GEORGIA PARTNERSHIP FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Top Ten Issues TO WATCH IN 2006

We are proud and pleased to present the second installment of our annual publication, Top 10 Issues to Watch 2006. We hope you find this latest version even more informative. We have continued the three-tiered approach offering the political context that will contribute to the public visibility of the issue in 2006, the policy perspective which provides insight on what other states are doing and how research undergirds emerging or best practices. Finally, in the third tier, we highlight what's next for Georgia. We have given greater consideration to not only what the state is currently doing but also what the state should be doing to strengthen outcomes in the respective areas. All 10 issues are important to improving educational outcomes in our state but given the clear and urgent link between our nation's and state's economic competitiveness and vitality to strengthening education from prekindergarten through college, there is a clear theme, ***Education is Economic Development.*** *If Georgia is to realize the benefits of that relationship then our work in education must continue to be systemic in nature. The addition of each new program or initiative must be weighed against the value it adds to improving student achievement and its alignment with the state's overall education reform agenda.* – Stephen Dolinger, President

1 EDUCATION IN A FLATTER WORLD

POLITICAL CONTEXT

In July 2005, 15 of America's most prominent business organizations jointly released *Tapping America's Potential: The Education for Innovation Initiative,* a report outlining an aggressive blueprint for federal, state, and business engagement to double the number of science, technology, engineering and mathematics graduates with bachelor's degrees by 2015.[1] As if to exemplify the report's rationale, Toyota announced plans to open a factory in Canada after turning down hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidies offered by several American states, indicating that those subsidies would be exhausted by the increased cost of training low-skilled American workers. The not so subtle message: *Education is economic development!* If America intends to maintain its economic and global advantage, then America's children must be educated in schools that ensure their "world-readiness."

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has launched its Business Education Network (BEN), a coalition of businesses, educators, and education service providers dedicated to advancing the global competitiveness of the U.S. education system and the success of future generations of Americans. State leaders are following suit, examining the implications of current educational trends on their state's economic futures. Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell has called together a coalition of business, policy and education leaders to craft an aggressive plan to strengthen student achievement in mathematics and science. Despite posting some of the highest scores in the nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Connecticut also has one of the widest achievement gaps. Black students are performing below the national subgroup average on the national assessment. By 2015, 40 percent of the state's workforce will come from its poorest cities. Those communities also have the highest concentration of minority students with significantly lower scores in mathematics and science and higher dropout rates. The state recognizes its economic future rests on how well it improves outcomes for these groups. Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Massachusetts, Maryland, and New Mexico have also announced plans to hold meetings before spring 2006.[2] Expect mathematics, science, and the role of education as an engine of economic development to gain increased attention and momentum across the nation in 2006.

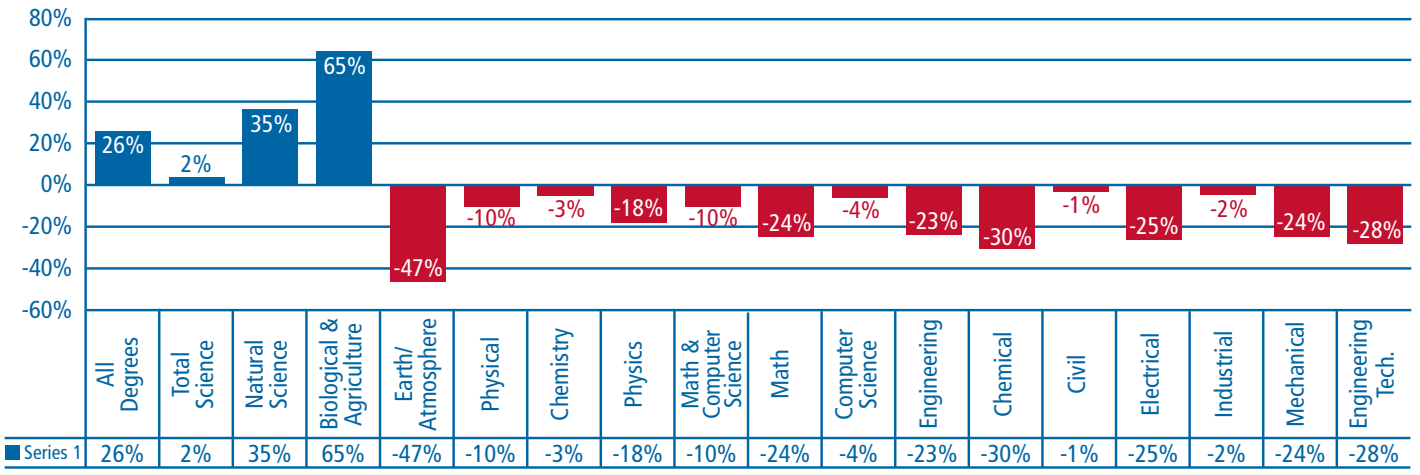
POLICY PERSPECTIVE

In 1982, "A Nation at Risk" painted a picture of a changing world in which America's children would be outperformed by their international counterparts. If America intended to maintain its competitive advantage, the report argued, the nation's schools had to do a better job. Fast-forward to 2005. The U.S. National Security Commission's report, Thomas Friedman's, *The World is Flat* and numerous other reports have all issued comparable impact statements. But

[1] "Tapping America's Potential: The Education for Innovation Initiative" is a joint project of AeA, the Business Roundtable, Business-Higher Education Forum, Computer Systems Policy Project, Council on Competitiveness, Information Technology Association of America, Information Technology Industry Council, Minority Business Roundtable, National Association of Manufacturers, National Defense Industrial Association, Semiconductor Industry Association, Software & Information Industry Association, TechNet, Telecommunications Industry Association and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

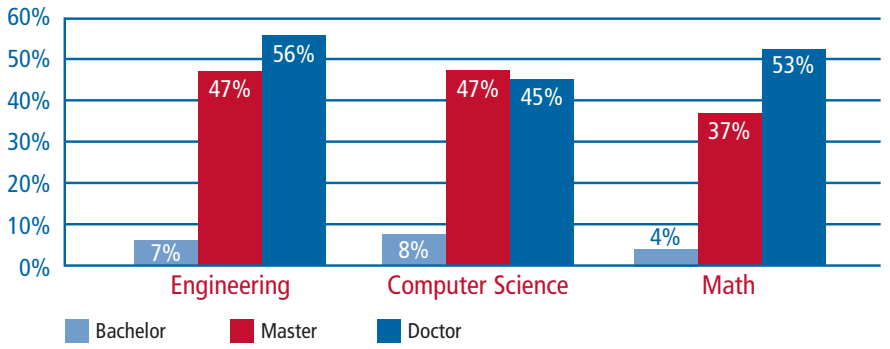
[2] Fraham, Robert, "Alarms Sounded on Math, Science Needs," Oct. 27, 2005, www.Courant.com.

CHART 1a: Brain Gain or Brain Drain?
Percent Change in Earned U.S. Bachelor's Degrees in Science and Engineering Fields from 1985 to 2000



Source: National Science Foundation/Drawn from Committee of Economic Development report, "Learning for the Future: Changing the Culture of Math and Science Education to Ensure a Competitive Workforce," 2003

CHART 1b: Percent of U.S. Degrees Awarded to Foreign Nationals



Source: U.S. Department of Education/Drawn from AEA report, "Losing the Competitive Advantage: The Challenge for Science and Technology in the United States," 2005

23 years after "A Nation at Risk," America still stands as the world's premier economic and political power. Do these dire predictions on the long-term consequences of under-investment and under-performance in mathematics and science amount to a crisis of Chicken Little proportions or is America truly at risk?

As the world flattens, international comparisons take on heightened value in what they tell us about world-readiness. The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) illustrate how U.S. students compare to their international counterparts at each of the key stages of K-12 (elementary, middle and high school).[3,4] TIMSS data reflect performance of a representative sample of fourth and eighth grade students from each of the participating countries. PISA measures educational progress at the point nearest the end of compulsory schooling with 15-year-olds as the target population.

Among the 15 countries that participated in TIMSS since 1995, U.S. fourth graders posted a scale score of 518 on the 1995 mathematics component, giving the U.S. the sixth highest score. In absolute terms, United States fourth-graders have shown no measurable change in scale score on the mathematics assessment between 1995 and 2003. However, in relative terms, the U.S. is losing ground. U.S. fourth graders were only outperformed by four countries (Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, Netherlands) in 1995 with scores similar to one country (Hungary). When compared to the same peer group in 2003, peers in seven countries outperformed U.S. fourth graders *(see Table A)*.

Eighth-graders' performance on the science component of TIMSS has been more promising over the eight-year period *(see Table B)* showing absolute and relative progress. In 1995, nine countries outperformed the U.S., by 2003 the U.S. had gained ground and was led by only five countries. The average scale score for U.S. students increased by 14 points from 513 to 527, even as scores of the leading international science performer, Singapore, remained virtually unchanged.

Performance on the PISA assessment is particularly informative as it provides an international comparison of how American students are performing at the end of compulsory attendance age.[5] U.S. student performance compared to the other 27 participating OECD countries is somewhat disappointing. Although the U.S. scores in both mathematics (493) and science (499) are at the OECD average (500 in both mathematics and science), America is outperformed by eight countries in mathematics (Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Finland, Australia, Canada, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom) and seven countries in science (Korea, Japan, Finland, United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand and Australia).

TABLE A: Average Mathematics Scale Scores of Fourth-Grade Students, by Country: 1995 and 2003

Country	1995	Country	2003
Singapore	590	Singapore	594
Japan	567	Hong Kong SAR	475
Hong Kong SAR	557	Japan	565
Netherlands	549	Netherlands	540
Hungary	521	Latvia-LSS	533
United States	518	England	531
Latvia-LSS	499	Hungary	529
Australia	495	United States	518
Scotland	493	Cyprus	510
England	484	Australia	510
Norway	476	New Zealand	499
Cyprus	475	Scotland	496
New Zealand	469	Slovenia	490
Slovenia	462	Norway	479
Iran, Islamic Republic	387	Iran, Islamic Republic	451

Average is higher than the U.S. average
Average is not measurably different from the U.S. average
Average is lower than the U.S.

Drawn from NCES report, "Highlights for the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study," 2003

[3] Trends in International Mathematics and Science is conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Education. The assessment has been administered in 1995, 1999, 2003 and another assessment is expected in 2007. TIMSS, formerly known as the Third International Math and Science Study, is the third iteration of international assessments to track educational achievement over time and across countries. The assessment is administered to a representative sample of fourth and eighth-graders in each of the participating countries. Between 1995 and 2003, the number of countries participating in both assessments has increased from 15 to 25 on the fourth grade assessment and from 22 to 25 countries on the eighth-grade assessment. More information on TIMSS can be obtained at www.isc.bc.edu.

[4] PISA is administered by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an intergovernmental organization of 30 industrialized nations that serves as a forum for member countries to cooperate in research and policy development on social and economic topics. PISA domains include reading, mathematics, and science literacy. Each cycle includes a more detailed look at a specific domain (i.e. 2000 focused on reading literacy). More information on PISA can be obtained at www.pisa.oecd.org or http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa.

[5] NCES, "Outcomes of Learning: Results from the 2000 Program for International Student Assessment of 15-Year-Olds in Reading, Mathematics, and Science Literacy," December 2001.

TABLE B: Average Science Scale Scores of Eighth Grade Students, By Country: 1995 and 2003

Country	1995	Country	2003
Singapore	580	Singapore	578
Japan	554	Korea, Republic of	558
Sweden	553	Hong Kong SAR	556
Korea, Republic of	546	Japan	552
Bulgaria	545	Hungary	543
Netherlands	541	Netherlands	536
Hungary	537	United States	527
Belgium-Flemish	533	Australia	527
Slovak Republic	532	Sweden	524
Russian Federation	523	Slovenia	520
Norway	514	New Zealand	520
Australia	514	Lithuania	519
Slovenia	514	Slovak Republic	517
United States	513	Belgium-Flemish	516
New Zealand	511	Russian Federation	514
Hong Kong SAR	510	Latvia-LSS	513
Scotland	501	Scotland	512
Latvia-LSS	476	Norway	494
Romania	471	Bulgaria	579
Lithuania	464	Romania	570
Iran, Islamic Republic	463	Iran, Islamic Republic	453
Cyprus	452	Cyprus	441

Average is higher than the U.S. average

Average is not measurably different from the U.S. average

Average is lower than the U.S.

Drawn from NCES report, "Highlights from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study," 2003

Three conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of these data: 1) Students from other countries are becoming increasingly competitive; 2) American students' performance varies by age-level over time from stagnant over an eight year period to posting gains even while peers in other higher-performing countries show declines; 3) All is not lost, American students are still competitive in mathematics and science, but the nation must increase its investments in these areas in order to maintain and gain ground.

Stakeholders from various sectors (business, science, technology and education) have weighed in with reports on the importance of this issue. The reports include recommendations on U.S. investment in research and development (R&D), and changes in immigration policy.[6] All highlight specific changes that must be made in K-12 and agree that these recommendations are critical in helping to mitigate the nation's mathematics and science slippage:

- Strengthen the quality of mathematics and science teachers by making systemic investments in all facets of teacher development from strengthening preparation programs to strengthening retention by providing quality professional development that addresses any gaps in teachers' content knowledge. Promote market and performance-based pay incentives to recruit and retain effective science and mathematics teachers.
- Strengthen mathematics and science curriculum that engages students in higher order thinking skills with direct applicability to real world science and engineering experiences. Increase access to advanced mathematics and science courses at the high school level (employing distant learning or post-secondary options when such courses are not available at the middle or high school). Several reports have called for greater involvement by the business community in this effort to ensure the integration of state of the art applications and ensure there is linkage to the every day work of scientists and engineers.
- Stimulate greater interest in mathematics, science, technology and engineering careers among adults and children by promoting extracurricular mathematics and science activities with specific attention given to programs for minority students.

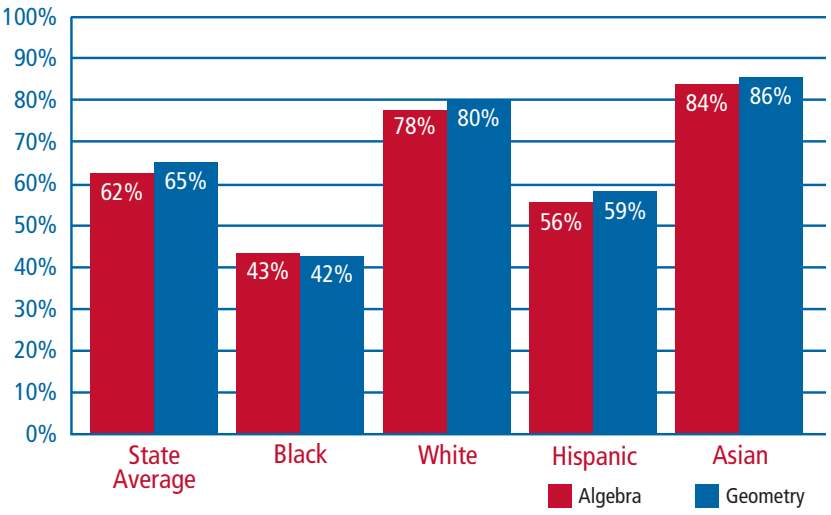
WHAT'S NEXT FOR GEORGIA?

Economic development's linkage to education is as important for Georgia as it is for the nation. Data from the Georgia Department of Labor and student performance on state assessments in mathematics and science underscore the importance and relevance of the issue. Short-term projections delineating the industries with the most annual openings finds professional scientific and technical services as the fifth highest among 100 industries.[7] Furthermore, data distinguishing only those jobs that are expected to have fast growth, above average salary, and at least 100 annual openings by 2012 highlight few jobs that do not occasionally or frequently require mathematics or science skills.

State leaders have already recognized and begun work to address weaknesses in science. In 2006, 16 science specialists will begin their work in earnest. The specialists are the result of a $2 million budget request by State School Superintendent Kathy Cox for specific funds to address the content knowledge gaps exposed in student scores on the state's high school graduation test. The specialists will work in partnership with the 16 Regional Education Service Agencies (RESA), school improvement personnel and curriculum specialists to support the rollout of the new Georgia Performance Standards. The urgency of addressing weaknesses in science has also resulted in revisions in the science component of the Georgia Performance Standards that will be rolled out to high school students beginning school year 2006-2007.

Recognition of the state's weaknesses in mathematics is just beginning to surface with concerns articulated by the State Superintendent about the pace of mathematics gains on the SAT. An examination of mathematics scores on the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT) compared to end-of-course tests (EOCT) suggests significantly different outcomes. While only eight percent of GHSGT first-time test-takers failed the mathematics component, almost 40 percent of students taking Algebra I failed the

CHART 2: 2004-2005 EOCT Passage Rates in Algebra and Geometry



THINGS GEORGIA CAN AND MUST DO

1. The state must determine if there is merit in the on-going debate about reducing class size in high school level science courses. Will smaller classes in math and science have any impact on student achievement? The state must decisively answer and address this question.
2. Business and higher education must expand extracurricular math and science programs to provide greater access to real-life science and math experiences for all students. Specific focus should be given to increasing programs targeting black and Hispanic populations.
3. The state must quantify the implications of weaknesses in the math and science pipeline and its impact on state economic development. The state should look to recommendations and strategies published by the Business Roundtable in developing a comprehensive strategy for strengthening math and science achievement. *(See recommendations outlined in Policy Perspective)*

[6] Recommendations are a synthesis of recommendations from the following reports: "Keeping America Competitive: Five Strategies to Improve Mathematics and Science Education" released by Education Commission of the States; "Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change," by the U.S. Commission on National Security; "Losing the Competitive Advantage," by AeA; "Before It's Too Late," by the National Commission on Mathematics and Science Teaching for the 21st Century; and "Learning for the Future," by the Committeee for Economic Development.

[7] Chart is available at www.dol.state.ga.us

assessment. Similarly, 35 percent of students who took geometry in 2004-2005 did not pass the EOCT. Black and Hispanic students posted lower passage rates, slightly more than 40 percent of all black students taking algebra and geometry passed the assessments *(See Chart 2: EOCT Passage Rates)*.

There are a number of efforts underway that can mitigate weaknesses in the state's mathematics and science pipeline including the Virtual School which is already expanding access to rigorous coursework, the continued rollout of the Georgia Performance Standards, and the University System (P-16) and Department of Education (DOE) PRISM Partnership to strengthen mathematics and science instruction through quality professional development. Georgia was selected as the first state to receive funds from the National Science Foundation for a public service campaign. In late January, the PRISM Math + Science = Success Marketing Campaign will be launched in a select number of communities. The promising campaign targets parents encouraging them to challenge their children to take higher-level mathematics and science courses. Additionally, the business community has also staked its investment in this area. IBM announced a partnership with 15 Georgia colleges and universities to develop advanced technology skills among students.

The state's next phase of work must ensure that these efforts are aligned and provide a coordinated approach to strengthening the mathematics and science pipeline (K-12) as Georgia strives to produce graduates that are world-ready. See also "Things Georgia Can and Must Do" (previous page) for other important state considerations.

2 DECIDING THE DESTINY OF GEORGIA DEMOGRAPHY?

POLITICAL CONTEXT

A debate expected to be the centerpiece of partisan politics at the state capitol during the 2006 legislative session is likely to raise questions about how Georgia intends to plan for its fast-growing and increasingly diverse population. While immigration policy has largely been relegated to the nation's capitol, states with significant immigrant populations (California, Florida, Texas) have long navigated the thin line between federal and state jurisdictions, particularly when it's had implications for state coffers. Two senate bills lay the terms of the debate on the extent to which immigrants who have resided in Georgia at least 12 months would be allowed to pay in-state tuition at the state's public colleges and universities. The debate may extend to undocumented immigrants' ability to access other public services. Nine states already have such policies in place.[8] Several others including Massachusetts are expected to debate the issue in the 2006 legislative session.[9]

Planning for the Future: Georgia of 2015

- By 2015, one-third of Georgians will be under 20 years of age. About half of this age group will be Hispanic, African American or other minorities.
- By 2015, half of the population will be of workforce age, 41 percent of that population will be black and Hispanic.
- By 2015, only New York will have a significantly larger African American population than Georgia.
- By 2015, Georgia's Hispanic population is expected to grow another 143 percent.

* Data drawn from Office of Planning and Budget, "Georgia 2015 Population Projections (2005)"

POLICY PERSPECTIVE

The 21st century South has largely redefined itself, creating greater economic opportunities for its residents and reversing the out-migration patterns that had been observed in the early 20th century. The new South is burgeoning with unprecedented diversity, including an explosive influx of foreign-born Hispanics. This new population, the speed of its growth, and distinct settlement patterns converge to create a slightly complex set of issues for six southern states – Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee *(see Table C: Hispanic Population Change)*.[10]

The immigration debate that will play itself out in the General Assembly may be the first of many such debates as the state begins to consider the public policy implications of its changing demographics. It is important to consider the nature of the growth, who are represented among the immigrant population and what are the economic, political and educational implications of this new demographic. An examination of population projections, and demographic attributes (employment patterns, median income, educational level and ability to speak English) provide a framework for considering the potential demands.

While traditional settlement states have maintained the largest number of Hispanic immigrants, the six southern states that comprise what researchers are calling, the New Latino South, lead the nation in the fastest growth among Hispanics since 1990. Georgia leads the six states in the total number of Hispanics, having tripled its population since 1990.

This new group of Latinos has bucked traditional family reunification patterns, migrating to the South primarily to take advantage of employment opportunities in the construction, manufacturing and poultry industries.[11] The South became the region of preference during the late 1990s because even while manufacturing jobs were decreasing in other areas of the country, the Southeast showed a 10 percent increase in such jobs. Even within the Southeast, Latinos' population growth has been concentrated within a select group of counties, again determined primarily by job opportunities. For example, Latino population

TABLE C: Hispanic Population Change In Traditional Settlement States and Six Southern States, 1990-2000

	Number of Hispanics 1990	Number of Hispanics 2000	Change (%)
Six Southern States	**293,445**	**11,958,000**	**308**
North Carolina	76,726	378,963	394
Arkansas	19,876	86,666	337
Georgia	108,922	435,227	300
Tennessee	32,741	123,838	278
South Carolina	30,551	95,076	211
Alabama	24,629	75,830	208
Traditional Settlement States	**11,546,271**	**16,481,592**	**43**
California	7,687,938	10,966,556	43
New York	2,214,026	2,867,583	30
Illinois	904,446	1,530,262	69
New Jersey	739,861	1,117,191	51

Data Drawn from Pew Hispanic Center, "The New Latino South: Context and Consequences for Rapid Growth"

[8] The nine states are: New York, Illinois, California, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, New Mexico, Kansas and Washington.

[9] "Undocumented Students Can't Receive Government Financial Aid," Dec. 21, 2005, www.Boston.com.

[10] Pew Hispanic Center, "The New Latino South: the Context and Consequences of Rapid Population Growth," July 2005.

[11] Ibid.

growth in metropolitan areas has been the by-product of growth in the service and financial industries which created a boom in real estate development and thus more jobs in construction. Growth of Georgia's Hispanic population has concentrated in 10 counties – Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, Gordon, Gwinnett, Hall, Murray, and Whitfield.[12]

Hispanic immigrants to the Southeast differ significantly from their national counterparts. They are more likely to be foreign born (57 percent) than their Hispanic counterparts nationwide (41 percent). Southern Latinos are younger with a median age of 27 compared to a median age of 33 among Hispanics nationally. Even though Hispanics immigrate to the South for job opportunities, they earn less than their national counterparts and less than their black and white counterparts working in comparable industries. The median annual income for Southern Hispanics was $16,000 compared to $18,000 among Hispanics nationally. Furthermore, while the percentage of Hispanics in poverty decreased nationally, the percentage of Hispanics living in poverty in the South climbed by six percentage points between 1990 and 2000.[13]

The disparate settlement patterns may further complicate state-level policymaking as the immediate benefits and burdens of Georgia's new Hispanic populations are borne by a select group of communities. School districts serving the 10 most impacted Georgia counties have been challenged to build a supporting infrastructure including staffing district level English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) specialists, providing professional development to teachers and establishing efforts to better engage parents who are not familiar with American schools. A report from the Tomas Rivera Institute, "The New Latino South and the Challenge to Public Education," suggests that decision-making at the state level lags slightly behind the reality of fast-growth Hispanic communities.

Although changing demographics have had the most immediate impact on public schools, there are other important considerations for the public and private sectors including the provision and costs of health care, social services and the long-term implications for state economic development efforts. By 2015, 41 percent of Georgia's workforce will be black and Hispanic. The state's economic vitality will be determined by how well the state has educated these populations and what mechanisms are in place to assure their contributions as thriving productive Georgia residents.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR GEORGIA?

Recognizing the foundation of its future, former Mississippi Governor William Winter offered these words, *"The line that separates the well-educated from the poorly educated is the harshest fault line of all. This is where we must begin. We must get the message out to every household and especially every poor household that the only road out of poverty runs by the schoolhouse."* Those prolific words are even more relevant today than perhaps at any other time in state or national history. Our futures are inextricably linked. If Georgia is to prosper in the knowledge-driven global economy of the 21st century, then the state must also produce higher educational achievement among all of its residents.

Georgia must plan for a very different future. The economic development implications of Georgia's increased diversity require a strategic discussion of how to create a new vision for the state's economic future, a future that will rely on the skills and knowledge of a workforce that will be 41 percent black or Hispanic by 2015 and over 50 percent of the workforce by 2025. These populations are currently performing on the lowest rungs of educational achievement based on state and national assessments. Furthermore, higher education decisions should not be considered in a vacuum. The state must consider and determine what is in the state's best economic interest as it relates to access for undocumented immigrants. As it does so, it may be useful to explore the experiences of traditional settlement states. Of the four traditional settlement states among Latino immigrants only New Jersey does not have a policy that provides in-state tuition to undocumented immigrants. The issues are difficult and politically divisive, but they must be examined and answered in short order.

3 THE MATTER OF THE MIDDLE

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Junior high, middle school or K-8? As a nation, the U.S. has explored many different school configurations to better address the needs of our nation's 12–14-year-olds, but strengthening academic performance for this age group remains elusive. The nation's focus on high schools brings us back to the middle answering the key question on how to improve educational outcomes for young adolescents and how to better prepare middle school students for a strong transition into high school.

In 2006, three factors are likely to usher this issue to the forefront: 1) State Superintendent Kathy Cox and the State Board of Education have acknowledged the need to provide stronger structural supports for middle school students, requesting $3.8 million for that purpose. The budget recommendation comes on the legs of troubling performance by the state's eighth graders who will face the third gateway in the state's promotion and retention policy. If the policy had been in place for the 2004-2005 eighth grade students, approximately 31 percent of them may have faced retention based solely on performance on the CRCT mathematics component. 2) The release of state NAEP scores has drawn national attention to the issue of adolescent literacy as eighth grade reading scores reflected stagnant performance. The National Governors Association (NGA), the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) and a number of other national organizations are urging states to give critical attention to the issue. 3) National leaders who have their eyes fixed on strengthening the mathematics and science pipeline will also likely turn to middle grades. The National Science Board suggests that critical decisions about pursuing higher level mathematics and science courses in high school or majoring in related fields are determined based on student performance and interest in mathematics and science during the middle years.[14]

POLICY PERSPECTIVE

Providing relevant instruction for adolescents has proven a somewhat daunting task since the beginning of American public education. Junior high schools (7th-9th grades) emerged in the early 20th century to facilitate a smoother transition from elementary school to the high school experience. The shift to the more contemporary middle school structure (6th-8th grades) was facilitated by critics' accusations that the junior high school structure lacked mission and ignored the emotional and social pressures of typical adolescents.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Pew Hispanic Center, "The New Latino South: the Context and Consequences of Rapid Population Growth," July 2005.

[14] As noted in, The World is Flat, Thomas Friedman, 2005, pg. 258.

[15] SREB describes the middle school paradox in, "Academic Achievement in the Middle Grades: What Does the Research Tell Us?: A Review of the Literature," as two countering views that middle school students are somehow distinct and require a different type of schooling experience. However, middle school reformers who advance effective and proven strategies include components that are effective at all levels – teacher quality, rigorous academic curriculum etc. GPEE takes the notion of the middle school paradox further suggesting the implicit paradox America's public schools have faced in coupling socially and developmentally appropriate instruction with academic rigor.

Balancing socially and developmentally appropriate instruction with academic relevance and rigor lies at the heart of the middle school paradox.[15]

Research on high school drop-out patterns suggests that decisions to complete high school or high school course-taking patterns are determined before a student even enters day one of their first high school course. It is determined in the student's readiness for the high school transition. The challenge to strengthen the middle school to high school transition has been complicated by research that addresses a specific content area only or efforts that have placed too great an emphasis on grade configurations and school structures (i.e. looping, team-based instruction) rather than the mechanisms that make any model effective (leadership, teacher quality, and an integrated and academically relevant curriculum).[16]

The Literacy Connection: As third grade is the gateway transition from learning to read to reading to learn, eighth grade is the transition from reading fluency to reading as a key to critical thinking and higher order thinking skills. The NGA Center for Best Practices suggests America's struggling readers fall into three categories, the largest of which is a group of students who can read newspapers and simple manual text but struggle with problems of fluency and comprehension.[17] This group is of particular concern because they typically are able to meet state proficiency standards but lack the skills to engage in higher literacy skills that are required in rigorous high school courses, college and the workplace.

The most rigorous standard America has for measuring literacy proficiency is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Only one-third of America's adolescents and slightly higher than one-fifth of Georgia's adolescents demonstrated reading proficiency on the 2005 test. NASBE suggests that strengthening students' critical-thinking and higher order skills capacity will require a shift from a narrow view of reading to a broader view of literacy encompassing students' ability to read, write and think.

The Numeracy Connection: The Algebra I readiness benchmark is well established. Students who have taken or are prepared to take Algebra I by ninth grade have a greater likelihood of taking calculus in high school and are also more likely to attend college than those students who do not.[18]

The significance of Algebra I readiness is even more pronounced for at-risk students as it increases the likelihood that such students will complete high school. Maryland has recognized the importance of the gateway. More than one-third of Maryland's students take one high school mathematics course before leaving middle school. The state has expanded access to rigorous mathematics courses even to students with weaker academic backgrounds. Last school year, of the almost 24,000 Maryland middle school students taking Algebra I, 90 percent passed the state's Algebra I high school assessment.[19] Still, Maryland may serve as the exception rather than the rule. With more than 10 years of research supporting the importance of numeracy, this benchmark is rarely incorporated in state accountability and reporting systems.

Recent Progress and Recommendations: Recognizing the importance of strengthening academic achievement of middle school students has led several states to initiate policies aimed at improving the transition to high school including Florida, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Rhode Island. Florida's policy requires the development of a personalized middle school success plan for every at-risk sixth grader. New Mexico's policy requires development of a high school graduation plan for at-risk eighth graders. Research has also shown that transition programs are particularly effective for minority and at-risk students as these programs provide the necessary academic and social bridge between middle and high school. In fact, a study based on transition programs implemented in Georgia and Florida high schools indicated that schools offering extensive transition programs had lower dropout and failure rates than their counterparts not offering such programs.[20]

WHAT'S NEXT FOR GEORGIA?

Seamless transitions are still a critical area for strengthening the K-12 educational pipeline. Georgia's gateway assessments in third, fifth and eighth grades are part of a systemic effort to ensure student readiness for the next academic transition. Each gateway was envisioned with a broad set of proactive systemic supports that would appropriately identify and address academic weaknesses prior to the gateway assessment (i.e. additional instructional time, the early intervention program). Georgia's student achievement data on the CRCT and NAEP signal the need for greater investment in supporting middle grades and the transition into high school.

Georgia's stagnant reading performance on NAEP, which was also below the national average, raises serious concerns, particularly given the importance of literacy as a conduit to higher order critical thinking skills. The magnitude of the CRCT vs. NAEP proficiency gap suggests that a significant number of Georgia students may fall in the category of "at-risk" readers who can read newspapers and simple manual text but struggle with problems of fluency. These students slip through state assessment cracks, unidentified because the nature of their literacy weaknesses allows them to perform above the state proficiency standard.

When eighth grade CRCT Mathematics and Algebra I End-of-Course Test (EOCT) pass rates are

CHART 3: Trend on Eighth Grade Performance on NAEP Percent at Proficient or Above

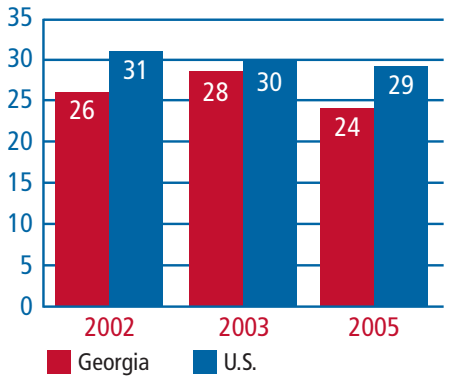
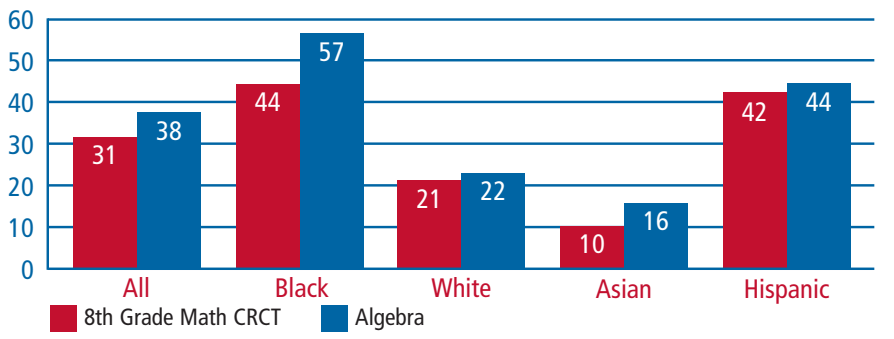


CHART 4: Percent of Students Not Meeting Standards at the Gateway: 8th Grade Math (CRCT) and Algebra I EOCT 2004-2005



[16] Keynote address by Hayes Mizell to the National School Boards Association's Council of Urban Boards of Education, "Still Crazy After All These Years: Grade Configuration and the Education of Adolescents," October 2004.

[17] NGA Best Practices Center, "Reading to Achieve: A Governor's Guide to Adolescent Literacy," 2005.

[18] SREB, "Academic Achievement in the Middle Grades: What Does Research Tell Us," www.sreb.org.

[19] deVise, Daniel, "Middle Schools in Maryland Find Advanced Math is Right Formula," Washington Post, Nov. 21, 2005.

[20] SREB, "Academic Achievement in the Middle Grades," p.10; Hertzog, C.J. & Morgan P.L., "Making the Transition from Middle Level to High School," March 2005.

considered, in light of the role of Algebra I as a gateway to higher-level mathematics and high school completion, serious gaps are exposed in the middle school-high school transition. Almost one-third of eighth graders did not meet the standard on the 2005 Mathematics CRCT. Nearly four of every 10 students taking Algebra I did not pass the EOCT with even higher non-passing rates among black and Hispanic students.

The State Department of Education, State Board of Education and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement have begun to give attention to creating a more seamless link between middle grades and high school by focusing efforts on secondary education (6-12). Such efforts include extending access to the state's new virtual school to middle school students and requesting additional funds to support enrichment and remediation for middle school students. However, stagnant reading performance has baffled many education stakeholders particularly given the significant investments that have been made in the state reading and math program. More attention must be given to identifying the source of literacy weaknesses and identifying what steps can be taken to strengthen these skills.

Efforts to strengthen middle school should be considered in the context of other school improvement strategies and incentives. Ultimately, the strategy to improve middle schools requires a set of policies and programs that are woven together as opposed to a patchwork of various programs that may have overlapping or contradictory purposes. The plan should include a clearly articulated set of benchmarks for the middle grades which includes determining if every middle school student has the opportunity to take an Algebra I course and the extent to which students take advantage of the opportunity. The importance of improving middle grade achievement is critical and all policy possibilities should be given reasonable consideration, including determining whether this group of students requires a longer school day/year, smaller class size, or institutionalizing summer transition academies to ensure student readiness for high school.

The linkage between middle school performance and high school completion rates suggests that unless Georgia gives immediate attention to creating a seamless transition, the state is unlikely to observe significantly improved high school completion rates.

Things Georgia Can Do to Create a Systemic Approach to Strengthening Middle Grade Performance

- Examine investment in the state's reading and math program and determine if the allowed usage of these funds is strategically targeted to maximize impact on improving student achievement.
- Expand opportunities for additional instructional time through enrichment and remediation programs prior to the gateway assessment.
- Ensure that every middle school student has access to an Algebra I course.
- Include Algebra I as a state and school benchmark indicating how many students take Algebra I or are Algebra I ready when exiting middle school.
- Expand access to transition programs from middle school to high school.

4 MORE TIME

POLITICAL CONTEXT

By far, time is not the most alluring educational reform issue! However, it lies at the crux of the increased demands of public education. If America is to increase the number of students who successfully complete high school, ensure that all children achieve proficiency by 2014, and maintain its global competitiveness (an issue that hinges on the increased effectiveness of K-12), then there is a critical need to reconsider the current 180 day school year and six hour school day. Students and teachers need more time.

If some policy advocates are to have their way, time will reappear among the top agenda items in education reform in 2006. Education Commission of the States has re-released its report, "Prisoners of Time," focusing on the importance of time and extended learning opportunities as central to the higher aims of the global economy and 21st century public education. Massachusetts 2020 offers a similar message with the release of its report on extended learning time, "Time for Change: The Promise of Extended-Time Schools for Promoting Student Achievement." The 2005-2006 school year will mark the first year the Massachusetts Department of Education issues competitive grants to school districts to extend learning time by at least 30 percent. Closer to home, a similar initiative of the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, **The Next Generation Schools Project,** will release the findings from the three year applied research project, Next Steps, which examined the impact of creative use of time and extended learning opportunities on student achievement.[21] With the release of student outcome data, the Partnership expects to re-energize the state level discussion on this important educational issue.

POLICY PERSPECTIVE

In 1983, the catalyst to the modern day education reform movement, "A Nation at Risk," highlighted increased learning time as one of its key recommendations. In 1994, the National Education Commission on Time and Learning indicated our schools were prisoners of time and again reiterated the need for increased academic time as a key element in strengthening K-12 schools. In fall 2005, Massachusetts 2020 indicated time is *still* the missing element in school reform. Even the landmark reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2001, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) with its higher demands, did not include a component to address the issue of additional instructional time.

Perhaps the reason time has not been integrated into school reform efforts is that there is still some doubt that increasing time will make a difference. It is this proposition that Massachusetts 2020 considered in its research report examining eight schools that have extended instructional time. Each of the schools spent more time on core academic subjects than their traditional counterparts (30 hours vs. 20 hours).[22] While there was no universal model for how the schools added time, all schools included increased time for teacher professional development. The report also gives consideration to the costs of providing additional instructional time. While some charter schools simply paid teachers at a higher rate than their district counterparts (~20 percent),

The Benefits of Additional School Hours/Days for all students

- More time on task
- Greater breadth and depth into curriculum
- Greater opportunities for planning and professional development (strengthening teacher quality)
- Greater opportunities for enrichment and experiential learning
- Stronger adult-child relationships

Drawn from "Time For Change: The Promise of Extended-Time Schools for Promoting Student Achievement," 2005

[21] The entire report and replication manual will be available at www.gpee.org.

[22] Core academic subjects include math, English language arts, science, social studies and foreign languages (if they are a required part of the curriculum). Each of the schools included in the study served a student population in which at least 60 percent of students qualified for free/reduced lunch. All schools with extended learning time observed positive outcomes.

several schools leveraged public and private grants and others exercised the available flexibility in the use of public dollars. Title I schools noted using those funds to pay teachers for the additional hours. The report highlights that additional time *must* be accompanied with strong leadership, a focus on professional development and teacher quality, use of data for continuous improvement, positive school culture, and family engagement.

Over 20 years have passed since America began its education reform efforts in earnest. Unlike the move towards standards and accountability, time has still garnered little traction in education policy despite clear evidence that America's international counterparts invest more hours of academic instruction per school year. Can America remain globally competitive by simply demanding more (standards) from our children without providing more time to assure their success?

WHAT'S NEXT FOR GEORGIA?

Georgia has been among a small group of states that recognized the importance of additional instructional time and implemented policy and funding to provide more time. Georgia's Instructional Extension (20 additional days) is a unique mechanism to provide school districts with a clear funding stream that allows 10 percent of students with access to up to 20 more days of instruction. The funding can be used to provide before and after school academic support, intercession or summer school. However, with more than 40 percent of students statewide qualifying for free and reduced lunch and the increasing diversity of student enrollment, research is clear that in order for at-risk populations to successfully achieve higher standards more time is needed. Furthermore, the state has invested more than $195 million in the program since it began funding in 2001. However, little data are available on how districts have used these funds to improve instruction for the most vulnerable populations.

Outside of the state's investment in 20 additional days, the issue of time has been relegated to schools and districts. The issue of time has not become a systemic part of education reform efforts in the state. Even less attention has been given to the need for additional time for teachers. However, additional time is equally important. Data from the Georgia BellSouth Quality Learning and Teaching Environments Initiative's pilot working conditions survey illustrate the level of importance teachers assign to the issue. When teachers were asked to rank key factors (Time, Facilities and Resources, Leadership, Empowerment and Professional Learning) that contribute to their overall job satisfaction, teachers highlighted time as the area of greatest concern. Teachers indicated the lack of time inhibited their ability to collaborate productively with colleagues and did not allow them to meet the needs of all students.[23]

Perhaps it is time for the state to consider increasing the length of the school day and/or school year. The soon to be released Next Generation Schools Project Final Report and accompanying Replication Manual will provide best practices from five Georgia school districts that can better inform state efforts to craft and/or strengthen policies that increase school time in meaningful ways that are likely to result in improved student achievement. Increasing time is generally viewed as cost-prohibitive. However, we give consideration to this issue below *(See Cost of Additional Days of Instruction in Georgia)*. Adding an additional hour to each school day would be the equivalent of 12 additional days of instruction, would allow critical time for teachers to work collaboratively with other faculty members, would not necessarily increase transportation costs and could result in significantly improved outcomes particularly if the additional time is structured to increase time in core content areas. There are a number of added social benefits especially for adolescents who engage in more "at-risk" behavior between 3–6 p.m. than any other time of day. Additional time is a necessary and appropriate complement to existing state efforts to improve student achievement.

The Cost of Additional Days of Instruction in Georgia

In 2005, it cost the state $28.5 million to provide one day of instruction to 1.5 million students (approximately $19/student a day).

Based on those costs, if the state added one additional hour to each school day that would result in five additional hours a week and 72 additional hours a year (5 hours* 36 weeks), for a total of 12 additional days a year.

- If the state increased its 2005 QBE spending by 3 percent ($142.7 million), it could provide all children with five more days of instruction.
- If the state increased its 2005 QBE spending by 6 percent ($285.4 million), it could provide all children with 10 more days of instruction.
- If the state increased its 2005 QBE spending by 7 percent ($342.5 million), it could provide all children with 12 more days of instruction or an additional hour every day of the 180-day school year.

These costs assume all indirect and direct related costs associated with providing instruction, including administration, media center and professional development.

5 HARD CHOICES IN HIGH SCHOOLS

POLITICAL CONTEXT

High schools were the hallmark of education policy discussions in 2005. Increased focus on the one-third of America's youth who do not complete high schools, the dearth of accurate information on state level graduation rates, and the need to build increased rigor, relevance and relationship all brought to the forefront the increasing need to realign and restructure high schools. NGA in partnership with the Gates Foundation supported the effort with a total of $23.6 million in grants to support state high school reform. Awards were granted in two phases to a total of 27 states.[24] The alarm has been sounded, and 2006 will find states challenged to turn proposals into policy as they begin the arduous work of transforming an American institution.

POLICY PERSPECTIVE

High school reform is a formidable challenge as states and schools must increase the number of students who stay in school until they earn a high school diploma while ensuring that the diploma they earn is relevant and facilitates a seamless transition to either college or the workforce. Inadequate preparation is pervasive, 50 percent of all students nationally require at least one remedial course. While significant attention has been given to the economic implications of high school non-completion, less attention has been given to the costs that result from the lack of alignment between high school curriculum/standards and the requirements of college and the workforce. While many middle and upper income families are less likely to be compelled by conversations on improving the state's graduation rate, as their children are on course to complete high school and go on to college, readiness resonates for all. Families often bear the direct costs of inadequate preparation in the way of tuition for coursework that does not count toward earning a degree and can

[23] Georgia BellSouth Quality Learning and Teaching Environments Initiative, Executive Summary. www.qlte.org.

[24] The 17 states are: Alabama, Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Wisconsin and Wyoming. Phase I provided support to states with plans to take a comprehensive approach to high school reform including developing a data collection system and communication plan. Phase II provided grants to 17 states (including Georgia) to strengthen specific programs that lead to higher completion and college readiness rates.

extend students' time in college.

Colorado's Commission on Higher Education examined the cost of inadequate preparation.[25] The state estimates it spends $10 million a year to pay for student remediation. This amount, however, does not include the direct costs to parents or costs borne via federal financial aid. Nor does it reflect the costs incurred by businesses that must pay to train workers who lack basic skills or purchase the technology to compensate for the lack of such skills.

The Mackinac Center for Public Policy included in its analysis the costs businesses and universities bear as a result of the K-12 shortcomings. The report, "The Costs of Remedial Education: How Much Michigan Pays When Students Fail to Learn Basic Skills," estimated the state spent $21.8 million for remediation in community colleges alone, and businesses spent an additional $40 million annually. The immediate financial costs are still only a fraction when considered against long-term costs. Students who take remedial courses are much less likely to earn a bachelor's degree.[26]

Research has clearly indicated that the greatest predictor of college readiness is a rigorous curriculum.[27] Rigor is defined both in the depth of the subject matter and also level of coursework (i.e. three years of mathematics through Algebra II).[28] However, changing high school graduation student requirements that reflect the 21st century "rigor for all" students will prove a challenging one among states. Only 42 states have specific course requirements for graduation. Of those, 20 require Algebra I, 13 require geometry and only five states specifically require students to take mathematics through Algebra II.[29]

WHAT'S NEXT FOR GEORGIA?

In 2005, Georgia made sizeable progress on putting several key elements in place that can contribute to an overall systemic plan for high school improvement. The state expanded access to Advanced Placement courses with the establishment of the new Georgia Virtual School. Likewise, the Governor's Office, Department of Education and Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education sponsored the Georgia Conference on High School Improvement conference to examine reform options. The State Board provided an alternative route to earning a high school diploma via waiver to those students who have difficulty passing one component of the GHSGT. The state's most significant progress across K-12 continues to be the implementation of the Georgia Performance Standards.

Georgia was one of 13 states that signed on to the American Diploma Project (ADP), so it is expected that the state will adopt an ADP model, requiring a college preparatory requirement for all students. As conversations begin on modifying state graduation requirements it will be important to consider how aligned current requirements are to the expectations of state colleges, universities and the needs of the business community. The implementation of the GSSIS can significantly contribute to this discussion particularly as the state explores opportunities to track students through the entire P-16 educational continuum.

6 MORE THAN MONEY: IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Money alone represents neither the floor nor the ceiling as it relates to improving teacher quality. Teachers do not leave the profession solely because of money nor will they stay in the profession or relocate to the neediest schools based on financial incentives alone. Many states have recognized that the disparate application and the narrow definition of highly qualified in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) will not significantly mitigate the maldistribution in teacher quality.[30] While the NCLB highly qualified definition was a requisite for emphasizing the central importance of teacher quality in America's quest to improve educational outcomes for all children, that step alone will not resolve the larger issues states face in recruiting, retaining, supporting and compensating a crème de la crème workforce.

This realization has brought many governors back to the drawing board examining teacher quality policies whose potential has not been fully realized. Not surprisingly, 2005 signaled a renewed interest in pay for performance. Denver taxpayers allocated $25 million to support the district's Professional Compensation performance pay plan. Minnesota issued the first grants to seven school systems as a component of its Quality Compensation program. Other states are watching how these policies are operationalized as they consider developing or expanding their own.

With U.S. Department of Education easing the 2005-2006 highly qualified deadline, many will monitor closely how the Department applies the four criteria that will determine whether a state is eligible for the one-year reprieve.[31] States will continue to grapple with improving teacher quality in 2006 realizing that all other reforms hinge on the quality of the individual delivering instruction.

POLICY PERSPECTIVE

In the Teaching Commission's 2004 report, "Teaching at Risk," Commissioner Louis Gerstner argued the importance of addressing teacher quality, *"If we don't step up to the challenge of finding and supporting the best teachers, we'll undermine everything else we are trying to do to improve our schools. That's a conscious decision that would threaten our economic strength, political fabric and stability as a nation. It's exactly that clear cut."* The imperative to improve teacher quality is clear. States are challenged to harness the political and financial will to develop a systemic approach to addressing teacher quality. Such an approach requires collaboration with teachers and local districts and must include an investment in state-level research and analysis to define the parameters of the problem and determine how most effectively to target limited resources. However, states often attempt to craft policy solutions to problems for which the state has limited data. Such solutions do not fully align with reality and do not achieve their expected outcomes. State efforts to provide financial incentives to encourage teachers to serve in hard to staff schools are illustrative. South Carolina

[25] Colorado Commission for Higher Education, "Remedial Education: One-Third of Incoming College Students Unprepared by K-12 High Schools," December 2005.

[26] In other words, students who take remedial course work can range from 37 percent to 67 percent (depending on the number and types of remedial courses) less likely than non-remedial course-takers to earn a four-year degree.

[27] Adelman, Clifford, "Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor's Degree Attainment," 1998.

[28] Achieve's American Diploma Project (ADP) framework encourages states to adopt college-preparatory course-requirements as the standard for all students. ADP recommends requiring four years of grade-level English, four years of rigorous math (Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II and data and statistical analysis). At a minimum, states are urged to require students to complete math through Algebra II.

[29] Updated information based on preliminary data from Achieve survey on high school graduation requirements. Report expected February 2006.

[30] The Teaching Commission in its 2004 report "Teaching at Risk," underscored its concern that the intent of the NCLB highly qualified provision might remain elusive and unfulfilled. Other proponents of NCLB have raised concern that the variance in states' definitions of highly qualified coupled with some states' limited capacity to collect teacher quality data could dilute the aim of the law. Education Trust voiced its concerns in testimony presented to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce on Sept. 29, 2005. "Closing the Achievement Gap in America's Public Schools: The No Child Left Behind Act."

[31] Drawn from Education Week,"U.S. Department of Education Gives States Reprieve in Meeting 'Highly Qualified' Teacher Requirement," Oct. 27, 2005. The four criteria upon which the Department will base decisions to grant any state a reprieve to the law's highly qualified provision are: 1) A state's definition of a highly qualified teacher is consistent with the law; 2) Reporting to parents and the public on highly qualified teachers is thorough; 3) Collection of data on highly qualified teachers is complete and accurate; and 4) Steps are being taken to ensure that experienced and qualified educators are as likely to reach poor and minority children as their white and more affluent peers.

is one example. The state created a program for teacher specialists to work in the state's lowest performing schools. The state sought 500 teachers in the first year of the program. Despite offering a $20,000 bonus, the program has only 208 teachers after four years.[32]

Money is not enough. Research on teacher attrition and working condition survey findings indicate the most compelling reasons for where teachers choose to teach or how long they remain in the profession are working conditions.[33] If policies are to be effective at addressing teacher quality issues they must, in addition to providing financial incentives, also address supports that are critical to teacher effectiveness such as school environment, quality professional development, leadership, and allocation of time.

A North Carolina policy summit for the state's national board certified teachers examined the issue of providing support and staffing to high needs schools.[34] Recommendations from the summit indicate that money is not teachers' only concern. North Carolina's National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) cited school building leadership, positive working conditions, in-building support systems, and being a true part of a learning community as among the most important factors in attracting teachers to high-needs schools.[35] The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards is working with several states to host similar summits in hopes that the recommendations from these summits can be used to craft policies that take a systemic approach to improving teacher quality.

Tying teacher pay to student performance (merit pay) can and should be a systemic reform. William Slotnik, the evaluator of Denver's pilot performance pay program, suggests that in order for such models to be effective they must include: 1) A clear purpose that considers student performance as the centerpiece; 2) Collaboration that considers teachers and distributive leadership; 3) Multiple measures for assessing teachers skills and that are not purely punitive in nature; and 4) A sustained fiscal investment.[36] Historically, districts that have embarked on such efforts have found them difficult to sustain, primarily for financial reasons. Given the early success of its pilot, stakeholders are monitoring the progress and lessons learned via Denver's Professional Compensation Program (*See Table D: Policies with Promise)*

TABLE D: Policies with Promise: Denver's Professional Compensation (Pro-Comp) and Minnesota's Quality Compensation (Q-Comp)

Denver Public Schools	
How was the program initiated?	Result of pilot from 1999-2003. Decision to take district-wide in 2005.
How can teachers earn pay incentive?	Individual performance
School-wide performance	Skills and knowledge-based pay, and market incentives
How are salaries determined?	$33,301 base salary for new teachers Performance bonuses are given as a percent of index as negotiated by teachers' union and school district. Bonuses range from 1-9 percent of index ($33,301 currently) as follows: a) Professional development: $666 b) Graduate degree/National Certificate: $2,297 c) Satisfactory evaluation if non-probationary: $999 d) Hard-to-staff school or position: $999 e) Meeting annual student growth objective: $333 f) Meeting or exceeding Colorado Student Assessment Program expectations: $999 g) Serving in a distinguished school as identified through multiple measure of student performance: $666.
Minnesota	
How was the program initiated?	Proposed by the governor and supported with an $86 million appropriation (2005)
How can teachers earn pay incentives?	School districts/ charter schools must develop a plan that includes: 1. Multiple career paths for teachers 2. Objective assessment systems and professional development that align with performance pay 3. Agreement by school/system to move from the traditional pay schedule
Status	Seven school districts and one charter school have been approved.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR GEORGIA?

Georgia has made significant progress on efforts to improve teacher quality not the least of which has been the formation of the Georgia Committee on Quality Teaching (CQT) which brings together all state agencies that have a role in effecting teacher quality and other relevant education stakeholders to craft a common language and agenda on improving teacher quality in the state.[37]

The CQT counts among its successes the adoption of the Georgia Framework by the State Board of Education, the Professional Standards Commission and pending adoption by the Board of Regents. This framework articulates a clear set of standards for a teacher's development from preparation, through induction, and into accomplished teaching. The Georgia Framework holds great promise as it ensures the work of each agency is in alignment with a common set of standards and expectations on development of teachers and the profession.[38]

In 2006, the CQT will continue working with 10 school systems to examine and improve teacher working conditions. As the state looks to strengthen its investment in teacher quality and create an integrated package of incentives that may include differential compensation, it is critical that such a package builds upon a clear understanding of the nature and magnitude of Georgia's teacher quality problem. Understanding how Georgia's teachers view their working conditions and how those conditions can be strengthened can be particularly informative in crafting an effective policy.

Education stakeholders are

[32] Berry, Barnett, and Eric Hirsch, "Recruiting and Retaining Teachers for Hard-to-Staff Schools," NGA Center for Best Practices, October 2005.

[33] Ingersoll, R., "Why Do High-Poverty Schools Have Difficulty Staffing Their School Classrooms with Qualified Teachers?" A National Taksforce on Public Education, November 2004.

[34] Policy Summit Convening Coalition: Hunt Institute for Educational Leadership, National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, National Education Association, North Carolina Board of Education, North Carolina Teacher Academy, North Carolina Association of Educators, N.C. Lieutenant Governor Beverly Perdue, and the Center for Teacher Quality.

[35] Drawn from PowerPoint presentation to the Columbia Group, "Policy Summit on Supporting and Staffing High-Needs Schools: A Conversation Among North Carolina's National Board Certified Teachers," November 2005.

[36] Slotnik, William J., "Mission Possible: Tying Earning to Learning." Ed Week, Sept. 28, 2005.

[37] CQT is comprised of: Board of Regents, Department of Education, Professional Standards Commission, Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, Governor's Office of Student Achievement, and BellSouth.

[38] Office of Governor Sonny Perdue, "Blueprint for an Action Agenda: Redesigning Secondary Education Schools in Georgia To Meet College – and Workforce-Readiness Standards," Georgia's Honor State Grant for NGA, October 2005.

anticipating the guidelines and first implementation of the state's new master teacher and academic coach programs. As a first step toward providing a true teacher career ladder, stakeholders are particularly interested in the extent to which these new policies will provide a model that directly measures teachers' impact on student performance. The implementation of the Georgia Statewide Student Information System, which includes both a unique student and teacher identifier, will further expand opportunities to strengthen teacher quality by providing a more seamless view of a teacher from preparation through induction and into accomplished teacher.

This year will bring together, yet again, a convergence of initiatives that provide a great opportunity for the state to strengthen its teacher quality efforts. However, realizing that potential will require deliberate attention including an investment in better defining the scope of the state's teacher quality problem (i.e. examining workforce conditions and defining the magnitude of the state's hard-to-staff schools problem) and determining how to better align existing policies with the realities of teachers and schools in the state.

7 AT LAST, THE WAIT FOR A STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM IS OVER

POLITICAL CONTEXT

In 2006, Georgia education stakeholders are expecting to see a key element of the state's education reform vision fulfilled. After five years and an investment of more than $25 million, in July 2006, the Georgia Statewide Student Information System (GSSIS) is expected to be fully berthed serving as the state's primary vehicle for collecting individual student level data with the capacity to track student progress over time. After much anticipation, the transition to the GSSIS will generate discussion on development plans for creating greater linkages to university system data and Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care and Learning.

A plethora of 2005 end of the year announcements related to longitudinal data systems will likely reverberate in national discourse during 2006. U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced plans to allow 10 states to use growth models in calculating adequate yearly progress (AYP). The change is a sharp departure from the Department of Education's previous stance on how states were required to develop AYP benchmarks.

Ten national organizations announced the launch of a new Data Quality Campaign. The Campaign intends to provide tools and resources to support the development of longitudinal data systems and to build support and political will for three articulated goals: 1) Fully develop high-quality data systems in every state by 2009; 2) Increase understanding and promote the valuable uses of longitudinal and financial data to improve student achievement; and 3) Promote, develop and use common data standards and efficient data transfer and exchange.[39]

Fourteen states were awarded $52.8 million in grants by the Institute of Education Sciences for the development of longitudinal student data systems.

As the direct linkage between accountability and quality longitudinal data becomes more pronounced, expect greater attention to be given to the mechanisms for collecting it.

POLICY PERSPECTIVE

If accountability is the foundation of education reform, then valid and reliable student level data are its cornerstone. Even in the 2005 focus on high schools there was the sobering recognition that as a nation, the U.S. does not know how many students who start high school actually graduate. In the absence of good data, policymakers find their hands tied in an effort to craft intervention and support strategies to problems that are not fully or clearly defined.

While most states have a data collection mechanism typically used to collect information required for state funding and federal reporting, those systems provide only a "snap-shot" of student achievement. States' information systems generally lack the ability to link enrollment and achievement data or to track individual student level data over time. The latter is the most important as it facilitates an authentic measure of how well schools and systems are improving achievement for specific students. Longitudinal data facilitates a more accurate assessment of how much value-added a particular school provides to the students it serves. However, the benefits extend beyond assessing student progress. Longitudinal data systems can be particularly informative to policymakers by helping assess program effectiveness (i.e. EIP or state-funded Pre-K), strengthening teacher quality by tracking the impact of teacher instruction on student outcomes (value-added), and measuring the seamlessness of key educational transitions by bridging data gaps as students progress from pre-kindergarten into K-12 and from K-12 to the university system.

Research and data experts agree that there are 10 essential elements to building a longitudinal student information system. *(See Table E: Capacity of Georgia's Current Student Information System)* The goals outlined by the Data Quality Campaign would require that every state in the nation, within the next three years, have a student information system with all of the 10 essential elements. The DCQ goal is

TABLE E: Capacity of Georgia's Current Student Information System

Ten Essential Elements for Longitudinal Data System	Number of states with system that includes this element	Does GSSIS have this capacity?
1 A unique student identifier	36	YES
2 Student-level enrollment, demographic and program participation information	38	YES
3 The ability to match individual student test records from year to year to measure academic growth	32	YES
4 Information on untested students	25	YES
5 A teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students	13	YES
6 Student-level transcript information, including information on courses completed and grades earned	7	YES
7 Student-level college readiness test scores	7	NO
8 Student-level graduation and dropout rate	34	YES
9 The ability to match student records between the pre-K-12 and postsecondary systems	12	YES
10 A state data audit system assessing data quality, validity and reliability	19	YES

Source: Based on Responses to Survey Administered by National Center of Educational Accountability, November 2005, www.dataqualitycampaign.org

[39] Achieve Inc, the Alliance for Excellent Education, Council of Chief State School Officers, The Education Trust, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, School Interoperability Framework Association, Standard & Poor's Evaluation Services, and State Higher Education Executive Officers.

ambitious as no state currently has all 10 components. However, if the nation truly intends to reach the NCLB goal of 100 percent student proficiency by 2014, a significantly improved graduation rate, and prepare students who are truly world-ready then there is indeed an urgent need for such data systems in every state. Consistent with its plan to provide tools and resources to states, the campaign has already outlined a set of specific actions required for state education agencies to achieve each of the 10 essential elements (Table F also includes data on the number of states that have each of the 10 elements in their current systems).

WHAT'S NEXT FOR GEORGIA?

The GSSIS provides the necessary complement to the state's accountability efforts serving as both a tool for teachers and schools that paints an accurate picture of student progress. For years, what state level decision-makers did not know about a particular program or overall educational progress was attributable to the lack of data. The value of data echoes in several of the state's greatest success stories on improving student achievement for students in all subgroups including Gainesville City, whose success has resulted in a study to determine how to replicate the data-driven model in other districts; and the work of the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI), which has held high the banner of data in its balanced scorecard trainings for school leaders. Still, even with the progress observed in both models, schools and districts have been limited in how they could use the data, particularly given the lack of vertical alignment on the state's criterion referenced assessment.

GSSIS most immediate contribution to education accountability and reform in the state may be its role in bringing precision to the state's graduation rate calculation. The 2006 freshman class (Class of 2009) will mark the first class for which the state will have a true graduation rate as the state will be able to identify students across schools and across districts and more accurately determine when a student has dropped out. Likewise, the system will likely contribute to developing a proxy graduation rate calculation for the class of 2007 and 2008 that is more accurate than the existing calculation method.

While possibilities are limitless for how GSSIS can contribute to strengthening education, such possibilities are likely to fall far shy of their potential in the absence of deliberate and immediate plans on how data from the system will be used at both the local and state level. It will be imperative that the Department of Education in concert with the Governor's Office of Student Achievement give deliberate attention to the following:

- Specific plans on how to assist district level and school level personnel in using the data to drive instruction and delivery of program services.
- How to interface GSSIS and its data elements with the university system to better determine college readiness and the impact of rigorous course work on college performance.
- How GSSIS can be used to strengthen accountability efforts both on sanctions and rewards.
- How access to student level progress data will contribute to modifications in the definition of the progress measure on school report cards.
- The extent to which GSSIS can be used to incorporate a value-added component to teacher evaluation, which might significantly strengthen existing state efforts toward improving teacher quality.

8 EARLY LEARNING STILL MATTERS MOST

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Early learning lived up to its billing in 2005. Underscoring its identification as one of 2005's key educational issues to watch, policymakers appropriated 26 million new dollars for FY 2006 toward strengthening existing or adding new pre-kindergarten opportunities nationally. These appropriations will provide access to an additional 120,000 children.[40] Gubernatorial and mid-term congressional elections, along with the much-anticipated reauthorization of Head Start, will keep early learning at the top of the educational agenda in 2006.

The emergence of Pre-K Now, a Washington-based advocacy organization, has added a new level of sophistication to a growing pre-k movement. Pre-K Now strongly advocates for expanding access to high quality pre-k for all three and four-year-olds, with specific attention given to strengthening teacher quality in these programs. The organization, originally the early learning arm of Education Trust, undergirds its advocacy efforts with strategic investment in states. To date, Pre-K Now has assisted Louisiana and Wisconsin in preparing and releasing reports on the cost savings associated with their respective investments in pre-kindergarten. The strategies appear to be successful. Louisiana increased its state investment in pre-k by 41 percent.

Adding to early learning's pre-eminence in 2006 will be the increasing linkage between early learning/pre-k as a component of adequacy litigation. Pre-k funding has been included in seven pending school finance cases and two other states have plans to add such a claim to standing litigation.[41] Even where pre-k funding has not been included in the litigation, it is emerging during the settlement phase. The most significant example is the settlement in the famed Abbott case in New Jersey where delayed action by lawmakers to address the state's unconstitutional funding mechanism resulted in a State Supreme Court mandate which included a requirement that all low-income children in Abbott districts receive pre-k services.

POLICY PERSPECTIVE

Kindergarten is not what it used to be. Unlike its high school counterparts, elementary schools have responded almost in lock-step to the increased demands of NCLB and what it means to provide a 21st century education. Students who show up on the first day of kindergarten without any formal schooling experience and lacking "pre-k" skills (i.e. knowing and being able to identify the letters of the alphabet, how to hold a book upright or the social skills otherwise needed to stay on task) face an enormous educational divide, a divide that is likely to take more than one year and significant additional resources to close. This realization is largely fueling the growth of pre-k programs across the country. However, in the rush to develop such programs, quality and sustainability (fiscal) are critical. Here we examine recent research and state efforts that offer insight on both these critical issues: quality and sustainability.

Defining High Quality Pre-K Programs – The recently released report by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) evaluated outcomes of programs in Michigan, New Jersey, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and West Virginia.[42] While the programs differ in who they serve and accessibility (Oklahoma and West Virginia have universal pre-k programs while Michigan, New Jersey and South Carolina serve only at-risk stu-

[40] Pre-K Now, "Votes Count – Legislative Action on Pre-K Fiscal Year 2006," November 2005.

[41] NIERR, "Pre-K Claims in School Finance Lawsuits Reflect Shift in Strategy," Preschool Matters, October 2005.

[42] NIERR, "The Effects of State Prekindergarten Programs on Young Children's School Readiness in Five States," 2005.

dents) all five programs are considered high quality, requiring that teachers hold a bachelor's degree and a certification in early childhood. The findings are particularly illustrative as they provide insight on whether pre-k matters for children from middle and upper class backgrounds. The findings from this study clearly suggest that pre-k matters for all, with consistent gains among all children. Significant gains were observed in three areas: vocabulary, mathematics and print awareness. Children in the study showed 31 percent more vocabulary growth over the year, 44 percent more growth in mathematics, and 85 percent more growth in print awareness.

The United Way's *Success by 6* initiative suggests that a quality rating system (QRS) can serve as a systemic vehicle of helping to raise the quality of center-based programs. Meeting national accreditation standards can be costly and programmatically prohibitive. However, if a state defines a set of indicators and supports centers through training and technical assistance, it can methodically help centers raise standards. Quality rating systems also add value for parents and policymakers and can serve as an accountability mechanism. Currently, 10 states (including four Southern states) have implemented statewide quality rating systems.[43]

Funding – Pre-K Now argues that one of the most sustainable funding mechanisms is integrating funding of pre-kindergarten into the state's school funding formula. Oklahoma and Texas currently fund some component of their pre-k investment through the school funding formula. Other states are creating blended funded streams to support the pre-k programs. Tennessee's lottery program, which is modeled after Georgia's, has a portion of its proceeds dedicated to college scholarships and $20 million set aside for pre-k programs. However, in an effort to ensure the pre-k program can maintain a higher level of quality, the state has recognized the need to create a blended funding model. Tennessee is expected to set aside an additional $15 million (from the state's general fund) as it transitions from its pilot program to a universal pre-k program.

TABLE F: Snapshot of Investment in Pre-K Quality and Sustainability Among Southern States

State	Percent Increase in Pre-K Funding FY 2006	Details	Program Requires Teachers to Hold Bachelor's Degree	State has a Quality Rating System
Alabama	0	Flat funding	Yes	No
Arkansas	39%	Increase from $51 million to $71 million	Yes	No
Florida	New program	$387 million appropriated for new universal pre-kindergarten (as of October 2005 80,000 four-year-olds had enrolled)	Yes	No
Georgia	5%	Increase from $269 to $283 million	No	No
Kentucky	6%	$13 million to $14 million	No	Yes
Louisiana	41%	$49 million to $69 million, 6,000 new children (9.4 percent of at-risk pre-k population)	Yes	No
Mississippi	No state-funded pre-k program		N/A	N/A
North Carolina	30%	$51 million to $67 million, creation of Office of School Readiness and 3,200 more children served	Yes	Yes
Oklahoma	Data not yet available – increase anticipated	Funding through school-funding formula	Yes	Yes
South Carolina	0	Flat funding	Yes	No
Tennessee	250%	$10 million to $35 million mixture of state funds and lottery funds, will serve an additional 6,000 children in pilot project toward universal pre-k	Yes	Yes
Texas	Data not yet available – increase anticipated	Increase anticipated via school formula for at-risk children	Yes	No
Virginia	34%	$35 million to $47 million Virginia has increased its funding by more than $40 million since FY 2004 with an aim of serving 100 percent of at-risk four-year-olds	No	No

WHAT'S NEXT FOR GEORGIA?

As the first state with a universal access pre-k program, Georgia set a framework and gave voice to the possibility that states could invest in early learning for all of its four-year-olds without an exorbitant price tag. Even more, the state identified what was then a controversial funding stream (lottery) and created value for all stakeholders. Georgia's successors have duplicated best practices and learned from both research and Georgia's experience. Successor programs have added components that are still outside the framework of the Georgia pre-k program, including *strengthening teacher quality* by requiring all teachers to hold a four year degree and *strengthening program quality* by developing a quality rating scale (the pre-k equivalent of a report card) that indicates how centers rate on a set of state defined indicators. Finally, successor programs have also *diversified and stabilized pre-k funding* by adding to the state education funding formula or creating blended funding models.

Georgia currently serves approximately 75,000 four-year-olds in the state funding program. Another 8,000 to 10,000 are served in Head Start, suggesting 85 percent of the state's approximate 100,000 four-year-olds receive some form of pre-k exposure prior to entering school. However, Georgia shares with the rest of the nation a disparate distribution in program quality. Less than seven percent of Georgia's center-based programs are nationally accredited. National accreditation is a high standard and a quality rating system can serve as a systemic vehicle for transitioning centers toward national standards.[44] While the state's public-private partnership broadens access to the program, public schools that house pre-k classes are able to provide higher teacher salaries creating inequities in teacher quality. While early learning supporters tout the outcomes observed in the North Carolina Abercedarian Study and Michigan's High/Scope Perry Pre-K study, those outcomes hinge largely on the quality of the program. Both studies emphasize teacher qualifications as central to program quality.

Georgia may have been the frontrunner on investment in pre-k but now the entire Southern region appears to be leading the national charge. Of the 10 Southern states that added 30 percent or more to their investment in pre-k for FY 2006 six were Southern states. Four of the

[43] The 10 states are Colorado, Kentucky, Maryland, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont and the District of Columbia. Source: United Way, "Stair Steps to Quality: A Guide for States and Communities Developing Quality Rating Systems for Early Care and Education," July 2005.

[44] United Way, "Stair Steps to Quality: A Guide for States and Communities Developing Quality Rating Systems for Early Care and Education," July 2005.

eleven states with statewide QRS in place are Southern states.[45] Oklahoma is increasingly viewed as a national leader. It was the first state to implement a statewide QRS, the first state with a universal access pre-k program to require its teachers to hold a bachelor's degree, and the first to fully incorporate pre-k funding into its school funding formula *(see Table F: Snapshot of Investment in Pre-K Quality and Sustainability Among Southern States)*.

Several items slated for 2006 could create an opportunity to discuss strengthening the quality of Georgia pre-k. In early spring, Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care and Learning will roll out new early learning standards. Governor Perdue is expected to name the remaining nine members of the agency's board.[46] Additionally, the House Study Committee on Children: Birth to Age Five, which received comprehensive reports from a diverse group of stakeholders on the necessary components in building a comprehensive, coordinated early learning system, are also likely to translate some of its recommendations into legislative action. With a new governance structure in place for Bright from the Start along with the new standards, it will be important for the state to give consideration to the following issues:

- Support statewide implementation of the work sampling system as a developmentally appropriate mechanism of measuring and reporting the extent to which students who participate in Georgia's pre-k program enter kindergarten ready to learn.

- Begin exploring whether a single funding stream, the lottery, will be sufficient to build upon the successes of the state's pre-k program and strengthen program quality. Could additional funding through the state education formula or a blended funded model from the state's general fund provide a conduit for improving program quality? For example, if the state provided lottery-funded pre-k teachers with health benefits and access to the state retirement system, it could help create a more equitable playing field for childcare centers. A blended funding model could significantly ease the financial burden associated with strengthening teacher quality.

- Examine what mechanisms exist to further strengthen program quality including development of a quality rating system. With the new student information system coming on line, does the system provide a unique opportunity for Georgia to begin development of a quality rating system? Will the expected additional flexibility allowed to states in the use of Head Start funds serve as an opportunity to help center-based programs statewide strengthen program quality?

9 STILL WAITING ON DEFINITIVE SOLUTIONS FOR SCHOOL FINANCE

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Still waiting...on the restoration of the austerity cuts, a judgment or settlement in the Consortium for Adequate School Funding vs. State of Georgia litigation, and the funding recommendations from the Governor's Investing in Educational Excellence Taskforce. While 2006 is unlikely to bring resolution to the issue of school finance, it will continue a hearty discourse seasoned with influences from debates on the issue nationally.

With a major election around the corner, Georgia House leaders have quietly ushered the property tax versus sales tax debate to the back burner. However, this gesture should not be interpreted as rendering the issue dead nor does it preclude other legislative proposals that could significantly affect how districts spend their money. The Washington D.C.-based organization, First Class Education (FCE), is promoting a concept called the 65 Percent Solution. The proposal requires that school districts spend 65 percent of funding on classroom instruction and appears to be attractive among policymakers, particularly as it provides a way to increase spending on students without increasing taxes. A number of states have already taken action or are proposing to implement a comparable policy including Texas, Louisiana, Kansas, Ohio, Minnesota, Illinois, Florida, Colorado, Washington and Arizona.

Economists and choice proponents have also found a linkage between the adequacy in funding movement and charter and voucher efforts. After gathering a brain-trust of supporters at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government including Paul Peterson, Kenneth Starr, Eric Hanushek and others, the group argues that vouchers and charter schools are viable alternatives to lining the coffers of school districts with more money that may not result in different outcomes. In fact, the Alliance for School Choice has plans to introduce alternative litigation in states with pending adequacy cases suggesting choice, not additional money, will lead to improved educational outcomes.

While 2006 is likely to add to the menu of options on education finance, Georgia will find plenty of discussion and few definitive solutions.

POLICY PERSPECTIVE

First Class Education (FCE) has articulated a goal of having all 50 states implement a 65 percent policy by 2008. The organization, which was founded just last spring (2005), has found fertile ground for its message. FCE is counting 16 states and the District of Columbia among its "active states."[47] The group has based the calculation of its 65 percent on data from the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES), employing the NCES definition for classroom instruction-related expenses *(see Table G: Definition for the 65 Percent In Classroom Costs)*. NCES data indicate that schools spent an average of 61.3 percent of their operating budgets on classroom resources in 2002-2003.

Proponents count among the key rationales for support, the opportunity

TABLE G: Definition of 65 Percent In Classroom Costs

In the Classroom	Outside of the Classroom
Classroom Teachers and Instructional Aide Salaries	Instruction Staff Support Services: teacher training, instruction and curriculum development, library and media services
Instructional Supplies: computers, televisions, or other multimedia devices used in instruction	Student-Support Services: Attendance takers, guidance counselors, nurses, and social workers
Co-curricular Activities: Field Trips, Athletics, Music, Arts	School and District-level Administration
Tuition to Out-of-State Districts	Operations and Maintenance
Payments to Private Institutions for Special Needs	Food Services and Transportation

Drawn from Standard and Poors, "The Issues and Implications of the 65 Percent Solution"

[45] Ibid.

[46] Members for four of the districts were named in September 2005: Charles R. Webb of Statesboro, representing the 12th District, Melissa V. Turner of Braselton representing the 10th District, M. Carlene Talton of Decatur representing the Fourth District, Maggy Martinez of Hampton representing the 13th District.

[47] Active states are as defined by the organization www.firstclasseducation.org.

Table H: For the Record: How Georgia Fares on K-12 In the Classroom Expenditures

Georgia				
Total Spending (%)	2003	2002	2001	2000
Operating Expenditures	86.8	86.3	85.7	85.4
Total Capital Expenditures	12.8	13.2	13.9	14.2
Non-K-12 Expenditures	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.5
Operating Expenditures by Function (%)				
Instruction	63.4	63.9	63.4	62.4
Instructional Staff Support	5.4	5.1	5.1	5.7
Pupil Support	4.5	4.6	4.6	4.8
General Administration	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
School Administration	6.1	6.0	6.1	6.2
Operations and Maintenance	7.3	7.6	7.9	7.8
Student Transportation	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.7
Food Services	4.9	5.0	5.1	5.3
Enterprise Operations	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other Expenditures	3.2	2.8	2.7	2.6

Data drawn from Standard and Poor's www.schoolmatters.com. Instruction is comparable to NCES definition for in classroom expenditures

to bolster spending in the classroom including teacher pay raises while not having to increase taxes or allocate additional state funds. Opponents argue the narrow definition of "classroom-instruction" could adversely affect student achievement. For example, while quality professional development is the most cost-effective investment in improving teacher quality and student achievement, the 65 percent model excludes professional development from its classroom costs. Opponents also argue that the 65 percent solution could lead to redirecting or reducing funds from critical support services (i.e. social workers) that are also particularly important for schools' most vulnerable populations.

Based on a Standard & Poor's analysis of student achievement data for several school districts in Minnesota that currently expend 65 percent of funds in the classroom, there is no direct correlation between student achievement and a specific ratio of spending on classroom instruction. However, the group argues that such a ratio can be an effective performance benchmark to assess districts' return on resources.[48]

WHAT'S NEXT FOR GEORGIA?

While some Georgia lawmakers have already articulated an interest in the 65 Percent Solution, Georgia education stakeholders are likely to find the terms of this debate strikingly similar to debates on the role, relevance, and viability of expenditure controls. The proposal is also likely to resonate among taxpayers who are eager to have more strategic investment of taxpayer dollars. However, the impact of the 65 Percent Solution rests largely in how in-classroom costs are defined and how the policy is operationalized. Stakeholders should give attention to the following questions in determining whether to support or oppose such a proposal (*See also Table H: How Georgia Fares on K-12 in the Classroom Expenditures)*:

- Will a 65 Percent Solution be implemented as a revenue-driven policy or an expenditure control? This has significant implications because the current funding formula has embedded in its weights several costs that NCES would define as out-of-classroom costs. If this proposal were implemented as a revenue-driven policy, then modifications would have to be made in how funds were allocated to districts and how much districts would receive.

- If it is implemented as an expenditure control, what is the unit of measurement – the school or the district? The unit of measurement will ultimately determine the extent to which the policy infringes on local control.

- Does the administration of such a policy impact all districts equally, i.e. will wealthier districts have more flexibility because they have a significant amount of local revenue as compared to low-wealth districts that rely more heavily on state funds? If the policy creates different impositions for districts, which districts are "winners" and which districts are "losers" under such a policy?

- Finally, can the state mandate inputs and regulate outcomes, particularly when limits on inputs preclude a district from aligning spending with needs at the local school level?

For Georgia, 2006 is the figurative equivalent of an anticipatory set, as the most substantive decisions related to how the state allocates funding for K-12 will likely be delayed until after the November 2006 gubernatorial and legislative elections. Barring an out-of-court settlement between the Consortium and the State of Georgia, the most important education finance decision of 2006 will likely be addressed in the recommendations that will come from IBM consultants, the selected contractor for providing a cost model to the Investing in Educational Excellence Taskforce. How the model integrates best practices and educational benchmarks with the growing practical school district expenses in maintenance and operation (M&O) and transportation will have significant implications for the next funding mechanism. Furthermore, the cost model recommendation will likely answer the long anticipated question on whether accelerated educational expectations will result in greater financial investments.

10 NECESSARY BUT NOT SUFFICIENT: REDEFINING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

POLITICAL CONTEXT

As national lawmakers and education stakeholders ready themselves for the battle that is likely to ensue with the approach of the reauthorization of NCLB 2007, state level policymakers are becoming increasingly aware that NCLB is a necessary but insufficient requirement on the road to educational excellence and ensuring workforce and world readiness. While NCLB brought a much-needed focus on subgroup performance and expedited states' efforts to create accountability mechanisms, the variance in state proficiency standards and diverging capacities to collect valid student level data along with additional flexibility granted to state plans have produced data that make comparisons across states difficult if not impossible.

While some states have continued to rely on their flagship accountability programs (i.e. North Carolina's ABC and Tennessee's use of value-added assessments), others (Massachusetts, Maryland, and Texas) have convened commissions including business leaders to create better alignment between current and future workforce requirements and educational expectations (standards). The various commissions are offering policy recommendations

[48] Standard & Poor's, "The Issues and Implications of the 65 Percent Solution," November 2005.

that are directly tied to the realities of their specific state. These states have determined that they must craft their own definitions of excellence and put mechanisms in place that are both relevant and meaningful to community members, clearly articulating what students and schools are expected to be held accountable for and translating that into real meaning for students, teachers, and schools.

POLICY PERSPECTIVE

Accountability and governance mechanisms are increasingly viewed as the vehicle for facilitating seamless transitions across the educational continuum, minimizing the educational disruptions that occur from a lack of policy cohesion. The most visible indictment of a lack of such alignment is observed in the gap between the standards required to earn a high school diploma and skills required for success in college. The increased skills demanded of the 21st century workforce have generated a renewed interest in the direct linkages in P-16 accountability, particularly among business leaders. Three national organizations (Institute for Educational Leadership, The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and Stanford Center for Educational Leadership) have given credence to the issue and provided a set of real-world policy options for states as they look to create more effective governance structures that better align P-16 production with the realities of the 21st century world.

The report, "The Governance Divide," reviews the experiences of Georgia, Florida, New York and Oregon. The report highlights four policy levers that are essential to creating true systemic reform across the educational continuum:

- **Curricula and assessments –** creating standards that are aligned across P-16, including expectations on course-taking patterns.

- **Finance –** providing funding that is truly integrated across P-16 including legislative committees. True policy integration will be hampered without comparable budgetary access to support it.

- **Data Systems –** implementing high quality data systems that allow for individual student tracking throughout the continuum. Such a system provides information that allows for better diagnosing student needs, identifying good practices and tracking students over time.

- **Accountability –** developing accountability systems that truly span P-12 and higher education and structures incentives and sanctions accordingly.

The report suggests that efforts to move to a true P-16 system are significant paradigm shifts that must be implemented in the context of a state's history and culture in education reform. As such, there is no singular best model to implement a true P-16 system.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR GEORGIA?

Georgia was beginning its work to implement a statewide accountability system when No Child Left Behind was signed into law in January 2002. In many ways, the landmark legislation embodied key elements of the planned Georgia system – school level accountability, disaggregated subgroup data, and testing in grades three through eight. Implementing NCLB became paramount as the state went back to the drawing board to ensure the alignment of the new system would ensure a single statewide accountability system. Since 2002, the language of NCLB has permeated the state. However, NCLB's annual standards of proficiency are only a floor in delineating expectations of student achievement. The 2005 rollout of the state's new school report cards provides the appropriate complement to NCLB's definition of proficiency by offering an opportunity to define educational excellence. The report cards bridge the communication challenge of NCLB by allowing different types of schools to celebrate success and excellence by measuring them against both an absolute and a progressive standard and incorporating other indicators that are equally important to parents and community members but often overlooked in the larger AYP discussions.

Georgia has the four key elements outlined in the Governance Divide Report. This year will provide a unique opportunity to interface those elements to create a true accountability and governance mechanism linked to 21st century workforce requirements and the state's economic future. Four factors converge that will further contribute to the viability of strengthening P-16 accountability and governance: 1) The second year of school level report cards as a part of the Georgia Single Statewide Accountability System (GSSAS); 2) Plans outlined in the state's National Governors Association Honors Blueprint to convene a P-16 council to create systemic policy linkages; 3) An articulated need for such a linkage by the Commission for a New Georgia, Workforce Development (This committee outlined the need for greater linkages across P-16 and among other relevant state agencies that directly impact workforce and economic development.); and 4) Implementation of the new Georgia Statewide Student Information System.

Georgia was among the national leaders when it developed a governance body, the Education Coordinating Council, to link P-12 with higher education. Today, Georgia has all of the supporting mechanisms to actualize the vision of such a body. The state however must harness the political will to integrate and continue to move forward a true workforce development/P-16 agenda. An essential element of this effort must include linking the new student information system to higher education and creating accountability measures that cross the traditional divides of P-12 and higher education. This means linking its accountability mechanisms to key indicators like lowering the percentage of students taking remedial courses, increasing persistence rates in college, and increasing the percentage of underrepresented minorities that attend and complete college.

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