

Top Ten Issues to watch in 2007

1 Is Teacher Quality the Bridge to Maintaining America's Global Competitiveness? *Page 1*

2 Will Secondary Reform Transform P-16 Education? *Page 3*

3 No Child Left in Traditional Public School...the Proliferation of School Choice *Page 4*

4 Focusing on the Necessary: Addressing the Achievement Gaps *Page 6*

5 Is NCLB Dead? Reauthorizing and Changing the Tenets of NCLB *Page 7*

6 Will Georgia Seize the Opportunity to Fund Schools Differently? *Page 9*

7 Rising Costs of Higher Education: Who Really Pays? *Page 10*

8 Can Single-Sex Education Improve Achievement? *Page 12*

9 NCLB Goes to Pre-K? *Page 14*

10 Needed: Technology for Schools and Georgia's Statewide Student Information System *Page 14*



As we release the third annual edition of this publication, it strikes me that the imperative to improve educational outcomes is more pronounced than ever. The state is challenged to address the rising cost of health care and provide critical governmental services. Policymakers face a formidable challenge in balancing the often competing policy priorities. We believe this document, along with the Partnership's continued policy efforts, crystallizes the systemic need for investment in education. It is too easy to short shrift critical investments in education with the hope that we can make it up on the back end. However, one thing is certain – We will pay! We will pay now or we will pay later. We can pay now by investing in improving teacher quality, developing reliable data systems, investing in additional time for our most academically vulnerable students, strengthening the quality of early learning so that all students enter school ready to learn, ensuring higher education is more accessible and affordable – or – we can pay later in decreased purchasing power, increased costs of remediation and job-training, increased need for social services, higher unemployment rates, and in the inability to attract and retain industry.

We can ill-afford to linger in the last quartile in graduation rates, performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or other critical indicators of student proficiency. There are few opportunities in this new economy for low-skilled workers. In this new South, we must answer the call of the knowledge-driven global economy by producing a qualified and competent workforce. Our preparedness to respond to that call will be directly determined by how we confront the hard choices we must make today.

As we work for the betterment of our state and specifically of our children, there is an adage that has often been shared on our annual bus trips: The measure of a community is reflected in the quality of life of its children. In 2007, how will we answer when we are asked how did we invest in our children's future?

– Dr. Stephen Dolinger, President, Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education

1 Is Teacher Quality the Bridge to Maintaining America's Global Competitiveness?

Political Context

With the principal author of key legislation aimed at addressing teacher quality expected to take the helm as chair of the U.S. House Education and Workforce Committee (Representative George Miller, (D-California) primary sponsor of the Teacher Excellence for All Children Act) and several Southeastern states tackling key issues on teacher quality, the significance of teacher quality will rightfully lay claim to a significant portion of the education policy debate in 2007. Alabama policymakers are expected to respond to a set of recommendations outlined by a governor-appointed commission on teacher quality. North Carolina will release its final report on the state's teacher working conditions survey. Georgia lawmakers will be called upon to act decisively to help strengthen teacher quality in the face of recommendations outlined in *Georgia's Unfinished Business: Teacher Quality*, a report released in late 2006 by the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education.

These factors, coupled with the U.S. Department of Education's increased focus on addressing the equitable distribution of qualified and experienced teachers, suggest teacher quality is increasingly recognized as a critical component of national efforts to strengthen education as the bridge to assuring America's competitiveness in the 21st century.

Policy Perspective

Is teacher quality the bridge toward creating 21st century schools? Does it trump national standards, quality early learning or strengthening high schools? While certainly all of these policy issues are important in creating the 21st century standard of public education, none of them will achieve optimal effectiveness in the absence of critical investments in transforming the teaching profession. It's not complicated! In fact, in this day and age with a plethora of

"In the conditions of modern life the rule is absolute, the [nation] which does not value trained intelligence is doomed."

– Alfred North Whitehead, Philosopher

research confirming teacher quality is the single most influential school-based factor toward improving student achievement, it can almost pass for common sense. Yet, it continues to be one of the most difficult areas to garner the necessary political and fiscal will to make the critical investments. If business leaders and education advocates have their way, 2007 will mark an alignment between the level of need in improving teacher quality and the political and fiscal will to make the necessary investments.

Do we have the will to act? If policymakers need the cover of research to support spending the billions of dollars that are required to usher the teaching profession into the 21st century, then the perfect storm is brewing (see Sample of Reports on Improving Teacher Quality). Business-led organizations, think tanks of both the liberal and conservative hue, and those from within and outside of the educational establishment have reached a general consensus on the need to overhaul the teaching profession. There are several key issues that must collectively be addressed:

► **Ensure education preparation is more in alignment with the realities of 21st century schools and provide adequate support to new teachers as they enter the profession.** Arthur Levine's report, "Educating School Teachers," delineates specific recommendations to strengthen educator preparation programs, including evaluating such programs based on impact of their graduates on student achievement. Louisiana has already designed a data system to collect and measure such data. Levine, however, cautions that teacher education programs cannot compensate for needed state and local government and school board action on matters like teacher salaries, incentives and working conditions, which are critical to create the quality teaching workforce our nation requires.

► **Curb the flight of new teachers from America's public schools and retain experienced teachers in the profession.** With almost one of every two new teachers exiting the profession within the first five years, attrition has approached crisis levels. Richard Ingersoll's research along with evaluation of best practice induction models in California, including the Santa Cruz New Teacher Center Induction Model, indicates that providing new teachers with a mentor, reduced workload, and ongoing support can cut new teacher attrition in half. Likewise, North Carolina's "Teacher Working Conditions Survey" has shed light on what matters to teachers. Survey data indicate working conditions have a significant impact on teacher turnover. Among the issues that matter to teachers and shape their willingness to remain in their schools/profession are leadership, empowerment, and greater opportunities for planning and collaboration. Thus, investments in teachers also requires investment in on-going high-quality professional development. Teachers must have opportunities to work collaboratively with other teachers at the school level, spend time in each others classrooms, and revise practices based on analysis of student achievement data.

► **Ensure every child has a caring, qualified and**

competent teacher by putting an end to inequitable distribution. Regardless of what proxy of teacher quality is employed (years of experience, at least a college minor in primary subject area, or certification), NCES (National Center for Education Statistics) data along with reports from the Education Trust, indicate poor and minority children are significantly less likely than their counterparts to have experienced and qualified teachers. America's fast changing demographics indicate the nation's ability to raise the floor on student achievement is inextricably linked to improving educational outcomes for poor and minority children. Among key recommendations targeting this issue is a call for increasing the number of minority candidates entering the profession.

► **Overhaul teacher compensation from the current steps and ladders model to accommodate the realities of supply and demand and reward efficacy.** The growing pool of emerging best practice teacher compensation models (Q Comp, Pro Comp and Milken's TAP) illustrate overhauling teacher compensation must take a broad look at the needs and realities of the profession and move beyond simply "paying teachers differently." The best models integrate teacher evaluation, professional development and create multiple career pathways. Restructuring teacher compensation and creating performance- and market-based pay are also seen as critical steps to strengthening recruitment of high caliber teaching candidates.

The College Board's Center for Innovative Thought in its report, "Teachers and the Uncertain American Future," provide a sobering call to action. The report explicitly articulates the need to move the teaching profession into the 21st century. Calling for a new compact between the nation and its teachers, the report "... insists that teachers deserve a professional community and the professional treatment that befits their important role in our national life."

What's Next for Georgia?

A Sample of Reports on Improving Teacher Quality Released in 2006

Tough Choices Tough Times, New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce/National Center on Education and the Economy

North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey Interim Report, Center for Teacher Quality

Georgia's Unfinished Business in Teacher Quality, Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education

Governor's Commission on Quality Teaching Initial Report to Governor Bob Riley, Office of the Governor of Alabama and Alabama State Department of Education

Teachers and the Uncertain American Future, Center for Innovative Thought

Teaching Inequality: How Poor Minority Students Are Shortchanged on Teacher Quality, Education Trust

Education School Teachers, Arthur Levine

Teacher Pay Reforms: The Political Implication of Recent Research, Center for American Progress/Urban Institute

In 2006, Georgia named its first cadre of Master Teachers and stands poised to identify a corps of teachers as Academic Coaches to support school improvement in 2007. Likewise, the Alliance of Education Agency Heads has named teacher quality as its second major goal to develop and align cross-agency policy. Their work will be supported by the Committee on Quality Teaching which was also integrally involved in vetting recommendations delineated in "Georgia's Unfinished Business: Teacher Quality" report. After North Carolina releases its final working conditions survey and related teacher turnover data, Georgia must determine if it should expand use of such a survey in Georgia.

Political Context

2 Will Secondary Reform Transform P-16 Education?

In 2005, when Bill Gates, now named among the most influential individuals in driving education policy discourse in the United States, rolled out the new three "Rs" – rigor, relevance and relationships, few could have known it would generate a firestorm that would engulf all of education from pre-kindergarten through higher education. While high schools were the catalyst, every education issue is now examined in the context of how it connects to creating a globally competitive workforce. Even this publication (See teacher quality, achievement gap, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reauthorization, data information system) continues this integrated discussion to identify and build the essential elements in a relevant system to support America's economic future.

In 2006, Georgia made a significant step forward in its journey to solidify a seamless pipeline from early learning through college. Governor Perdue established the Alliance of Education Agency Heads (AEAHA), a consortium of the agency leaders from the state's seven education agencies. The entity has already identified secondary reform as its first policy priority. In 2007, the AEAHA will play a critical role in helping to advance Georgia's efforts under the American Diploma Project (ADP).

Policy Perspective

Secondary reform continues to focus on three factors: ramping up curriculum (*rigor*), ensuring the high school experience is *relevant* to the requirements of the 21st century workplace and getting an accurate representation of how many students are lost in the pipeline. The latter has states focusing on strengthening data systems to track individual student progress. Several states have already adjusted their high school graduation calculation method. The shift provides a sobering *reality check*.

► **Rigor:** As states move forward in efforts to strengthen high schools, research underscores the importance of a rigorous curriculum. The U.S. Department of Education's "Toolbox Revisited" (2006) reinforced findings from its earlier report "Answers

in the Toolbox" (1999) that a rigorous high school curriculum is the most important factor influencing college success, with the highest level of math above Algebra II as a key marker for bachelor's degree completion. "Toolbox Revisited" emphasized the need for post-secondary institutions to identify key gateway courses to assist teachers and parents in helping students plan and prepare accordingly long before graduation. These findings are in alignment with the work of the American Diploma Project which recommends four years of rigorous English and four years of mathematics with at least one course beyond Algebra II for all students in order to earn a college and work ready diploma.

► **Relevance:** Even as states ramp up curricular requirements, many are working to ensure that a high school diploma certifies students are work and college ready. As of February 2006, five states had aligned their high school standards with post-secondary and business expectations and an additional 30 states plan to work towards alignment. As of the end of 2006, four states (Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana and Rhode Island) had completed the process and are identified as "highly aligned" with ADP benchmarks.

► **Reality Check:** Thirty-nine states have committed to using the Graduation Counts Compact definition to calculate their graduation rates. Early reports among states which have adjusted their calculation methods confirm the nation may be graduating fewer students. In November 2006, Indiana presented a new graduation rate of 75.5 percent to the public, much lower than its previous inflated rate of 90 percent. Mississippi also rolled out a new graduation rate in November 2006; the state's rate of 61.1 percent was a wake-up call compared to the previously reported rate of 85 percent.

What's Next for Georgia?

Georgia continues to move steadfastly in its efforts to reform high schools. 2007 will mark the first year a cadre of graduation coaches dispatched throughout the state will have an opportunity to address the third "R" – relationships. These individuals are expected to help identify students at-risk of dropping out and linking such students to critical services including credit recovery programs. The program, which has received several national nods, holds promise in helping to strengthen the state's graduation rate. Governor Perdue has indicated his plans to extend the program to middle schools.

Perhaps most significant in our journey toward secondary reform will be the approval of a new set of high school graduation requirements which will apply to the ninth graders entering in the fall of 2007. The State Board of Education's graduation rule is particularly significant as it is expected to reflect the tenets outlined in the American Diploma Project. Georgia has made great strides in aligning high school standards for college and workforce readiness under the guidance of ADP's Alignment Institute. The Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) in English and mathematics were benchmarked against the American Diploma Project and ACT college readiness standards.

Finally, the second in the Georgia's Partnership's

gap analysis series ("Georgia's Unfinished Business") will focus on secondary education reform and a set of recommendations which will further inform the state's efforts.

Political Context

3 No Child Left in Traditional Public School...the Proliferation of School Choice

As the nation continues to grapple with the stubbornly persistent achievement gap, the challenges of improving student achievement for poor, minority and disabled students is contributing to a broader acceptance of and appetite for public and private choice. In 2007, choice is expected to garner its fair share of the NCLB reauthorization debate including the President's efforts to gain bipartisan support for the inclusion of Opportunity Grants (\$100 million in federal dollars to provide private school scholarships to students in chronically underperforming schools). While the change in Congress' composition might suggest the tabling of such an initiative, the growing bipartisan support of private school choice options are rendering the traditional party lines on this issue less clear. Likewise, NCLB's accountability provision which allowed chronically underperforming schools to be reconstituted as charter schools is also likely to be revisited. Advocates and opponents of choice as a component of NCLB¹, will draw on the lessons learned from the charter school movement, which will mark its 16th anniversary in 2007, with particular focus on school systems in which charter schools comprise a significant proportion of market share (i.e. New Orleans – 69 percent; Dayton, OH – 28 percent and Washington, D.C. – 25 percent).² While broad conversations about the value of choice will continue, the 2007 choice discourse will be marked by a specific focus on the broader question of whether choice can yield significantly improved outcomes for underserved populations.

Policy Perspective

The current proliferation of school choice including charters, tax breaks and direct vouchers has largely targeted special education, low income and minority students. In fact, of all expanded choice options for which legislation was enacted or appropriations made during 2006, seven of the nine programs targeted such populations. Persistent achievement gaps, new choice programs targeting minority populations, and a growing number of minority-supported, pro-choice advocacy organizations are contributing to the support of private school choice initiatives by governors of both parties (See table, page 5).

Has choice, in either its public or private school iteration, rendered substantive insight in addressing one of the nation's greatest educational dilemmas – significantly improving educational attainment of poor, minority and disabled children? Turning to the available pool of research does not readily answer the question. The universe of research on vouchers is

mixed when assessing the impact on student achievement. Furthermore, the most recent research on such efforts focuses on other indicators – parental satisfaction, impact of private school choice on racial segregation in schooling, and whether voucher/tax credits for private school scholarships are more efficient than school district spending. While certainly each of these indicators is important, the core question is whether these programs have been effective at improving student achievement. The verdict is still out on that question in the context of private choice. A key contributor to the limited research on the student achievement impact of private choice initiatives is a lack of comparable student achievement data. Private schools typically do not participate in the testing programs required of public schools. To address this issue, a number of states with private choice programs are requiring specific assessments be administered at particular grade levels. The availability of such data is critical to assesses program effectiveness.

The research on charters is better but still plagued by its own set of limitations. There is a growing body of evaluative research, based on sound research methodologies, focused on specific charter schools within particular districts or comparisons among several districts. However, this research is limited in its inferential value largely due to the diversity of charter schools. In a 2006 report, "Playing to Type: Mapping the Charter School Landscape," the Fordham Institute attempts to address the diversity issue identifying five charter school types – traditional, progressive, vocational, general, alternative delivery. This classification system can significantly expand the universe of research on charter schools and allows for a broader assessment of the performance of charters on a national level.

In 1991, charter schools proposed to significantly contribute to improved student achievement by giving poor families the option to vote with their feet and eliminating the monopoly of the traditional neighborhood public school. Sixteen years later, the value of choice is perhaps best illustrated in the lessons learned from the charter movement. Charters have significantly contributed to shifting educational policy discourse with its focus on accountability and introducing the market paradigm in a fully public school context.

Charter schools now serve two percent of public school students nationally in more than 3,500 schools. There are six school districts in which charters comprise a significant market-share of public school options, comprising at least 20 percent of the market. For Washington, D.C., which occupies third place among highest market share districts with one of four students attending a charter school, charter schools have not proven to be an easy answer to addressing lagging achievement. The District is in its tenth year with charter schools and now projects it will become a majority-charter district within eight years. However, in and of itself, creating a market share of charter schools has not significantly reduced the number of schools and students performing below standards. In 2005, 37 percent of charter schools did not meet NCLB AYP requirements. Quality varies across charter

¹ Several organizations including the Alliance for School Choice have articulated their intent to advocate for stronger choice via NCLB. An Alabama-based advocacy organization, Citizens for Better Schools, has filed a federal complaint on the enforcement of public school choice currently required in the law, www.edweek.org.

² Ziebarth, Todd, "Top 10 Charter Communities by Market Share," National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Sept. 9, 2006.

schools. A recent report released by pro-charter group Fight for Children acknowledges a key variable in addressing variance in charter school quality is working to build capacity both within charters and among authorizers. This sentiment is echoed in a report released by the Fordham Institute, "Trends in Charter School Authorizing." The clearest recognition of the importance of capacity building is perhaps echoed in the foreword of the Fordham report, "...we and others have claimed that charter schools are the most promising innovations in American education. We were wrong. Charter school authorizing and the act of chartering schools are the most promising contemporary educational innovation."

Perhaps the most important lesson we can derive from the charter school movement, to borrow from the mantra of the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), is there are no short cuts!

Choice alone is not a silver bullet for addressing public education's most pressing challenge – educating poor and minority children. Schools must have the

capacity, resources and leadership undergirded by high expectations to raise the achievement of poor and minority students. We know what works for children – qualified, competent and caring teachers for every child, additional instructional opportunities for students with academic weaknesses, and high expectations coupled with rigorous academic curriculum in a school environment focused on continuous improvement. Improving student achievement does not happen by accident, it requires deliberate and specific attention. Efforts to expand or provide new choice opportunities must have as its central aim the improvement of student achievement, which by design is reliant upon the collection and analysis of data. The challenge all schools will face is bringing those things into alignment – it's both that simple and that complex.

Districts Where Charters Comprise Significant Market Share

New Orleans, LA	69%
Dayton, OH	28%
Washington, D.C.	25%
Pontiac, MI	20%
Kansas City, MO	20%
Youngstown, OH	20%

Progress of Choice Initiatives 2006					
State	Governor	Target Population	Program Description	Appropriation	New Program/Expansion
Arizona	Janet Napolitano (D)	Foster children	(est. 2006) Tuition scholarships expected to serve 500 children annually. Scholarships will be worth up to \$5,000.	\$2.5 million in dollar for dollar tax credits to businesses.	New Program
		Children with disabilities	(est. 2006) Children with disabilities can earn a voucher up to the "base support level of state funding (slightly more than \$3,000/student)."	\$2.5 million in dollar for dollar tax credits to businesses that donate money for scholarships to tuition granting non-profits.	New Program
		Low income students	(est. 2006) Corporations receive dollar for dollar tax credit for contributions to nonprofits that fund private scholarships for low-income students.	\$10 million cap in year one (provision allows for increasing cap to 20 percent in 2010).	New Program
Florida	Jeb Bush (R)	Children from failing public schools	This program was established to replace Florida's A+ Opportunity Scholarship which was ruled unconstitutional by the state Supreme Court. It expects to serve 700 children.		Expansion/Replacement
Iowa	Tom Vilsack (D)	Students from families below 300 percent poverty	Educational Opportunities Act – Individuals can receive a 65 percent tax credit for donations to nonprofit tuition organization that fund private school scholarships.	\$2.5 million	New Program
Ohio	Bob Taft (R)	Students attending schools under "academic watch"	Ed Choice Program – expands the number of students eligible to receive scholarships under the state's voucher program from 20,000 to 50,000.		Expansion
Pennsylvania	Edward Rendell (D)	N/A	Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program – corporations receive partial tax credits for donations to nonprofits that fund private school scholarships for school improvement projects.	Increased tax limit from \$44 million to \$54 million	Expansion
Rhode Island	Donald Carcieri (R)	Low income students	Corporate Scholarship Tax Credit Program.	\$1 million	New Program
Utah	Jon Huntsman, Jr. (R)	Children with special needs	Expansion of Tuition Scholarship Program from serving 250 to 500 children.	Tuition per child of \$5,700	Expansion
Wisconsin	Jim Doyle (D)	N/A	Expanded Milwaukee's existing school voucher program from 15,000 to 22,500 children. It also expanded the program to include requirements for administration of a norm-referenced assessment and submission of results for academic evaluation.		Expansion

Data drawn from The Heritage Foundation, "The Backgrounder," No. 1970, Sept. 18, 2006.

What's Next for Georgia?

In the K-12 arena, Georgia's policy discourse on choice has focused almost exclusively on charter schools. However, with the establishment of the Georgia Virtual School, which expands access to Advanced Placement and other secondary courses to home school and private school students, 2007 is poised to be another landmark year in the state's journey with voucher legislation on the horizon. Senate Bill 10 sponsored by Eric Johnson would offer private school tuition to children with disabilities. This issue will spark debate on amending the state's constitution to allow for the use of public dollars for private/sectarian schools. However, it is also possible the Georgia General Assembly will entertain serious debate on the issue of providing a tax-credit option for families who have children enrolled in private school and/or a tax credit for businesses to provide scholarships in 2007.

Likewise, support for charter schools is growing. 2006 marked the first year a charter school was added to a districts Special Purpose Local-Option Sales Tax and a commitment made by a local district to provide a building. Chatham County has approved plans to build a facility for Oglethorpe Academy, a 6th-8th grade middle school featured on the Georgia Partnership 2006 Annual Bus Trip Across Georgia. Lawmakers may consider expanding the available pool for charter school facilities.

4 Focusing on the Necessary: Addressing the Achievement Gaps

Political Context

With NCLB reauthorization expected to consume a significant portion of the nation's education policy discourse in 2007 and the third administration of NAEP since the law's passage, the underlying theme of the law – "the achievement gap among the nation's poor, minority and disabled children" – will again receive significant attention. A confluence of reports has emerged delineating the persistence of the nation's achievement gap. Some researchers have been blatant in their concern about the limits of moving all students to a proficiency standard by some predetermined time period.³ After such ambitious policy efforts as Goals 2000, several are questioning if America's goal of proficiency for all and specifically closing the achievement gap is *the right goal, at the right time with the right timeline?*

Policy Perspective

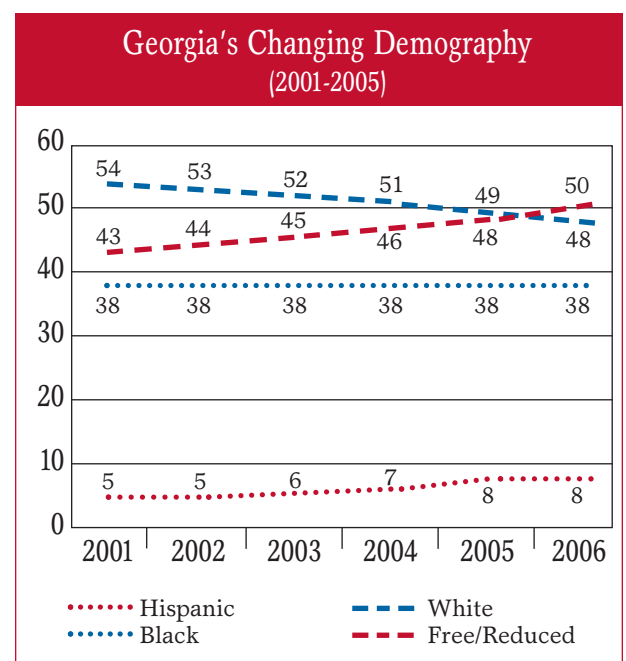
"How many effective schools would you have to see to be persuaded of the educability of poor children? If your answer is more than one, then I submit that you have reasons of your own for preferring to believe that pupil performance derives from family background instead of school response to family background. We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far."

– Ronald Edmonds, Harvard University

In "Top Ten Issues of 2006" specific attention was given to the argument of educational excellence. The section "Necessary but Not Sufficient" gave credence to the goals of NCLB which establishes a floor for educational achievement in K-12 schools for all students. The end of 2006 was marked by a number of reports that directly questioned the viability and practicality of the NCLB proficiency for all goal. In this 2007 edition, we focus on why closing the achievement gaps, establishing a floor for educational achievement in 21st century American public schools, is both necessary and possible.

For all its criticisms, No Child Left Behind has drawn a definitive line in the sand, a powerful policy statement that the U.S. believes in the educability of poor, minority and disabled students. It is not necessarily altruism which gives resonance to the importance of ensuring all of America's children are provided with a quality education. Our nation, rightfully, recognizes its economic prosperity is inextricably linked to strengthening the quality of K-12 education for all. The browning of America suggests a centerpiece toward improving K-12 education is also addressing historical underperformance of K-12 schools with minority, disabled and low-income children.

Several researchers have explicitly raised the question of whether proficiency for all is a realistic goal. The underlying theme harkens back to a historical debate that injected itself into the national discourse



3 Rothstein, Richard, Jacobsen, Rebecca, Wilder, Tamara, "Proficiency for All: An Oxymoron," Prepared for the Symposium, "Examining America's Commitment to Closing Achievement Gaps NCLB and Its Alternatives," Campaign for Fiscal Equity and Teachers College, November 2006.

over a decade ago with Charles Murray's, *The Bell Curve*, which questions whether gaps in achievement between blacks and whites are genetic. Further muddying the 21st century version of this emerging debate is a focus on the intersection of other social policies that are seen as contributors to a cycle of disadvantage and whether schools can and/or should be expected to compensate for these early disadvantages/inequities. Undeniably, students do not neatly divorce themselves from the realities of their lives when they enter the doors of public schools. However, this debate is dangerous in its implications for distracting attention from the critical work public schools can do to level the playing field. There is a line between arguing for and identifying what schools can do to eradicate inequity and suggesting that such inequity is a matter of fact. It is this line that we must clearly demarcate and deliberately expose, it is what President Bush termed "the soft bigotry of low expectations."

Education researchers and economists Eric Hanushek and Steven Rivkin provide analysis of data from the Texas Schools Project and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey which provide strong evidence that school based factors account for a significant proportion of the differential in achievement between minorities in grades third through eighth. Among the attributable factors are school mobility rates, prevalence of beginning teachers and racial composition of schools that combine to exacerbate early achievement gaps. A litany of data analysis from the Education Trust underscores the Hanushek and Rivkin findings.

In "How Well Are States Educating Our Neediest Children," the Fordham Foundation highlights and ranks states on three indicators that can significantly boost student achievement: 1) content-rich curriculum, 2) standards-based reform, and 3) school choice. Fordham finds that states which have made progress on these indicators have also made some or moderate progress in improving achievement among poor and minority students. Longitudinal NAEP data from 1972 through 1989 show a narrowing of the achievement gap between minorities and their counterparts. The trend line stagnated in the early 90's and then began to widen. Is closing the achievement gap possible? The data resoundingly indicate it is possible; we need only muster the will to take the critical steps and investments to close it.

What's Next for Georgia?

For Georgia the future is now! Georgia had its first student count in October 2005 in which the state crossed the threshold toward becoming a majority-minority public school system. With one of every two Georgia children eligible for free/reduced-priced lunch, the state's greatest opportunity to reduce the number of children who qualify for the federal lunch program, which is based on poverty guidelines, will be determined in our investment in those children today. Georgia's changing demographics place the state ahead of the national curve. The state has increasingly given attention to the achievement gap. In fact, Georgia ranks among the highest in the percent of African American students who take the SAT. However,

graduation rates among black and Latino students continue to be a central concern. While rates have improved over the past three years, these groups lag significantly behind their counterparts.

Several home-grown success stories underscore that the achievement gap can be closed when deliberate attention is given to improving student achievement: the nationally renowned Gainesville model, Georgia Public Policy Foundation's Annual No Excuses Schools, and numerous schools the Georgia Partnership has visited on its annual Bus Trip Across Georgia including Dublin City's Saxon Heights Elementary (80 percent minority and 73 percent poverty) which is educating these subgroups at rates that exceed the state average. The state's commitment to strengthening teacher quality will also play a key role in helping to narrow the gap.

5 Is NCLB Dead? Reauthorizing and Changing the Tenets of NCLB

Political Context

Prior to the midterm elections of 2006, President Bush's adamant push for timely reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act scheduled for 2007 was expected to be fruitless. Political pundits argued it was unlikely the law would receive substantive attention prior to the 2008 presidential election. However, with the NCLB Commission expected to release its recommendations in early 2007 and an articulated commitment by expected chair of the House Education and Workforce Committee, Rep. George Miller, to begin NCLB hearings shortly after the new Congress convenes, 2007 will be marked by the promise and prospects of changes in NCLB. Education stakeholders are armed with a list of recommendations for necessary changes to the law.

If nothing other than the sheer politics of the issue, NCLB will be a front burner issue in 2007 as political prognosticators examine whether it becomes the first "break in the ranks" of the new Democratic majority between newly elected congressmen and their more senior counterparts, who are perhaps more wedded to the tenets of the law. Furthermore, after years of arguing their support for the law, yet decrying the woefully inadequate funding, will Democratic lawmakers be able to put the money where their mouths are?

Policy Perspective

To hear the use of adequate yearly progress (AYP), supplemental education services (SES) or highly qualified teacher (HQT) tossed around as common education vernacular, it's hard to imagine it has only been five years since NCLB rendered these terms nationally relevant. Since 2001, the nation has learned much about the promise and limitations of the landmark legislation, which arguably expanded the federal government's role in education policy. While staunch proponents and opponents had defined their positions

well before the ink dried, certainly five years of operationalizing NCLB offer insight on what areas of the law are in need of improvement and which are essential to honoring the spirit of the law. The Council of Chief State School Officers, the Business Roundtable, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 21st Century Partnership for Learning, the National Education Association and a litany of other national organizations have articulated a vested interest in what is included in the law's reauthorization.

► **Business** – Yielding a powerful, influential and credible voice, the business community, represented by the Business Roundtable and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, has articulated they view NCLB as a critical element of ensuring the nation's global competitiveness. As such, they will continue to directly advocate for ensuring the fundamentals of the law remain intact including: 1) proficiency for all by 2014; 2) testing;⁴ 3) accountability based on disaggregated data; and 4) options for children attending persistently low-performing schools. Additions/revisions the business community is likely to support in the reauthorization include: 1) ensuring state standards are rigorous and meet work and college readiness; 2) providing greater accountability for high school graduation rates; and 3) adding depth to the national focus on teacher quality via induction, pay for performance/merit pay and expanded professional development to support capacity building. The business community is also likely to support revisions championed by other groups including expanded use of growth models to determine compliance with AYP and strengthening state data collection capacity.

► **Research Community** – Researchers span the spectrum on their views of NCLB and what is required to ensure the law delivers on its promise to lift the floor for all children. Arguing NCLB began the "race to the bottom," Brookings and other education researchers point to the "proficiency gap between NAEP and state proficiency standards" as an example of how state's have dumbed down their standards, expecting less in order to ensure more schools make AYP. Education Trust and Harvard Researcher Paul Petersen have highlighted this issue. In a follow-up to their article, "Johnny Can Read in Some States," education researchers Peterson and Frederick Hess rate how state-defined proficiency compares to NAEP proficiency. Unsurprisingly, South Carolina led the Southeast and ranked among the best in the nation based on its proficiency definition in both 2003 and 2005, earning an "A" along with five other states and the District of Columbia (Massachusetts, Maine, Wyoming, Missouri and Hawaii). The state used NAEP as a benchmark in setting its standards. However, this has proven to be a dubious distinction for South Carolina. The state also ranks among the seven states⁵ with 50 percent (or more) of its schools not making AYP.

Southeastern States and NCLB		
	Percent of Schools Not Making AYP 2005	Strength of State Proficiency Standards 2005
Alabama	47	D-
Arkansas	22	C+
Florida	64	C+
Georgia	18	D-
Kentucky	25	C+
Louisiana	16	C
Mississippi	11	D-
North Carolina	42	F
South Carolina	50	A
Tennessee	7	F
Virginia	17	D+

Data drawn from Education Next, "Keeping An Eye on State Standards," No. 3, 2006.

There are two underlying implications of the NAEP vs. state proficiency gap on NCLB reauthorization: 1) a push for national standards and 2) requiring states to strengthen their proficiency definition. While it is unclear what form efforts to address the gap in state standards will take, the reauthorization is likely to include some effort to create greater comparability among state proficiency definitions. In fact, this issue is also included in another legislative proposal. Senator Ted Kennedy's Right T.R.A.C. (the Right Time to Reinvest in America's Competitiveness) legislation also includes a focus on providing states with the capacity to strengthen their standards. States would be given a chance to request a federal analysis to compare their reading, mathematics and science standards against NAEP benchmarks. The business community has already voiced its interest in seeing a strengthening of standards and expanded use of growth models as key components of the law's revision.

One of the law's most controversial components has been the methodology by which the states are to demonstrate progress toward the proficiency for all by 2014. States were allowed to determine their respective starting point targets for Annual Measurable Objective (the percentage of students who are expected to meet standard by grade level and content area) as a component of Adequate Yearly Progress. Brookings Institute and Richard Rothstein are among several education researchers labeling the methodology for determining AYP as "critically flawed" because it provides a universal standard to all schools in a state and does not consider individual school progress (gains). For example, in 2005 Georgia's Annual Measurable Objective for students between grades three through eight in reading/language arts was 66.7 percent. In other words, 66.7 percent of students (in all subgroups) must at least meet standards on the CRCT Reading/Language arts assessment. The state determines (approved by U.S. Department of Education) how frequently the rate increases and by what percentage, but it must result in 100 percent of students meeting proficiency by 2013-2014.

4 Other business leaders, particularly those whose enterprise is education, are advocating changes in the testing provision. Specifically, a consortium of technology and education companies and the American Federation of Teachers (The 21st Century Partnership) are advocating for testing focused on higher order thinking skills.

5 There were six states and the District of Columbia with 50 percent or more of schools not making AYP in 2005-2006. They were Florida, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico, Rhode Island and South Carolina.

Researchers criticize the model because it does not allow a school to be compared to itself, measuring its growth in improving student achievement from one year to the next. Thus schools with a high proportion of low-income and minority students, which may have started off farther behind, could show significant progress and not make AYP, while a more affluent school could appear to be effective even though it made few significant gains from one year to the next.⁶ In fact, Brookings researchers in a study of one state determined that there was no significant difference in gains between schools making AYP vs. schools not making AYP. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings and the U.S. Department of Education have shown some interest in allowing schools to use growth model calculations. In 2005, the Department, for the first time, granted permission for 10 states to use such a model. Employing a growth model requires a reliable data collection system which allows for tracking individual student progress.

► **Education Community** – Two key organizations representing distinct constituents from the education community have articulated specific concerns for the NCLB reauthorization. Choosing to lend its voice to the growing issue of improving high school completion rates, the National Education Association (NEA) will be among those who support greater accountability for states to improve their high school graduation rates. Currently, the law is soft on the issue requiring only that states show progress. Such progress could be less than one percent and the high schools are not required to meet some set benchmark on graduation rate as a component of its adequate yearly progress determination. The NEA has rolled out a 12-point plan for improving graduation rates. The organization suggests it would like to see key components of its plan included in NCLB reauthorization which includes an infusion of over \$10 billion over 10 years to make high school graduation a federal priority and mandating high school graduation or its equivalent for everyone below 21 years old. The nation's Chief State School Officers also consider high school graduation a critical focus area in the reauthorization of NCLB. The group suggests the reauthorization shift its focus from leaving no child behind to ensuring every child graduates. To that end, the group outlines three recommendations with supporting details which shift the focus of NCLB from simply establishing the tenets of standards-based reform to building capacity among states and school districts. Such capacity building would include a focus on ensuring states received supporting funding for quality data collection systems, efforts to improve teacher quality, and critical support for the necessary technical assistance schools and districts need to move to the next level on their journey toward the 2014 target.

► **Parents** – After the release of the Appleseed Report, "It Takes A Parent: Transforming Education in the Wake of No Child Left Behind Act," parent organizations will likely draw on the findings of the report to encourage Congress to offer increased funding and greater directives to drive parental involvement. NCLB originally intended to empower parents, particularly

via the provision of choice and supplemental education services as options for students attending schools that consistently did not make adequate yearly progress. However, those resources have been significantly underutilized. In fact, a Government Accountability Office report determined on average, 15 percent of eligible families exercised the options. Parent groups are calling for increased professional development funding for teachers and administrators in cultural competence and how to more effectively engage parents, greater inclusion of parents in school improvement plans and plans to restructure schools, and increased accountability for districts by requiring parent involvement information is included in consolidation applications.

What's Next for Georgia?

Georgia has largely committed itself to honoring both the letter and the spirit of No Child Left Behind. The law's testing provision was well in alignment with the state's accountability plans as delineated in the A+ Education Reform Act. However, there are two key NCLB related issues with central significance for Georgia: 1) federal funding for increased data systems and 2) measuring the state's progress under the law via the NAEP state proficiency gap. 2007 will mark the third administration of the NAEP since No Child Left Behind has been in place. However, it will be the first year Georgia's students will have received instruction under the new Georgia Performance Standards. In many ways, the 2007 NAEP administration is the first assessment of how the new standards measure up. Education stakeholders will stand poised to determine if Georgia's state vs. NAEP proficiency gap narrows. Additionally, as the Georgia Statewide Student Information System (GSSIS) continues to move forward, the state must determine if it will apply for the opportunity to employ a "growth model" as a vehicle of measuring school progress.

6 Will Georgia Seize the Opportunity to Fund Schools Differently?

Political Context

Despite concerns the economy is nearing a slowing point, funding on education is expected to garner significant attention among state level lawmakers across the nation in 2007. In Georgia, the end of the 2005-2006 legislative session was marked with several fiscal niceties (including pay raises and supply cards for teachers) while the more hotbed issues (replacing local property taxes with a sales tax to fund education) were ushered to the backburner. With the 2006 elections behind them and a bubbling interest among lawmakers to reduce Georgian's tax burden, changes in who's taxed, when, and on what will likely have direct implications for the single largest item in the state budget – K-12 public schools. Likewise, entering its third year of deliberations the Governor's Education Finance Taskforce Investing in Educational Excellence has yet to weigh in decisively on the direction of

⁶ West, Martin. "No Child Left Behind: How to Give It a Passing Grade," Policy Brief, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., December 2005.

school funding. Negotiations between the Consortium for Adequate School Funding and the state have come to a screeching halt. The battle for the budget raises the question, will Georgia seize a deliberate opportunity to provide a 21st century vision of public education supported by the requisite funding or will school funding simply be the budget's by-product?

Policy Perspective

The state budget is also the state's premier policy document. It rightfully articulates our collective needs and priorities. It is appropriate that the state contributes the greatest share of its budget to education. Equally important is the extent to which strategic visioning informs the direction of additional revenues, budget reductions and how state revenue is generated (who and what is taxed). The latter is particularly complex, as lawmakers must balance the public will (policy priorities) with the public's willingness and ability to pay. Here we give greater consideration to the state's growing interest in tax and expenditure limits.

► ***Tax and Expenditure Limits (TEL) and Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR)*** – There is a growing interest among state lawmakers to curb spending. In fact, three states (Maine, Nebraska and Oregon) presented voters with the option to add a Taxpayer Bill of Rights to their state constitutions. However, changes in tax structure and expenditure limitations rarely avoid impacting key governmental services, particularly education. California's experience with Proposition 13 and Colorado's TABOR experience are illustrative.

A Taxpayer Bill of Rights is typically instituted in a state via constitutional amendment and limits growth in government spending to comparable growth in population and inflation. As a constitutional amendment, lawmakers must seek voter approval to override spending limits. Only Colorado has a TABOR clause and in 2005 voters decided to suspend the amendment for five years to allow for restoration of public services. Another 28 states have some form of tax and expenditure limit.

Proponents of tax and expenditure limits applaud such efforts for reigning in government spending while stimulating economic growth. Opponents decry the impact on critical governmental services. Budget and policy researchers point to how tax reductions are spent as a key variable in determining whether reduced taxes stimulate economic growth. For instance, to the extent that tax reductions significantly impact education funding/quality, the research indicates the economic benefit is likely to be negative in the long-term.^{7,8}

What's Next for Georgia?

If Georgia is to seize an opportunity to fund education differently, it will require a very targeted discussion that balances the growing interest in changing the state's taxing structure against the realities of growing student enrollment, higher medical costs, growing prison populations and the realities of what will be required for Georgia to lead the nation in improving

student achievement. What we know is that if Georgia is to match the national average on any of the critical academic indicators (NAEP, graduation rates or SAT scores) then its trajectory of student achievement must significantly accelerate. Such an improvement, even in the most efficient fiscal environment, is unlikely to occur without some increase in revenue.

Data from the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute (GBPI) underscore the complexity of the challenge lawmakers face. Three key areas drive the state's \$17 billion dollar budget – education, healthcare and criminal justice. In fact, GBPI data indicate these items are increasing at a rate that outpaces population growth and inflation. While Georgia's population has grown by 39 percent between 1990 and 2005, the Medicaid population has grown by over 126 percent and the prison population by 153 percent. In this dynamic environment, a TABOR initiative would certainly require some reduction in government services.

The Investing in Educational Excellence Taskforce is expected to complete its work in 2007. The final recommendations may be well suited for the state's current fiscal environment as lawmakers can inform their vision of how revenue should be generated with a 21st century vision of Georgia's public schools.

7 Rising Costs of Higher Education: Who Really Pays?

Political Context

The affordability of higher education is increasingly seen as another barrier in America's journey toward global competitiveness. In fact, the issue is already slated as the number one education item of the 110th Congress. Lawmakers have articulated an agenda to reduce interest rates on student loans, and increase the per grant amount on the nation's premier need-based education grant - the Pell Grant.

Lawmakers will find no shortage of information to inform necessary next steps the federal government should take on higher education and the importance of the issue. Secretary Spelling's Commission on the Future of Higher Education released a final report in 2006 with a full set of recommendations on reform in higher education which, in addition to affordability, also considers recommendations to improve access, reform to improve the entire financial aid process, and targets efforts to improve transparency and accountability.

Georgia's policy discourse will also give significant consideration to higher education as Governor Perdue has articulated his commitment to seeking a constitutional amendment which will preserve the exclusive use of lottery funds for HOPE and pre-kindergarten only. Additionally, state lawmakers have articulated an interest in revisiting last year's immigration debate to give specific legal guidelines on whether undocumented students, who attended Georgia's K-12 schools, should be afforded in-state tuition.

⁷ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "What is TABOR?," www.cbpp.org.

⁸ McGuire, Therese and Rueben, Kim, "The Colorado Revenue Limit: The Economic Effects of TABOR," Economic Policy Institute.

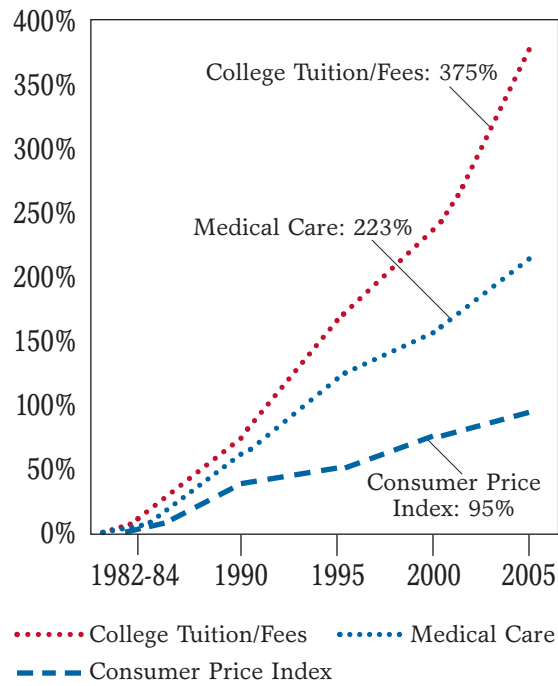
Policy Perspective

According to data from the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development, America, once the world leader in the percentage of its population holding a college degree, has slipped to ninth in the world with several countries following close behind. U.S. colleges and universities are second to none in the world. Yet, we have not been able to translate our lock on the best knowledge-producing institutions into significant increases in college degree holders particularly as such rates have lagged since the early 1990s. Even more disconcerting, America trails at a time in which a highly educated populace is at a premium. By 2010, 90 percent of the fastest growing jobs will require some post-secondary education. In addition to growing concerns to increase higher education participation and completion rates, recent data suggest America must give greater attention to the quality of production. Employers articulate concern that the nation's college graduates lack the necessary skills.⁹

These facts are driving the growing interest in strengthening production at the nation's higher education institutions. The third edition of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education's "Measuring Up" coupled with the Commission's report frame the key issues America must consider in its education discourse on higher education. Higher education has historically been the premier feather in the nation's education cap; however, if America is to remain competitive, it will require the removal of non-academic barriers to higher education. Over the past two decades college tuition and fees have outpaced medical care costs and median family income increases (see chart).

College affordability has a direct impact on access and is particularly more pronounced for low-income families. Unfortunately, family income is still the greatest predictor of who will attend college, where they will attend, and the likelihood of their completion. The nation's changing demographics require that increasing

The Increase in the Price of College has Outstripped Price Increases in Other Sectors of the Economy



Source: Percent growth rates calculated based on Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers, available at the Bureau of Labor Statistics website, <http://stats.bls.gov/>. All industries above are components of the CPI.

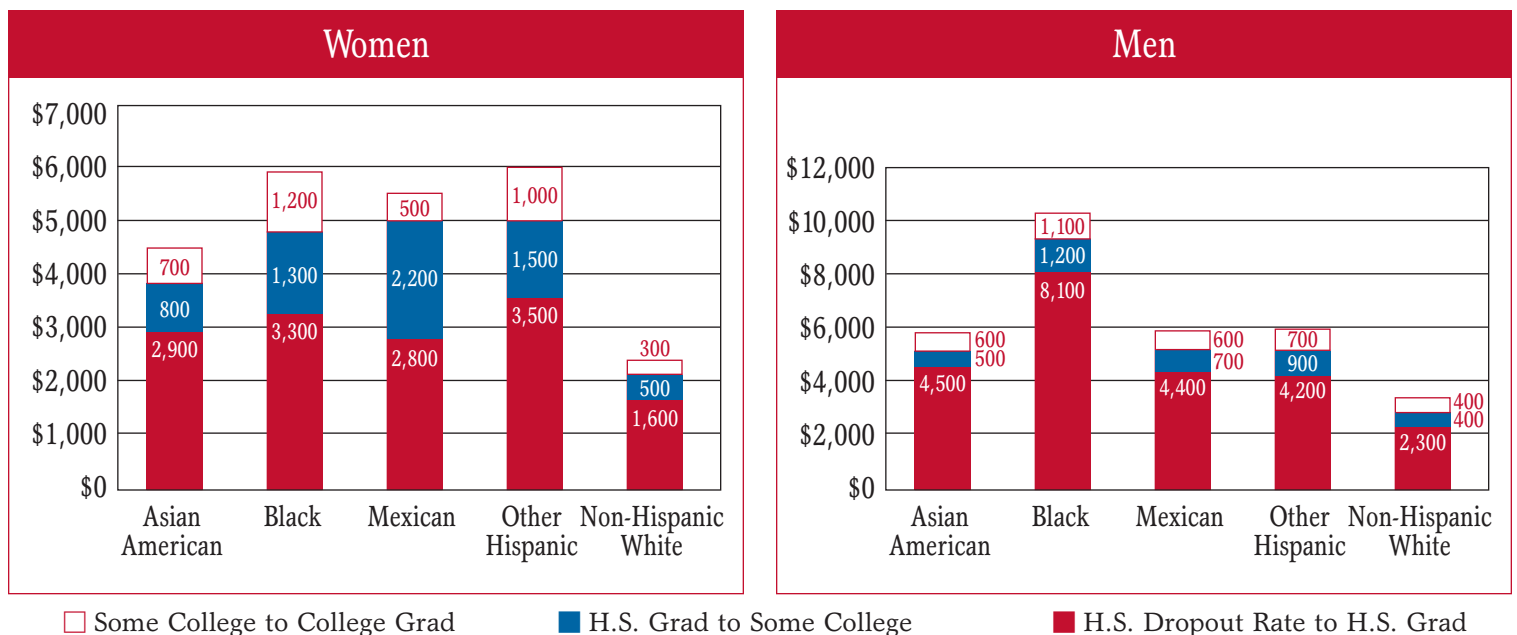
Data drawn from *Measuring Up 2006*.

production means financial barriers to access must be curbed. In fact, in "Measuring Up's" rating of the 50 states, only California and Utah earned a grade above D on affordability. The report recommends among key strategies to improve affordability expanding need-based financial aid and creating affordable college options.

Does Investment in Higher Education Pay?

Annual Savings on Social Programs from Increased Education:

Savings for 30-Year-Old Men and Women Relative to High School Dropouts, 2003 Dollar



Data drawn from "Education Pays 2004," College Board.

9 U.S. Department of Education, "A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of Higher Education," September 2006.

What's Next for Georgia?

"Today's knowledge-based global economy is highly competitive and will only become more so in the foreseeable future. The nations, states, and communities that are the most successful in developing human talent, particularly college-level knowledge and skills, will enjoy significant advantages."

This statement highlighted in the introduction of "Measuring Up" suggests states should give credence to their ratings on the biennial report card. The report card measures states' progress against the best performing states in the nation on six indicators. Two of those indicators are directly relevant to the higher education affordability discourse: 1) affordability – which measures states efforts to reduce financial barriers to entering college and 2) benefits – which measures the return a state garners from its degree holding population. While Georgia, like many of its national counterparts, earned an F on affordability, the state clearly benefits from its bachelors degree-holding population. Georgia earned a B– in this area and has shown forward progress since 1992. One in four Georgia residents between ages 25-65 holds a bachelor's degree. Georgia's data suggests, if the state were to achieve greater parity (across ethnic groups) in educational attainment in higher education, the state's annual total personal income could increase by an additional \$5.7 billion. Additionally, data from the College Board indicates savings in the cost of social services based on level of education. Those benefits are significantly increased for minorities. This suggests that when it comes to the issue of soaring higher education costs, our state's long-term economic vitality may bear the brunt of the burden.

Georgia must consider reducing non-academic barriers to college. While the state's signature merit-based scholarship program, HOPE, has certainly opened access to higher education, it is not sufficient to overcome the fiscal barriers to access, particularly in a state in which 50 percent of K-12 public school students qualify for free/reduced priced lunch, a proxy for poverty. There are clear and direct benefits to the state of having better educated residents.

8 Can Single-Sex Education Improve Achievement?

Political Context

A late 2006 decision by the U.S. Department of Education to reverse its 1972 stance on Title IX regarding single sex education is likely to reverberate in K-12 schools throughout 2007. The decision is due, at least in part, to growing public interest in declining achievement among boys across all racial/ethnic backgrounds. The nation's boys show greater discipline incidences, higher dropout rates and lower college attendance and persistence rates than their female counterparts. In fact, on some of the nation's most elite college campuses males represent less than 45 percent of student enrollment. However, everyone does not share the perceived boy crisis. Stakeholders run the gamut on their support for the federal government's allowance of single sex classrooms and schools. Some researchers question whether it's a sound policy decision as the research on the impact of single sex education is mixed. Women's rights organizations worry about equity in educational opportunities leveraging concerns that "separate is inherently unequal." Parental advocacy groups support the expanded educational options. The fervor around this issue will increase as will the number of single sex classrooms and schools that are likely to spring up in the nation's public schools in the fall of 2007.

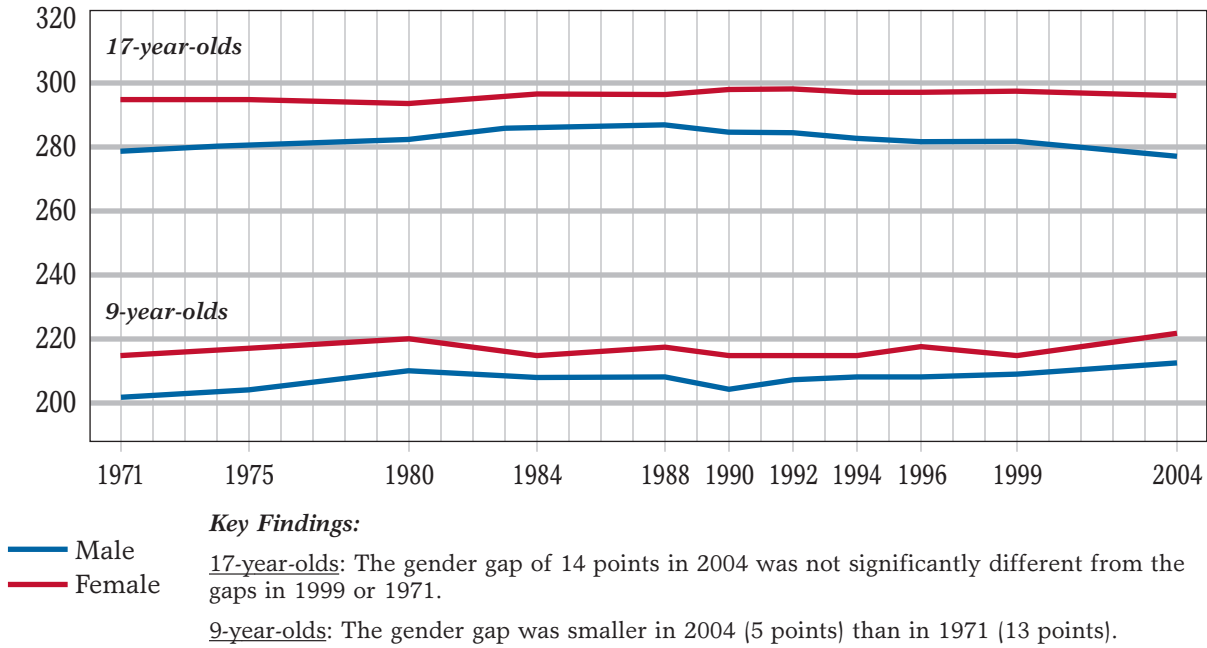
Policy Perspective

Is the crisis real or perceived? It depends on who you ask and what data sources are used. Certain data suggest white males have been the only group which has actually shown a declined/stagnant graduation rate since 2001. Even though graduation rates among Latino and black males are below the national average, the trend line has shown steady progress. Others cite the lower numbers of males on college campuses. Males comprise only 41.6 percent of the student body at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and only 42 percent at the University of Georgia. This gender distribution is of particular concern given significant gender differences in college majors. For example, males still comprise the majority of engineering degrees.¹⁰

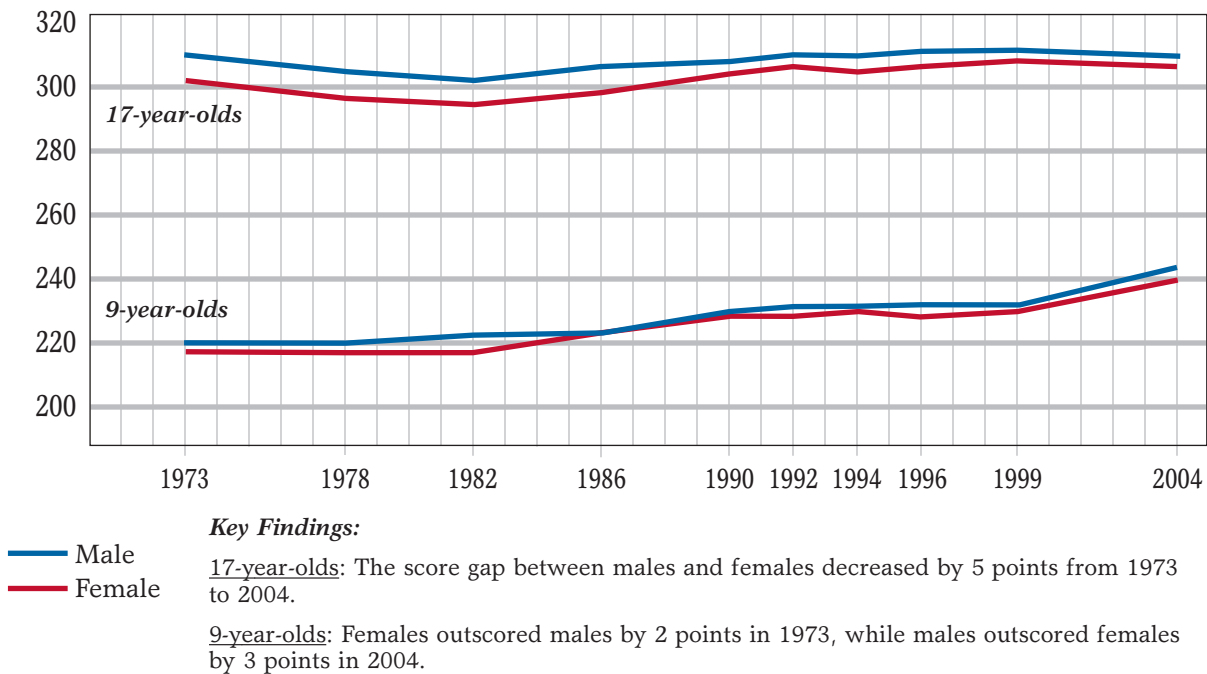
An examination of NAEP data does not definitively resolve that the crisis is real. Trend data show girls outperforming boys on the reading section of the assessment but also shows boys outperforming girls on the mathematics section. Brain development theorists argue certain parts of boys' brains develop at a slower pace than girls and thus explains the noted differences in achievement on the NAEP. Stakeholders who support this theory suggest it is important that teachers understand these differences in brain development and make the appropriate adjustments.

¹⁰ www.theweeklystandard.com, "Where the Boys Aren't," Volume 11, Issue 16.

Long-Term Trends by Gender (NAEP Reading)



Long-Term Trends by Gender (NAEP Mathematics)



However, other stakeholders suggest a number of cultural factors may contribute to the boy vs. girl achievement gap. There is some concern that a growing youth culture which devalues academics may be partly to blame. Perhaps it is this effort to curb the impact of youth culture which stimulates parental interest in single sex education, particularly during the middle and high school years. In fact, there are notable examples where the shift to single sex education has resulted in greater achievement of both boys and girls as compared to their peers in coeducational classes. However, the research on single sex schooling as an answer to lagging achievement for either boys or girls is inconclusive. A report released by independent

Arizona State researcher Gerald Bracey, *Separate but Superior? A Review of Issues and Data Bearing on Single Sex Education*, suggests the very reasons for making the change and the deliberate attention given to how instruction is delivered may be as important as the treatment itself (single-gender classrooms). The report, which provides a meta-analysis of previous research on the issue, draws no definitive conclusions on the impact of single sex education on student achievement but instead provides a template of questions that the researcher suggests should be asked of those pursuing such an initiative. The questions drive to the rationale for the decision and the support for its implementation.

What's Next for Georgia?

With at least 253 schools offering single sex classrooms and 51 of those schools offering complete single sex schooling, the National Association for Single Sex Education (NASSE) projects thousands more classrooms will be added to that number in 2007. It is likely Georgia's classrooms will be among them. Atlanta Public School's Martin Luther King Middle School has had single sex classes for four years. In fact, the Atlanta school district is expected to be among the first districts in the state to launch a single sex school in 2007. Deliberate attention should be given to documenting implementation as well as any changes in student performance. Does it benefit one gender more than another? Does it have differential impact on different subgroups/age groups (middle/high school)? It will be important for Georgia to consider the value of single sex education as it determines its utility in improving student achievement and narrowing achievement gaps.

9 NCLB Goes to Pre-K?

Political Context

The nation's premier early learning advocacy organization, Pre-K Now, has added its voice to the NCLB debate, arguing that Early Reading First should be included among the law's reauthorization. Even if such a proposal were adopted, it is unlikely that it would also extend the law's testing provision to pre-k. However, it would render the highly qualified teacher (HQT) relevant for early learning programs. This would also allow states to use Title II funds under the law to support strengthening teacher quality in pre-kindergarten, an area that continues to be among the critical elements of developing a quality early learning program. As states continue to explore opportunities to strengthen school readiness, early learning will again enjoy high visibility in 2007.

Policy Perspective

As a critical component of states' advocacy strategies, many are quantifying the economic benefits of such programs. Arkansas recently released such a report entitled "Economic Analysis of Pre-K in Arkansas." Data from the report indicated a return of \$1.58 for every dollar invested by the state if a universal pre-k program is enacted. The report estimated the state benefits of a universal pre-k program would reach \$356.4 million by the time 4-year-olds reached the age of 65.

High quality pre-k programs are also contributing their share to the debate on America's global competitiveness. The New America Foundation reports that European countries historically have provided early childhood education to all 3- to 5-year-olds, with an 80 percent enrollment rate. In Japan, more than 90 percent of all kindergarten students have had some type of pre-kindergarten experience. India has committed to providing universal early childhood education to all 3- to 6-year-olds by 2010. In the U.S., 41 states and the District of Columbia now provide some form of state

funded preschool serving 20 percent of our nation's 3- and 4-year-olds. The United States continues to lag behind the rest of the world. If we are serious about our ability to close the education achievement gap and to better prepare American students to compete in an expanding global economy, we must be willing to increase our investment in providing quality early childhood education.

What's Next for Georgia?

As the push towards universal pre-k programs continues, states must be sure not to sacrifice quantity for quality. Oklahoma's pre-k program, one of three states with a voluntary universal program for all 4-year-olds, serves as a model early education program. While serving 65 percent of the states' 4-year-olds in 2005-06, Oklahoma has ensured that its pre-k teachers are highly qualified and compensated accordingly. All Oklahoma pre-k teachers hold four-year degrees and are paid the same as K-12 teachers with similar class sizes. As a result, the state's early education program has helped students to raise test scores by 16 points on average with low income and minority students showing even greater gains.

Georgia's journey in strengthening early learning and pre-kindergarten, specifically, rightfully continues to focus on strengthening the program quality. Implementation of a quality rating system assists parents in choosing the right program and fosters competition between providers. Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care and Learning is exploring development of such a system in Georgia. Likewise, a United Way Early Learning Commission is expected to bring forward recommendations to support strengthening of program quality.

10 Needed: Technology for Schools and Georgia's Statewide Student Information System

Political Context

The need to know is pushing states toward developing comprehensive pre-kindergarten through college student information systems. States need an accurate and reliable calculation of how many students actually complete high school versus how many are lost in the 9-12 pipeline. After significant investments are made to ensure high school graduates are work and college ready when they leave high school, states need to know how students fare in the transition. As states strive to strengthen teacher quality and usher the teaching profession into the 21st century, they must have the data to measure teacher impact on student achievement. Student information systems are the cornerstone of standards-based reform and accountability. States must have the ability to track individual student progress. This fundamental need will continue to drive the development of quality student information systems among the top education issues in 2007.

In late 2006, Time Magazine ran an article about what it takes to create a 21st century student. Among the issues highlighted was the critical gap between student's out-of-school reality and their school reality. Out of school, children are technologically connected.

However, public schools still lag behind in ensuring technology is an integral part of the educational experience. Many public schools made investments in technology prior to 2000. Georgia invested lottery dollars to provide necessary wiring and infrastructure for schools. However, now most of that technology is outdated and there is no designated state funding to support upgrading and sustaining technology. While lottery funds were previously designated for that purpose, schools have not received lottery funds for technology since 2002. The need to integrate technology into the K-12 schooling experience will color the debate on the governor's proposed HOPE Constitutional Amendment, which would formally remove technology from one of the designated uses of lottery funds.

Policy Perspective

Florida serves as a model for states on the long journey toward developing a student information system. The state has fully embraced development of a true P-16 pipeline. Florida made a radical step of linking the institutional infrastructure (K-12 and the state's university system) into one state agency. This decision was intended to drive a more integral approach to all policy issues, including budgeting. A powerful companion to the state's P-16 system is a student information system, Sunshine Connections, which allows the state to track students from pre-k through the workforce. Already, Florida has the ability to examine life outcomes (unemployment, college, military, incarceration rates) based on students' academic records (types of classes, high school attended, etc). As such, the state can determine which high schools were more effective at preparing

students for college and/or the workforce. It is a powerful tool in helping the state frame how to support its K-12 schools and appropriately structure accountability through college.

What's Next for Georgia?

Georgia's educational journey relies on its ability as a state to collect reliable data on student achievement. The Georgia Statewide Student Information System is an essential component on the state's journey as it will allow for the evaluation of the effectiveness of various educational programs and interventions, track student achievement and equip school leaders with reliable data that allows for data-driven decision-making and instruction. Its importance is underscored by the Alliance of Education Agency Heads, which has included it among the first strategies to support work on secondary education reform. As the state moves forward to develop a truly seamless educational pipeline, the need for the student information system is critical. While the rollout of the system experienced some delays in 2006, the state is expected to use it for AYP determinations in 2007. A central component of this transition will be moving toward complete reliance on a unique student identifier which does not rely on a student's social security number. The system's ability to link to individual student data will be a critical component of other key education policy issues (i.e. a true cohort based graduation rate). Finally, as a state Georgia must determine how and where it will systematically support the integration of technology. In the absence of lottery support, there are no state dollars allocated for this purpose.



GEORGIA PARTNERSHIP
FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

*The Ten Issues to Watch is an annual publication of the
Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education*

*Researched and written by Deirdre A. Johnson, Policy and Research Director
Special thanks is extended to Donna Patrick, Georgia State University graduate-level intern, for her assistance.*