



Dr. Gary L. Burgess, Sr.

**Announcement of Candidacy for the
Office of South Carolina State Superintendent of Education
February 21, 2022
1 p.m.
Wofford College
The Portico of Old Main
Spartanburg, South Carolina**

To almighty GOD, the creature and sustainer of the universe it is HE who has brought us to this moment for such a time. Elder Dr. Arthur L. Brewton, Executive Pastor of the Universal Body of Christ Church of the Redeemed, Boiling Springs; Inman; my wife, the love of my life; my children Lee, Alexandra, Nathan, and Darian. My amazing campaign group chair by Dr. Wanda Andrews, program participants, family, friends and the President of Wofford, Dr. Samhat for allowing the campaign to be here today.

Here on the campus of this outstanding college, here on the portico of this grand edifice, built by my enslaved African ancestors and my European ancestors- the place where I learned that I had the right stuff to give back to humanity, the place where I learn how to interact with the larger world, the place where I learned how to speak up and speak out, the place where I learn that my world view mattered, the place where I learn how to navigate barriers. This place has special significance to my family and to me.

I sat in Leonard Auditorium, in this building in the late summer of 1975 as a first-generation college student accompanied by my father, Edward and my mother, Willean. I was rich in love, culture, and history, but the tuition of the

college was three times my parents' combined income. Twenty-two years later I was the first graduate of American slave descent to be honored as the college's Young Alumnus of the Year. Forty-one years later my daughter, Alexandra, graduated from this very college having been the second woman in the history of the college to win a Southern Conference Championship.

This college, because it contains the embryonic material of the African and European, now embracing all of humankind, endeavoring to understand, and make peace with its past, lives up to its motto: *Intaminatis Fulget Honoribus - Untarnished, She Shines.*

I come today, to my academic home, to express my profound belief that all children are our children, and that all children must be provided with and equipped with an education that will allow her to excel and thrive in this world regardless of whether or not she chooses to be an astrophysics or an electrician. We must equip every child. We must teach every child to read, so they can read to learn. We must equip every child to write, so they can write to learn. There is an African proverb that says, "the hunter will always be glorified until the lion learns to write." Every child must master the basics of mathematics.

We must teach every child, through elementary school, in South Carolina as though they are going to attend a college such as Wofford or Claflin, allowing them to decide in middle school and high school their own path- be that path to work, starting their own business, technical school or a four-year college. They can choose not because the public school system crippled them, but because the public school system equipped them.

South Carolina can do better, and we must do better in educating our children. We must not settle for *minimally adequate* which leads to us being at the bottom of the academic rung of the education ladder and one of the less educated states in America.

As South Carolinians we must come together for the sake of our children. Our children are our present. They will embark into a future that we will never see, carrying our dreams and our hopes. We must expect excellence and extract excellence from all our children-red, yellow, black, and white. We must push them; we must pull them, and instill in them a spirit of excellence.

How do we do this- I have met exceptional teachers all over this state in my years as an educator. I envision implementing a framework that I call ACE- Academic Excellence, allowing teachers to do their jobs without fear; Community Local Control, allowing citizens through their local school boards to set policy to efficiently and effectively operate schools with the maximize impact to benefit teaching and learning, keeping the heavy hand of the South Carolina Department of Education from interfering, but to act as a resource for local school districts; Educator Teacher Pride- teacher pay must reflect their membership in the greatest profession in the world responsible for the progress of civilization, retaining teachers by creating meaningful environments for their work, allowing them to be innovative, developing their craft with and entrepreneurial mindset- ACE=Academic Excellence, Community Local Control, Educator Teacher Pride.

I will advocate for teachers to be in control of their classrooms. I will form a Gold Ribbon Commission to develop policies, procedures, and practices to involve community volunteers to work in our schools to free teachers up from such task as lunch supervision and clerical task that volunteers can handle. We must do this so teachers can get about the business of teachings. I will advocate for a Gold Ribbon Commission to develop policies and procedures to get rid of the meaningless, senseless testing that occurs in our public schools. The state and federal government must let our teachers go- let the teachers teach!

I will promote the teaching of history, the most accurate telling of our family's story, the American story. I am a proud South Carolinian and I want our story to be told from the various perspectives of the members of our family. Indeed, we are family. I remind my northern cousins, I am American by birth, but Southern by the grace of GOD.

I make this pledge today, not to ask for a new tax increase for public education until a comprehensive forensic financial audit is conducted to determine where we are spending our money and if money spent is having the greatest impact in the classroom and that our teaches are being paid well. We must not take our taxpayers for granted. I believe, based on my research that the funds currently exist to pay our teachers well and to do what needs to be done to educate our children.

My experience as a product of South Carolina's public education system- a classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent,

superintendent of schools and as an elected board member has uniquely qualified me to be the next superintendent of education for the state of South Carolina.

I am running for all children, our children, as a South Carolinian. It is my aim and the goal of this campaign to build a multiethnic, multiracial, cross-generational, social-economic and faith coalition to take back public education from those on the extreme right and on the extreme left. It is my aim and the goal of this campaign team to bring South Carolina together around educating our children. We must put aside our biases and mistrust for the sake of our children. We must work together to move South Carolina from the lowest of the rungs on the academic ladder nationally, we must move South Carolina forward to having one of the most educated populations in the United States.

I will listen to the voices of the people- the parent, the senior citizen, the business owner, the person of faith, the taxpayer, the teacher. With the help of GOD and your donations I will travel to every part of this state to understand your hopes and dreams for you children, our children.

I was asked, Dr. Burgess, what party will you affiliated with and will you run in. I told them I had run in my great-grandfather's party in the past. The party founded by Black men in South Carolina, the GOP, the party that gave us the constitution of 1868 which established the system of public education in this great state. I have moved from the party of my great-grandfather to the party of my father and mother, because of my stance for public education, but never forget both political parties belong to me.

So, I stand here in sound spirit, mind, and body with the aspiration of my great-grandfather and my father and mother to see to it that our children, all children, because they all are our children, are well educated. Education is my central focus. I am running for the children of South Carolina, as a South Carolinian, on the democratic ticket to become the next superintendent of education of South Carolina.

As I told a dear friend who worked with me in turning a school around in this county, we might be on a different ticket, but we are indeed on the same platform- standing for our children, and I expect your vote and your donation.

We know what time it is- it is time for us to come together, it is time for us to stand together, it is time for us to move forward together in educating our children.

I end with this- I am running as a father, as a person whose faith and life experiences has uniquely qualified him to be the next South Carolina Superintendent of Education. I am not running as a black candidate, I am not running as male candidate, I am not running as a candidate from the upstate, I am running as a South Carolinian.

South Carolina you have prepared me to be the next state superintendent of education. You have prepared me to launch our most precious presents, our children, into the future in building a more perfect union.

Visit the campaign's website burgessforsceducation.com

God bless our children, this campaign, my Wofford, and South Carolina.

Thank you.