Dr. Phinnize J. Fisher was selected as the ninth CEO of The School District of Greenville County in May, 2004, after previously serving as deputy superintendent and chief of staff. She joined Greenville County Schools in 1996 as assistant superintendent of middle school education, after serving 10 years as an associate superintendent and principal in Montgomery County Schools (Maryland). Dr. Fisher’s lifelong work in education began as a teacher in New Jersey in 1969. In the course of her career, she has served as teacher, principal, assistant/associate superintendent, deputy superintendent of operations, chief of staff, and superintendent.

While overseeing 69,802 students and more than 9,000 employees in the 50th largest school district in the nation, and a budget greater than $400 million, Dr. Fisher has championed high academic rigor, relevance for students, and enhanced student opportunities, even as she leads the school district through more challenging times due to recent State budget cuts totaling more than $50 million. Her educational philosophy focuses on connecting children to the purpose of learning, and helping them understand how success at school relates to a successful, fulfilling, and meaningful life.

Dr. Fisher’s vision and determination led to the opening in August, 2010, of A.J. Whittenberg Elementary, the state’s first elementary school with a fully integrated engineering curriculum. Another unique feature of the school is its emphasis on healthy lifestyles and nutrition, which includes providing students with school meals that expose the children to healthier food choices and exceed federal nutritional requirements. In addition, A.J. Whittenberg Elementary is the district’s first school built on the community school model, and features a working agreement with the Salvation Army to provide support and services for students and their families.

During Dr. Fisher’s tenure as superintendent, she has overseen the construction of 70 schools, and developed a Long Range Facilities and Capital Improvement Plan that outlines future school construction and maintenance needs. She also established an education foundation to provide beneficial programs and services that are not paid for by tax dollars.

In the fall of 2008, Dr. Fisher led Greenville County Schools through its first-ever district-wide national accreditation process and received acclaim from the SACS/AdvancEd Quality Assurance Team for providing the district with a clear and “singular focus that is supported at all levels of the organization.”

As a direct result of her initiatives, Greenville County students have consistently outperformed their national peers on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and scored above the state average on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and above the state and national average on the American College Test (ACT). In addition, more students are taking AP courses and the percentage of AP tests taken by GCS students that score a three, four, or five has improved from 43% in 2005 to 57% in 2010. Likewise, 10th grade students passing the High School Assessment Program Exam on their first attempt has improved to 80.8%.

In an effort to meet the needs of a very diverse student population, 48% of whom qualify for free and reduced meals, Dr. Fisher has championed programs such as virtual school, twilight school, and a variety of choice programs that provide distinctive and flexible opportunities for learning. Dr. Fisher is also focused on developing the whole child, and recognizes the important role of extracurricular activities such as speech and debate, chorus, band, fine and performing arts, and athletics in developing an individual’s full potential and in connecting students to learning.

Dr. Fisher is active in the community, serving on boards for the United Way of Greenville and the Public Education Partners Foundation. She is a trustee for Spartanburg Methodist College and is on the Board of Commissioners for Greenville Technical College. She is also a member of the Rotary Club of Pleasantburg, the South Carolina Association of School Administrators’ (SCASA) executive board, and the South Carolina Superintendent’s Roundtable. On the national level, she is a lifetime member of the NAACP, and a boulè member (leadership council) of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.
Dr. Fisher has been recognized with numerous awards, including: 2011 South Carolina Superintendent of the Year, 2009 Honorary National FFA American Degree, 2009 Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club Public Servant of the Year, 2007 Outstanding Superintendent by the Career and Technology Education Administrators Division of SCASA, 2005 Women Making History Award, Greenville Magazine Administrator of the Year, and The Order of the Jessamine, an honor bestowed on women making a difference in their communities. Her professional organizations include the American and South Carolina Association of School Administrators, National and South Carolina Alliance of Black School Educators, and the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Dr. Fisher is a graduate of St. Paul’s College (Va.) and received a master’s degree and doctoral degree from Rutgers University – the State University of New Jersey. In setting an example of continuous self improvement, Dr. Fisher has participated in Leadership Greenville, the Furman University Women’s Leadership Connections, and the Diversity Leadership Academy of the Richard W. Riley Institute of Government, Politics and Public Leadership at Furman University.