



**Lee Education and Economic Development
Independent Expenditures Political Action Committee**

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Public Education seems to be under attack in today's society. Both the Democratic and Republican parties are using the fiscal crisis—tax cuts, the bailout of the banks, and an economic crash caused by rampant speculation—as an opportunity to undermine and eliminate public education. The attempt to dismantle our local public education represents a historic turning point in our community as well as in communities all across the country. The concept that everyone should have access to education provided by the state, one long central to American democracy, is under attack. Social progress in the United States has been associated with the extension of public education. The most democratic and enlightened leaders of the American Revolution, such as Franklin and Jefferson, campaigned to expand public education as the basis for democracy.

Business and manufacturing, long one of the larger contributors to Lee County's success, however, still seem to hold to the doctrine that quality public education is essential to quality economic development. Without one there is rarely the other in a community. Too often people assume property tax rates are the primary driver of why industry locates to a community. In actuality they look for many other factors such as quality of the work force, existing infrastructure, access to technologies, favorable incentives, and, most importantly, quality of the local public school system. These in turn lead to a higher quality of life that people enjoy.

Over the past several years Lee County Schools has established itself as an educational leader across the region and the state. In the last 3 years, the Board of Education and administration have adopted the guiding principle that “Education is Economic Development” and have delivered on their promise made several years ago to the local business community that our schools would meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive world. They have let that promise shape their decisions to make our students – and ultimately – Lee County – be competitive on the global stage. In the classroom students are taught by highly qualified caring teachers who truly believe every child can succeed. Uniting quality teachers with a focused district vision, 21st Century technology, and community support has produced amazing results and an award winning school district. The evidence for such claims is apparent when you consider just some of the accomplishments from the 2010-11 school year.

The many achievements and accomplishments that have been achieved by our schools have come during an era of discretionary cuts and losses in funding. The “attack” on our schools began in 2002-03



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when the General Assembly began a practice of appropriating funds to public education only to turn around and ask for a portion of that appropriation back. In that fiscal year the “discretionary cut”, as it is called, was \$260,697 for Lee County Schools. The amount of the discretionary cut has risen steadily to a proposed mandated return of funding of **\$3.3 million** for our school district in 2012-13.

Over the past couple years the discretionary cut, coupled with other budgetary cuts enacted by the General Assembly, has meant a loss in funding for our district’s classrooms. Changes in student services have been necessary. Some examples have included academically or gifted (AIG) students no longer receive small group instruction outside of their regular classroom; instead the AIG teachers now have been placed back in regular classes. Curriculum coaches, lead teachers valued by teachers and principals alike, have also been moved back into the classroom. Additionally, other support positions for the classroom have been cut mainly through attrition. In total, forty-five (45) full time positions have been lost since the 2009-10 school year.

We maintain that there is always room for continual improvement in our schools. Yet when considering the “attack” and funding losses of late, our Lee County School System has continued to shine and out-perform. From our standpoint the numbers and results speak volumes. Our students are receiving quality education and being prepared for the competitive world that awaits them. As long as these types of results and private public partnerships continue, we will continue to promote and support our current administration and school system and their vision for a successful school system.

ABOUT LEE EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IE-PAC

Lee Education and Economic Development Independent Expenditure Political Action Committee (LEED IE-PAC) is a bipartisan political organization founded by Lee County business leaders focused on sound educational and economic initiatives. LEED IE-PAC’s purpose is to support political candidates, regardless of party affiliation, who bring strong ideas to the political process. It measures educational success through test scores, graduation rates, teacher retention and advances in classroom technology. LEED IE-PAC supports economic development legislation with an emphasis on business recruitment and retention, cultural arts and quality of life initiatives in Lee County.

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