



## ISSUE 1

### PREPARING FOR 2030: SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS AND GEORGIA'S FUTURE

#### ISSUE OVERVIEW

Georgia faces a serious challenge in meeting its workforce needs by 2030. "If state and business leaders do not act, 1.5 million workers and their children could be unemployable or stuck in low-wage jobs: an endless cycle of poverty." This is according to research conducted by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) on Georgia's economic outlook for 2030. The study concluded that due to the impact of automation and the changing economy, coupled with the current education level of the state's population, Georgia is in danger of creating a multigenerational system of poverty that will result in more workers across the state being unemployed or underemployed, earning incomes below the poverty level, and becoming more reliant on state services.

There is no doubt that the educational attainment of a state's population – its workforce – is critical to supporting its economic development goals. However, the overall education level of Georgia's population has not kept pace with its economic development plans. As noted by the National Skills Coalition, "The question for state leaders, then, isn't whether there will be sufficient jobs in the future. The question is whether there will be enough skilled workers to fill those jobs." To close this gap and meet the challenges of economic globalization and advancing technology, Georgia must tackle issues of increasing poverty, undereducation, and the state's historical dependency on low-skilled jobs.

#### SIGNIFICANCE FOR GEORGIA

Like the nation, the demographics of Georgia's population is shifting, dramatically changing the composition of the state's current and future workforce. Population growth is directly related to job growth and the healthy economic growth of a town, region, and a state. To meet the challenges of post-secondary educational attainment and future workforce needs, issues of Georgia's overall population, demographic shifts, and educational opportunity for all its citizens must be addressed.

As the population becomes more ethnically and racially diverse and more public-school students are living in poverty, Georgia's education system must adapt to the new economy. Jobs are now requiring more skills and training, including stronger basic proficiency in math and skills such as problem solving, communication, and complex thinking. These are competencies in which historically underserved students struggle the most.

#### ACTION STEPS FOR GEORGIA

If Georgia is to address the challenges of the 2030 workforce, state and local leaders must provide opportunities to increase educational attainment and skills training for all students and adults. We can no longer afford for factors such as class, race, and ethnicity to serve as stronger predictors of educational success than aptitude or inherent talent.

Moreover, focusing on grade-school students alone will not be enough to close the skills gap and meet the 2030 challenge. If every graduating high school senior stayed in Georgia and trained for the open jobs, there would still be unfilled positions. Georgia needs to invest in initiatives designed to help low-skill adult workers earn diplomas and aid all adults in staying current with technological advancements in the job market. Without a coordinated plan across all education agencies (early learning through post-secondary) and workforce development entities, decades of poverty, undereducation, and a long dependence on low-skilled jobs will hinder the state's ability to meet the challenges of economic globalization and advancing technology.



## ISSUE 2

### EARLY LEARNING: BUILDING TOWARD THE FUTURE

#### ISSUE OVERVIEW

The research is clear: Early childhood education is critical and provides numerous benefits for both students and society. Participation in early childhood education is linked to higher graduation rates, a decreased likelihood of involvement in the juvenile or adult justice system, and higher lifetime earnings. Studies like the Perry Preschool Project have estimated a return to society of between \$7 and \$12 for every \$1 invested in early childhood programs. Investments in early learning are an important part of developing a strong workforce and can yield increased workforce productivity decades later.

For years, Georgia has recognized the importance and value of early childhood education and has invested significant resources into its youngest citizens. From establishing the first universal pre-K program entirely funded by the state lottery, to leveraging a \$51.7 million federal grant to scale up its early learning systems, Georgia has made intentional investments in providing high-quality early childhood education. Looking ahead, Georgia has an important opportunity to reflect on the progress and changes made under the grant, and to look ahead to how to sustain and build upon these improvements.

#### SIGNIFICANCE FOR GEORGIA

The Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge (ELC) Grant focused on improving early learning and development programs for young children by supporting states' efforts to ultimately do two things: (1) increase the number and percentage of low-income children enrolled in high-quality early learning programs and (2) design and implement an integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services.

In 2013, Georgia applied for and was awarded a \$51.7 million grant over four years to expand on five critical areas: (1) building successful state systems, (2) increasing high-quality accountability programs, (3) promoting early learning outcomes, (4) developing a great early childhood education workforce, and (5) measuring outcomes and progress.

Over the grant period that officially ended in 2018, Georgia made clear progress in its five critical areas outlined in the Early Learning Challenge Grant. In addition to the Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs), expansion of Quality Rated, and resources and support for the Ga Early Learning Development Standards (GELDS), the state made significant progress in its approaches to family engagement, incentives for teachers to obtain higher education, and the creation of a cross-agency data system.

#### ACTION STEPS FOR GEORGIA

The Early Learning Challenge Grant enabled the state to strategically invest funds and expand upon an already strong foundation and system, while also allowing for innovation. Georgia has much to celebrate for what it accomplished during the grant period. However, work must still be done to ensure all young children in Georgia have access to high-quality early learning programs. Leaders at the state and local levels – elected, business, community, and education – must sustain and build on the many improvements made under the grant and continue to help Georgia be a nationwide leader and innovator in the early learning space.

It will be important to continue investing in top talent not only in the state agencies, but also in the workforce and teachers who are directly executing early learning programs on the ground. Further, the Department of Early Care and Learning, in its efforts to incentivize child care programs to attain Quality Rated status, must help centers to not only attain but also sustain high-quality standards. Lastly, Georgia must also find ways to increase the supply of high-quality family child care via more support and resources for providers.



## ISSUE 3

### LITERACY: THE GREAT EQUALIZER

#### ISSUE OVERVIEW

Literacy is the foundation on which all other learning is built. In Georgia, 58% of third-graders are not reading with proficiency, bringing long-term learning challenges to students and their families – and significant negative economic impact to our state. Early intervention is key, given that the strongest predictor of reading outcomes in third grade is a child's language skills at age five. Additionally, because of the proven relationships among adult low literacy skills (defined as a reading level equivalent to the fifth grade or lower), poverty, and educational outcomes for children, increasing the literacy of the one million low-literate adults in Georgia is paramount. Children whose parents have low literacy levels have a 72% chance of being at the lowest reading levels themselves.

Literacy is a driver of sustainable economic growth, full participation in the labor market, and improved child and family physical and mental health. Georgia's economic growth relies on the state's ability to provide a literate, skilled workforce to meet demand in key sectors such as agriculture, trade and transportation, advanced manufacturing, health care, and technology.

#### SIGNIFICANCE FOR GEORGIA

Literacy impacts all segments of the birth-to-work pipeline. Early language development forms the building blocks for third-grade reading proficiency, a key determinant for middle and high school success, on-time graduation, and ultimately employment or post-secondary opportunities. Without basic literacy, adults will not be employable in the labor market of tomorrow. And without employment, the cycle of poverty – and low literacy – will continue.

Georgia is tackling the literacy issue on multiple fronts. Entities like Get Georgia Reading (GGR) and the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), for instance, are emphasizing the importance of high-quality early learning and language nutrition from birth through age five. Meanwhile entities like the Georgia Department of Education (GADOE) and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) are investing heavily in third-grade reading initiatives aimed at ensuring reading proficiency through family and community-based approaches and high quality teacher training programs. And to address adult literacy, the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and the University System of Georgia are providing adult literacy programs and interventions to help adults without adequate reading skills. More recently, entities like DECAL and TCSG have begun collaborating on two-generation approaches to improving literacy, which simultaneously address the needs of parents and children to improve outcomes for the whole family.

#### ACTION STEPS FOR GEORGIA

Alignment of resources and funding is critical as Georgia continues to move the needle on literacy. Statewide campaigns that increase awareness of the availability and importance of literacy programs are essential. Equally vital, adult learners – as well as parents of school-aged children – need relevant workforce information to better understand in-demand jobs, reskilling, and how to maintain employability in the face of increasing automation.

While Georgia needs to address the numerous factors affecting early learning, adult basic education must also be expanded to facilitate continuous renewal of the talent pipeline and improve citizens' economic mobility. Georgia's 2030 literacy challenge will be in preparing its citizens – from birth through adulthood – to develop the literacy skills necessary to earn living wages and effectively decipher the continuous flow of information that has become the new normal. The prosperity of all Georgians depends on this.



## ISSUE 4

### FUNDING: RIPPLE EFFECTS OF BUDGET CUTS

#### ISSUE OVERVIEW

On August 6, 2019, Governor Brian Kemp directed all state government offices to cut state spending and prepare budget requests that included a 4% cut to current budgets (fiscal year 2020 which began July 1, 2019) and 6% for the following fiscal year (FY 2021). Because the Georgia constitution requires a balanced budget each year, Governor Kemp requested the potential cuts based on a combination of economic forecasts and recent changes in Georgia tax policy.

Although Georgia's K-12 education funding formula (called the Quality Basic Education or QBE funding in Georgia) is excluded from the proposed cuts, other areas that support strong educational outcomes are being considered. Some of the largest proposed cuts include a reduction of \$23 million in adult mental health services, \$12 million in child welfare services, and \$7.6 million to county public health departments.

Georgia has taken important steps in recent years to recognize and address the impacts on student outcomes of non-academic barriers, such as poverty, mental and physical health, and community factors. In doing so, Georgia has seen impressive academic gains. As the state weighs potential budget cuts, it must address the need to balance the state budget as well as meet the commitment to serve all students and not lose the educational progress it has made.

#### SIGNIFICANCE FOR GEORGIA

At the time of the publication of this document, the 4% and 6% proposals are just that – proposals. However, effective October 1, 2019, all state agencies began operating under the 4% cut in case tax revenues do not recover. The final amended FY 2020 and 2021 budgets will be approved by the General Assembly and signed by the governor during the 2020 legislative session. The challenge will be balancing the revenue demands of the state agencies under decreasing income strands.

It is important to note that the K-12 education funding formula (called the Quality Basic Education or QBE funding in Georgia), Medicaid, and transportation are all excluded from the proposed cuts. Therefore, a significant portion of state education funding is currently protected. However, other areas that support strong educational outcomes are being considered. Some of the largest proposed cuts include a reduction of \$23 million in adult mental health services, \$12 million in child welfare services, and \$7.6 million to county public health departments.

#### ACTION STEPS FOR GEORGIA

As the economic forecast becomes clearer, Georgia lawmakers may face difficult decisions to balance the state budget. As state leaders consider budget cuts of up to 6%, they must recognize that protecting QBE, while important and necessary, may not be sufficient. They must also protect broader impacts on educational outcomes and achievement, especially for the state's most vulnerable populations. Local school districts will likely have to make hard choices on serving the needs of their students and must prepare for possible decreases in support for those children and their families. Serious discussions must focus on how to financially support all of the expectations Georgia has for all of its students and the educators who serve them.



## ISSUE 5

### PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP: INSULATING THE TEACHER PIPELINE

#### ISSUE OVERVIEW

Teacher quality matters. In fact, it is the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement. Over the past five years, Georgia has enacted several reforms targeting teacher preparation, recruitment, and retention, beginning with Governor Nathan Deal's Education Reform Commission in 2015, followed shortly thereafter by the 90-member Teacher Advisory Committee. Together, these efforts addressed issues as far ranging as compensation models, pre-service training recommendations, and teacher certification ladders.

Strategies designed to affect teacher recruitment and retention have continued under Governor Brian Kemp, whose 2020 budget included a \$3,000 pay increase for certified teachers and public-school personnel. As much as these reforms can help professionalize teaching and strengthen the teaching pipeline, the role of the principal is equally critical. The principal is responsible for creating the right conditions to support and increase teacher leadership. Empowering school-level leaders to transform and support a culture of learning is one of the most important steps districts and schools can take to support student learning.

#### SIGNIFICANCE FOR GEORGIA

Among all principals in Georgia in 2014, 49% were still employed as principals in 2019. On average, the annual principal turnover rate is 19%. This annual turnover rate is a bigger problem for schools that struggle the most with achievement, primarily those with high percentages of students living in poverty and/or minority students. In response to a directive from the US Department of Education, Georgia submitted an educator equity plan to address achievement gaps in 2015. At that time, the data showed the following:

- 23% annual turnover of principals in schools in the highest poverty quartile compared to 15% in schools in the lowest poverty quartile.
- 22% annual turnover of principals in schools in quartile with the highest percentage of minorities compared to 16% in schools in the lowest minority quartile.

In developing the state's equity plan, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) worked with multiple stakeholders, including representatives from the community, local school districts, regional support specialists, evaluation specialists, and state Equity Team members, to conduct a root cause analysis for the equity gaps. Each group identified leadership as a primary issue associated with teacher turnover and lack of student growth. GaDOE also noted that administrators often lack the skills to effectively communicate with teachers and the community. This lack of leadership, which contributed to teacher and leader turnover, was especially acute in rural areas. Much like the conversation around how to recruit and retain highly effective teachers, Georgia is working at both the state and local levels to recruit and retain highly effective leaders that embrace these challenges and responsibilities.

#### ACTION STEPS FOR GEORGIA

To meet the workforce challenge of 2030 and ensure all students graduate from high school ready for a successful transition into post-secondary education, Georgia must develop a comprehensive, statewide plan to support the recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development of education leaders at all levels. Georgia needs to build upon and leverage successful leadership efforts that already exist, such as GLISI and the QPLA used by Gwinnett County, that help support and retain current innovative leaders and train the next generation. These models also need to connect school leaders with each other and district priorities and supports.

Leaders at all levels share responsibility for insulating the teacher pipeline, and everyone has a role to play. District and school leaders create and maintain the culture, and shape how people think, feel, and act in schools. State leaders can focus on policies that support local districts and that develop and maintain a strong leadership pipeline. Business leaders can provide guidance on the leadership and operations side of running a district. Families and community members can be involved in their school systems by providing input into district priorities and even sharing in governance responsibilities. The vision for Georgia is that every district and every school has focused, innovative leaders able to set a positive culture of learning and student success.



## ISSUE 6

### STRONG FOUNDATIONS: STANDARDS, ASSESSMENTS, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

#### ISSUE OVERVIEW

For a public K-12 education system to function optimally, it requires an instructional system that makes the acquisition of knowledge and skills efficient, effective, and appealing. This system has evolved to include standards, instruction, assessment, and accountability for all those involved in the extremely critical and important role of educating students. Teachers, counselors, and principals, for instance, can share insights on students that will help them to best guide their students on their educational paths. Moreover, students can better monitor their own progress, parents can make fully informed decisions about their children's education, and policy makers can make the best decisions to support public education.

Georgia is currently examining various components of its instructional system. The state recently began a review process of its English/language arts and math standards, while state leaders are proposing changes to the accountability system, and select districts are piloting new assessments that ultimately could replace the current statewide end-of-course and end-of-grade Georgia Milestones assessments. Taken together, these changes signify potentially significant shifts in the foundation of the K-12 instructional system that will impact all 1.4 million public school students in Georgia.

#### SIGNIFICANCE FOR GEORGIA

The foundations of any instructional system are to clearly identify what a student should know and be able to do, monitor whether the student is getting the content, and understand what to do if students are not getting it. Thus, an instructional system combines standards, assessments, and accountability. Implementing rigorous college- and career-ready standards that prepare students for success has been an integral aspect of education reform in Georgia for years. In 2015, the State Board of Education (SBOE) voted on revisions to Georgia's existing English language arts and math standards based on a detailed review by Georgia educators, post-secondary experts, parents and instructional leaders from across the state. Extensive public feedback was also collected and incorporated into the revisions. The SBOE approved the recommendations and renamed the ELA and Mathematics standards the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE). These standards were implemented beginning in the 2015-2016 school year. Georgia has continued its commitment to more rigorous standards by revising and updating both science and social studies standards.

When Georgia decided to improve its standards, it also took on the responsibility of creating a corresponding assessment system for measuring student learning, now called the Georgia Milestones Assessment System. The Georgia Milestones were first administered to students during the 2014-2015 school year. In 2019 two consortia of local schools districts, the Georgia MAP Assessment Partnership and the Putnam County Consortia, were granted waivers from federal testing requirements to develop alternative assessments. The ultimate goal is for one of these alternative assessments to potentially replace the Georgia Milestones statewide.

Accountability systems are used to ensure that college- and career-ready standards are being met as students move through the K-12 system. In Georgia, the accountability system is called the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). The CCRPI is Georgia's annual tool to measure how well schools, districts, and the state are preparing students for their next level of education. It is also used to identify schools for "needs improvement" status, per federal law. Although the CCRPI was amended in recent years, there still remains growing concern among state leaders and the public that Georgia has moved too far into high-stakes accountability and reliance on test scores and a single number or letter to "grade" schools.

#### ACTION STEPS FOR GEORGIA

Over the past decade, Georgia has worked hard to develop a coherent instructional system that incorporates high standards and aligned assessments that will allow instruction to be personalized. Georgia is making significant progress toward ensuring that all students graduate from high school ready for the next step, be it college, career, or the military, but there is still room for improvement and many opportunities to build upon the momentum of these successes.

The EdQuest Georgia best practice research tells us that top-performing states and education systems have well-developed, coherent instructional systems that incorporate standards, curricula, and assessments that allow for the personalization of instruction and appropriate methods of teaching. Combined, this coherent instructional system allows all students to reach their goals. For Georgia to meet its educational goals of today and the challenges of a changing economic future, the state needs to capitalize on the progress it has made in its K-12 system over the past decade. This means a continued commitment that all students have access to high standards and expectations and the resources necessary to reach their goals.





## ISSUE 7

### STUDENT SUCCESS: BARRIERS BEYOND THE SCHOOLHOUSE

#### ISSUE OVERVIEW

Many factors affect each student's ability to succeed in school. Some are directly related to academic instruction. Others, like the safety and health of students and the environments in which they learn and grow, are also instrumental to student performance. There are multiple reasons for suboptimal academic success unrelated to academic instruction. Many of these are related to unrecognized or undermanaged health conditions, referred to in best practice research as health barriers to learning (HBLs). These conditions include language skill deficits, uncontrolled asthma, vision problems, hearing loss, dental pain, persistent hunger, and untreated behavioral and mental health problems and are a dominant predictor of long-term academic, social, emotional, and mental health outcomes.

Ensuring that children are successful in school is a pathway out of poverty and an essential ingredient of social mobility. Moreover, for Georgia to remain economically competitive and meet the workforce challenge of 2030, it is essential that all children are healthy and well-educated and that they graduate from high school ready for college or a career. Addressing non-academic barriers to student achievement, particularly those related to health, must be a priority.

#### SIGNIFICANCE FOR GEORGIA

Over one-quarter of Georgia's children live in households with incomes at or below the federal poverty level. Over 60% of public-school students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Poverty is not just the context within which schools exist. It directly impacts the students, families, schools, and broader community. A growing body of research has documented and quantified how the disproportionate exposure to stress and trauma among children living in poverty directly damages brain development, leading to significant learning and behavioral problems that impact academic achievement.

Georgia has begun to recognize the need to address these non-academic issues for all students across all schools. The state has made concerted efforts to address these issues in Georgia's lowest performing schools and those in need of the greatest assistance. One way the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has responded to this challenge is to emphasize the "whole child" at the center of its internal System of Continuous Improvement. The Georgia legislature has also taken notice of the importance of these factors, passed the First Priority Act in 2017, which was designed to provide a system of supports for Georgia's lowest performing schools and those in the greatest need of assistance. Part of the Chief Turnaround Office (CTO) established by this law, the Health and Wellness Initiative was founded to address health-related non-academic needs as part of the broader turnaround work. This initiative is exploring systems level-scalable approaches necessary to tackle large-scale, persistent health factors; a process that could be applied in other communities.

#### ACTION STEPS FOR GEORGIA

Countries with the highest academic performance provide strong supports for children and their families that go beyond the academic instruction students receive in classrooms. Most high-performing countries have extensive health and family supports, thereby promoting healthy child development and family structure. This foundation helps ensure children come to school healthy, eager to learn, and ready to engage in instruction.

For Georgia to address the projected skilled-worker shortage of 2030, the state must make a comprehensive and coordinated assessment of current policies and practices at the state and local levels in order to begin addressing non-academic barriers to success. With more than half of Georgia's K-12 population considered low-income, the importance of these issues is only growing. For students to continue to thrive, an awareness of the impacts of these barriers to learning and a commitment from all Georgians to do something about them must be sustained. State, district, and school-level leaders must have the capacity to develop ambitious plans and implement them through broad, multisector collaborations.



## ISSUE 8

### RURAL POVERTY: ENDANGERING OPPORTUNITY

#### ISSUE OVERVIEW

Attention to rural Georgia and the challenges that it faces continues to gain traction in the state. In recent years, several important initiatives have been created to address economic and community development goals in the geography broadly defined as rural Georgia. While these efforts represent diverse areas of focus, from expanding broadband internet access, to supporting job creation, to addressing health care needs, they share a common goal: increasing the economic and social well-being of rural Georgia.

The pathway to the region's economic success requires a strong educational infrastructure, from birth through post-secondary completion. Businesses and industries are attracted to talent; job creation requires a strong workforce, resulting in sustainable economic growth. The education pipeline, however, requires more than academic rigor to achieve strong outcomes. The housing, health, and infrastructure challenges that face rural Georgia directly impact educational success for students in the pipeline today and adults who need to retrain and upskill to meet changing workforce needs. This latter group is particularly important in communities with high unemployment rates and where significant parts of the current workforce are employed in sectors threatened by automation. To overcome these challenges and meet shared economic development goals, those focused on rural Georgia must align their work and closely connect their efforts with the education sector.

#### SIGNIFICANCE FOR GEORGIA

Georgia's economy is changing, and the way the state prepares its workforce must adapt to ensure current and future economic competitiveness. Looking across the entire birth-to-work pipeline, the state's rural communities are facing challenges with respect to education, poverty, and automation in the employment sector.

To understand and improve economic development in rural Georgia, establishing a clear picture of rural education is necessary. Consider the following:

- The number of rural students in Georgia is third-highest in the nation.
- One in four Georgia students attends a rural school.
- Rural schools tend to be extremely racially diverse, serving communities where poverty is prevalent.
- Across the U.S., the education funding per pupil is significantly lower than the national average.

The Rural School and Community Trust found Georgia's rural schools and districts to be among the most concerning in the nation, stating that "more than any other gauge, it is the dire college readiness rankings that drive Georgia's overall priority ranking as the seventh most serious situation for rural education in the US." It is college readiness that is predictive of barriers to post-secondary completion. For example, only 41.2% of Georgia's rural students took the ACT or SAT,225 compared to nearly 70% of students statewide. In terms of Advanced Placement (AP) classes, only 12% of rural student passed at least one AP exam by scoring a three or higher, compared to 23% of Georgia students statewide.

#### ACTION STEPS FOR GEORGIA

Georgia's focus on rural development is timely and necessary to ensure prosperity across the state. It is critical to poverty alleviation and economic development for a town, a region, and a state. However, there is very little coordination or overlap between the economic revitalization of rural communities and strengthening the education pipeline in those same communities. To effectively address the challenges facing the region, the efforts across sectors must be coordinated. Cross-pollination between them is necessary, as is multisector involvement to ensure their efforts are working in alignment. Issues such as transportation, health care, and broadband access are closely tied to educational attainment and success. Economic development, in turn, predicates a strong workforce. Efforts focusing on these and other facets of the challenges of rural Georgia will be stronger if they work collaboratively and in close alignment.





## ISSUE 9

### SCHOOL TO WORK: PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT

#### ISSUE OVERVIEW

In light of the Southern Regional Education Board's workforce 2030 analysis, Georgia must refine its ability to equip each citizen with the tools necessary to identify, train for, and pursue a career path. Doing so is critical as the state strives to fill in-demand jobs to sustain economic growth. In particular, meeting the demand for middle-skill jobs, those requiring less than a bachelor's degree but more than a high school diploma, requires clear linkages between the K-12 system and post-secondary institutions. These linkages, or pathways, need to allow students to earn in-demand credentials and degrees that bolster the talent pipeline.

The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (CEW) launched the Good Jobs Project in 2017 to demonstrate the importance of intentional career planning and to analyze "good jobs." The project defined good jobs as those that pay at least \$35,000 per year for workers between the ages of 25 and 44, and at least \$45,000 for workers age 45 and older. Based on these categories, the median earning of those with good jobs was \$65,000 in 2016.

Traditionally, there generally have been three routes to good jobs: high school graduation; middle-skill acquisition, which includes associate degrees, post-secondary certificates, licenses, and job credentials; and finally a bachelor's degree that may lead to a master's degree or professional/doctoral degree. However, a Brookings Institution report notes that these career pathways are not always so easily defined or navigated. Additionally, these pathways are restricted by racial and economic inequities. Employer-based training goes disproportionately to highly educated workers, further jeopardizing inclusive talent development. Addressing these issues will prove critical for Georgia, particularly as talent-driven economic development continues to fuel the state's prosperity.

#### SIGNIFICANCE FOR GEORGIA

Georgia's Career, Technical, and Agricultural (CTAE) program has led the way in innovative pathways to increase postsecondary credentials by partnering with other state agencies, businesses, community leaders and other statewide initiatives. CTAE students can take courses in more than 130 Career Pathways within 17 Career Clusters (see Table 9.1), earn recognized industry credentials, and participate in work-based learning and apprenticeships. The CTAE division is particularly focused on working with the business community and key Georgia industries to meet the needs of a 21st century workforce.

The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and the University System of Georgia (USG) also play a direct role in preparing high school students for the rigor of college coursework and post-secondary success through Georgia's dual enrollment program, which allows qualifying high school students to take college courses for free while earning both high school and post-secondary credit. The program helps address concerns about college affordability while increasing college access and success. While the dual enrollment program is considered a key indicator of continued postsecondary work and credential attainment, the question for Georgia is one of financial sustainability. Georgia, one of five states responsible for paying a student's dual enrollment tuition.

Technical College System of Georgia's (TCSG) Office of Workforce Development oversees WorkSource Georgia, the state's federally-funded employment and training system, which provides another pathway to credentials and employment. WorkSource Sector Partnerships have been developed across all of the state's 12 economic development regions. A product of the High Demand Career Initiative (HDCI), WorkSource Sector Partnerships are designed to support the development of regional partnerships that will work to understand and act on the needs of key regional industries.

#### ACTION STEPS FOR GEORGIA

Georgia's education system must stay abreast of workforce changes and industry expectations to provide students with their best chances for success. To ensure that the state continues to have a prepared workforce and economic opportunities for all, state policy must support career education, college and technical school readiness, and innovative programs that drive post-secondary achievement.

To maintain its competitive economic edge, Georgia will need to modify the lens through which it views student development, shifting from the current fragmented system to a seamless learning continuum from cradle to career. In addition to improving education and career outcomes for future generations, the payoffs for Georgia include inclusive economic growth and a robust talent pipeline – one that is ready for the workforce demands of 2030.



## ISSUE 10

### BEYOND THE DIPLOMA – KEYS TO POST-SECONDARY SUCCESS

#### ISSUE OVERVIEW

In 2019, Georgia was proud to be named the “Top State for Doing Business” for a record-setting seventh consecutive year by Site Selection Magazine, a publication covering corporate site selection and expansion planning information like business climate analysis. Many factors go into this designation, and Georgia is particularly renowned for efforts to reduce red tape and promote a positive business environment across the state. These assets are significant and should be celebrated, yet on their own they paint an incomplete picture of what undergirds Georgia’s long-term business success. In a 21st century economy, business is driven by talent, and a trained workforce is critical to success.

However, a closer look at demographic and workforce trends indicates that we are quickly approaching challenges in maintaining a robust workforce pipeline. The state has strong programs, but many Georgians continue to fall through the cracks and are left without the credentials they increasingly need to be competitive in the workforce.

#### SIGNIFICANCE FOR GEORGIA

Georgia is currently facing challenges in meeting its workforce needs. Much like other southern states, Georgia’s economy was built upon low-skilled jobs, with decades of intergenerational poverty and undereducation. Now, in 2020, changes in automation and technology are conflicting with the population’s current and future post-secondary education levels, which further threatens access to living-wage jobs.

When comparing the educational attainment of Georgians today with the projections for job requirements over the coming years, the gaps are significant. For example, 28% of Georgia’s adult population has only a high school diploma, but only 4% of job growth for those with that education level is predicted. Conversely, jobs that require an associate degree are predicted to grow by 13%, and only 8% of Georgia’s adult population has that credential.

The stable jobs that were once held by low-skill workers without advanced degrees are becoming scarcer. The positions that remain require the skills and training to oversee, maintain, and improve highly advanced production pipelines. This increase in education and training requirements is present in other industries as well. In the agricultural industry, farmers are quick to adopt new technology to monitor and cultivate their crops. In the retail space, customers are encouraged to place their own orders or check out their own purchases at automated kiosks. As technology continues to advance, those positions held by workers who either have not attended a postsecondary institution or have not completed a degree are at highest risk.

#### ACTION STEPS FOR GEORGIA

Over time, the needs of the workforce change, and the education system must stay abreast of these changes to provide students with their best chance for success. To ensure that Georgia continues to have a prepared workforce and economic opportunities for all, best practice research identified by EdQuest Georgia found that states must have policies in place that support career education and college preparation as well as innovative programs that support and ensure post-secondary achievement. Key to this achievement is removing barriers and ensuring students have the resources they need to complete their degrees.

In 2018, Georgia took a significant step toward removing a key financial barrier when the General Assembly passed House Bill 787. This bill called for the creation of a needs-based aid program for higher education students in Georgia. However, since its passage, the details of the bill have not been developed, nor has a funding stream been identified. Support for Georgia’s low-income students is a necessary component of any comprehensive plan to improve Georgia’s enrollment, attendance, and completion rates. A statewide need-based funding program must be made available to ensure successful post-secondary education completion for all students.

Georgia will not continue to be the “Top State for Doing Business” without more students entering, completing, and reentering the post-secondary education system. Technological advancements will not slow down, and a strong workforce must continually adapt to new and disruptive changes. As we consider the role of post-secondary education in the state, we must recognize that the ever-evolving landscape of automation, artificial intelligence, and technology will continue to require additional reskilling and upskilling. Higher education can no longer be considered a unique, one-time event for a select group of residents. To meet Georgia’s current and 2030 economic needs, workers will likely have to return to education again and again. Continued economic development depends on having systems in place that meet the evolving needs of industry and allow all Georgians to live, work, and thrive.