



GEORGIA PARTNERSHIP  
FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPEE) is pleased to present the 2005 inaugural edition of the Top Ten Issues to Watch. A three-tiered approach has been adopted in delivering this information. First, the political context that will usher the issue to the forefront in the upcoming year has been highlighted. The second tier presents the policy context emphasizing the research and best practices of the given issue. Finally, the third tier stresses what this issue means for Georgia. The topics are not prioritized.

# Top Ten Issues

## T O W A T C H I N 2 0 0 5

1

### MERIT PAY FOR TEACHERS

#### Political Context

Paying for performance may be next for teachers during 2005. President Bush has proposed \$500 million for schools and states to reward effective teachers. As schools and states scramble to meet the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) highly qualified teachers deadline, expect the national and state agenda to focus on teacher quality, recruiting high quality teachers to under-performing schools and reducing teacher attrition. Such discussions will necessarily involve the relevance of traditional teacher pay scales in the face of high-stakes accountability.

#### Policy Perspective

Research defines teacher quality as the single most influential school-based factor on student achievement. However, the schools that most need high quality teachers are the most challenged to attract and retain such teachers. Urban and rural school systems with high poverty populations have difficulty recruiting and retaining high quality teachers. Furthermore, recent data suggest that teacher shortages are not primarily the result of an aging workforce entering retirement nor increases in student enrollment. Instead, the increased demand for teachers is largely the result of pre-retirement teacher turnover.<sup>1</sup> Experts on issues of teacher quality suggest that new recruitment strategies alone will not solve the teacher shortage or quality distribution problem.

Traditional teacher salary schedules that provide incremental pay increases to teachers based on number of years in the classroom and level of education are increasingly viewed as contributing to the teacher attrition problem. Teaching is one of the few professions in which exceptional performance or working in a high need area is not rewarded. There is growing national support for merit pay or other mechanisms to restructure how teachers are compensated. These efforts aim to more closely align teacher pay with job-relevant knowledge and skills, teaching in fields with shortages, and working in harder-to-staff schools. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, The Teaching Commission, Public Agenda, the Progressive Policy Institute and an increasing number of business leaders are among the organizations/entities supporting the movement toward merit pay. An example of such efforts is the Denver City School System's four-year pilot program. The pilot resulted in a modified teacher pay scale that rewards performance and provides additional incentives for working in hard-to-staff schools. Early evidence indicates the pay incentives are effective in attracting high quality teachers to these schools. The Milken Family Foundation has also established the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) aimed at improving teacher quality. A core element of the program is performance-based compensation.

#### What's Next for Georgia?

While drastic changes to Georgia's teacher salary schedule may not be plausible, the state's investments in National Board Certification (NBC) may provide the perfect laboratory for examining the effectiveness of incentive based pay. Georgia has invested more than \$20 million to grow the number of National Board Certified teachers in the state. The two-tiered incentive structure<sup>2</sup> has yielded a NBC teachers' pool of 1,780 in Georgia placing it seventh among other states in total number of NBC teachers.<sup>3</sup> In 2004, a number of studies were released validating the positive impact of the credential on improving student achievement.<sup>4</sup> As policymakers explore ways to leverage the state's investment while curbing the growing costs of the program, tying the NBC 10 percent pay increase to teaching in a hard-to-staff school or in a shortage area may be an effective alternative.

<sup>1</sup> Ingersoll, R. "Why Do High-Poverty Schools Have Difficulty Staffing Their Classrooms with Qualified Teachers?" November 2004, Prepared for: Renewing Our Schools, Securing our Future – a National Task Force on Public Education.

<sup>2</sup> Georgia's incentives are: assistance with the \$2,300 application fee to encourage teachers to pursue the certification and an annual 10 percent salary increase to earn the credential.

<sup>3</sup> North Carolina (8,280), Florida (6,364), South Carolina (3,866), California (3,080), Ohio (2,374), and Mississippi (2,110) are the six states that precede Georgia.

<sup>4</sup> Among the studies are: L.G. Vandevort, A. Amerein-Beardsley, and D. Berliner, "National Board Certified Teachers and Their Students' Achievement." and D. Goldhaber and E. Anthony, "Can Teacher Quality Be Effectively Assessed?" All studies were independently conducted and can be accessed through the NBPTS website at [www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org).

Georgia's Committee on Quality Teaching (CQT), a collaborative including the Department of Education (DOE), Board of Regents (BOR), Professional Standards Commission (PSC), the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (OSA), Georgia's Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI), the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPEE) and BellSouth, will survey and produce analysis of working conditions for all of Georgia's 115,733 teacher workforce. The results of this survey will define Georgia's next steps to improve teacher quality.

# 2

## HIGH SCHOOL MATTERS

### Political Context

An investment in high schools is an investment in the not so distant future. It's no wonder then that high school completion rates, rigor of curriculum standards, and school culture will get their due in the educational spotlight in 2005. Already slated as a priority of the National Governors' Association,<sup>5</sup> the Southern Governors' Association will also turn their attention to high school reform. After releasing their fall report, "New Traditions: Options for Rural High School Excellence," expect governors of southern states to introduce new initiatives and agendas that focus on high school reform and increasing high school graduation rates. The President's proposal to require annual testing of reading and math in grades 9 through 11 will further influence discussions of high school reform.

### Policy Perspective

While Georgia's trend line on graduation rates is steadily moving upward, it still lags behind the nation and reflects significant gaps in completion rates when disaggregated by subgroup (poverty, race/ethnicity, limited English proficiency). Between 2002 and 2004 Georgia's overall graduation rate increased by almost four percentage points from 61.8 to 65.4 percent. White and Asian students graduate at rates higher than the state average. As a group, black students demonstrated the largest increase, improving five percentage points from 51.6 to 56.8 percent. However, Hispanic graduation rates only improved by one percentage point from 48.5 to 49.6 during the same period. Even with the small improvement, completion rates among Hispanic students are almost 16 percentage points below the state average.

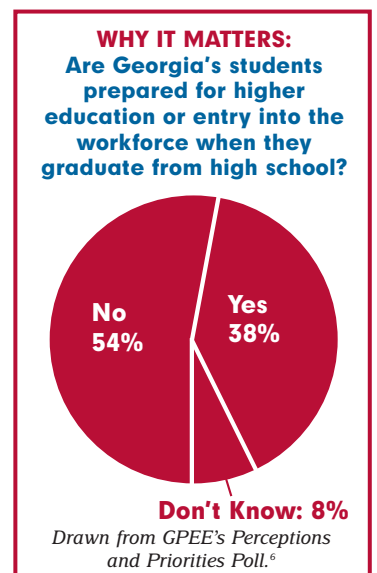
Among the research-informed high school reform strategies, three are most commonly cited: 1) providing all students with access to a rigorous curriculum including advanced placement courses; 2) decreasing the size of high schools (i.e. schools within a school); and 3) linking high schools with community colleges and technical schools. High school completion rates are a glimpse into the state's future. Here's why: non-high school graduates earn less in a lifetime than their counterparts who complete high school; the compounded costs to taxpayers of non-high school graduates are reflected in reduced buying power (loss of revenue for business owners), increased costs of government support (unemployment and other social services), and additional costs of importing a qualified workforce.

### What's Next for Georgia?

Governor Perdue has proposed a virtual high school that would expand access to advanced placement courses and ensure that students across the state have access to high quality teachers in key shortage areas (i.e. math and science). This effort aligns with research-based strategies to provide all students with access to a rigorous curriculum. The governor is also expected to launch a high school initiative in the early spring.

Bill and Melinda Gates' Early College High School (ECHS) initiative links high school and college curriculum allowing students to work toward their diploma while simultaneously receiving college credit. The schools have been recognized nationally for their success rates with students who otherwise would not have completed high school. Georgia's BOR and DOE have been granted funds to open a school in Georgia.

While a number of high school initiatives are in place or set to launch in 2005, there is still great potential for statewide high school reform. Georgia's greatest potential for creating large scale reform will rest largely on developing a coordinated effort to leverage all of its available resources, including engaging the business community and expanding options with the Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE).



# 3

## EARLY LEARNING MATTERS MOST

### Political Context

The Business Roundtable's growing interest in early learning is likely to continue to drive states' efforts to strengthen early learning programs. Recent reports released by the Economic Policy Institute and the Committee for Economic Development provide the supporting ammunition. These reports boast the economic benefits of early learning including higher verbal, math and intellectual achievement, higher graduation rates and better employment opportunities.<sup>7</sup> Florida is among several states that have recently passed legislation to create a universal pre-kindergarten program. Oklahoma strengthened its pre-kindergarten program by requiring teachers to hold a bachelor's degree.<sup>8</sup> Early Learning conversations are also likely to permeate Georgia's education policy discourse as Bright From the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning marks its first full year of operation and lays out its policy and programmatic agenda.

<sup>5</sup> Virginia's Governor Warner, chair of the National Governor's Association, has released a top ten list on Redesigning the American High School. This list is available at [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org).

<sup>6</sup> Poll respondents were asked "Are students in Georgia prepared for higher education or to enter the workforce when they graduate from public high school?" The data outlined above are from a representative sample of 801 respondents.

<sup>7</sup> Education Week, "Groups Link Preschool Education, Economic Growth." Nov. 2, 2004; Marianna Hurst

<sup>8</sup> Committee for Economic Development report is entitled "Developmental Education: The Value of High Quality Preschool Investments," Economic Policy Institute's report is entitled, "Exceptional Returns."

## Policy Perspective

Early learning is the first step on the journey to high school completion. A clear illustration of the economic and educational benefits of quality preschool programs is the “Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40.” This longitudinal study tracks low-income children who were randomly assigned to participate in a two-year preschool program and another group who received no preschool program. The educational results are clear and statistically significant with 65 percent of program participants completing high school while only 45 percent of non-program participants earned a high school diploma. The study also tracks earning, social service support, and arrests and criminal behavior. The cost-benefit analysis of the Perry Preschool program had an economic return of \$258,888 per participant for an investment of \$15,166 per child.

The National Institute for Early Education Research delineates five early learning policy challenges in their August edition of “Preschool Policy Matters.” Four of the five policy challenges are directed at state policies including: 1) coordination of federal and state programs; 2) broadening access to programs to address regional imbalances within a state; 3) developing strategies to broaden access for middle income families; and 4) improving quality as access is improved. Georgia has developed policy mechanisms to address coordination and access. The state’s next challenge is to continue to enhance the quality of programs for children birth to 5-years-old.

## What’s Next for Georgia?

Quality of early learning programs is largely a function of what is taught (curriculum/standards) and who teaches (teacher quality).

*What is taught (curriculum/standards):* In 2005, Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning will complete the development of voluntary early learning standards for children birth through 3-years-old. These standards will be aligned with the Pre-K standards, which are already linked to K-12 standards. This continuum for children from birth through high school will provide a clear definition of what Georgia’s children should know and be able to do.

*Who teaches (teacher quality):* Currently, Georgia’s Pre-K teachers are required to hold an associates degree for which a majority of DTAE institutions offer specialized programs in early care and education. Continuing to link such programs with changes in the curriculum and standards and providing relevant professional learning opportunities for Pre-K teachers may be Georgia’s most immediate opportunity to support and continue strengthening teacher quality. In 2004, the PSC approved a certificate for teachers working with children birth through age five, which will increase opportunities for them to improve their professional qualifications. Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning has begun working with DTAE and BOR to develop a seamless system of professional development for preschool teachers.

# 4

## THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL CHOICE

### Political Context

For three consecutive years, President Bush proposed a pilot voucher program that Congress failed to fund. However, with significant changes in Washington and the political capital garnered through this last presidential election, the voucher proposal could receive the requisite funding. Texas business leaders have also proposed expanding choice as the next logical step in the state’s education reform efforts. Outlined in a report to Governor Rick Perry, the Business Council’s proposal includes increasing the number of charter schools, introduction of vouchers and elimination of the current teacher salary system.<sup>9</sup>

Georgia’s General Assembly is expected to consider expanding choice. Legislative proposals may include: modifications to the state’s charter school law restoring the blanket exemption option and appropriating facility funds to support the HB 1190 per-pupil facility clause,<sup>10, 11</sup> providing home-school students with access to certain public school services and a pilot voucher program.

### Policy Perspective

Choice can be both an option among other traditional and non-traditional public (charter) schools or a broader option that includes providing public dollars to private or religious schools (vouchers).

*Charters* – Since the first charter school legislation was enacted in 1991,<sup>12</sup> the charter school movement has received bi-partisan support growing from only two schools in one state in 1992 to 2,695 schools operating in 36 states as of school year 2002-2003. In 2004, the findings of two studies were released that appeared to offer conflicting reports of charter schools’ impact on student achievement: the Policy and Program Studies Service “Evaluation of the Public Charter Schools Program” which was conducted on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) and the Harvard University study conducted by economist Caroline Hoxby, “Achievement in Charter Schools and Regular Public Schools: Understanding the Differences.” However, the U.S. DOE report only examined charter schools’ ability to meet states’ NCLB standards, and the study’s design did not allow for an evaluative comparison of traditional and charter schools.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, the Harvard study evaluated effectiveness using a matched sample in which charter schools were compared to demographically similar traditional public schools in the same community. In many cases, performance is measured against the performance of the school the student would have

**STATES WITH VOUCHER PROGRAMS**

**Colorado\***  
(State Supreme Court over-turned)

**Florida \***  
(Courts have ruled unconstitutional)

**Maine**

**Ohio\***

**Vermont**

**Wisconsin**

**Washington, D.C.**

\* State has a Blaine Amendment in its constitution

<sup>9</sup> Dallas Morning News, “Gov. Considers Education Overhaul” Nov. 17, 2004

<sup>10</sup> Currently, charter school applicants must identify specific state law, state board rules and/or local rules they would like to be exempted from and outline what will be accomplished by such exemptions.

<sup>11</sup> Charter schools are not covered under the State Department of Education’s Capital Outlay program. Facilities are among the key challenges charter schools.

<sup>12</sup> The first charter school legislation in the country was passed in Minnesota in 1991.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. DOE, “ Evaluation of Public Charter Schools: Final Report” 2004

otherwise attended in the absence of the charter. The study's results show that charter schools are especially likely to raise the achievement of students who are poor or Hispanic. It further suggests an even greater student proficiency advantage in states with strong charter school laws and comparable funding. Currently, 39 states have laws allowing charter schools but very few of those states provide funds for facilities.

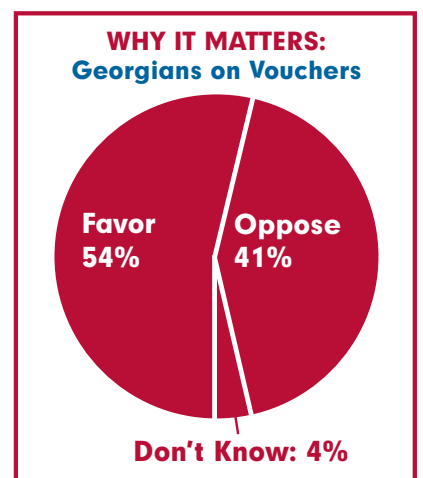
**Vouchers** – The concept of vouchers is not a new one, first introduced by economist Milton Friedman in 1955. Friedman argued that vouchers would introduce free-market competition in public education, eliminate its inefficiencies and yield greater results for students and families. The 1991 passage of public school choice (charter schools) ushered the voucher concept back into educational discourse in the U.S. and is seen by its proponents as the next logical step of choice. In the last 10 years, vouchers have garnered increased attention with the emergence of a number of state funded programs. The pivotal 2002 Supreme Court decision on the Cleveland voucher program (*Zelman v. Simmon-Harris*), which ruled that the government provision of funds to religious schools through a voucher program did not violate the standards of the separation of church and state, provided the greatest momentum in expanding the voucher movement. Currently, six states and the District of Columbia operate some type of voucher program. With only a few programs across the nation, the verdict is still out on how effective vouchers are at improving student achievement. The available research is mixed at best. A number of studies have been released supporting and opposing vouchers based on their impact at improving student achievement.<sup>14</sup>

### What's Next for Georgia?

**Charters** – During school year 2003-2004 there were 35 charter schools operating in Georgia. Of those, 11 were conversions, 23 were start-ups, and one was a state special school. Georgia's charter schools, like charter schools across the nation, are slightly more likely to serve minority students. However, unlike their national counterparts, there are fewer poor students in Georgia's charter schools. Georgia's Charter School law (O.C.G.A 20-2-2060) has undergone a number of revisions, one of which was the 2002 removal of a blanket exemption clause.<sup>15</sup> As such, the blanket exemption is not a new issue in Georgia. While the 2003-2004 General Assembly passed legislation to provide facilities for charter schools (HB 1190 Section 19C), there was no funding appropriated for that distinct purpose. As such, this issue is likely to resurface during the 2004-2005 session. Detailed information on the status of Georgia's charter schools is available in the Annual Report on Charter Schools released by the Department of Education. The report is available online at [www.doe.k12.ga.us/schools/charterschools/report\\_2004.asp](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/schools/charterschools/report_2004.asp).

**Vouchers** – Polling data from GPEE's Perceptions and Priorities: Public Opinion Regarding Georgia's Public Education System, suggests 54 percent of Georgians support the voucher concept. While proponents and opponents alike see Blaine amendments<sup>16</sup> as an obstacle to introducing a voucher program, three of the six states and the District of Columbia that have introduced voucher programs also had a Blaine amendment in their constitution (*see page 3 – States with Voucher Programs*). Georgia's Blaine amendment or plans for a constitutional amendment may not necessarily preclude the introduction and passage of voucher legislation. It's important to note that in all of the states with Blaine amendments, the passage of voucher legislation has also been followed by legal challenges.

**POLL QUESTION:**  
A proposal has been made that would allow parents to send their school-age children to any public, private or church related school they choose. For those parents choosing non-public schools, the government would pay all or part of the tuition. Would you favor or oppose this proposal?



# 5

## RETENTION STILL HAS A PLACE AT THE TABLE

### Political Context

Retention policies continue to gain national attention. Georgia also had its fair share of debate on the issue. After a heated 2003-2004 legislative session, which called into question students' readiness for the high stakes 3rd grade Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), the session ended with a decision to move forward on plans to end social promotion in the state. However, a last minute conference committee compromise included language requiring a study of the implementation of the retention law and authorized school systems to place students who failed the second assessment into a transition class or provide such students with extended early intervention services. As the state prepares for the second phase of the retention law, which places high stakes on the 5th grade CRCT, the study is likely to garner significant attention. Furthermore, funding to support the law's implementation will also be a part of the state's discussion as systems seek additional funds for summer remediation.

### Policy Perspective

Retention has become a popular, albeit politically intractable, policy option. Research suggests that if such policies are to be effective, then the states and school systems that implement them must take a systemic approach. Retention is far more than a "one moment in time" proposition. Research on the issue depicts significant long-term consequences. Retention increases a student's likelihood of not completing high school and these students are also likely to remain below standards even after being retained. However, this does not suggest that schools and systems should completely abandon the practice and promote students even when they have not mastered the content.

In its report, "Finding Alternatives to Failure: Can States End Social Promotion and Reduce Retention Rates," SREB outlines a coordinated approach that is more likely to achieve the results policymakers are seeking. Key elements of such an approach include early identification of at-risk students with targeted assistance to address academic

<sup>14</sup> Examples of reports/studies providing data in support and opposing vouchers respectively are "Reclaiming Education" by J. Tooley (2000) and "An Evaluation of the Cleveland Scholarship Program" by J. Green, P. Peterson and J. Du.

<sup>15</sup> The blanket exemption option allows charter schools to waive all elements of education law and rule except those related to civil rights, accountability and testing, and safety issues.

<sup>16</sup> Blaine Amendments are provisions in the constitutions of some states that prohibit the use of state funds for sectarian schools.

deficiencies, and additional instructional time through before and after-school tutoring. These efforts should be proactive in nature increasing students' opportunities to master content and meet standards on state assessments. Likewise, there must be efforts to support students who fail to meet standards. Simple retention is ineffective. As such, retention policies must include individualized instructional plans that focus on students' weaknesses instead of simply repeating the same instruction and content.

### **What's Next for Georgia?**

Language outlined in the last minute addendum to Georgia's Retention Policy was only effective for the 2003-2004 school year. However, the authorized transition class or extended EIP provide necessary additions that complete the state's effort to take a systemic approach to ending social promotion. It ensures that grade repeaters receive the necessary differentiated or individualized instruction that is likely to have a lasting impact on improving student achievement by broadening the available options. The findings from the study should support efforts to strengthen the state's retention law including identifying funding gaps that may minimize systems' ability to deliver coordinated services.

## **6**

### **THE NEW IDEA**

#### **Political Context**

After a year of anticipation, educators were largely resigned that the nation's primary special education law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) would not be reauthorized until the 109th Congress was in place. However, the law was quietly reauthorized with President Bush signing it into law on Dec. 3, 2004. While reauthorization occurred virtually unnoticed, expect extensive conversations across the country in 2005 as the U.S. Department of Education provides guidance to state education agencies on implementing the new law. Such conversations will inevitably examine funding levels, a core issue since the inception of the law, and IDEA modifications to the highly qualified definition for special education teachers.

#### **Policy Perspective**

IDEA governs the provision of education services for the nation's more than six million students with disabilities. First enacted in 1975, the law guarantees the right of such children to receive a free and appropriate education. A cornerstone of the program is its provision that educational services to students with disabilities are provided in the "least restrictive environment." This provision has become increasingly significant with requirements under the 1997 reauthorization to monitor the growing trend of disproportionate representation of minority students in special education programs. Research has shown that minority students are significantly more likely to be labeled special education and in such cases are also more likely than their counterparts to spend the majority of their school day outside a regular classroom. The 2004 reauthorization builds upon efforts to curb over-identification of minority students allowing systems to set aside 15 percent of their IDEA funds for early intervention services for over-represented minority groups.

The reauthorization provides additional latitude for school systems in dealing with discipline issues of students with disabilities. Under the new IDEA, a student may be removed from class if the incident does not stem from the student's disability. Currently, a school must hold an administrative hearing to remove the student.

Perhaps one of the most significant additions in the newly revised IDEA is a plan for a 15 state paperwork reduction pilot. Under this new clause, selected states would be allowed to develop three-year individualized education plans (IEP) for special education students. Currently, IEP must be developed each year for a student and if any changes are made to the plan the entire plan must be redrafted.

### **What's Next for Georgia?**

The changes to IDEA are likely to have significant implications for Georgia (12 percent of Georgia's student population is special education) and a number of Georgia's school districts have disproportionate numbers of minority students assigned to special education. The State Department of Education (SDOE) will be challenged to support districts in developing and implementing plans for early intervention among such groups. However, the new IDEA will provide a greater opportunity to better coordinate the state's existing programs (i.e. early identification program, English for Speakers of Other Languages and Instructional Extension) as a part of its effort to provide "comprehensive, coordinated, early intervention services."

## **7**

### **WHAT'S NEW? PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND THE SAT!**

#### **Political Context**

The development of Georgia's new curriculum, the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS), received national attention this past year leading to significant revisions of the math, science, and social studies content areas. The 2005-2006 school year will mark students' first year of instruction under the new English/Language Arts standards. Perhaps the SDOE's most significant undertaking, all eyes will be fixed on the implementation of the GPS as it will directly affect other important education indicators: high school completion rates, SAT scores and college completion rates.

The College Board, producers of the college admission's SAT, recommends a rigorous curriculum as the best preparation for the exam. Seniors across the nation will face a new SAT this spring. The new test will include a writing component, a renamed verbal section that no longer includes analogies and an expanded math section, which will now include Algebra II concepts, in addition to the Geometry and Algebra I components previously assessed. Viewed by the public as an unofficial indicator of the effectiveness of the nation's public schools to prepare students for college, educators and policymakers alike will closely monitor any significant shifts in student performance on the new test.

## Policy Perspective

*Curriculum* – A state’s curriculum is the cornerstone of the educational system outlining the minimum standards of what students are expected to know. A 2002 curriculum audit of Georgia’s Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) by Phi Delta Kappa and sponsored by GPEE confirmed what many educators and policymakers had long believed: the QCCs lack depth, are too broad and do not meet national standards. The audit by the nationally recognized group generated the mandate to overhaul the state’s curriculum framework.

Student performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), commonly referred to as the “Nation’s Report Card” because it provides the only national comparison of student performance, is largely attributable to the rigor of a state’s curriculum. In 2003, only 26 percent of Georgia’s 4th graders demonstrated proficiency or better on the reading component of NAEP compared to their performance on the CRCT where 80 percent of 4th graders demonstrated proficiency or above. Furthermore, other research suggests that rigor of curriculum is the single most influential factor in predicting college completion. Findings from the U.S. DOE study, *Answers in a Tool Box*, found that 73 percent of students exposed to a rigorous high school curriculum attained a bachelor’s degree compared to only three percent of students whose high school curriculum was ranked in the lowest quintile based on rigor. Curriculum matters!

**WHY IT MATTERS:**  
**Georgia’s SAT scores still fall below scores of states with high proportions of seniors taking the test.**

AVERAGE SCORE OF STATES WITH 50% OR MORE OF H.S. SENIORS TAKING THE SAT IN 2004		
	Participation Rate	Mean Verbal and Math Score
NY	87%	1007
CT	85%	1030
MA	85%	1041
NJ	83%	1015
NH	80%	1043
D.C.	77%	965
ME	76%	1006
PA	74%	1003
DE	73%	999
GA	73%	987
RI	72%	1005
VA	71%	1024
NC	70%	1006
MD	68%	1026
FLA	67%	998
VT	66%	1028
IN	64%	1007
SC	62%	986
HI	60%	1001
OR	56%	1055
AK	53%	1032
TX	52%	992
WA	52%	1059
<b>U.S. Avg.</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>1026</b>
<b>Avg. States with greater than 50% participation</b>		<b>1014</b>

*New SAT* – The changes to the SAT are arguably a result of concerns voiced by the University of California. The University system requires all students to take either the SAT or the ACT in addition to three SAT II subject area tests, two of which must include writing and math and a third subject of the student’s choosing. The University of California argued, supported by its research findings,<sup>17</sup> that the SAT II was a better measure of a student’s exposure to a rigorous curriculum and thus their likelihood to be successful in college. Furthermore, the SAT II with its subject matter focus was deemed a fairer assessment because it was less likely to be influenced by a student’s socio-economic background. The new SAT unsurprisingly reflects a greater focus on content knowledge with the addition of Algebra II concepts and a writing component.<sup>18</sup>

Increasingly more of Georgia’s high school seniors are taking the test with 73 percent in 2004 compared to 66 percent in 2003. While it is a fact that, on average, states with a large proportion of its seniors taking the assessment score beneath the U.S. average (*see Average Score Table*), the data suggest that participation rates alone do not fully explain Georgia’s performance. For example, while the U.S. average score was 1025, the average score of the 23 states with more than 50 percent of its seniors taking the test was 1014. However, Georgia’s score of 987 fell below the average of other states with high participation rates by more than 20 points. In fact, the state with the highest participation rate in the country, New York (87 percent), had an average score of 1007 compared to Georgia with a participation rate of 73 percent and a score of 987.

### What’s Next for Georgia?

*Curriculum* – The current schedule for rolling out the new GPS has final implementation concluding in school year 2008-2009. All stages of the high school components will be completed in 2007-2008. In the interim, it will be important to ensure that full funding is available at both the state and local levels to fund the massive training that is required to get teachers prepared to teach the new standards.<sup>19</sup>

It is unclear what the new SAT will mean for Georgia’s high school students. Students are likely to perform well on the new writing component given their experience with writing assessment as part of the state’s testing program in 8th grade and as part of the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHS GT). However, the introduction of Algebra II concepts may pose a challenge for the 73 percent of Georgia’s high school seniors who take the test. Currently, the state’s high school requirements

do not include an Algebra II course. The 2005 SAT results may renew discussions about high school course requirements and the state’s two-track diploma (college preparatory and vocational) system. Should all of Georgia’s students be required to take three years of mathematics, including Algebra II?

# 8

## MONEY, MONEY AND THE LACK OF MONEY

Three years of austere budgets and over \$300 million in cuts to the state’s education funding formula have school systems’ and educators’ attention focused on the restoration of budget cuts in 2005. Litigation filed by several rural school systems on the grounds that the state is not adequately funding education; the Governor’s Education Finance Task Forces’ efforts to craft a definition of educational excellence (and its costs) in Georgia; and legislation from the General Assembly proposing the introduction of a sales tax to provide additional revenue for education, all suggest there is unanimity on one issue: money, the lack of it, and the need for more. While there is no such agreement on how much is enough and where additional revenues should come from, everyone seems to agree when it pertains to education finance, the word of the year is MORE!

<sup>17</sup> Greiser, S. and R. Studley, “UC and the SAT: Predictive Validity and Differential Impact of the SAT I and SAT II at the University of California”

<sup>18</sup> GA DOE, “Improving SAT Scores in Georgia, No Short Cuts!” (Fall 2003)

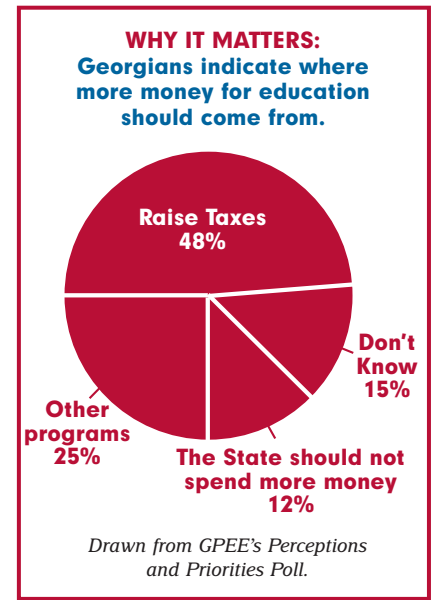
<sup>19</sup> More information on the development of the GPS and timeline is available at [www.georgiastandards.org](http://www.georgiastandards.org).

## Policy Perspective

Education finance's heavy reliance on property taxes has long been viewed as the primary contributor to the vast inequities between more affluent suburbs and their poorer urban and rural counterparts. Critics argue that rural and urban areas are at an inherent disadvantage. The net wealth of the property base is not sufficient to earn amounts comparable to suburban districts even when rural and urban communities are willing to tax themselves at higher rates. The property tax issue was used as leverage in equity litigation of the 1970s and 1980s. While the nature of education finance litigation has shifted from equity to adequacy, there are still significant rumblings about the use of property taxes.

California's historical Proposition 13 (1978) serves as a case study in the unintended consequences that can result when drastic changes are made to property tax assessments. Facing its own economic crises in the late 1970s with many Californians being forced to sell their homes due to the increasing property tax rate, California voters acted on a proposal to cap property tax assessments. The byproduct was a significant reduction in the revenue available to support public schools, libraries and other services of municipal governments. The long-term effects are clear as California went from one of the nation's best public school systems to performing at the bottom.

Georgia's Equalization grants intend to minimize the disparities that result from the varying property values across the state by providing a base level of funds to all systems. The grants are calculated based on a formula that ranks all systems according to their assessed valuation (total amount of eligible property tax) per student. Every system that falls below the 75th percentile of that ranking receives an Equalization grant, which provides funds based on the community's willingness to tax itself. As such, even if a poor system does not earn very much per mil, but is willing to tax itself, then the state will provide a grant for every mil that is above the five mil required of all school systems.<sup>20</sup>



GEORGIA BY THE NUMBERS				
Data drawn from the National Education Association's "Rankings and Estimates: A Report of School Statistics."				
	Rank 2003	Rank 2004	2003 data	2004 data
<b>Average Teacher Salary</b>				
Georgia	15	16	\$45,533	\$45,938
U.S. average			\$45,810	\$46,726
<b>Enrollment</b>				
Georgia	9	9	1,496,012	1,522,611
U.S. Average			n/a	n/a
<b>Class Size</b>				
Georgia	20	19	15.6	15.7
U.S. Average			15.7	15.7
<b>Expenditures Per Student</b>				
Georgia	19	19	\$8,336	\$8,703
U.S. Average			\$7,920	\$8,208

The next stage of education finance is largely being driven in the nation's courts. As school systems face higher standards and accountability, many across the country have challenged their state's constitutional responsibility of providing an "adequate education." In such cases, systems argue that state funds are inadequate to accomplish the job, especially with the expectations of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Approximately 24 states (including Georgia) have active litigation on the grounds of adequacy. Since 1989, two-thirds of plaintiffs have won these cases.<sup>21</sup>

## What's Next for Georgia?

The Governor's Education Finance Task Force is largely charged with redefining the necessary inputs to achieve educational excellence in Georgia. This effort will inevitably involve a costing study that will define the parameters of the state's next funding formula. The task force's work is unlikely to restructure the formula until school year 2006-2007. In the interim, it will be

important for the state to identify ways to restore formula budget reductions. While the state's economic picture appears to be improving, the General Assembly will be challenged to identify new revenue sources to fund the increasing cost of education. However, the extent to which such efforts include significant changes to property tax assessments should be approached with caution. A change to relying solely on sales tax would produce a much less predictable revenue source upon which to budget teacher salaries and successful programs. Any such changes that occur in the absence of a broader examination of Georgia's tax structure can lead to significant unintended consequences.

# 9

## ADDRESSING THE "B" IN NCLB – AMERICA AND GEORGIA'S ACHIEVEMENT GAP

### Political Context

Nationally, there has been marked progress for states at decreasing the number of schools on their state's "Needs Improvement" list. This is the list schools are placed on when they fail to meet their state's standards under NCLB for all subgroups. However, any gains that states made as the result of technical changes in their NCLB plan were exhausted with the determinations based on student performance from school year 2003-2004. As many states face significantly higher achievement targets, the determinations made for school year 2004-2005 will likely bring to the forefront the issue that is central to No Child Left Behind, the nation's achievement gap. Conversations are likely to return to issues of funding and identifying best practices and professional development to help school systems achieve a feat heretofore never accomplished.

### Policy Perspective

The National Education Assessment Program (NAEP) clearly establishes and defines the nature and magnitude of the national achievement gap between white students and their black and Hispanic counterparts. The public schools of Georgia educate the fourth largest number of African-American males nationwide. Moreover, the state hosts one of the fastest growing Hispanic populations. These demographic shifts alone suggest that any conversation about meeting adequate yearly progress and improving student achievement must deliberately include addressing the achievement gaps.

<sup>20</sup> Moore, Stephen. "Proposition 13 Then, Now and Forever" July 30, 1998 Cato Institute

<sup>21</sup> Data on adequacy litigation is drawn from the website of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity/Access.

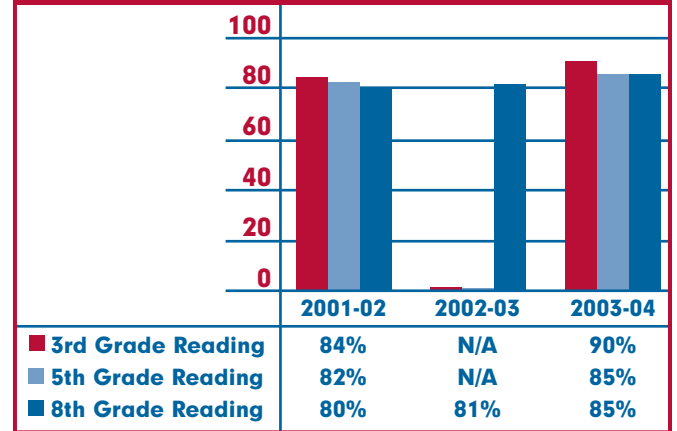
## WHY IT MATTERS

- ▶ Georgia has the second fastest growing foreign born population in the country (primarily Hispanic).
- ▶ Georgia educates the fourth largest number of black males in the nation.

Interesting trends are emerging as one analyzes Georgia's CRCT scores in the gateway<sup>23</sup> grades of 3rd, 5th and 8th grades. The gaps between white students and their black and Hispanic counterparts are significant. Such gaps are most pronounced for Hispanic students. For instance, on the 2004 CRCT the gap between white and Hispanic students was a 14 percentage point differential. The gap increases in the higher grades to 20 percentage points in 5th grade and 31 percentage points in 8th grade.

There are some positives in Georgia's data. The CRCT performance of black 3rd grade students showed a 10 percentage point increase in 2004 compared to their performance in 2002. This increase was proportionately more than the three percent increase of white students during this period. If progress continues at this rate, the 3rd grade achievement gap between white and black students could close in 2006.

## CRCT PERFORMANCE AT THE GATEWAY: 3rd, 5th and 8th Grade CRCT scores in Reading



## STUDENTS MEETING OR EXCEEDING STANDARDS ON GEORGIA'S CRCT Disaggregated Student Performance at the Gateways: 3rd, 5th and 8th Grade CRCT Reading Scores

	3rd Grade CRCT (2002)	3rd Grade CRCT (2004)	5th Grade CRCT (2002)	5th Grade CRCT (2004)	8th Grade CRCT (2003)	8th Grade CRCT (2004)
White	90%	94%	90%	91%	88%	91%
Black	77%	87%	77%	79%	73%	79%
Hispanic	72%	80%	67%	71%	65%	69%
Asian	91%	95%	91%	91%	88%	91%

### What's Next for Georgia?

With specific attention given to the achievement gaps, Georgia has the tools that research recommends are critical to addressing the gap: additional learning time (Instructional Extension – 20 additional days), early identification of academic weaknesses (Early Intervention Program). The challenge Georgia faces is effectively coordinating those resources for the distinct purpose of addressing the gaps and examining the extent to which other variables affect the state's achievement gaps including disproportionate numbers of minority students identified for special education and discipline actions.

# 10

## ACHIEVEMENT GAP GOES TO COLLEGE

### Political Context

Georgia's HOPE Scholarship debate, which filtered into the 2003-2004 legislative session, foreshadowed an issue that is garnering increased national attention – college completion rates. The issue is only likely to gain momentum with Congress expected to reauthorize the Higher Education Act and national organizations like Education Trust turning its attention to the gap in college completion rates. States have already begun to launch initiatives to address disparities in completion rates including Texas' Education-Go-Get-It campaign, which also focuses attention on achieving balance in completion rates among minority groups.

### Policy Perspective

Education Trust, the nation's leading organization when it comes to addressing the achievement gaps, has added a focus on college completion rates. According to data from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (1975-2001), workers with at least a bachelor's degree earn twice as much as their counterparts with only a high school diploma. This issue is further compounded by the changing face of the nation's economy that requires an educated workforce. While attendance rates are improving, completion rates show the same disparities that are observed in K-12 achievement. While 63 percent of all college freshman graduate, that rate drops to 54 percent for low-income students, 46 percent for black students and 47 percent for Hispanic students. Among Ed Trust's recommendations on how states can begin addressing this issue are: 1) Improving alignment between K-12 and higher education; and 2) Continuing to improve access and affordability.<sup>23</sup>

### What's Next for Georgia?

Georgia's Education-Go-Get-It initiative, patterned after the Texas program and pioneered by the Board of Regents, is set to launch in early 2005. The initiative will draw increased attention to college completion rates in Georgia. As the state revisits future changes to HOPE, Georgia's completion rate and factors contributing to the disparity in rates should inform those discussions.

<sup>23</sup> Carey, Kevin., "A Matter of Degrees: Improving Graduation Rates in Four-Year Colleges and Universities," Ed Trust (May 2004)

For more information, contact:



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