

The Palmetto State became her home very quickly.

“I always tell people that I’m not from South Carolina, but now, South Carolina is my home,” smiled Brailov.

“It’s because of the strong and welcoming community I found with my staff and with scholars and their families.”

Year one proved to be a challenge. But Mellichamp Elementary School embraced her.

“My school community made up for anything I was missing,” said Brailov. “The greatest educators I know are at Mellichamp, and they helped me love what I do every day. It was there I found my passion for teaching reading and writing.”

Brailov told her colleagues that she would never leave Mellichamp unless her “dream job” came along.

It took six years. In 2021, she relocated to Charleston to lead a “mighty team of 10 staff members” in the launch of Compass Collegiate Academy. The public charter school started with kindergarten and first-grade students and will grow classrooms all the way to eighth grade.

“We want to transform Charleston,” said Brailov. “Everyone is welcome here — there are no testing admissions and no zoning. We’re diverse, reflective of our community in downtown Charleston. As dean of academics, I manage all curriculum and coaching. It’s the opportunity of a lifetime.”

Brailov will make sure building community is always a top priority.

“Our school is a choice for all our families, and I take their commitment very seriously,” she said. “Scholars will be with us from their start through eighth grade, which means families invest some serious trust in us to do right by their children.”

Brailov added, “It’s so exciting to build relationships here. Our families come from communities all over the Charleston area and across many lines of difference.”

Her commitment rests on a bedrock belief in her newly adopted family of South Carolinians.

“I truly believe the people in South Carolina are what South Carolina needs,” said Brailov. “I think the state’s ready for work.”

She added, “We have strong communities and amazing families, local businesses, and places to visit. We sometimes forget what’s here. I honestly think right now we have the elements that we need to make schools great and scholars successful.”

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RACHEL BRAILOV
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ALUMNA SPOTLIGHT

LaCheryl Smith
Principal, Legacy Early College High School

A special teacher helped LaCheryl Smith become who she is.

“I was a late bloomer,” said Smith. “I was very reserved and shy. My first grade teacher thought I should be retained in that grade.”

Smith’s parents urged her on through early elementary grades in her hometown of Fountain Inn, S.C. Smith still flew under the radar in fourth grade. Grades lagged. She sat in a below-average reading group.

Loretta Hampton, her fourth-grade teacher, began taking one-on-one time after school with Smith. Hampton discovered a smart — but breathtakingly shy — young lady. Smith blossomed with the special attention, and her life did too.

“I advanced from one reading grade to the next in weeks,” recalled Smith. “I’m grateful to Ms. Hampton for not foreclosing on my opportunities.”

“Now, as a principal, I tell my team, ‘Let’s be careful with our precious cargo. You never know who’s sitting in front of you.’”

Shy Smith became a formidable woman, intellectually and physically. She earned a degree in early childhood education while playing NAIA basketball as a 6’1” power forward on full scholarship at Southern Wesleyan University. She taught at every level after graduation, simultaneously coaching young people, including collegians, in classrooms and on the hard court for much of her career.

“Teaching and coaching share transferable skills,” said Smith. “Building a team depends on the culture you establish — your mission, goals, and getting every person aligned. Creating an all-in culture is fundamental in education and in sports.”

A principal for four years at Legacy Early College High School, Smith sets clear culture goals. She wants every scholar to be college-ready. And she wants to safeguard the health — emotional and physical — of every student and staff member.

Legacy offers innovative opportunities to scholars. A Legacy high schooler, for example, will visit an average of 10 universities before graduation, absorbing the look and feel of a college experience. Scholars take courses for college credit, learning in advance the time management and discipline college life requires. Legacy also has a full-time therapist onsite.

Smith welcomes TFASC teachers. Legacy currently has six TFASC teachers, and Smith finds them to be highly motivated and sensitive — especially to diversity, equity, and inclusion issues — and eager to join the world of their scholars and community.

“Our schools are only as good as our classroom teachers,” said Smith. “Our young talent from TFASC is always passionate, coachable, and engaged.”

“Every TFASC teacher we’ve had here brings a passion to teach and serve the underserved. That’s what I love most.”

Smith strongly feels that boosting rewards and incentives for teachers should be a slam dunk for policy decision-makers.

“Everything starts with a teacher,” said Smith. “You can’t name a career that’s possible without a teacher. Today, we’re losing teachers at alarming rates. Things need to change.”

A special teacher helped LaCheryl Smith become who she is.

“I was a late bloomer,” said Smith. “I was very reserved and shy. My first grade teacher thought I should be retained in that grade.”

Smith’s parents urged her on through early elementary grades in her hometown of Fountain Inn, S.C. Smith still flew under the radar in fourth grade. Grades lagged. She sat in a below-average reading group.

Loretta Hampton, her fourth-grade teacher, began taking one-on-one time after school with Smith. Hampton discovered a smart — but breathtakingly shy — young lady. Smith blossomed with the special attention, and her life did too.

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“Everything starts with a teacher,” said Smith. “You can’t name a career that’s possible without a teacher. Today, we’re losing teachers at alarming rates. Things need to change.”
My experiences in public and private education have changed my mindset about what can happen in education. I’ve been with a team of people all rowing in the same direction,” she said. “It wasn’t perfect, but the planning of that school and how it was made the center of community revitalization changed my mindset about what can happen in education.”

In 2018, Vaughn brought that enlightenment to the mission of Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative (TCCC), representing Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties, and to another organization she co-founded, E3 Educate. Empower. Elevate. With both organizations, she seeks to transform South Carolina education by changing systems, so Black and brown children can achieve life goals.

TCCC emphasizes early education but works to close equity gaps “at every stage along the cradle to career educational journey,” according to Vaughn.

“And through E3, we’re out to build an ecosystem more tenable for the improvement of education. It involves everything from bringing in more Black and brown educators to creating authentic community engagement, and making parents more knowledgeable about how to be better advocates for their children.”

To Vaughn, teaching talent matters significantly. That’s why she has been a vocal advocate for TFASC as a board member and in our teacher selection.

“I clearly see the value TFASC brings to the community, starting with educator preparation,” said Vaughn.

“The level of support TFASC offers to their teachers is really commendable. I honestly see it as a model we could use to rethink teacher development because many teachers coming into our South Carolina classrooms right now are simply not ready for the classroom reality they face.”

Vaughn senses a greater willingness in South Carolina education today to consider fresh ideas like those from TFASC.

“I see more people coming together now around the issues and barriers that have long impacted children and their families,” said Vaughn. “I hear more conversations and alignment in certain circles. There’s still a divide, but I see people mobilizing. It makes me hopeful.”

In 2011, Josh Bell, an alumnus of TFA and former student body president at Clemson University, became the first executive director of TFASC. Hard work lay ahead in every direction.

Bell didn’t blink.

“Working hard is the one thing that has defined my life,” he said. “My parents showed me that achievement doesn’t come without hard work and perseverance.”

Channeling that work ethic, Bell would expand TFASC from 31 teachers in our first year to a total of more than 700 teachers in our first decade.

He led an effort to bring outstanding leaders to South Carolina.

TFASC teachers skyrocketed test scores and served as dazzling role models to students in historically underserved areas.

“Those who know me even a little understand that I’m a dreamer,” said Bell. “I’m a big believer in what’s possible. I feel like I’ve long been in the ‘what’s possible’ business for South Carolina students from TFASC until now.”

“I can say personally that education truly changed my life,” he added. “I was the first person in my family to graduate from college. I have lived the power of an education. I’ve had teachers and mentors who shaped me. I never forget them, and I see so many TFASC teachers having the same profound impact on students.”

Bell concluded by stating, “What TFASC has achieved, while I served there and now with an outstanding team in place, makes me so proud. At the same time, I’m really humbled by what TFASC does, and I deeply appreciate my opportunity to have been part of things from the start.”
Support Our Next

DECADE OF IMPACT

Additional support will be crucial to amplify our impact over the next decade. With your support, we will expand our teacher development programs that are designed to retain high-quality educators and transform student outcomes across the state. Excellent teachers are the key to improving education and preparing all students for success in a rapidly changing world.

Here are several ways you can get involved and support our vision to make an excellent and equitable education a reality for all children in South Carolina.

DONATE
Your investment supports our teachers who are working to expand opportunity and access for all South Carolina students.

FOLLOW
Follow us on social media, share our story, and join the conversation.

SUBSCRIBE
Get our emails to stay up to date on our latest news and events.

mailchi.mp/teachforamerica/tfasc

Our
FINANCIALS

TFASC is committed to using our resources in service of our vision. In the fiscal year ending May 31, 2022, our total revenue was $2,897,323, and our total expenses were $3,037,721.

1% Federal Funds
4% Corporate Contributions
4% Individual Contributions
10% Foundation Contributions
10% School Partnerships
71% State Funds

90% of our expenditures focused on high-quality teacher recruitment, development, and retention.
Thank you to our donors for their generous support during the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Annual gifts from our supporters enable us to recruit, develop, and retain more high-quality teachers who transform student outcomes at schools where the needs are greatest.

Brandon Johnson (TFASC ’14) serves as an assistant principal at Eastside High School in the Greenville County School District. Prior to his current position, he was an assistant principal at McCracker Middle School in the Spartanburg School District Seven.

In 2014, Johnson was placed by TFASC to teach at Palmetto Middle School in the Marion County School District. In this role, he served as the math department chair, and his students had a 100 percent pass rate on the Algebra One End-of-Course Examination.

Given his interest in public policy, Johnson founded We Are The Change SC, a nonprofit organization linking individuals to the necessary educational information and resources to close the achievement gap.

He received a bachelor’s degree in athletic training from the University of South Carolina and a master’s degree in educational leadership and administration from Coastal Carolina University.

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