2025-2026
School Year



TakeActionSC.org

Since its introduction, “Action” has won national awards including:

- **The White House “Closing the Circle” Award**;
- **The Excellence in Solid Waste Education Award** presented by the Solid Waste Association of North America; and
- **The National Recycling Coalition’s Beth Brown Boettner Award** for Outstanding Public Education.

TAKE ACTION SC

ANNUAL REPORT

SC DEPARTMENT *of* ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Myra Reece, Director

About Take Action SC ...

SECTION 1

The S.C. Solid Waste Policy and Management Act of 1991 (Act) establishes a comprehensive framework to ensure safe and cost-effective practices that protect human health, preserve the environment, and conserve resources.

The Act requires the S.C. Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) to develop and make available a K-12 curriculum centered on recycling to both public and private schools. In addition, SCDES must provide a grant program for school districts and schools to establish waste reduction and education programs.

The Take Action SC (TASC) Partnership is dedicated to sharing environmental knowledge, coordinating resources and providing South Carolina teachers and students lessons and tools to help protect and preserve the environment.

Introduced in 1993, "Action for a Cleaner Tomorrow: A South Carolina Environmental Curriculum Supplement" remains the partnership centerpiece. The curriculum supplement was developed by SCDES alongside a statewide team of teachers, science coordinators and the S.C. Department of Education.

"Action" is designed to provide teachers with the tools and resources to bring the environment into the classroom. All lessons in the 30th anniversary edition align to the S.C. College- and Career-Ready Science Standards of 2021 and, when possible, contain South Carolina-specific information. "Action" is promoted through teacher workshops and provides lessons for classroom presentations, called "Action in the Classroom.

TASC Partnership Members

SC DEPARTMENT of ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

UofSC Sustainability University of South Carolina

KEEP SOUTH CAROLINA BEAUTIFUL

PalmettoPride Litter Trashes Everyone

ENERGY OFFICE

KIRKLAND

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Acronyms

"Action" = Action for a Cleaner Tomorrow Environmental Curriculum Supplement

FY = Fiscal Year

SCDES = S.C. Department of Environmental Services

TASC = Take Action SC

USC = University of South Carolina

Acknowledgments

The **"Take Action SC Annual Report for School Year 2025-2026"** is published by SCDES's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling (Office). The report is submitted in compliance with the Act (S.C. Code of Laws § 44-96-60). In addition, Act 119 of 2005 mandates that agencies provide all reports to the General Assembly in an electronic format.

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TASC's Educational Impact in South Carolina

SECTION 2

TASC's "Action in the Classroom" program reached students and educators across South Carolina with standards-aligned lessons focused on waste reduction, recycling, composting and resource conservation, water conservation and air quality.

During the 2025-2026 school year, TASC presenters visited **296 schools**.

STUDENTS REACHED: (See Figure 1.)

- **37,190 students educated**;
- **549 classrooms visited**; and
- **Knowledge scores improved** by 64 percent pre-assessment to **98 percent post-assessment**.

TEACHERS REACHED:

- **1,622 classroom teachers participated**;
- **1,050 teachers trained** through professional development workshops; and
- **Teacher knowledge scores increased** from 83 percent pre-assessment to **100 percent post-assessment**.

These results demonstrate significant gains in environmental literacy and provide evidence that TASC's educational programming continues to build student and educator understanding of environmental issues.

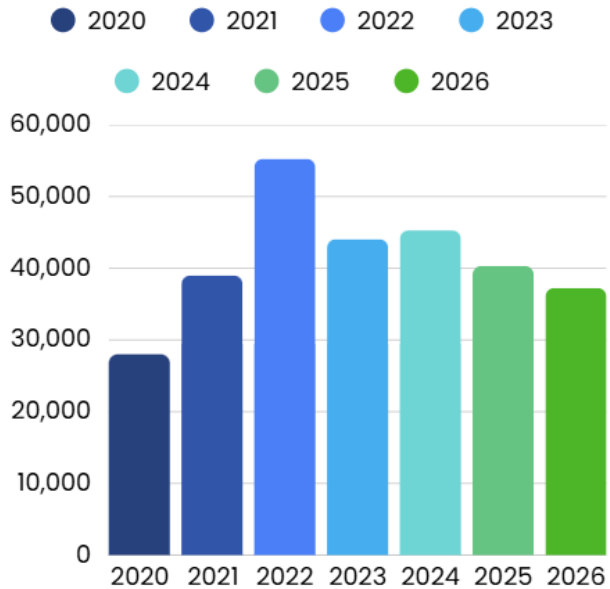
*"Take Action made a great presentation to K5-6th grade this morning. They were all quite intrigued and asked a lot of great questions! We learned **recycling**, **reusing** and **reducing** helps our environment and it takes **ALL** of us!"*

– Michelle Hughes,
Andrew Jackson Academy, Bamberg County

*Pictured below is Midlands TASC Presenter – **Bri Tribbett** – with a class of students at Meadowfield Elementary School.*



FIGURE 1: Students Reached Each Year By Take Action in the Classroom



Professional Development & Educator Support

SECTION 3

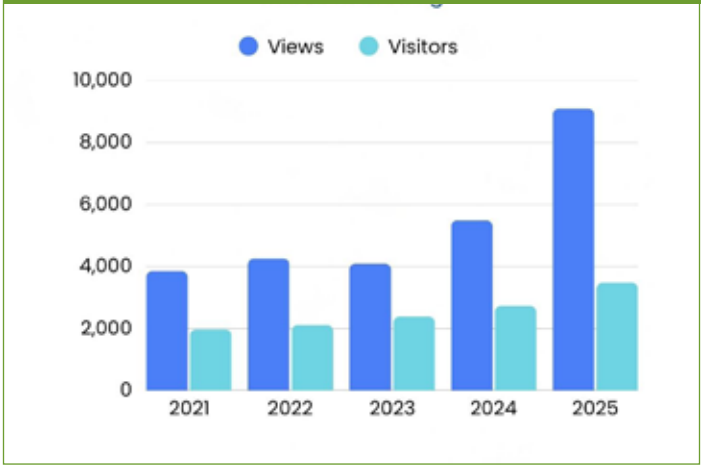
TASC teacher workshops equip educators with the knowledge and preparation to teach all 23 lessons within the "Action" curriculum supplement.

By completing a teacher workshop, educators receive their own copy of "Action" at no cost.

All "Action" lessons are correlated to the most recent 2021 S.C. Department of Education's College- and Career-Ready Science Standards. To expand environmental education capacity statewide, TASC conducted:

- **38 in-person workshops**;
- **8 virtual workshops**; and
- **Training for 1,050 educators**.

FIGURE 2: TASC Website Engagement



Website Improvements

In 2025, TASC also launched significant improvements to its website for educators, students, schools and community partners.

Website views have increased by 40 precent since 2024 (See Figure 2), while overall traffic directed to **takeactionsc.org** has increased by 40 percent since 2025.

Website updates included:

- **Improved navigation and user experience**;
- **Enhanced grant information**;
- **Expanded classroom materials** and downloadable content using the teacher toolkit;
- **A new "Students in Action" page** featuring South Carolina schools' successes in sustainability.

These updates make it easier for educators and schools to locate resources, schedule presentations and implement sustainability initiatives.

The website also features a new TASC Students in Action Web page. It currently highlights 20 environmental projects by schools and students across South Carolina.

Visit the new page at **takeactionsc.org/about/**.



TASC Offers New Teacher Toolkit

A major accomplishment in the 2025-2026 school year was the creation of the TASC Teacher Toolkit.

The toolkit is designed to provide educators with a comprehensive collection of resources, that help support waste reduction education during the school year. Through the toolkit, educators are directed to our partners' resources. The toolkit includes:

- **Updated lesson plans and videos** aligned with state educational standards;
- **Expanded recycling, composting and food waste reduction activities**;
- **School-wide engagement tools**;
- **Student leadership resources**;
- **Grant and project implementation guidance**; and
- **Easy-to-use digital poster downloads**.

In addition to "Action" curriculum information, the new TASC Teacher Toolkit features helpful links to online resources, school guides for reducing food waste, composting, recycling and battery safety, a project planning workbook and more.

Visit **takeactionsc.org/resources** to access and download materials from the toolkit.





*"Thank you for empowering our students with **useful**, **practical** and **relevant information**. Your passion really connected with them, the feedback has been wonderful and for that, we thank you."*

– Ebanreb David-DiMaria,
Eau Clare High School, Richland 1

School Programs & Projects

SECTION 4

Schools that participated in TASC programs reported a variety of waste reduction initiatives currently in place. TASC visited 286 schools during the 2025-2026 school year. ***Most of them reported not having a recycling program.*** According to surveyed teachers, barriers to starting recycling include administration and district support, employee turnover and limited funds for hauling diverted materials.

RECYCLING PROGRAMS

Number of schools currently operating:
(See Figure 3.)

- **67 commingled recycling programs**; and
- **26 single-material recycling programs**.
  - **Top single-stream materials:**
    - 42 percent paper materials;
    - 39 percent aluminum cans;
    - 11 percent cardboard; and
    - 8 percent plastic bottles.

COMPOSTING & GARDEN PROGRAMS

Schools currently operating:

- **28 on-site composting programs**;
- **3 commercial composting programs**; and
- **38 school gardens**.

School gardens present additional opportunities for future composting and food waste diversion efforts. Sixty percent of schools with gardens do not currently compost. With the existing garden infrastructure, beginning a small compost operation on campus could be possible.

CAFETERIA SHARE TABLES

Currently there are **47 schools** operating share tables. Share tables are an inexpensive option for food waste diversion. (See picture below.) Students can place uneaten, unopened packaged food on their share table, a fridge or a cart. This allows hungry students an opportunity to grab an extra snack while reducing waste generated in cafeterias. Share tables are highly encouraged by SCDES and the S.C. Department or Education.

Opportunity for Growth

Of the schools surveyed, results also identified that:

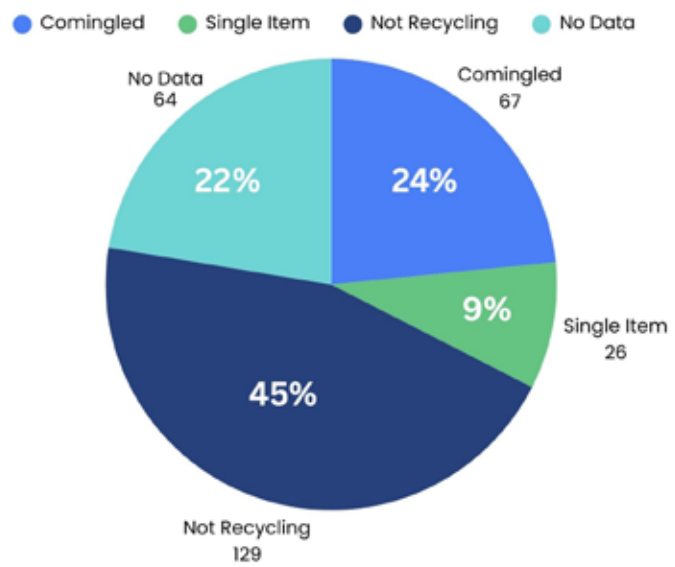
- **Only 32.5% of schools surveyed are recycling**;
- **129 schools not currently recycling**; and
- **64 schools not surveyed**.

These findings highlight substantial opportunities for future program expansion and technical assistance efforts. Improvements to reporting will provide an accurate depiction of recycling across all schools in South Carolina.



Pictured above is an example of cafeteria share table used in one South Carolina school.

FIGURE 3: S.C. School Recycling Programs



Student Ambassadors for Sustainability Projects

Coastal Carolina University and USC have partnered with TASC to pair college students with South Carolina classrooms to complete a sustainability project.

Serving as a mentor, the college ambassador gains leadership and career skills while helping empower the next generation to solve an issue in their environment. The 2025-26 school year ended with six successful projects. Special thanks to our ambassadors and teachers for your hard work.

- **Recycling and Composting Commercial** – North Springs Elementary School 5th Grade
- **Energy Audit** – North Springs Elementary School 4th Grade
- **Garden Wildlife Habitat** – Alice Drive Middle School
- **Recycling Program** – Moore Middle School
- **Cafeteria Share Table** – Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School
- **Litter Prevention Program and S.C. Sweep Event** – Indian Land High School



Indian Land High School students participate with members of the community in their litter prevention event.

School Recycling Grants

SECTION 5

The Office provides grant funding for local governments, colleges and universities, as well as K-12 schools. The Recycling Education grant funds the creation or expansion of a recycling program, composting, and food waste reduction initiatives. The Office has partnered with TASC to support teachers as they execute their grant projects.

During the 2025-2026 school year, the Recycling Education Grant Program awarded **$67,998.51 to 55 South Carolina schools** to support recycling, composting, food waste reduction, school gardens, environmental education and waste diversion projects. These funds supported elementary, middle, high school, charter, magnet, Montessori, career and technology and special population school settings across the state.

Grant recipients represented schools from all regions across South Carolina, ensuring that environmental education opportunities reached students in urban, suburban and rural communities statewide.

FY25 Recycling Education Grant Recipients

- Andrew Jackson Academy
- Bamberg-Ehrhardt Middle School
- Ben Lippen School
- Berea Elementary School
- Bethany Elementary School
- Bethel Elementary School
- Bluffton Middle School
- Busbee Elementary School
- Calhoun County High School
- Camden High School
- Cane Bay Middle School
- Chapin Intermediate School
- Continuous Learning Center
- Conway Elementary School
- Fairforest Elementary School
- Faith Christian Academy
- Gaffney High School
- Heyward Career & Technology Center
- Hillcrest Middle School
- Hughes Academy
- James H. Hendrix Elementary School
- Lake Carolina Elementary Lower Campus
- Lake Carolina Upper Campus
- Lakeside Middle School
- Latta Elementary School
- Latta Middle School
- Liberty STEAM Charter School
- Malcolm C. Hursey Montessori School
- Meadowfield Elementary School
- Midlands STEM Charter School
- Midway Elementary School
- Moore Middle School Military Magnet Academy
- Monarch Elementary School
- Ninety-Six Primary School
- North Springs Elementary School
- Northwoods Middle School
- Oconee Academy
- Pee Dee Elementary School
- Pleasant Hill Middle School
- Pomaria-Garmany Elementary School
- Reedy Laurel Elementary School
- Reuben Elementary School
- Richland Northeast High School
- Roebuck Elementary School
- South Carolina Governor's School for Agriculture at John de la Howe
- South Carolina School for the Deaf & the Blind
- St. James-Santee Elementary-Middle School
- Waccamaw High School
- Windsor Elementary School



Pictured from left: Bluffton Middle School's Green Steps club completing their garden makeover; Northwoods Middle School's food sharing and food scraps collection cart; and Fairforest Elementary School learning how vermiculture breaks down food scraps.

TASC: Looking Ahead

SECTION 6

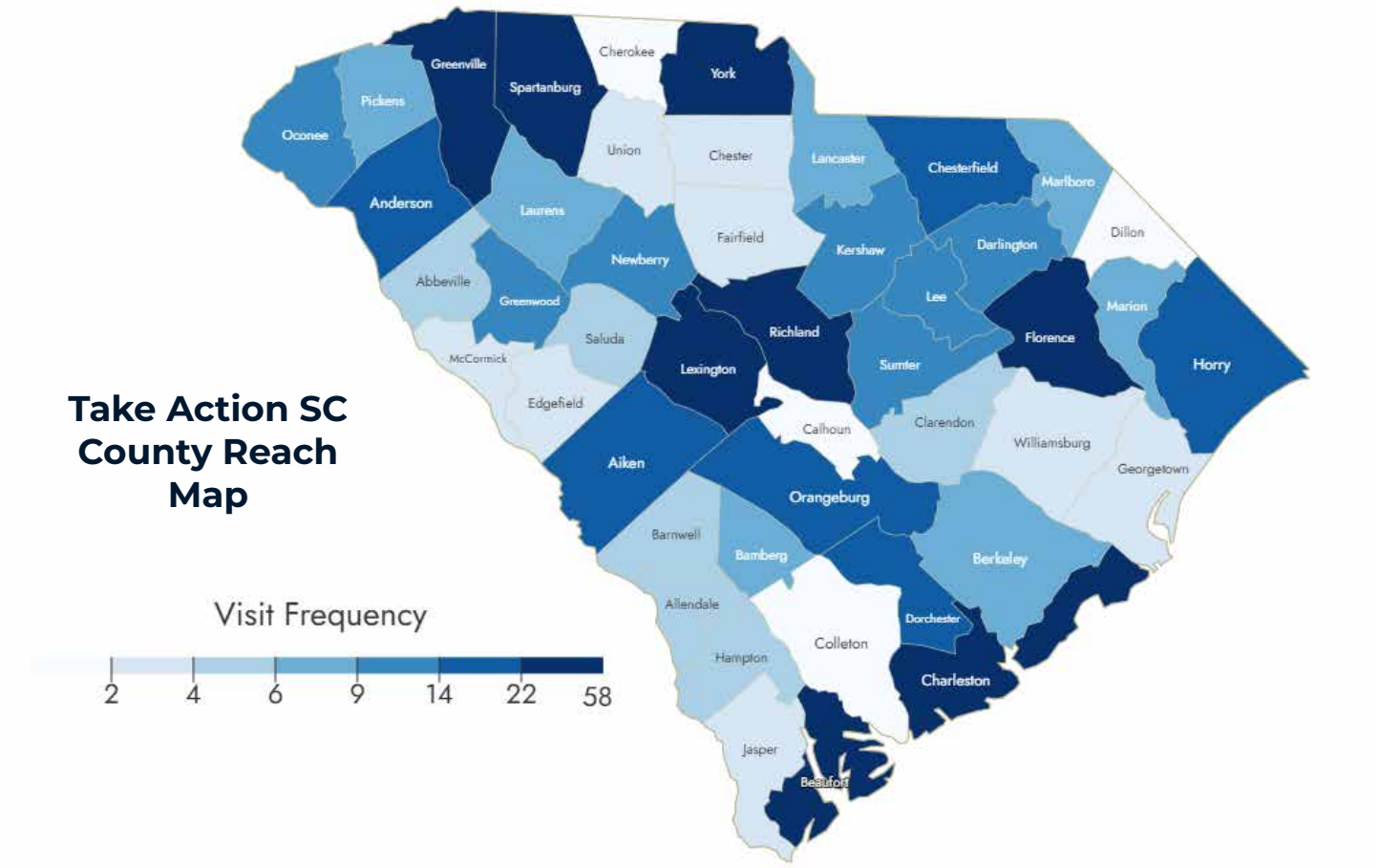
As South Carolina continues to prioritize waste reduction, recycling, composting and environmental stewardship, TASC remains committed to supporting educators and students with high-quality lessons, professional development and funding opportunities.

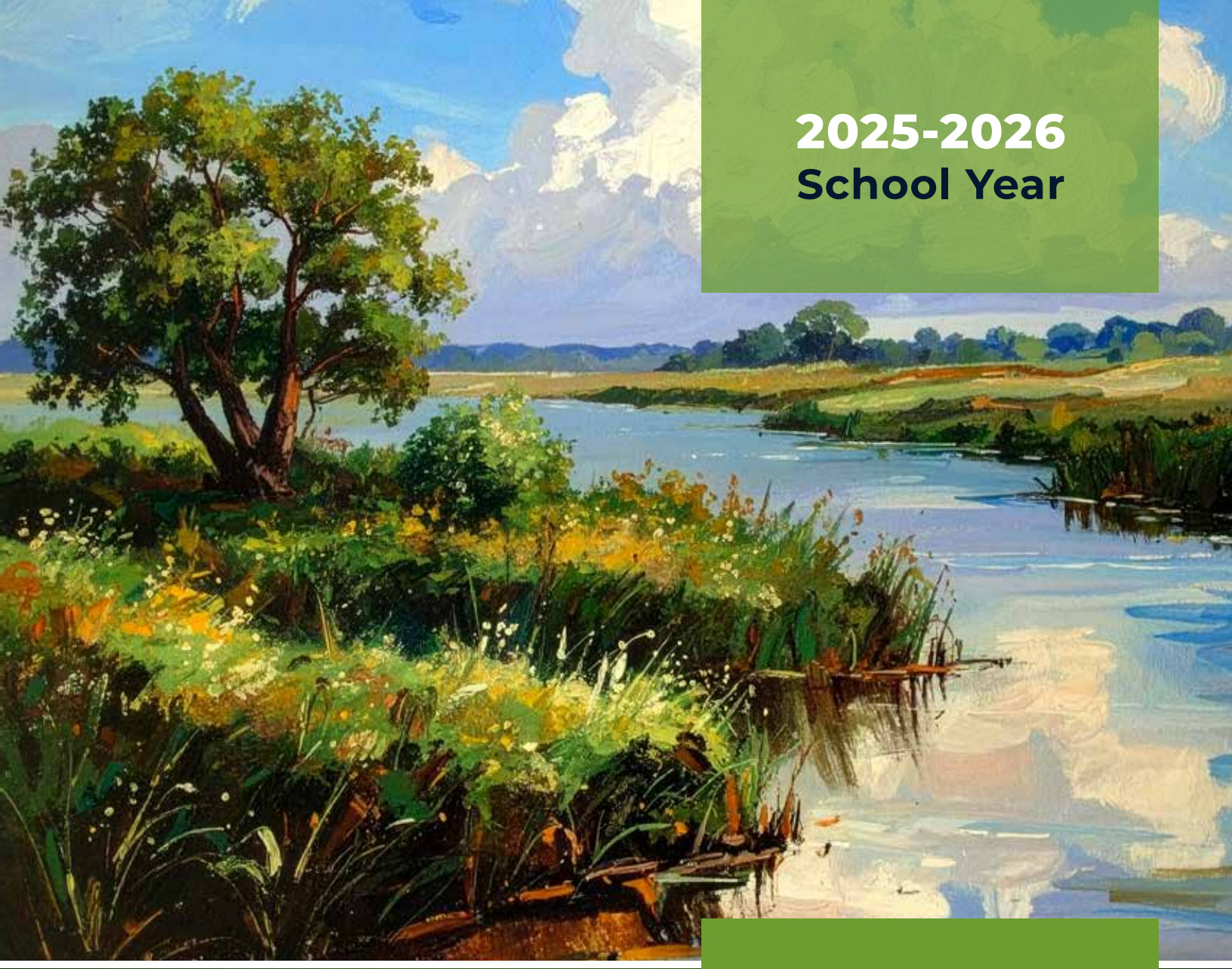
The 2025-2026 school year demonstrates that when schools are equipped with educational tools, training and financial support, students develop the knowledge and skills needed to become responsible environmental stewards.

2025-2026 HIGHLIGHTS

- **The Recycling Education Grant Program and TASC educational initiatives reached schools across every region of South Carolina.** Participation was strongest in the Midlands, Upstate and Pee Dee regions, with particularly high engagement in Florence, Lexington and Richland Counties.
- **Continued opportunities exist to expand participation in several rural and underserved counties**, including Calhoun, Cherokee, Colleton, Dillon, Fairfield, McCormick, Union, Edgefield, Georgetown, Jasper and Williamsburg.
- **Future outreach efforts will focus on increasing access to grant funding, technical assistance and professional development** to ensure equitable access to environmental education resources statewide.

Through the combined efforts of educators, administrators, students, community partners and SCDES, South Carolina schools are making measurable progress toward reducing waste, conserving resources and creating a cleaner, more sustainable future.





2025-2026 School Year

Take Action SC Partnership

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Sustainability
University of South Carolina

COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

PalmettoPride
Litter Trashes Everyone

The Take Action SC Partnership encourages and promotes environmental education across South Carolina. This unique group of state agencies, colleges and schools, as well as other environmental organizations, believes that education is key in protecting and preserving the environment for future generations.

The partnership encourages teachers and students to explore environmental issues, engage in problem-solving and take action to improve the environment. As a result, they will develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and have the skills to make informed and responsible decisions.

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