

3) Teacher pay rates were recently increased to catch Pickens County teachers up on their steps, which at one point were three steps behind. But on average, district pay is still not in line with neighboring districts. What is your platform on teacher pay?

Alex Saitta: Average teacher pay in Pickens County is \$568 less than the average of surrounding counties. That's about \$10 a week. If a teacher decides to get a job in Anderson, Greenville, Oconee, they'll spend \$750 in extra gasoline, and end up with less in their pocket. Our pay is competitive. The teacher turnover rate in Pickens County is 8.9% and that is lower than the average of surrounding counties of nearly 10%. Our turnover is lower because our new buildings, class sizes are still smaller, and our students behave better. We promote from within so the chance for advancement is high. We want to keep our teacher pay competitive, but to attract the best and brightest teachers you cannot lose sight of those positives like keeping class sizes low. This is why I've never voted to eliminate one classroom teaching position and have voted to add many.

Most enter teaching because they want to freely teach students. That is changing and will drive more teachers out of the field. Back then the principal just handed a teacher the curriculum standard and said teach. So if the standard said teach addition, one teacher may create a lesson using pumpkins measuring their size and weight and call it Pumpkin Math.

They put in scope and sequence, and teachers must teach the material in a specific order, and each item this amount of time – no more or less. Next I fear something called “Common Assessment”. Where they'll require teachers to use the same lessons, same tests and the same quizzes, squashing all creativity and stomping on why teachers get in the field. Complete teaching to the standard test.

This trend of reaching over their shoulders and telling them how to do their job has to stop or more and more will leave.

Shannon Haskett: In my experience, you get what you pay for! If I have an illness, I want the best trained and most successful doctor taking care of me. If I have an opportunity to learn another trade or skill, I want the best trained and most successful person teaching me that trade or skill. My son is in the 6th grade at Pickens Middle school and my daughter is in the 3rd grade at Ambler, and I want the best teaching my kids. I feel we have the best already. I also believe that Pickens county offers our incredible teachers and support staff intangibles that need to be highlighted. I would like to work hard to increase morale in the

school district so that teachers feel comfortable in openly communicating their feelings. Sometimes pay is not the only reward. I know, personally, I like to hear that I am doing a good job at something. Highlight the ones that are performing at a higher level and recognize that skill.