EDQUEST GEORGIA™
Charting Educational Reform

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BASELINE REPORT
FALL, 2017

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Charting Educational Reform

EdQuest Georgia highlights foundational policies proven to increase the education outcomes across the entire birth to work pipeline, while helping inform, engage and mobilize stakeholders – particularly in business, education, philanthropic, and policy making communities – to work together to support innovative and evidence-based education reform.

GEORGIA PARTNERSHIP
FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Founded in 1992 by the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the Georgia Economic Developers Association the Partnership consists of business, education, community and government leaders who share a vision of improved education in our state.

The organization is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit working tirelessly to be Georgia's foremost change agent in public education. Our mission is to inform and influence Georgia leaders through research and non-partisan advocacy to impact education policies and practices for the improvement of student achievement.

November 2017
EdQuest Georgia: Charting Educational Reform, Baseline Report

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Report researched and compiled by Dr. Dana Rickman and Caitlin Daugherty Kokenes.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Challenge

Over the past several decades, globalization, advances in technology, and free trade have changed the economy of the United States. While these changes have brought benefits for the economy as a whole, many people have been left behind. Those living in rural communities, communities built around manufacturing plants, and regions with high proportions of citizens with a low level of education who lack access to advanced skills training have been hurt the most.

This uneven growth has created a challenge for the state of Georgia. In 2010, over half of the state's working population worked in sales, office support, or blue-collar jobs — jobs in which the projected growth by 2020 remains below average and sectors that have still not fully rebounded from the economic recession of 2007–2009.

In response to these changes, Georgia has invested in an economic development plan based on a diversified economy that includes trade and transportation, a growing high-tech sector, and natural resources. The state is predicted to add 1.5 million new jobs by 2020, nearly 60% of which will require some sort of education beyond high school.[1] Currently, only about 42% of Georgia's adult population has education beyond the high school level. The current skill level of Georgia's workforce does not meet the growing needs of this ambitious plan for the state's economic development.

Progress to Date

To address the needs of its citizenry, Georgia has embarked on a series of education reforms to transform its public education system so that every student who graduates from high school is successful in college and/ or their chosen career, and is competitive with their peers throughout the country and the world.

When Georgia applied for and received the $400 million Race to the Top (RT3) grant in 2010, it had a clear vision for what it wanted to accomplish as a state. The grant application listed five priority areas that Georgia was already developing and implementing that would transform the educational system for students:[2]

1. Setting high standards and rigorous assessments for all students, leading to college and career readiness
2. Preparing students for college readiness, transition, and success
3. Providing great teachers and leaders
4. Providing effective support for all schools, including the lowest achieving schools
5. Leading the way in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields

Achieving success across all five goals required a robust state data and information system that would transcend all state education agencies. The state's accountability system — the College and Career Ready Performance Index — laid the foundation for a more effective educator workforce by measuring students' readiness for college. Georgia was working toward the vision of an internationally competitive, educated citizenry.

1 Carnevale, A.P., and Smith, N. (2012). *A Decade Behind: Breaking Out of the Low-Skill Trap in the Southern Economy.* Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce.
2 US Department of Education. (2012). *Georgia Report, Year 1: School Year 2010–2011.* Washington, DC: US Department of Education.

The reforms under RT3 included all seven state education agencies and impacted every public school in the state. These reforms sought to 1) increase the focus on student growth for determining educator effectiveness, instead of solely focusing on student achievement, 2) utilize a standards-based approach to teaching and learning, 3) continue the use of data to drive instruction and policy decisions, and 4) provide support to turnaround efforts for the lowest achieving schools.

Since the official end of the RT3 grant in 2014, Georgia has continued to focus on and undertake new and innovative approaches to improve teaching and learning. Governor Nathan Deal's Education Reform Commission conducted a "top to bottom review of public education" in 2015. The Commission's report made recommendations for revising the funding structure, providing charter and flexibility options for schools and districts, keeping good teachers in the classroom, expanding early learning, and improving dual enrollment/Move On When Ready. Additionally, the Georgia Department of Education under the leadership of State Superintendent Richard Woods has developed a strategic plan for K-12 education with a greater focus on the "whole child."

Concurrently, over the past decade Georgia has moved away from state-mandated centralization toward a decentralized approach that values local input and control in its educational system. The 2007 Charter Systems Act granted school systems considerable autonomy by freeing them from many of the state's education regulations specified in Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia. To help facilitate greater local control of public education, district leaders have been empowered with the flexibility and authority to lead their districts through student performance contracts between local boards of education and the State Board of Education.

Finally, with the passage of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act in December 2015, Georgia has recently completed a new consolidated state plan to address issues such as how to measure the performance of schools, how to support struggling schools, and how to implement the state assessment and accountability systems.

All of these efforts have primarily focused on K-12 public education. However, under the leadership of the Department of Early Care and Learning, Georgia has been working on improving both quality of and access to early learning programs. Examples of achievements in early learning include the following:

- Establishment of the Quality Rated program
- Implementation of the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards
- Provision of resources for statewide family and community engagement grants
- Expansion of center-based home visitation programs for family, friend, and neighbor care for children being cared for in private homes
- Continuing to increase the knowledge and competencies of educators who work in the early care industry
- Development of a comprehensive assessment system for early learning

Reforms in the connections between K-12 and higher education have also been underway. Opportunities for dual enrollment as well as career pathways have been streamlined and expanded. Opportunities for Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and College and Career Academies, which all work to improve college readiness for students and potentially shorten the time to earn a degree or professional certificate once in college, have also been expanded.

In 2011, Governor Deal launched Complete College Georgia, a statewide initiative to improve college completion and produce 250,000 more adult post-secondary credentials by 2025. The Technical College System of Georgia and the University System of Georgia have been central to carrying out the initiative by working on reforms that shorten the time to a degree, restructure education delivery models, and strengthen remedial courses.

Indicators of Progress

Taken together, the education reforms have coincided with improved outcomes for Georgia's students across all indicators of student success. For more details about Georgia education indicators and national comparisons, see EdQuest Georgia – State of Georgia Data.

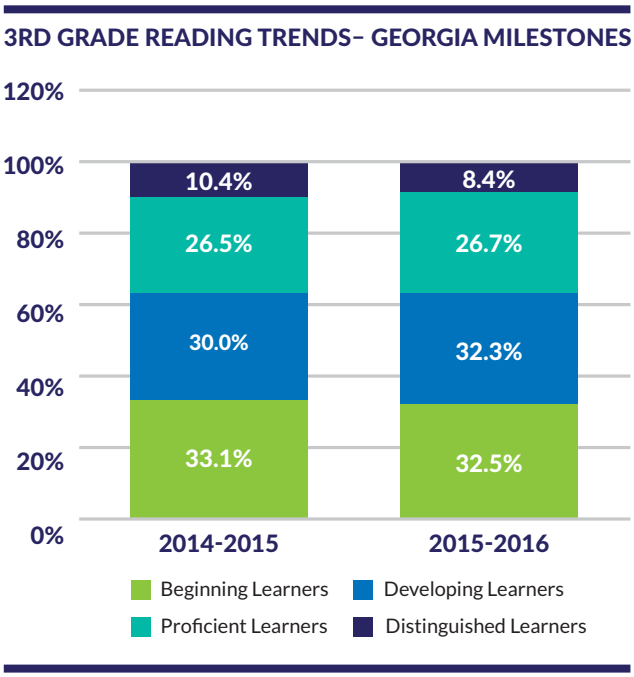
Kindergarten Readiness

Children who have access to quality early education programs or pre-K develop cognitive, social, and behavioral skills necessary for kindergarten readiness.

17% of the birth to age four population are served in "high-quality" centers.[3]

Third-Grade Reading Proficiency

Students who do not read on grade level by third grade are **four times** more likely than proficient readers to drop out of high school.



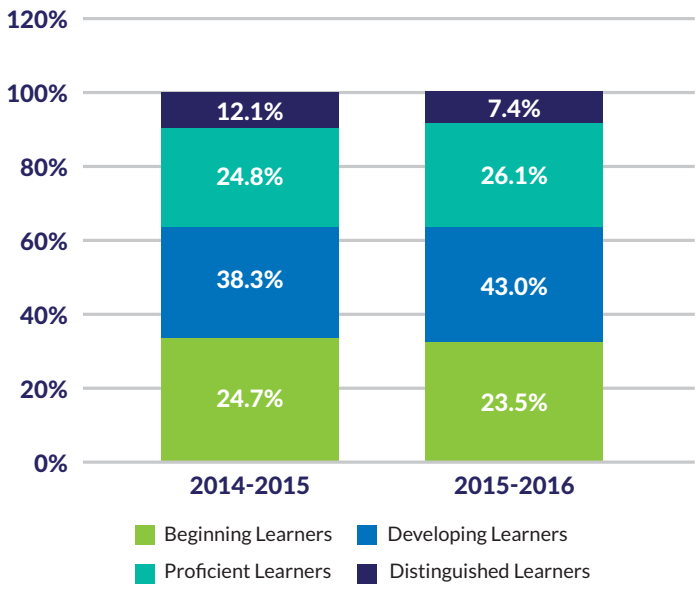
9th – Largest increase in the nation on the average scale score of fourth-grade students in reading from 2005 to 2015 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

3 Calculations based on reported capacity of early learning centers participating in the Quality Rated program using population 2016–2020 forecast data compiled by Georgia State University.

Eighth-Grade Math Proficiency

Students must succesfully complete algebra for access to higher level high school courses in math and science, which are drivers of high school graduation, college readiness, and college completion.

8TH GRADE MATHEMATICS TRENDS– GEORGIA MILESTONES

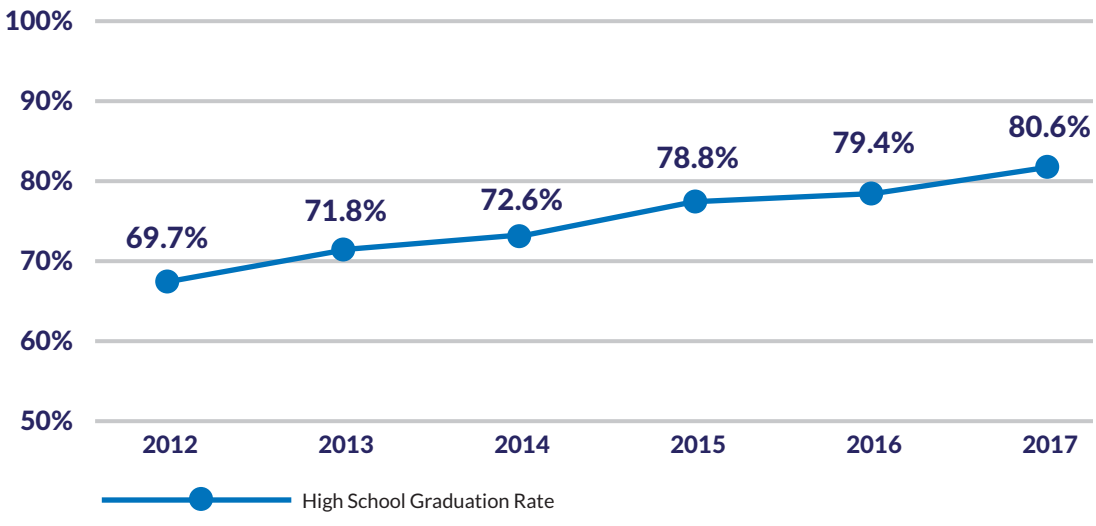


11th – Largest increase in the nation on average scale score of eighth-grade students in mathematics from 2005 to 2015 on the NAEP.

High School Graduation

Educational attainment, particularly high school graduation, is a strong predictor of health, mortality, teen childbearing, marital outcomes, and crime.

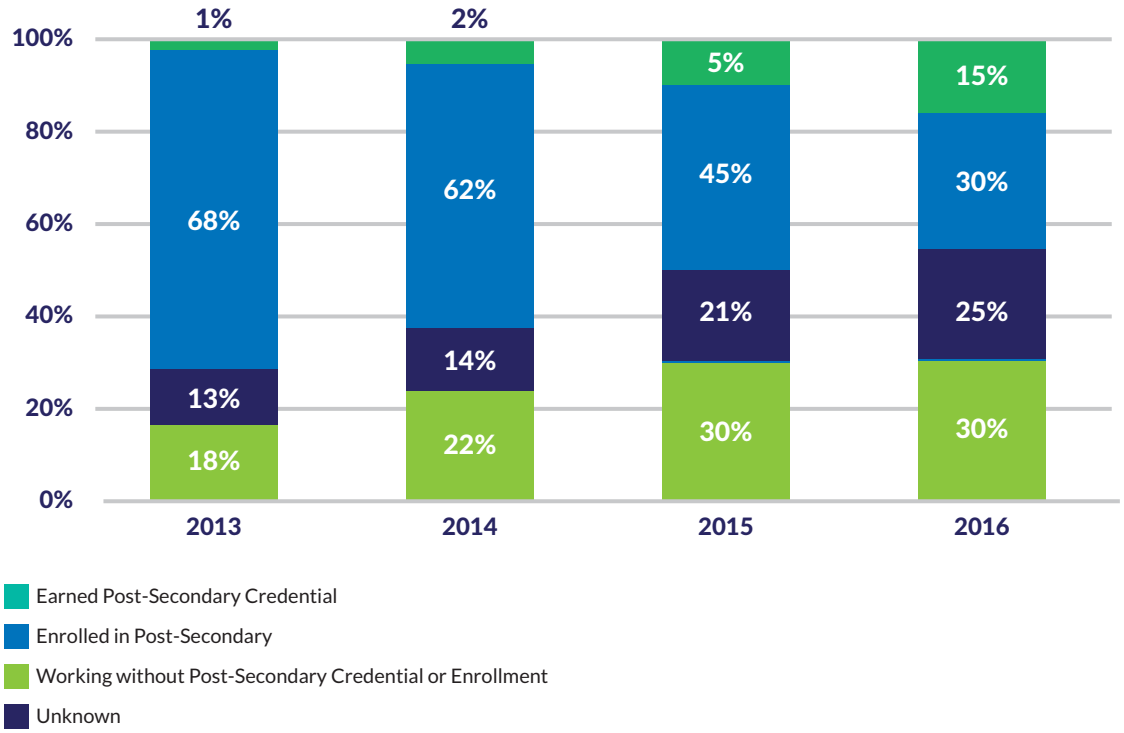
GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE, 2012–2016



Post-Secondary Enrollment and Completion

By 2020, a majority of jobs in Georgia (approximately 60%) will require some form of post-secondary completion. Society benefits from a more educated population, which results in lower instances of child abuse, lower rates of criminal behavior, and fewer teen pregnancies among children of college-educated parents.

POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT AND PROGRESS TO COMPLETION, GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATING CLASS 2012



Recommendations

Georgia is moving in the right direction to ensure an internationally competitive, educated citizenry. Georgia has increased academic expectations of its students and educators. As a result, more students are graduating from high school and going on to post-secondary education. The state now ranks around the national average on the important indicators of grade-level reading and mathematics. To be a global leader, however, Georgia must take its education system to the next level by creating conditions in which schools continuously advance their own performance through teaching and learning.

This baseline report provides a model of education reform to understand where Georgia is and where it can go. High-performing countries, states, and individual school systems share many common foundational policy themes that promote excellence in educational outcomes. This project has reviewed these best practices and combined them in a framework for Georgia. Best practice research has identified seven core policy areas that, when fully implemented and functioning together, produce optimum outcomes for students.

1. **Foundations for learning,** which include supports from birth for families, schools, and communities as well as access to high-quality early learning
2. **Quality teaching** for all students ensured by providing supports for teachers across recruitment, retention, and professional development and learning
3. **Quality leadership** within schools — such as teacher-leaders, counselors, and principals — and those outside the school building, such as district and state leaders
4. **Supportive learning environments** that promote positive conditions for learning within schools through fostering positive school climate and social and emotional learning for students, and outside of school in the home and throughout the community
5. **Advanced instructional systems** that support high standards, personalized learning, innovation, a strong accountability system, and aligned curricula
6. **Clear pathways to post-secondary success** that support the transition from high school into post-secondary education, and ensure post-secondary education access and success
7. **Adequate and equitable funding** for all students

Working as a holistic approach, and not viewed as individual silos, these integrated policy gears can drive education reform. These policy supports create the foundation needed for individual schools and districts to focus on teaching and learning.

What follows is a detailed discussion of each of these core areas. Each chapter contains the following:

1. A research-based summary of best practices in each core area
2. Key indicators comparing Georgia to other states in meeting the best practice standards
3. The Georgia landscape detailing what policies and practices Georgia currently has in each core area
4. Recommendations highlighting Georgia's strengths and identifying opportunities for reform

The goal of EdQuest is to offer a new view of education from outside the system. This baseline report is just the beginning of the discussion about opportunities in education for Georgia. Our goal is for this report and the supporting research to provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to understand the education landscape in Georgia, engage in the discussion about next steps and opportunities, and come together to make Georgia a national and global leader.

CHAPTER 2

Foundations for Learning

I. Issue Definition

Research has demonstrated a direct link between early experiences and later success in life. The relationships, environments, early experiences, and supports that children receive have a profound impact on their development.[4] From birth, there are multiple factors that together impact a child's capacities for communication, self-regulation, learning, and social interaction. These factors include good heath; safe, stable, and nurturing relationships; appropriate learning environments; and supportive communities. A lack of high-quality early learning opportunities and responsive interactions puts children at risk for poor mental and physical health, behavior problems, and school failure.[5]

II. Elements of an Effective System

Top-performing states and educational systems have strong foundations in place to support children and families before students arrive at school. Internationally, high-performing countries help ensure that children enter school healthy and ready to learn by focusing these foundational supports on prenatal care, mother and child nutrition, access to health care, and access to high-quality early learning for all children.[6]

These policies focus on the twin goals of supporting children's development and parent's participation in the labor market.[7]

1. **Child development policies** focus on services that enhance child development outcomes, which include physical health and well-being, as well as social-emotional and cognitive development. To achieve these goals, countries focus on supporting high-quality early learning opportunities for all children, especially high-risk children (such as those from disadvantaged backgrounds). Supply-side and demand-side funding are both commonly used to finance these services. Supply-side funding includes subsidizing early learning centers and staff salaries, and providing capital and resource grants. Also, funding ensures access to health care and support services to families. Demand-side funding includes providing tax credits, vouchers, or family allowances to ensure access to quality services.
2. **Parent work and labor market assistance** includes policies aimed at prenatal supports and parental leave policies.[8]

4 Tout, K., Halle, T., Daily, S., Albertson-Jenkins, L., and Moodie, S. (2013). *The Research Base for a Birth Through Age Eight State Policy Framework.* Washington, DC: Alliance for Early Success and Child Trends.

5 Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students and Child Trends. (2016, May). *Care for Georgia's Infants and Toddlers: Boosting Young Children and Their Parents in the Peach State.* Retrieved from geears.org/wp-content/uploads/2016-02GeorgiaInfantsToddlers.pdf.

6 Center on International Benchmarking. (2016). *9 Building Blocks for a World-Class Education System.* Washington, DC: National Center on Education and the Economy.

7 Bertram, T., Pascal, C., Cummins, A., Delaney, S., Ludlow, C., Lyndon, H., . . . Stancel-Piatak, A. (2016). *Early Childhood Policies and Systems in Eight Countries, Findings from IEA's Early Childhood Education Study.* Amsterdam: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

8 Cunnyngham, K. (2017). *Reaching Those in Need: Estimates of State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates 2014.* Mathematica Policy Research. Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture.

The Alliance for Early Success developed a Birth Through Eight State Policy Framework that seeks to provide a foundation for all children across the United States to be successful in school.[9] Much like the broad-based supports provided in high-performing countries, this framework includes a list of best-practice policies that incorporate health, family supports, and learning.[10]

TABLE 2.1 BIRTH THROUGH EIGHT STATE POLICY FRAMEWORK, ALLIANCE FOR EARLY SUCCESS

HEALTH	**Policies and practices focused on the physical and mental health of young children and the adults that care for them** • Ensure access to affordable, physical, oral, and mental health insurance coverage for children and parents • Prioritize prevention, including prenatal and pediatric health care • Improve the quality of health care, including health data systems and the coordination of those systems, childhood behavioral health issues, prenatal and maternal mental health, and coordination among providers

EARLY LEARNING	**Policies aimed at providing effective early learning options across multiple settings from birth**
	• Expand access to high-quality early learning programs that include:
	  ◦ Quality programs accessible for full days, nontraditional hours, before and after school and during the summer
	  ◦ Developmentally and culturally appropriate early learning standards that address social/ emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development
	  ◦ Aligned curricula, standards, and assessments in early learning through grade three
	• Build a high-quality early childhood workforce

FAMILY SUPPORTS	**Policies that provide families the knowledge, skills, stability, and basic resources needed to enhance children's development and learning** • Support strategies that foster responsive caregiving, including directing supports to vulnerable parents (such as teens, foster parents, and parents of children with disabilities or health conditions) • Align policies and practices to support stable, economically secure families, including a focus on eligibility and work requirements for low-income families and access to public benefits and/ or tax credits that help families meet basic needs and maintain stable housing and employment

9 Alliance for Early Success. (2015, November). *Birth Though Eight State Policy Framework.* Retrieved from Alliance for Early Success - Advancing State Policies for Young Children: earlysuccess.org/sites/default/files/website_files/AESBirthThru8FrameworkFINAL3.pdf.

10 For more information about the Alliance and the Framework, please see www.earlysuccess.org.

Georgia Comparisons

Health

TABLE 2.2 HEALTH INDICATORS

	Georgia	US
Low-birthweight babies[11]	9.5%	8.1%
Children without health insurance[12]	7.0%	5.0%
Births to women receiving late or no prenatal care[13]	8.0%	6.0%
Children with one or more emotional, behavioral, or developmental conditions[14]	17.0%	17.0%
Households that are food insecure[15]	14.9%	13.7%

Early Learning in Georgia – By the Numbers

Enrollment

Head Start, 2016 [16,17]

30 Number of Head Start Programs in Georgia – 21,828 funded slots
26 Number of Early Head Start Programs in Georgia – 4,282 funded slots
18% of eligible children ages 3–5 had access to Head Start
3% of eligible children under age 3 had access to Early Head Start

60% of estimated 4-year-olds participating in Georgia's lottery-funded Pre-K Program, 2016[18]
50% of 3- and 4-year-olds in Georgia were enrolled in preschool (national average 47%), 2016[19]

Quality Rated[20]

58% of eligible early learning centers participating in Quality Rated
63% of program licensed capacity participating in Quality Rated

Resources – 50 State Rankings[21]

28th State spending on preschool programs
37th All reported spending on early learning education (including state and federal dollars)

11 KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2017). *KIDS COUNT.* Retrieved from Georgia Family Connection Partnership: gafcp.org/kids-count/.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Food Research and Action Center. (2016). *State of the States: Georgia.* Retrieved from FRAC – Resource Library: frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ga.pdf.
16 Head Start and Early Head Start are federally funded programs, administered at the state level, that provide comprehensive early childhood and family development services to children from birth to five-years-old, pregnant women, and families. The programs provide comprehensive services designed to foster healthy development in low-income children and their families. Head Start agencies provide a range of individualized services in the areas of education and early childhood development; medical, dental, and mental health; nutrition; parent involvement; and family support.
17 National Head Start Association. (2016). *2016 Georgia Head Start Profile.* Retrieved from NHSA, Center for Policy, Data, and Research: www.nhsa.org/files/resources/fact_sheet_georgia.pdf.
18 National Institute for Early Education Research. (2016). *State of Preschool Yearbooks: Georgia State Profile.* Retrieved from NIEER State of Preschool Yearbook: nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Georgia_YB16.pdf.19
19 KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2017). *KIDS COUNT.* Retrieved from Georgia Family Connection Partnership: gafcp.org/kids-count/.
20 Quality Rated is Georgia's system to determine, improve, and communicate the quality of programs that provide child care. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, Quality Rated assigns one, two, or three stars to early education and school-age care programs that meet or exceed the minimum state requirements.
21 National Institute for Early Education Research. (2016). *State of Preschool Yearbooks: Georgia State Profile.* Retrieved from NIEER State of Preschool Yearbook: nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Georgia_YB16.pdf

Family/Community Supports

Paid Family Leave[22]

The federal Family Medical Leave Act provides up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave during a 12-month period to care for a newborn, adopted, or foster child; to care for a family member; or to attend to the employee's own serious medical health condition. The law applies to private employers with 50 or more employees.

3 states — California, New Jersey, and Rhode Island — currently offer paid family and medical leave. New York will join the list effective January 1, 2018.

7 states — Arizona, California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, and Washington, DC — currently require paid sick leave.

29 states (plus the District of Columbia) provide a state match to the federal EITC (earned income tax credit). Georgia does not.[23]

89% of Food Stamp — eligible participants receive the program in Georgia. (National average – 83%)[24]

140% Georgia child care subsidy income limit, as a percentage of poverty[25]

40 states eligibility levels > **140%** of poverty
9 states eligibility levels < **140%** of poverty
10 states eligibility levels > **200%** of poverty

22 See www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-family-and-medical-leave-laws.aspx.
23 See georgiaworkcredit.org/.
24 Cunnyngham, K. (2017). *Reaching Those in Need: Estimates of State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates 2014*. Mathematica Policy Research. Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture.
25 Shulman, K., and Blank, H. (2015). *Building Blocks: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2015*. Retrieved from National Women's Law Center: nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/CC_RP_Building_Blocks_Assistance_Policies_2015.pdf.

III. Georgia Landscape - Foundations for Learning

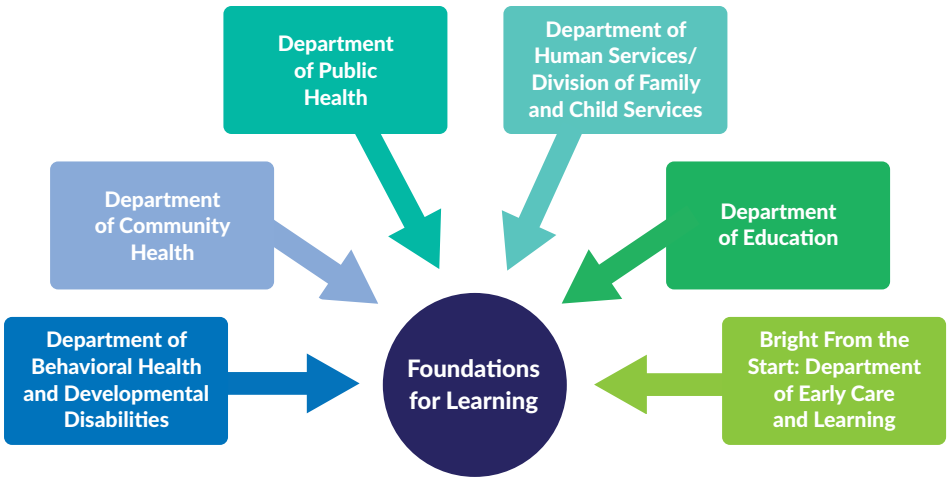
From birth, there are multiple factors that together impact a child's capacities for communication, self-regulation, learning, and social interaction.[26] These factors include good heath; safe, stable, and nurturing relationships; appropriate learning environments; and supportive communities. A lack of high-quality early learning opportunities and responsive interactions puts children at risk for poor mental and physical health, behavior problems, and school failure.[27]

More than 650,000 children under the age of five live in Georgia,[28] and by 2050 these children will be the leaders of our state. However, Georgia faces many challenges to providing the positive, foundational, early life experiences these children need to help ensure future success.

- **More than half (51%)** of children under age five live in low-income families.[29]
- **More than a third (34%)** of these children live in communities of concentrated poverty, where more than 20% or more of the residents live below the poverty line.[30]
- **More than one-third** have experienced life events that lead to trauma or toxic stress.[31]

Georgia has multiple state agencies, statewide coalitions, and local efforts in place to help offset the negative impacts of poverty and provide quality foundations across areas of health, education, and families and communities. Several state agencies, listed in Figure 2.1, provide direct services to children, families, and communities.

FIGURE 2.1 GEORGIA STATE AGENCIES PROVIDING DIRECT SERVICES TO CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES



26 Tout, K., Halle, T., Daily, S., Albertson-Jenkins, L., and Moodie, S. (2013). *The Research Base for a Birth Through Age Eight State Policy Framework.* Washington, DC: Alliance for Early Success and Child Trends.

27 Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students and ChildTrends. (2016, May). *Care for Georgia's Infants and Toddlers: Boosting Young Children and Their Parents in the Peach State.* Retrieved from geears.org/wp-content/uploads/2016-02GeorgiaInfantsToddlers.pdf.

28 KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2017). *KIDS COUNT.* Retrieved from Georgia Family Connection Partnership: gafcp.org/kids-count/.

29 In 2017, the federal poverty level (FPL) was $20,160 for a three-person household. "Low-income" is defined as incomes less than twice FPL ($40,320), which many experts believe is the threshold that more accurately reflects an income that meets a family's basic needs. See: KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2017). *KIDS COUNT.* Retrieved from Georgia Family Connection Partnership: gafcp.org/kids-count/.

30 Bishaw, A. (2014, June). Changes in Areas with Concentrated Poverty: 2000 to 2010. Retrieved from US Census Bureau: www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2014/acs/acs-27.pdf.

31 Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students and ChildTrends. (2016, May). *Care for Georgia's Infants and Toddlers: Boosting Young Children and Their Parents in the Peach State.* Retrieved from geears.org/wp-content/uploads/2016-02GeorgiaInfantsToddlers.pdf.

While each of these agencies provides some level of family and community support and interventions, they can generally be divided into the areas of health and public welfare and education.

Health and Public Welfare Supports

Four state health and welfare agencies serve Georgia, all of which support children and provide foundational supports.

1. **The Department of Community Health (DCH)** is responsible for Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids®, the State Health Benefit Plan, health care facility regulation, and health information technology.

PeachCare for Kids®, Georgia's Children's Health Insurance Program, is the state's medical insurance plan for low-income, uninsured children. Eligible children are generally under age 19 in families with incomes of 247% of the federal poverty level or less. Premiums and co-payments are only required for children ages six and over. Those under age six are exempt from co-payments, as are children living in foster care, Alaskan Natives, and American Indians. As of October 2016, there were 134,000 eligible children enrolled in PeachCare for Kids®.

2. **The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD)** provides treatment and support services to people with mental health challenges and substance abuse disorders, and it assists individuals who live with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Within DBHDD is the Office of Children, Young Adults, and Families, which offers children, young adults, and their families a range of treatment and support services to address emotional and behavioral problems. Much of this office's work focuses on the mental health of older children and young adults.

3. **The Department of Human Services (DHS)** is responsible for Aging Services, Child Support Services, Family and Children Services, and Residential Child Care.

Within DHS is the Division of Family and Child Services (DFCS), which administers a wide variety of health and family services. These include the administration of federal support programs for low-income families such as SNAP (Food Stamps), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), and Medicaid.

Not to be confused with PeachCare for Kids®, Medicaid is available for very low-income adults and children. Children under age 19 qualify at various income levels depending on their age and family size (See Table 2.3). The income eligibility range decreases as children age. It is based on a percentage of the poverty rate minus 5% of the federal level.

TABLE 2.3 MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY FOR CHILDREN IN GEORGIA[32]

Family Size	Monthly Net Income Limit 133% Age 6-19	Monthly Net Income Limit 149% Age 1-5	Monthly Net Income 205% Age 0-1	5% Deduction
1	$1,323	$1,207	$1,679	$48
2	$1,785	$1,631	$2,268	$65
3	$2,248	$2,054	$2,857	$82
4	$2,710	$2,478	$3,446	$99
5	$3,172	$2,901	$4,035	$115

Together, more than 1.3 million children are enrolled in PeachCare or Medicaid. It is estimated that nearly 170,000 more children are eligible for either program, but are not enrolled.[33] Georgia has the 13th highest percentage in the nation of uninsured children under the age of five (5%).[34]

DFCS also works to protect and educate the most vulnerable children in Georgia through the foster care system and its Child Abuse and Neglect division.

4. **The Department of Public Health (DPH)** had divisions focusing on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Maternal and Child Health, Infectious Disease and Immunization, Environmental Health, Epidemiology, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Emergency Medical Services, Vital Records, and the State Public Health Laboratory.

Within DPH, Great Start Georgia (GSG) is a framework of comprehensive support services targeted at families with children from birth to age five. (See Home Visiting Sidebar) Programs are designed to create a community culture of family engagement and local connections and resources. The main focus of GSG is providing evidence-based home visiting programs. GSG also partners with or provides referrals pertaining to the following:

- Maternal and child health
- Children 1st
- Babies Can't Wait
- Children's Medical Services

HOME VISITING – FROM GREAT START GEORGIA

A major service strategy in the Great Start Georgia (GSG) system is evidence-based home visiting services for families needing support in providing safe, nurturing, and healthy environments for their children. The long-term goal is statewide implementation. As of 2017, 12 counties had received federal funding from DPH to embed evidence-based home visits within their local GSG systems. This funding is allowing Georgia to create a statewide home visiting infrastructure and better coordinate community-based services and supports focused on promoting optimal early childhood health and development.

The home visiting programs offered in Georgia include Early Head Start – Home-Based Options, Healthy Families Georgia, the Nurse-Family Partnership, and Parents as Teachers. Evidence from these programs have repeatedly shown their effectiveness. For example, results from the Nurse-Family Partnership consistently show the following:

- Improved prenatal heath
- Fewer childhood injuries
- Fewer subsequent pregnancies
- Increased intervals between births
- Increased maternal employment
- Improved school readiness

32 Division of Family and Child Services. (2017). Family Medicaid Fact Sheet. Retrieved from Medicaid Services: dfcs.georgia.gov/sites/dfcs.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/DFCS.%20Family%20Medicaid%207.15.pdf.
33 HealthyFuturega.org.
34 KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2017). *KIDS COUNT*. Retrieved from Georgia Family Connection Partnership: gafcp.org/kids-count/.

- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants & Children (WIC)
- Home and child safety
- Community and family safety
- School readiness
- Family economic self-sufficiency

DPH also houses the Maternal and Child Health Section, which administers the Federal Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant. This grant funds services related to prenatal care and newborn screening, early detection for developmental delays, hearing screenings, and intervention services. This section of DPH also implements the Georgia Autism Initiative and Georgia WIC Supplemental Nutrition program. These initiatives and programs are designed to provide a strong foundation for children by supporting young children, their families, and the communities where they live.

Importantly, DPH implements Project LAUNCH, a five-year pilot program to increase access to screenings, assessments, referrals, and mental health services for children ages zero to eight in child-serving settings. Project LAUNCH provides parental supports, early behavioral health screenings, and trainings for early identification of autism. This pilot program is being implemented in Muscogee County and offers Georgia the opportunity to develop a comprehensive approach to healthy and developmental concerns in very young children.

Education – Early Learning

Now more than ever, the American public has embraced the importance of high-quality early learning. Since the mid-2000s, there has been a growing understanding of brain development in infants and toddlers,[35] and an increased push to evaluate the social and educational outcomes of early learning programs.

Georgia has long been committed to early learning. It was the first state in the nation to establish a state-level department responsible for early learning, Bright From the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). DECAL administers the state-funded Georgia Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers federal nutrition programs, manages voluntary quality enhancement programs, and administers the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program in partnership with the Division of Human Services.

Based on the strength of Georgia's Pre-K Program—a free early learning program for four-year-olds available to all children depending on space and availability—the state is viewed as a national leader in early learning. Independent evaluations of the lottery-funded program confirm it is having a positive and significant impact. One comprehensive study found that students had significantly higher school-readiness skills across most measures of language, math, and general knowledge than students who did not participate in Georgia Pre-K.[36]

While Georgia continues to focus on quality improvements to the Pre-K Program, DECAL is also working to improve the quality of early learning in both child care centers and family child care homes. DECAL developed and launched Quality Rated in January 2012, a tiered quality rating and improvement system. Quality Rated provides early childhood programs with incentives and resources to improve quality while working through several manageable steps, or levels. At the same time, the centers receive public recognition for their achieved quality efforts, which DECAL communicates to parents and families.

Quality Rated uses one, two, and three stars to indicate programs that meet defined program standards beyond Georgia's minimum licensing requirements. The program is currently voluntary for all child care

35 See the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, developingchild.harvard.edu/.
36 For a complete discussion of the Pre-K Evaluation, see decal.ga.gov/BftS/EvaluationGAPreKProgram.aspx.

centers. Participating programs become eligible for free professional development, technical assistance, and financial incentives packages supported by foundations and businesses.[37]

In addition to the continued expansion of Quality Rated, Georgia is in the final phases of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, which is a state-level competitive grant program targeted at early learning and development. While the goals of the grant are to improve program quality and outcomes for all children, Georgia specifically focused on increasing the number of children with high needs who attend high-quality early learning programs. The projects associated with the grant also were directed at closing the achievement gap between children with high needs and their peers by supporting efforts to increase kindergarten readiness. Georgia received $51.7 million over a four-year grant period, beginning in 2014, to expand the five critical areas outlined in Table 2.4.

TABLE 2.4 RACE TO THE TOP EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE GRANT[38]

CRITICAL AREA	PROJECT LIST
1. Building successful state systems	• Develop Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs), where the state will align supports, activities, and services in four geographical areas with large numbers or high percentages of children with high needs and improve infrastructure for high-quality early learning programs.
2. Increasing high-quality accountability programs	• Validate Quality Rated and expand research and data activities that will evaluate current and future efforts and support policy revisions. • Drastically increase program and parent participation in Quality Rated.
3. Promoting early learning outcomes	• Expand the comprehensive roll-out of the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards. • Expand Georgia's home visiting program, Great Start Georgia, by creating home visiting and family engagement hubs in three-star child care centers in each E3Z.
4. Developing a great early childhood education workforce	• Increase articulation among institutions of higher learning to increase student success and persistence in achieving advanced credentials in early childhood education. • Expand scholarships and incentive programs to increase the number of early childhood educators moving along a knowledge and career pathway.
5. Measuring outcomes and progress	• Create a Task Force for Comprehensive Assessment to identify a single set of common child assessments with professional development and policy guidelines. • Design and implement a formative assessment that will be conducted during the first six weeks of children's kindergarten experience so each student receives a measurement of kindergarten readiness that teachers can use to individualize instruction. • Expand the quality of data collected for children, programs, and educators by pooling additional, existing data feeds from participating state agencies to expand the Cross Agency Child Data System.

37 For more information on Quality Rated, see families.decal.ga.gov/ChildCare/QualityRated.

38 Bright From the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (2014). *Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant*. Retrieved from decal.ga.gov/BftS/EarlyLearningChallenge.aspx.

This commitment is being supported and potentially enhanced by Governor Nathan Deal's Education Reform Commission (ERC). Working throughout 2015, the commission's goal was to provide recommendations to improve Georgia's educational system, including increasing access to early learning programs. Governor Deal challenged the Subcommittee on Early Learning to study and make recommendations for expanding early education options, including the following:[39]

1. Addressing the funding formula for Georgia's Pre-K
2. Expanding Pre-K access in Georgia
3. Increasing access to Quality Rated programs for all children from birth to age five
4. Considering innovative approaches for getting more children into high-quality programs

To help support the ongoing work of DECAL and the early learning community, the ERC Subcommittee on Early Learning proposed a series of recommendations in the final report submitted in December 2015 aimed at increasing both the supply of quality programs and the demand for them from consumers. Table 2.5 provides a partial list of the subcommittee's recommendations.

TABLE 2.5 EDUCATION REFORM COMMISSION – SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING

Increase the number of Quality Rated programs	• Set 2020 as the deadline by which child care programs must be Quality Rated in order to receive child care subsidy funds. • Implement a tired-reimbursement program, meaning providing appropriate funding to adjust the subsidy rates for Quality Rated providers to more closely align with the true cost of tuition.
Increase the demand for quality	• Appropriate funding to at least match private dollars raised to support a comprehensive marketing and public relations campaign to promote awareness of Quality Rated and the importance of high-quality early learning. • Pass legislation to create business tax incentives for Quality Rated child care providers. • Pass legislation to create an occupational tax incentive based upon teacher credentials for educators employed by a Quality Rated provider. • Pass legislation to create a consumer tax incentive for families who enroll their children in Quality Rated programs.

The ERC also recommended increased supports for the Georgia Pre-K Program, for teachers, and for assistant teachers. Many of these recommendations were incorporated in 2016. Budget increases supported increased salaries for Pre-K lead teachers and the implementation of a salary scale comparable to that of K-12 teachers. What remains are the recommendations concerning supporting the expansion of Quality Rated and increasing the affordability of quality: Funding that would allow centers to provide quality and parents to afford it.

While the state has been working hard to expand the number of high-quality options, many Georgians living in poverty struggle to find any child care providers, much less those of high quality. Even in areas where quality care is available, low-income families have a hard time paying for it.

39 Education Reform Commission. (2015). *Final Recommendations to Governor Nathan Deal.* Atlanta: Office of the Governor.

Georgia's CAPS Program helps low-income families afford quality child care. CAPS is a child care subsidy program administered by DECAL, recently transitioned from the Georgia Division of Human Services. It is funded through the Childcare and Development Fund, a federal block grant. Eligible families can earn up to about 150% of the federal poverty level and still potentially qualify for subsidies.[40]

The reauthorization of the federal block grant that passed in 2014 brought about significant changes to the implementation of the CAPS program in Georgia. One specific change was the amount of money each subsidy would be worth. The new regulations require state agencies to pay higher subsidy rates to higher quality providers. For example, in Georgia, a new tiered reimbursement rate is based on the Quality Rated star rating. Though a higher rate is now in place for quality programs, the total amount of the block grant funds has not increased. When more money is needed per provider, the total number of families that can be served with the same amount of money decreases.

To comply with the higher rates that needed to be paid to centers of higher quality, Georgia implemented funding restrictions in August 2016. To maintain the current CAPS funding without terminating child care assistance to families already enrolled in the program, restrictions were implemented on new enrollees. New families must not only meet need-based income eligibility requirements, as before, they now must also be identified as part of a priority group. Priority groups include TANF applicants and recipients, children in DFCS custody or in Child Protective Services, minor parents in school, grandparents raising grandchildren, children with special needs, children in Georgia's Pre-K Program requiring extended care, or victims of a natural disaster.[41]

Coordinating the Foundations

As shown in Figure 2.1, six state agencies directly serve young children, their families, and the communities where they live in various ways to help provide a good foundation for learning and the future. However, other state agencies, advocacy groups, nonprofits, foundations, business leaders, local development agencies, and others all work throughout Georgia in this effort as well.

From a state-level perspective, a unified approach across all areas of foundational supports (health, learning, family, and community supports) provides the strongest policy framework to ensure all children receive the assistance they need.

Georgia's Cross Agency Child Data System (CACDS) is integral to informing this framework. CACDS aligns child-level data from government-funded programs and services for children ages zero to five and their families. Currently, the following agencies and programs contribute data to CACDS:

- Childcare and Parent Services
- Early Head Start and Head Start
- Preschool Special Education (IDEA Part B)
- Georgia's Pre-K Program
- Georgia's Rising Pre-K Summer Transition Program
- Rising Kindergarten Summer Transition Program
- Babies Can't Wait (IDEA Part C)
- Children 1st
- Georgia home visiting
- Foster care (added in fall 2017)

40 Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students. (2016). Supporting Affordability. Retrieved from geears.org/business-toolkit/supporting-affordability/.

41 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (2016). Questions About Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Funding Restrictions. Retrieved from CAPS: Eligibility Requirements: www.caps.decal.ga.gov/en/EligibilityRequirements.

The purpose of CACDS is to identify service gaps, create opportunities for analysis and research, and provide an integrated and aligned approach to demonstrate how Georgia is serving its youngest citizens. For example, counties and regions can examine program access goals and the distribution of services across the region and highlight enrollment gaps.[42]

In addition to state agency initiatives, a successful coordinating framework in Georgia is Get Georgia Reading: The Campaign for Grade Level Reading. The campaign strives to ensure that all children are on a path to reading proficiently by the end of third grade. To achieve this objective, the campaign created a common agenda based on four research pillars that combine to create the foundations necessary for student success:[43]

- **Language Nutrition:** All children receive abundant, language-rich adult-child interactions, which are as critical for brain development as healthy food is for physical growth.
- **Access:** All children and their families have year-round access to, and supportive services for, healthy physical and social-emotional development and success in high-quality early childhood and elementary education.
- **Positive Learning Climate:** All educators, families, and policymakers understand and address the impact of learning climate on social-emotional development, attendance, engagement, academic achievement, and ultimately student success.
- **Teacher Preparation and Effectiveness:** All teachers of children ages zero to eight are equipped with evidence-informed skills, knowledge, and resources that effectively meet the literacy needs of each child in a developmentally appropriate manner.

The work of the campaign is guided by the collective voice of 21 high-level statewide public/private organization leaders.[44] These leaders work across agencies and organizations to implement each of the four pillars at the systems level. See the sidebar titled "Get Georgia Reading: A Campaign with Results."

The Get Georgia Reading Campaign also consists of more than 60 partner organizations focused on investing and implementing strategies around the four pillars of the common agenda into communities across the state.

The Get Georgia Reading Campaign is but one example of coalition work being done across the state to unify the foundational needs of health, learning, and family and community supports. State policy work is also being coordinated by the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS), also a cabinet member of the Get Georgia Reading Campaign. GEEARS leads multiple initiatives that influence state policy, including the Frontiers of Innovation initiative. Georgia is one of three states partnering with the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. The goal of this collective impact initiative is to identify how science-based innovation applied to policies and services for the birth-to-five population can advance the governor's goal of every child being able to read at grade level by third grade. This partnership includes representatives from DECAL, DPH, the Governor's Office, GEEARS, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation – Atlanta Civic Site. GEEARS works to coordinate efforts across these agencies and connect them with scientific expertise.

42 Note that although CACDS contains child-level data, it cannot track individual children and only provides data in aggregate counts.
43 See getgeorgiareading.org/common-agenda/common-agenda-overview/
44 Cabinet members include the Alliance of Education Agency Heads, the Annie E. Casey Foundation – Atlanta Civic Site, DECAL, Governor Nathan Deal, First Lady Sandra Deal, the Department of Community Health, DFCS, GaDOE, DPH, the Georgia Early Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS), the Georgia Family Connection Partnership, the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, the Georgia Public Library, the Georgia School Superintendents Association, the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, the Marcus Autism Center, Polk Family Connection, the Rollins Center for Language and Literacy at the Atlanta Speech School, the Technical College System of Georgia, and Voices for Georgia's Children.

GET GEORGIA READING: A CAMPAIGN WITH RESULTS

- **Talk With Me Baby** is a partnership of six lead organizations: DPH, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), Emory University's School of Nursing and Department of Pediatrics, the Marcus Autism Center at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, the Atlanta Speech School's Rollins Center for Language and Literacy, and Get Georgia Reading: Georgia's Campaign for Grade Level Reading. The program initially focused on training nurses to educate parents and caregivers about the importance of language in early childhood development. More than 1,000 WIC nutritionists have been trained as language nutrition coaches and are integrating messages about language nutrition into their conversations with parents about food nutrition. The program is scaling up to train nurses and other maternal/child health care providers statewide. It has also launched www.talkwithmebaby.org, an interactive resource with conversation starters, videos, and training tools for families, communities, and professionals, and much more.
- Georgia is innovating a practice that integrates strategies from the preschool model of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) into the school-wide model. The Metropolitan Regional Education Service Agency, DECAL, and GaDOE are leveraging the state's investment in PBIS with funding from the David, Helen, and Marian Woodward Fund — Atlanta. By integrating practices from the preschool PBIS model into the school-wide model, these partners are developing a new, scalable approach aimed at supporting the social-emotional development of children across their first eight years of life.
- The **Georgia Public Library Service** has been working with DECAL and GaDOE for the past few years to provide children with nutritious meals and educational opportunities. This partnership has led to significant increases in the number of meals served to children during the summer.
- The W.K. Kellogg Foundation recently **awarded $1.45 million** to four campaign partner organizations: the Common Market Georgia, Georgia Organics, Voices for Georgia's Children, and Quality Care for Children. The grant supports access to local, healthy foods for young children in Georgia's early learning environments. The initiative will offer hands-on education in nutrition, cooking, gardening, and the promotion of local, fresh foods in child care programs. The nonprofits will partner with the Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education Coalition, which formed in 2016 and recently finalized a three-year strategy.

GEEARS also convened a large coalition of stakeholders to develop a common framework for "school readiness." A common understanding of school readiness provides the opportunity to align and promote policy, practice, and investments that support the healthy development of children from birth to age eight.

Translating state policy to the local level is the Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP), the only statewide network of its kind in the country. GaFCP works in all 159 counties as a public/private partnership by providing expertise in planning and governance in local communities. One of GaFCP's initiatives is to help communities coordinate the foundations for learning so that all children are prepared to start school. This work encompasses local health and early learning policies and opportunities. It also promotes the incorporation of Quality Rated and the four pillars of the Get Georgia Reading Campaign.

Finally, Georgia is seeing collaborative work at the local level to integrate the importance of health and early learning in helping prepare young children for success in school. One example is the Healthy Beginnings program funded by the United Way of Greater Atlanta. By partnering with Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Centers, the Fulton County Department of Health and Wellness, DPH, and DECAL, the program has embedded a System of Care into early learning centers. This System of Care provides health educators and community-based nurse navigators directly to children and their families enrolled in the early learning centers. The results are impressive. Almost all (97%) children enrolled in Healthy Beginnings have health insurance, are connected to a medical home, and visit their doctor at least annually. Ninety-six percent are immunized against childhood disease.[45]

This project first focused on one neighborhood in metro Atlanta. However, United Way is now working to scale the program. These are but a few examples of the unifying work being done in Georgia to build strong foundations for student success. For more examples, see the "Additional Resources Related to Foundations for Learning" page at www.EdQuestGa.org.

45 See www.unitedwayatlanta.org/program/healthy-beginnings/.

IV. Opportunities - Foundations for Learning

Georgia has been working to provide a solid foundation for learning so that children enter school ready to learn. Best-practice research indicates that state policies must align across three primary areas:[46]

1. **Health:** Policies and practices focused on the physical and mental health of young children and the adults that care for them
2. **Learning:** Policies aimed at effective early learning in multiple settings from birth
3. **Family and Community Supports:** Policies that provide families the knowledge, skills, stability, and basic resources needed to enhance children's development and learning

Georgia has long been a national leader in early learning and continues to innovate and explore ways to increase the quantity of high-quality early learning options for all children. Georgia is also making progress in aligning and leveraging work around child health and well-being with early learning. At the local level, there are examples of communities working together to support families and provide healthy environments for young children. Georgia has several opportunities to build upon these strengths and broaden the foundation for learning.

GO! KEEP MOVING FORWARD: STRONG POLICIES IN PLACE

Continue to support statewide coalitions to align the work being done across all policy areas, including health, education, and family well-being.

By uniting multiple agencies and state leaders around a common expectation using a shared language, the Get Georgia Reading Campaign has already had an impact on strengthening foundational supports for young children. The common agenda formed around the four pillars of language nutrition, access, positive learning climate, and teacher preparation and effectiveness are the same foundational elements found in high-performing states and nations.

The ongoing work is to translate those foundational elements to local communities. As of spring 2017, more than 50 local communities across Georgia had committed to apply the four pillars to build a strong foundation. Other work at the local level continues through the efforts of organizations such as the Georgia Family Connection Partnership and the Georgia Vision Project.

In 2016, GEEARS, with the support of senior leadership at DECAL, GaDOE, and DPH, convened a committee of stakeholders representing early childhood, K-12 education, families, health, and higher education to develop and adopt a shared school-readiness framework. Much like the Get Georgia Reading Campaign, this framework for school readiness articulates a shared vision and provides a common language across health, early learning, and family and community supports. This framework aligns and encourages equitable policy, practice, and investments that promote healthy development of children from birth to age eight.

46 Alliance for Early Success. (2015, November). Birth Though Eight State Policy Framework. Retrieved from earlysuccess.org/sites/default/files/website_files/AESBirthThru8FrameworkFINAL3.pdf.

Continue to support and expand the Georgia Pre-K Program.

Independent evaluations have demonstrated the long-term impact of participation in the lottery-funded Georgia Pre-K Program. DECAL is undergoing a research-based continuous improvement process that focuses on teacher professional development, program quality improvements, a Pre-K Summer Transition Program for income-eligible rising kindergarten students who did not attend Pre-K or Head Start, and the Rising Pre-K Program for income-eligible children entering Pre-K whose home language is Spanish.

Support for the Georgia Pre-K Program should include increased resources to expand access and reduce class size to 20 students.

Continue to support the work developed under the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant after the grant period ends.

Best-practice research finds that strong policy frameworks that support high-quality early learning include early learning standards, research and evaluation of assessments, quality rated programs, professional development, and lessons learning in the implementation of the Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs). Each of these have been developed or enhanced through the Early Learning Challenge Grant. Those initiatives need to continue to support high-quality early learning options for all children.

YIELD! PROCEED WITH CAUTION, MORE WORK TO BE DONE

Increase access to high-quality early learning programs, especially for low-income children, and continue to expand Quality Rated.

One-third of Georgia zip codes are considered "child care deserts." These are defined as zip codes with at least 30 children under the age of five living where there are either no child care centers or so few centers that there are three times as many children as there are spaces in the centers.[47] About half of the more than 800,000 residents living in those deserts are in places where the poverty rate is higher than 20%. With 650,000 children under age five in Georgia, demand for child care assistance is much higher than the supply available.[48]

Quality Rated. The quality improvements occurring under Quality Rated are supported by business and philanthropic dollars. Georgia's Pre-K Program is funded by the lottery proceeds, which must be shared with the HOPE Scholarship program. Georgia leaders should continue to investigate innovative strategies for funding the program at levels that ensure high quality and accessibility for all children. Such funding strategies are especially needed for programs aimed at the state's youngest citizens, infants through preschoolers, as the lottery funding is only specified for the Pre-K Program that serves four-year-olds.

Georgia CAPS Program. Georgia's CAPS Program is administered by DECAL. CAPS provides assistance to approximately 50,000 children (ages zero to four, and school-aged) each week. The program has three primary goals:[49]

47 Malik, R., Hamm, K., Adamu, M., and Morrissey, T. (2016, October 27). Child Care Deserts: An Analysis of Child Care Centers by ZIP Code in 8 States. *Center for American Progress.* Retrieved from www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2016/10/27/225703/child-care-deserts/.

48 Ibid.

49 For more information on Georgia's CAPS program, see geears.org/wp-content/uploads/CAPS-Fact-Sheet-1.pdf.

1. To provide access to high-quality, affordable early learning environments to low-income families
2. To support DECAL's efforts at increasing positive school-readiness outcomes
3. To assist families in achieving and maintaining self-sufficiency by providing financial supports for child care

Governor Deal recommended an additional $5.5 million in state funds to provide tiered reimbursements to higher quality early education programs for eligible families. The Subcommittee on Early Learning, part of the governor's Education Reform Commission (ERC), recommended that $10 million was needed for the program. Therefore, an additional $4.5 million is necessary to reach this goal. Currently, Georgia is only serving a fraction of eligible families, and as the state's poverty rate continues to grow, greater investments in CAPS will be needed to meet the need.[50]

Implement recommendations for early learning made by Governor Deal's Education Reform Commission.

Working throughout 2015, the ERC's goal was to provide recommendations to improve Georgia's educational system, including increasing access to early learning programs. Governor Deal challenged the Subcommittee on Early Learning to study and make recommendations for expanding early education options aimed at increasing both the supply of quality programs and the demand for them from consumers.

The ERC recommended increased supports for the Georgia Pre-K Program, for teachers, and for assistant teachers, which were incorporated into the 2016 state budget. What remains are the recommendations concerning supporting the expansion of Quality Rated and increasing the ability of centers to provide quality and parents to afford.

The ERC recommended that for centers to receive the CAPS subsidy, they should be required to be Quality Rated by 2020. This policy would expand the number of available spots for low-income children in Quality Rated centers. The ERC's second recommendation was to appropriate funding to allow for adjustments in rates for higher quality centers. This would meet the new federal requirements and increase Georgia's ability to serve income-eligible families. Finally, a combination of tax incentives for providers, teachers, and parents would allow centers to increase quality and would help families pay for higher quality early learning programs.

Fully leverage the opportunities under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to enable and encourage states, districts, and schools to strengthen and expand connections between early learning programs and elementary schools, improve instruction, and measure progress.

ESSA includes numerous early learning provisions designed to enable and encourage states, districts, and schools to strengthen and expand connections between early learning programs and elementary schools, improve instruction, and measure progress. As Georgia implements the state plan, attention needs to be paid to ensuring that the following opportunities are realized:

- Developing assessments and accountability systems that explicitly consider and address P-2 as well as alignment with birth to five
- Developing accountability measures that reflect the importance of children's earliest years
- Including engaging early learning in the Comprehensive Needs Assessment for school improvement
- Including DECAL as a partner in school turnaround plans
- Supporting alignment and transitions between early learning environments and kindergarten

50 Ibid.

ALERT! POLICY MISSING OR NEEDS IMMEDIATE ACTION

Georgia must increase access to health supports for young children and their families, including access to insurance and providers as well as mental and oral health support.

Insurance. Continuous and adequate health insurance coverage is critical to ensuring access to prenatal care and other preventative and routine services that minimize health risks. For young children, health insurance coverage is associated with increased access to well-child visits, more immunizations, and decreased emergency room visits. In Georgia in 2015, 14% of the population was without insurance, higher than the national average of 9%, and the second-highest percentage of uninsured individuals in the nation.[51] Among all children under the age of 18, 8% were uninsured, placing Georgia as fifth highest in the nation for uninsured children.[52] Among children living in poverty in Georgia, that number rose to 10%, despite the availability of both Medicaid and PeachCare.

Mental Health. Georgia is also facing a shortage of mental health professionals, especially for very young children. Across Georgia, 76 of 159 counties do not have a licensed psychologist, and 52 of 159 counties do not have a licensed social worker.[53] Governor Deal has formed a Commission on Children's Mental Health, which will identify potential improvements to state medical services as well as ways to increase access to care for uninsured children. The governor has also provided $2.5 million for early childhood mental health.

These are steps in the right direction. However, throughout 2015, the Georgia House of Representatives convened a study committee on this issue. The primary recommendation of the House Study Committee on Children's Mental Health was the creation of a statewide Children's Mental Health Strategic Plan, designed and determined by a statewide coalition of stakeholders. The committee recommended the plan include creating a state budget for children's access to mental health prevention resources and early intervention based on an assessment of currently available services and resources. Another element is a mental health workforce development plan, as Georgia's workforce falls far short of the needed care providers. By increasing this workforce, Georgia can reduce the ratio of students to mental health personnel in and out of schools. The governor's commission does not address the workforce shortage, which is a key limiting factor to access to services.

Increase access to family supports.

Best-practice research shows that countries and states with policies that support parents' access to work and economic advancement opportunities have better student outcomes. As mentioned above, Georgia has a relatively high level of uninsured parents and a relatively low income threshold (compared to other states) to qualify for Medicaid. Georgia does not require paid family medical leave or paid sick leave.

Finally, Georgia does not offer a state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The federal EITC cuts federal taxes and provides a modest wage enhancement for low-wage workers—predominately women. The credit is available only to people who work, and it grows as wages rise, which encourages people to stay employed and work more hours, rather than relying on public assistance to make ends meet. Nearly 1.1 million Georgia households, or 28% of all Georgia income tax filers, received the federal EITC in 2013.[54]

51 See www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/total-population/?state=GA.
52 Ibid.
53 Voices for Georgia's Children. (2015, December). Georgia's Crisis in Child & Adolescent Behavioral Health. Retrieved from georgiavoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/HealthPolicy_Recs_12115.pdf.
54 Johnson, M. (2016). Economic Opportunity Agenda for Georgia Women. Retrieved from Georgia Budget and Policy Institute: gbpi.org/2016/economic-opportunity-agenda-for-georgia-women/.

Twenty-six states and the District of Columbia have built on the federal EITC's success with their own state-level versions of the tax credit. State EITCs are typically claimed as a percentage of the federal credit's value, ranging from a low of 3.5% in Louisiana to a high of 40% in Washington, DC. If Georgia were to enact a refundable EITC set at a 10% state match, a family with a $3,000 federal credit also would receive a $300 state credit. A Georgia EITC of this size would put an estimated $270 million annually into the pockets of about 1.1 million Georgia households.[55]

In trying to address some of these issues, Georgia is among five states recently selected by the National Governor's Association and the Center for Law and Social Policy to participate in the Parents and Children Thriving Together: Two-Generation State Policy Network.[56] With this designation, Georgia has joined a network of states working to develop and implement two-generation strategies to achieve statewide systems change across a range of policy areas, including workforce development, human services, education, health, child care, and early childhood education.

Georgia's pilot is designed to connect access to quality early learning, school readiness and workforce readiness policies that support the entire family. DECAL is the lead agency and is partnering with the Georgia Department of Economic Development — Workforce Division, the Technical College System of Georgia, and the University System of Georgia.

55 Ibid.
56 The other states are Colorado, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Oregon.

CHAPTER 3

Quality Teaching

I. Issue Definition

High-quality teaching has long been touted as the most important in-school factor that can improve student achievement. Studies reveal that student performance is correlated with the quality of a student's teachers. Students exposed to consistent high-quality teaching are more likely to attend college, are less likely to become teenage parents, and have higher earnings in adulthood. However, student performance lags when children are taught by low-quality teachers — an effect that compounds over time. Given the critical importance of teacher quality, it is essential that states have policies in place that attract and retain the highest quality teachers possible.

Teachers often spend more time with children than any other adults; therefore, their influence on the next generation of citizens is paramount. In addition to their role in shaping young minds, teachers make up a significant portion of the group of people that will go on to serve as school and school system leaders, furthering this influence. In many cases, teachers are the principals and superintendents of tomorrow. For these reasons and more, it is essential to ensure that Georgia's teachers are adequately prepared, compensated, supported, and assessed in their profession.

In a career that brings with it enormous responsibility, teachers face many challenges that can make a tough job even tougher. It is important for stakeholders to understand these challenges and consider how they affect the education system as a whole and what can be done to change the equation for teachers that need stronger supports.

II. Elements of an Effective System

High-performing states and education systems have processes designed to ensure high-quality teaching throughout by focusing on attracting talented students committed to the profession. Those students are subjected to rigorous preparation and induction systems, and they are provided work environments and career pathways that support teacher learning and professional development. Each of these supports represents a commitment to professionalize teaching as an occupation.[57]

Internationally, high-performing countries follow a few keys steps to create an abundant supply of highly qualified teachers:[58]

- They recruit teachers from the top ranks of high school graduating classes, primarily from among the top third to top quarter.
- They have highly selective teacher training programs with admission rates ranging from 10 to 15%.
- They develop rigorous requirements for subject mastery.
- Top performers require at least one year of supervised teaching (either during teacher preparation programs or during the first year of teaching), with new teachers serving as apprentices to Master Teachers.

57 Darling-Hammond, L., Burns, D., Campbell, C., A, Lin Goodwin, Hammerness, K., Low, E.-L., . . . Zeichner, K. (2017). *Empowered Educators: How High Performing Systems Shape Teaching Quality Around the World.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

58 Center on International Benchmarking. (2016). *9 Building Blocks for a World-Class Education System.* Washington, DC: National Center on Education and the Economy.

- They require teacher preparation programs to use research methods that enable teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of their own work in implementing and improving curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- They set beginning compensation at about the same level as beginning engineers.
- Top performers provide aggressive career ladders that include increased compensation, responsibility, authority, and autonomy.
- They focus on professional development and professional learning.

BEYOND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN HIGH-PERFORMING SYSTEMS, KEY TAKEAWAYS[59]

High-performing systems focus on professional learning as a driver for improved student achievement in different ways:

1. **Singapore** is known for very rigorous teacher education and a highly structured career ladder with different pathways tied to performance appraisal and required individualized and ongoing training.
2. **In Shanghai,** teacher induction is a critical component in the process of ensuring high-quality teaching. Other components include ongoing mentoring, career ladder options, and student performance–based pay.
3. **Hong Kong** builds teachers' capacity through lesson observation, using a "learning study" method adapted from a program in Japan. It involves intense observations of one particular lesson (repeatedly), helping teachers improve their skills.
4. **In British Columbia,** the majority of teacher learning is in inquiry-based groups, which occur within one to two class periods per week. Most inquiry projects involve research in one particular area for most or all of the school year, allowing for deep learning and sustained changes in teaching practice.

While these systems are quite different, the key to all of them is that collaborative professional learning is built into the daily lives of teachers and school leaders. This is reinforced by resourcing policies such as the examples below that free up teachers' time for collaborative professional learning. For example,

1. The average teacher in Shanghai teaches for only 10–12 hours per week.
2. Singapore invests significantly in teachers as professionals with leadership roles that recognize excellence in professional learning. Policies help teachers lead professional learning within their own schools and align teacher needs with broader school objectives.

Professional learning in high-performing systems is built on an improvement cycle aimed at improving student learning. The cycle has three key steps:

1. Assess students' knowledge and progress to identify their next stage of learning.
2. Develop teaching practices that provide for the next stage of student learning.
3. Evaluate the impact of new practices on student learning so that teachers can refine their methods.

Recent reforms in Shanghai emphasize the professionalization of the field.

1. The teacher career ladder is designed so that as teachers moved toward the top, they are expected to lead teams of teachers by doing serious instructional development work in the schools, researching the effects of their development projects on student achievement, and writing research papers on those projects that get reviewed in university-run, refereed journals.
2. Teachers in Shanghai are treated like professionals in a high-status professional field and are given the tools, career opportunities, compensation, recognition, and status that come with a professionally structured occupation.
3. Creating a fully professional role for teachers in the Shanghai system was at the heart of Shanghai's strategy for creating one of the world's most successful education systems.

59 Jensen, B., Sonnemann, J., Katie, R.-H., & Amelie, H. (2016). *Beyond PD: Teacher Professional Learning in High Performing Systems.* Washington, DC: National Center on Education and the Economy.

Georgia Quality Teaching Data — By the Numbers

Overall Teaching Outcomes

Nationally, Georgia ranks **9th** in the quality of policies that govern the teaching profession.[60]

Ratings are compiled across a variety of measures examining five key aspects of quality:[62]

1. **Delivering well-prepared teachers: C+**
   This area focuses on teacher preparation, such as program admission requirements; elementary, middle, and high school preparation; professional knowledge assessments; and student teaching.

2. **Expanding the teacher pool: B-**
   This area examines alternative certification pathways.

3. **Identifying effective teachers: C+**
   This area is related to teacher evaluations, licensure, and equity.

4. **Retaining effective teachers: C+**
   This area focuses on issues of induction, professional development, and compensation.

5. **Exiting ineffective teachers: B**
   This area examines procedures related to dismissals and reductions of force.

TABLE 3.1 GEORGIA COMPARED TO THE FIVE TOP-PERFORMING STATES: OVERALL STATE GRADES AND NATIONAL RANKINGS BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON TEACHER QUALITY, 2015[61]

State	Grade	National Rank
Florida	B+	1
Indiana	B	2
Louisiana	B	3
New York	B	4
Tennessee	B	5
Georgia	**B-**	**9**
US Average	C	

States with Strong Teacher Policies: Leading states demonstrate strong teacher preparation programs and teacher evaluation systems. **New York,** in particular, stands out for ensuring that special education teachers know the subjects they are licensed to teach by requiring both elementary and secondary special education teachers to pass tests in all core subject areas. New York has also raised the bar on entrance requirements for graduate-level teacher preparation programs and has held firm on teacher effectiveness policies such as teacher evaluations based on student achievement and tenure tied to evaluation results. The state also requires action when teachers receive multiple ineffective evaluation ratings.[63]

TABLE 3.2 GEORGIA COMPARED TO SOUTHERN NEIGHBORS: OVERALL STATE GRADES AND NATIONAL RANKINGS BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON TEACHER QUALITY, 2015[64]

State	Grade	National Rank
Florida	B+	1
Louisiana	B	3
Tennessee	B	5
Georgia	**B-**	**9**
Virginia	C+	18
Kentucky	C	21
Mississippi	C	21
South Carolina	C	23
Alabama	D+	35

60 National Council on Teacher Quality. (2015). *2015 State Teacher Policy Yearbook, Georgia.* Washington, DC: NCTQ.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.

Equity and Turnover

44% of new teachers leave the field within the first five years[65]
$33,424 – Starting salary of a new teacher, based on the state salary schedule
28th – Georgia's national rank for new teacher starting salaries[66]

Percentage of First-Year Teachers

7.7% highest poverty schools vs. **4.4%** lowest poverty schools
9.2% highest minority schools vs. **3.5%** lowest minority schools

Percentage of Teacher Turnover (fall 2012 to fall 2013)

20.9% highest poverty schools vs. **14.3%** lowest poverty schools
23.1% highest minority schools vs. 1**6.5%** lowest minority schools

Educator Preparation Benchmarks

In 2013, the Task Force on Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession, formed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), released a series of recommendations to guide the transformation of educator preparation programs.[67] Georgia is actively implementing these recommendations throughout the teacher preparation pipeline. Table 3.3 shows the status of key task force recommendations in Georgia.

65 Henson, K., Stephens, C., Hall, T., and McCampbell, C. (2015). *The 2015 Georgia Public P-12 Teacher Workforce: A Status Report.* Atlanta: Georgia Professional Standards Commission.
66 Teacher Portal. (2016). *Georgia Teacher Salary, – 2016.* Retrieved from www.teacherportal.com/salary/Georgia-teacher-salary.
67 CCSSO Task Force on Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession. (2013). *Our Responsiblity, Our Promise: Transforming Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession.* Washington, DC: CCSSO.

TABLE 3.3 CCSSO TASKFORCE ON EDUCATOR PREPARATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Category	Indicator	Status in Georgia
Licensure	States will revise and enforce their licensure standards for teachers and principals to support the teaching of more demanding content aligned to college- and career-readiness and critical thinking skills to a diverse range of students.	Teacher preparation programs approved by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) must be aligned with the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards, College- and Career-Ready Standards, and current subject area standards published by national specialized professional associations. Georgia Educational Leadership Preparation Program Standards are based upon the spring 2016 draft of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards. A revision of the standards is planned for fall 2017 to incorporate the National Educational Leadership Preparation Standards published by the National Policy Board for Education Administration.
	States will work together to influence the development of innovative licensure performance assessments that are aligned to the revised licensure standards and include multiple measures of educators' ability to perform, including the potential to impact student achievement and growth.	Beginning in 2015–2016, Georgia adopted the edTPA as the statewide content pedagogy performance-based assessment required for teacher licensure. A performance-based assessment for Educational Leadership licensure at the Tier II level became effective in July 2017. Georgia educator licensure renewal is now linked to educator performance on the observation portion of the statewide evaluation system.
	States will create multitiered licensure systems aligned to a coherent developmental continuum that reflects new performance expectations for educators and their implementation in the learning environment and to assessments that are linked to evidence of student achievement and growth.	Implementation of Georgia's four-tiered teacher licensure system began in July 2014. Performance at each tier is based on the statewide evaluation system, and performance impacts licensure renewal and continuation in the profession. A two-tiered licensure system for school and district leaders became effective October 2016.
	States will reform current state licensure systems so that they are more efficient, so that they have true reciprocity across states, and so that their credentialing structures support effective teaching and lead toward student college- and career-readiness.	Georgia is recognized as having one of the most highly efficient certification systems in the nation.
Program approval	States will hold preparation programs accountable by exercising the state's authority to determine which programs should operate and recommend candidates for licensure in the state, including establishing a clear and fair performance rating system to guide continuous improvement. States will act to close programs that continually receive the lowest rating and will provide incentives for programs whose ratings indicate exemplary performance.	Preparation Program Effectiveness Measures (PPEMs) have been developed and will be implemented non-consequentially in academic year 2017–2018. Consequential implementation will follow in 2018–2019. PPEMs will provide the basis for annual program review and for decisions to recognize and reward high-performing programs and close low-performing programs.

Continumed

TABLE 3.3 CCSSO TASKFORCE ON EDUCATOR PREPARATION RECOMMENDATIONS, CONTINUED

Category	Indicator	Status in Georgia
Program approval	States will adopt and implement rigorous program approval standards to assure that educator preparation programs recruit candidates based on supply and demand data; have highly selective admissions and exit criteria including mastery of content; provide high-quality clinical practice throughout a candidate's preparation that includes experiences with the responsibilities of a school year from beginning to end; and produce quality candidates capable of positively impacting student achievement.	The CAEP[68] standards have been adapted by Georgia, and they are used in the state approval review process of educator preparation programs and program providers. Preparation programs are required to provide teacher and leader candidates with more intensive and high-quality clinical practice (yearlong residencies are strongly encouraged). The use of the performance-based edTPA provides additional assurance of the ability to positively impact student achievement.
	States will require alignment of preparation content standards to P-12 college- and career-ready standards for all licensure areas.	Preparation programs are required to align program content standards to P-12 college- and career-ready standards.
	States will provide feedback, data, support, and resources to preparation programs to assist them with continuous improvement and to act on any program approval or national accreditation recommendations.	GaPSC offers technical assistance to program providers. As PPEMs are implemented, the technical assistance will become more focused on the analysis of program performance data and the use of those data to inform program improvements.
Data collection, analysis, and reporting	States will develop and support state-level governance structures to guide confidential and secure data collection, analysis, and reporting of P-20 data and how it informs educator preparation programs, hiring practices, and professional learning. Using stakeholder input, states will address and take appropriate action, individually and collectively, on the need for unique educator identifiers, links to nontraditional preparation providers, and the sharing of candidate data among organizations and across states.	As of 2017, Georgia's statewide longitudinal (P-20) data system, GA AWARDS, is in the early stages of implementation. GaPSC regularly collects and analyzes data on supply and demand, as well as the hiring and placement of educators.
	States will use data collection, analysis, and reporting of multiple measures for continuous improvement and accountability of preparation programs.	PPEMs and other data are shared regularly with program providers and appropriate stakeholders for improvement and accountability purposes. Web-based data dashboards are under development and will be used to display PPEMs to program providers and to the public.

68 Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation

III. Georgia Landscape - Quality Teaching

Many of the education reforms implemented under Georgia's Race to the Top grant that began in 2010 were focused on improving teaching through creating a more rigorous preparation and induction system and revising how the state evaluates teachers and supports their professional learning and career ladder opportunities. Georgia is addressing many of these reforms through participation in the Network for Transforming Educator Preparation (NTEP).[69] NTEP was formed to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession convened by the Council of Chief State School Officers.[70]

To implement the NTEP work, a state task force consisting of GaPSC, the University System of Georgia (USG), and the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has been implementing each of the 10 recommendations listed in Table 3. Three areas have seen significant reforms: (1) a multi-tiered licensure system, (2) professional learning for current teachers, and (3) program accountability.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Georgia is now asking more from its teacher preparation programs. "Preparation program" is defined as any program that trains teachers for the classroom. Most of these programs are based in schools of education within colleges and universities. There are also alternative certification programs operated by such entities as area Resource Education Support Agencies (RESAs), Teach for America, local school systems, and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG).[71] Note that Teach for America is phasing out its teacher certification programs. Georgia is one of only a few states in the nation that holds alternative certification programs to the same rigorous standards of program approval as traditional university-based programs.

To raise the standards of teacher preparation programs, the following reforms have either been implemented or are in process.[72]

- Beginning in 2016, new national standards were adopted (published by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation) that are more rigorous than the previous national standards and require program providers to show evidence that their graduates are having a positive impact on P-12 student learning.[73]
- Programs are partnering with K-12 school districts through P-20 Collaboratives to ensure teachers are prepared to meet local needs.
- GaPSC is encouraging all institutions to provide a full year of classroom time for teacher candidates instead of the minimum one-semester requirement.

69 NTEP is composed of two cohorts of states. Cohort One began in 2013 with seven states. Cohort Two launched in 2015. As of 2017, 13 states are participating in NTEP: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Washington.

70 The task force was composed of current and former chiefs as well as representatives from the National Association of State Boards of Education and the National Governors Association, and was chaired by Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna.

71 Alternative certification programs serve individuals who wish to enter teaching from another career path, have not completed a teacher education program, and do not hold a professional teaching certificate.

72 Georgia Educators Collaborate to Transform Teacher Preparation. (2017, January). *Georgia Is Strengthening Teacher Preparation and Advancement Opportunities.* Retrieved from CCSSO: www.ccsso.org/Documents/Georgia%20NTEP%20Case%20Story.pdf.

73 GaPSC adapted the Accreditation Standards published August 19, 2013, by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) for use in the Georgia educator preparation provider and preparation program approval process. The adapted standards include all five of the CAEP standards, as well as one additional standard addressing preparation program requirements specific to the state of Georgia. For more information, see www.gapsc.com/EducatorPreparation/Downloads/GeorgiaStandards2016.pdf.

GaPSC is also using data to measure program success in two important ways. First, scores from graduating students' content knowledge and subject-specific performance assessments (both required for an initial teaching license) will be combined with surveys of graduates from their first year of teaching to determine their satisfaction with their preparation. A second system will utilize outcome data, including summative performance data derived from principal observations of classroom teachers and surveys of the principals of the schools where first-year teachers taught.[74]

Between 2012 and 2015, Georgia implemented more rigorous requirements to earn a state teaching license for students entering the profession from a traditional university-based preparation program or alternative certification program. These changes include the following:[75]

- Increased rigor on the content assessment (GACE[76]) and subject-specific performance-based assessment (EdTPA)
- Additional educator ethics assessment

Licensure and Career Ladder

Related to reforms to teacher preparation programs, much of the collaborative work around the NTEP recommendations has to do with changing the licensure requirements of new and current teachers. Georgia's new teacher certification system requires student teachers to demonstrate proficiency before they can obtain a teaching certificate. Teachers are assessed through an assessment system called the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES), which plays a large role in induction and continuing licensure. The teacher certification system is tiered, consisting of four levels of licensures and five different certifications. Thus, the certification system establishes a pathway for teachers to advance within the profession while still remaining in the classroom and provides a process for recognizing excellent teachers.[77] Most of these rule changes were implemented by the 2016 school year.

Georgia's licensure system now has three primary levels:

1. **Pre-Service –** This first level is for teaching candidates from a university program. The content knowledge exam and a subject-specific performance assessment are more rigorous, and students must complete an ethics assessment and background check prior to their field experiences in P-12 schools.

2. **Induction –** For new teachers, the induction certificate lasts for three years, during which time the teacher must be rated "proficient" or "exemplary" on two out of three of their TKES assessments. Professional learning and skills in need of additional support will be identified by the TKES assessments.

3. **Professional –** The professional certificate is a five-year renewable license. To renew, a teacher must show a "proficient" or "exemplary" TKES rating for four out of five years. Like the induction certificate, professional learning will be identified by the TKES assessment.

For those with a professional certificate who wish to further their career while staying in the classroom, there is an additional certificate level with two options from which teachers can choose.

74 Georgia Educators Collaborate to Transform Teacher Preparation. (2017, January). *Georgia Is Strengthening TeacherPreparation and Advancement Opportunities.* Retrieved from CCSSO: www.ccsso.org/Documents/Georgia%20NTEP%20Case%20Story.pdf.
75 Ibid.
76 Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators
77 For a complete description, see: Georgia Professional Standards Commission. (2014, October 30). *Understanding the 2014 Educator Certification Rule Changes.* Retrieved from www.gapsc.com/Commission/policies_guidelines/Downloads/2014EducatorCertificationRuleChanges.pdf; Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education. (2014). *Top Ten Issues to Watch 2014: Issue 3, Teacher Preparation Programs*. Retrieved from www.gpee.org/fileadmin/files/PDFs/GPEE_Top_Ten_2014_Final.pdf.

4a. Advanced Professional – This certificate is designed to recognize classroom excellence in student achievement and requires five years of experience. During those five years, a teacher must have at least one TKES rating of "exemplary" and no ratings below "proficient." They must also have an advanced degree in their certification field or in curriculum and instruction or instructional technology, or be National Board Certified.

4b. Lead Professional – This certificate is for teachers who positively impact other teachers and adults. Like the advanced professional, this certificate requires at least five years of experience, at least one TKES rating of "exemplary" and no ratings below "proficient." The teachers also must either be certified in teacher leadership or have an advanced degree in their certification field, curriculum and instruction, or instructional technology, AND a Teacher Leadership Endorsement, a Coaching Endorsement, or Teacher Support Specialist Endorsement. Teachers must also demonstrate through a rigorous performance assessment the capability to work with their colleagues in ways that improve student learning.

Schools and districts can benefit by encouraging high-performing teachers to apply for and maintain Advanced Professional or Lead Professional Certification, as these teachers serve important roles in improving the teaching and learning in their schools. Advanced Professional certified teachers can provide instructional modeling for their peers, and Lead Professional certified teachers are equipped to coach and mentor new teachers or those who are striving to improve their practice.

The changes in licensure have also changed how Georgia views the role of professional learning. Traditionally in Georgia, teachers needed 10 hours of professional learning units to keep their license current. There were no specific requirements about the focus of those units. Professional learning requirements are now tied to annual assessments. Every five years when teachers are up for certification renewal, they must demonstrate improvement in their areas of weakness identified by the TKES. Guided by targeted professional learning, this requirement shifts the licensure renewal process to a performance-based definition of tenure. Teachers must demonstrate continuous professional learning.

Teacher Effectiveness

To increase the number of high-quality teachers in the classroom, under Georgia's Race to the Top grant, the state developed new effectiveness systems for teachers and school leaders, primarily principals. One of those systems is the teacher assessment system, known as the TKES. In addition to being able to distinguish between good teachers, great teachers, and ineffective teachers, the primary focus of TKES is to help improve instruction and to better design professional development activities to meet teacher needs. The goal was to develop a rigorous and transparent teacher and leader evaluation instrument that would help ensure an effective teacher in every classroom and an effective leader in every school.

The system underwent a significant revision beginning in the 2016–2017 school year due to the passage of Senate Bill (SB) 364 in 2016. The system now has three standard components:

- **Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS), 50%**
  - This includes at least two classroom observations and a summative assessment for teachers with three or more years teaching experience. Other levels of teachers receive four classroom observations, two formative assessments, and a summative assessment.
- **Professional Growth, 20%**
  - Individual districts may define professional growth as the attainment of professional growth goals or plan additional TAPS measures, or use other district-identified measures.

- **Student Growth, 30%**
  - For fourth- through eighth-grade math and English language arts (ELA)/ reading teachers and for teachers of high school courses with an end-of-course assessments, student growth is calculated based on the Georgia Milestones student growth measures.
  - For all other teachers, districts may select among the following:
    - The school-level mean growth percentile based on Georgia Milestones ELA/reading and math assessments
    - The district-level mean growth percentile based on Georgia Milestones ELA/reading and math assessments
    - Student learning objectives or other pre- to post-measures
    - Any other district-identified measure

Compensation

In the current salary structure, the state sets a base salary of $33,424, and teachers receive step increases based on the number of years of experience in the classroom and education level. Compared to other states, starting teacher salaries in Georgia rank 28th and the average Georgia salary ranks 21st.[78]

Some local school systems are currently experimenting with alternative compensation models based on district needs and teacher performance. They have waived the standard state salary model, which is driven only by years of experience and education level. The new tiered certification system allows for a career ladder for classroom teachers, but those differing levels of certification have not been tied to teacher pay. As these are new experiments, results on the success of these programs have yet to be determined.

Pending Reform Proposals

As Georgia continues to strengthen the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers, two policy opportunities are ready to be implemented and supported.

The first is the state plan developed under the Every Student Succeeds Act. That plan calls for the development of broad state strategies that allow district flexibility to address several aspects of teacher effectiveness:

- Formalized recruitment strategy
- Preparation pathways
- Leadership and opportunities for advancement
- Ongoing mentoring and coaching

The second policy opportunity began January 2015, when Governor Nathan Deal appointed the Education Reform Commission (ERC) to develop recommendations to reshape Georgia's education system. The ERC was charged to examine five areas: funding, early education, Move On When Ready/ dual enrollment, expanding educational opportunities and school choice, and teacher recruitment, retention, and compensation.

The Subcommittee on Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Compensation proposed 12 recommendations across those priority areas, listed in Table 3.4.[79]

78 Teacher Portal. (2016). *Georgia Teacher Salary, 2016.* Retrieved from www.teacherportal.com/salary/Georgia-teacher-salary.
79 For details on all 12 recommendations, see gov.georgia.gov/sites/gov.georgia.gov/files/related_files/document/FinalGovERCReport_121415.pdf.

TABLE 3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS OF ERC SUBCOMMITTEE ON TEACHING, RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND COMPENSATION[80]

Compensation	Develop guidance to assist districts in creating strategic compensation models for teachers.
	Increase K-12 funding to allow local districts to recruit, retain, and reward effective teachers and maintain competitive salaries.
	Investigate a sustainable state-level funding program to compensate teachers for supervising teacher interns.
Recruitment and training of new teachers	Provide grants to districts for developing strong teacher induction programs. Charter System and Strategic Waiver System contracts should provide details on how districts will support induction-level teachers.
	Investigate a service-cancellable loan program for students graduating from a USG teacher education program, and designate the teaching profession as a High Demand Workforce Initiative in Georgia.
	Reimburse the costs of the required GACE exams and edTPA of pre-service teachers enrolled in a USG teacher education program who have signed a contract to teach in a Georgia school.
	Study replacing a single-semester student teaching model with a full year of clinical practice for teacher candidates, without adding semesters to the established degree timeline.
	Develop and implement a statewide media campaign to promote the positive aspects of teaching as a profession.
Support for current teachers	Establish and maintain teacher planning time as a top priority of the education community.
	Encourage the General Assembly and the State Board of Education to implement guidelines promoting the best and most respectful use of teacher instructional time.
	Modify the implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System to allow fewer classroom observations for effective teachers.
	Implement a study of the Teacher Retirement System of Georgia to measure system health and ensure long-term program vitality.

After receiving the final report and recommendations in December 2015, Governor Deal appointed a 90-member teacher advisory committee (TAC) to review the recommendations and provide feedback in two areas: (1) teacher recruitment, retention, and compensation and (2) Move On When Ready/ dual enrollment. The TAC analyzed all recommendations concerning teaching and Move On When Ready/ dual enrollment, and provided additional thoughts on recruitment, retention, and compensation.[81]

Recruitment[82] – The TAC members fully supported the implementation of a positive media campaign with current teachers. They believed that having current teachers be a positive voice for the profession both within schools and across the community is the first step to recruiting the next generation of teachers.

80 Education Reform Commission. (2015). Final Recommendations to Governor Nathan Deal. Atlanta: Office of the Governor.
81 Teacher Advisory Committee Report. (2016). Feedback from Teachers on Education Reform Commission Recommendations: Final Report Submitted to Governor Nathan Deal. Atlanta: Office of the Governor.
82 Ibid.

Retention[83]**–** The TAC agreed on and supported the following recommendations:

- A yearlong student internship for pre-service teachers
- Intense mentoring for induction-level teachers and support for teacher mentors
- Preservation of teacher planning and instructional time as a means of enhancing teacher effectiveness
- Reinstatement of provisions for service-cancellable loans for use as both a recruitment and retention tool
- Reimbursement of GACE exam fees and Ed/TPA, with limits on the number of exams eligible for reimbursement

Compensation – The TAC also reviewed the ERC's recommended changes in how districts earn money from the state to pay their teachers. The proposed formula would provide districts with the 2016 statewide average teacher salary ($50,768) for each teacher, which is reflected in the base amount provided to districts. This is not how much teachers will actually be paid, but the amount districts earn from the state. Districts will develop their own compensation models to be approved by the state. These new models must include at least one measure of teacher performance.

The TAC suggested that teacher participation in the development of a new compensation model was critical. TAC members recommended that the new model should use a measure of effectiveness and additional duties performed but should also continue to include years of experience and degrees. The committee also reasserted that a more reliable growth component of the TKES must be established if effectiveness is to be a serious consideration.[84]

83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.

IV. Opportunities - Quality Teaching

Moving forward, Georgia has multiple opportunities to move the needle on both teacher preparation and professional learning and support.

GO! KEEP MOVING FORWARD: STRONG POLICIES IN PLACE

Teacher Preparation – Continue the rigorous teacher preparation program requirements.

The work of the NTEP state task force has raised teacher preparation program standards and requirements for the initial license to teach in a classroom. Georgia is one of the few states that has the same program requirements for traditional and alternative certification programs. With an increasing reliance on alternative certification programs to fill state teaching needs, this is an important policy development.

Career Ladder – Continue the tiered certification ladder.

By offering the tiered certification ladder, including the Advanced Professional and Lead Professional certifications, Georgia allows teachers with a professional license who wish to further their career to stay in the classroom. The state plan developed by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) also calls for continued focus on career pathways that encourage teacher professionalism and leadership growth.

YIELD! PROCEED WITH CAUTION, MORE WORK TO BE DONE

Teacher Preparation – Refine the performance measures for teacher preparation programs.

Initially, Georgia planned to include student growth data in its program preparation performance measures to gauge a program's overall success. However, in 2016 SB 364 granted districts flexibility in selecting growth measures for their teacher effectiveness systems that do not uniformly produce growth measures for all teachers. This high level of variability and disparate reliability prohibits the state from using these measures for statewide comparison purposes. Georgia is currently considering another outcome measure.

Teacher Preparation – Strengthen induction programs.

The new induction certificate has two primary goals, both of which are results-focused. First, the purpose of the improved content knowledge exams and added subject-specific performance assessment is to better determine a candidate's readiness to teach. This should allow Georgia to be more selective about who enters the profession. Second, the purpose of the Induction Certificate is to provide a structure that highlights the supports novice teachers need. The responsibility for strengthening induction support for new teachers rests with school systems, which encourages schools and districts to use teacher leaders (and those holding the Lead Professional Certificate) to support new teachers and student teachers. Education program providers are expected to deliver additional support via partnerships and professional learning. The P-20 Collaboratives — regional partnerships between local school districts, GaDOE, GaPSC, the USG, RESAs, and alternative certification programs — have been established to formalize

collaborative partnerships with local school systems. In addition to focusing on induction pathways, these Collaboratives help clearly identify specific needs of students, teachers, and leaders in each region and work toward implementing the state equity plan[85] within local districts. The state ESSA plan recommends further strengthening these partnerships.

Teacher Preparation – Transition to a full-year clinical model for student teaching.

GaPSC, many of the P-20 Collaboratives, the ERC, and the state ESSA plan all call for a transition to a full-year clinical model of student teaching, as opposed to the current single-semester requirement. Yearlong teacher residencies depend upon the mentoring and support of expert teachers, those who have earned credentials in teacher leadership or coaching and who have earned the top tier of certification — Lead Professional.

Teacher Evaluation – Allow time to evaluate the teacher effectiveness system.

The primary focus of the teacher effectiveness system, known as the TKES, is to help improve instruction and to better design professional development activities to meet teacher needs. The goal was to develop a rigorous and transparent teacher and leader evaluation instrument that would help ensure an effective teacher in every classroom and an effective leader in every school.

The system underwent a significant revision beginning in the 2016–2017 school year due to the passage of SB 364 in 2016. Georgia needs a serious examination to whether the revised TKES adequately distinguishes between good teachers, great teachers, and ineffective teachers and whether it is truly informing professional development and meeting the needs of educators.

ALERT! POLICY MISSING OR NEEDS IMMEDIATE ACTION

Recognize teachers as professionals.

The state ESSA plan developed by the GaDOE, the ERC, and the TAC all call for efforts to recognize the professionalization of teaching as a career to attract and retain top talent. Professionalization includes how the profession is viewed, compensation, and mentoring and support for ongoing professional learning.

- The ERC recommended implementing a positive media campaign led by current teachers (See Table 3.4). Elevating the voice of today's teachers as they show their support for the profession and discuss its benefits will positively influence the prospective teachers of tomorrow in our schools and communities.
- The ERC also recommended that the General Assembly and State Board of Education implement guidelines promoting the best and most respectful use of teacher instructional time (see Table 3.4).
- The state ESSA plan developed by GaDOE recommends ongoing mentoring and support throughout an educator's career. School and district leaders need systematic training in managing and implementing the mentoring process. Moreover, the learning community within a school or district should focus on a continuous improvement cycle for all educators.

85 In response to a directive from the US Department of Education, Georgia has submitted an educator equity plan to address these achievement gaps. In the plan, data show an equity gap on every metric included in an analysis for both low-income students and minority students. Higher percentages of inexperienced, first-year teachers are found in schools with the highest concentration of minority students and students living in poverty. Students in these schools are twice as likely to have a teacher teaching out of field. Both teacher and principal turnover is also higher.

Examine teacher compensation.

Related to the professionalization of teaching, the state must also examine how it compensates its. While continuing to focus on how to recruit more teachers and train them appropriately, the state must also devise strategies to keep existing teachers in the classroom. Research shows that individuals are more likely to become teachers when teacher salaries are competitive with other industries.[86] Salaries also influence attrition. Both beginning and veteran teachers are more likely to leave the classroom if their district pays lower wages then surrounding areas, leading to more experienced teachers moving to districts that pay higher salaries. Teachers are more likely to leave the profession entirely when their salaries are relatively low compared to alternative wage opportunities, especially in high-demand fields like math and science.[87]

In terms of teacher pay and the salary structure in Georgia, the ERC Subcommittee on Teaching, Recruitment, Retention, and Compensation recommended increasing the base salary of teachers. The subcommittee's rationale was that the decline in enrollments in teacher preparation programs must be met with a strong statement, through compensation, that says teaching is viewed as a worthy profession.[88]

In the current salary structure, the state sets a base salary of $33,424, and teachers receive step increases based on the number of years of experience in the classroom and education level. Compared to other states, starting teacher salaries in Georgia rank 28th and the average Georgia salary ranks 21st.[89] The ERC recommended that Georgia develop guidance to assist districts in developing their own strategic compensation models for teachers. The alternative compensation models would allow local districts to waive experience and education level as factors in determining teacher pay and weigh other factors, such as teacher classroom effectiveness, high-need teaching areas, and so forth.

Some local school systems are currently experimenting with alternative compensation models based on district needs and teacher performance. They have waived the standard state salary model driven only by years of experience and education level. The new tiered certification system allows for a career ladder for classroom teachers, but those differing levels of certification have not been tied to teacher pay. As these are new experiments, results on the success of these programs have yet to be determined.

Moreover, the proposed funding reforms do not include inflation to account for rising costs over time. Without an inflation factor, districts could be locked into today's funding levels for an unforeseen amount of time. Low-wealth districts may not be able to supplement the rising costs related to inflation, thereby exacerbating equity issues.

Address teacher equity.

A goal under Georgia's Race to the Top grant was "ensuring equitable access to highly effective teachers and principals, and increasing the pipeline of effective teachers to high-need schools and hard-to-staff subject areas." However, Georgia's ability to ensure an equitable distribution of teachers is far from met. Without an equitable distribution of quality teachers, Georgia will not be able to move the needle on student achievement.

86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 Education Reform Commission. (2015). Final Recommendations to Governor Nathan Deal. Atlanta: Office of the Governor.
89 Teacher Portal. (2016). Georgia Teacher Salary - 2016. Retrieved from Teaching Salary Data by State: www.teacherportal.com/salary/Georgia-teacher-salary

In response to a directive from the US Department of Education, Georgia has submitted an educator equity plan to address these achievement gaps.[90] In the plan, data show an equity gap *on every metric*[91] included in an analysis for both low-income students and minority students. Higher percentages of inexperienced, first-year teachers are found in schools with the highest concentration of minority students and students living in poverty. Students in these schools are twice as likely to have a teacher teaching out of field. Both teacher and principal turnover is also higher.

In addition to income and race/ethnicity, the equity plan highlights locale equity gaps (contrasting city, suburb, town, and rural area educator equity). The majority of Georgia's highest poverty schools are in rural districts. The most variables of concern were identified in these areas. Schools that are home to both the highest percentage of minority students and the highest percentage of students living in poverty appear to be concentrated in metro Atlanta and Southwest Georgia.

To prepare the equity plan and propose solutions, Georgia needed to understand the magnitude of the equity problem as well as the causes of that problem. Root cause analyses were conducted and strategies were identified to address these gaps. The plan includes four themes for ensuring equitable access to effective educators for Georgia students:

1. Recruitment and teacher preparation
2. Teacher and principal effectiveness
3. Retention and professional growth
4. Factors that impact the learning and working environment

Each of these themes builds on the education reform work of both the ERC and the state ESSA plan. The state's goal of providing a wider, more diverse recruitment pool of effective educators relies heavily on the continued implementation of reforms aimed at increasing the rigor and quality of Georgia's teacher preparation programs, both those within the university system and alternative certification programs.

Similarly, promoting equitable teacher and principal effectiveness (theme 2 above) relies on Georgia's success in providing a rigorous and transparent teacher and leader evaluation system. Theme 3 — improving retention and professional growth of educators—is closely tied to the statewide tiered certification system for educators.

Theme 4, counteracting factors impacting the learning and working environment (such as income level, race, and where students live), will be addressed through a twofold approach:

1. **Local equity plan creation at the district level aligned to the state plan:** The state will monitor the implementation of these plans.
2. **Promoting Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) implementation to address school climate challenges:** PBIS is a research-validated, school-based framework for improving school climate. It supports and promotes appropriate behaviors while preventing inappropriate behaviors. The primary goal for PBIS is to help schools design positive school climates that make effective teaching possible and student academic performance more likely.

The state equity plan requires that by 2018, building-level leaders will review student placement procedures to ensure an equitable distribution of effective teachers. Likewise, at the district level, building-level leaders will work to ensure placement of effective teachers in the highest needs situations. Support for and implementation of these plans is essential to address the equity issues around access to high-quality teachers.

90 Georgia Department of Education. (2015, September 14). Equitable Access to Effective Educators. Retrieved from www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/equitable/gaequityplan91415.pdf.

91 Metrics include the percentage of teachers in their first year of teaching, average years of teaching experience, the percentage of teachers "out-of-field" (teachers not teaching in their field of certification), the percentage of classes being taught by teachers who are not "highly qualified," average teacher days absent, adjusted average teacher salary, the percentage of teacher turnover, the percentage of principal turnover, and average student growth relative to their peers (mean growth percentiles).

CHAPTER 4

Quality Leadership

I. Issue Definition

In school systems, the leadership role is paramount. School districts have enormous power to support principals and teachers in driving instructional improvement. Research has shown that when district leaders effectively address specific responsibilities, they have a profound, though indirect, positive impact on student achievement in their districts. Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to student achievement.[92]

Positive leadership at the district level translates to effective leadership at the school level, which directly influences school and classroom conditions. Empowering school-level leaders to transform and reinforce a culture of learning is one of the most important steps districts can take to support student learning, as school leaders manage other influences on student learning both inside and outside the classroom.

According to research, "highly effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools by between two and seven months of learning in a single school year; ineffective principals lower achievement by the same amount."[93] However, that level of success depends on the stability of a high-quality leader. Creating conditions in the district that entice effective leaders to stay, grow, and lead schools has a positive effect on student outcomes. It takes principals an average of five years to put a vision in place for a school, improve instructional quality, and fully implement policies and practices that positively affect a school's performance.[94]

II. Elements of an Effective System

Successful systems have structures in place that develop leaders at all levels to manage systems effectively.[95] They identify and develop leaders who can

- build career ladders,
- recruit highly capable staff,
- create and sustain a positive school culture, and
- garner broad agreement across stakeholder groups about rigorous academic goals for students and staff.[96]

In designing their leadership programs focused on building-level leaders (principals), top-performing states and nations typically follow key broad principles.

92 Wahlstrom, K. L., Louis, K. S., Leithwood, K., and Anderson, S. E. (2010). *Learning from Leadership Project: Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning.* New York: Wallace Foundation.
93 Branch, G. F., Hanushek, E. A., & Rivkin, S. G. (2013, Winter). School Leaders Matter. *EducationNext, 13(1),* 62-69.
94 Van Cleef, V. (2015, February 26). The Real Impact of Principal Turnover. *The New Techer Project*. Retrieved from https://tntp.org/blog/post/the-real-impact-of-principal-turnover.
95 Center on International Education Benchmarking. (2016). *9 Building Blocks for a World-Class Education System.* Washington, DC: National Center on Education and the Economy.
96 Ibid.

- They limit candidates for the principalship to people who have proven themselves to be highly effective teachers.
- Top-performing states work hard to build a deep pool of candidates for principal positions by grooming capable teachers who appear to have strong leadership potential. They groom them for the principal positions by offering them a succession of progressively demanding opportunities to lead teacher teams in the school.
- They train principals entirely on-the-job or through a combination of formal training and on-the-job training. Regardless of the approach, the training always involves a clinical experience and mentoring by a successful school leader.
- Top performers provide new school principals access to a group of experienced peers and mentors who support them in their career growth, guide them toward professional learning opportunities aligned to their aspirations, and help them realize their personal goals and goals for the growth of their students.
- They provide strong incentives for especially effective principals to take responsibility for mentoring less successful principals. In some cases, the most successful principals are asked to take responsibility for providing guidance to the principals of more than one low-performing school.
- Top-performing states and nations provide principals with opportunities to regularly visit other schools in their district, state, or province, and even other countries, to learn about successful practices in those schools, districts, and countries and adapt their own leadership practice accordingly. Such visits are intended to ensure leaders are continuously learning and to promote a benchmarking culture.[97]

The Wallace Foundation funded a study of principal leadership that identified the following six state policy levers that help ensure leadership programs produce education leaders who are well-trained and supported.[98]

1. **Set principal leadership standards.** Standards define the scope of a principal's job, including what they should know and be able to do. Standards can also be used to inform training, professional development, and licensing practices.
2. **Recruit aspiring principals into the profession.** While recruitment and hiring are mainly a local district function, states can alter incentives to aspiring principals and to districts to help shape recruitment practices. For example, states can help facilitate coordination between local districts and principal preparation programs, support special training institutes, or help direct trainings and recruitment toward state-specific high-need areas.
3. **Approve and oversee principal preparation programs.** States oversee and approve specific degree programs at institutions of higher education.
4. **License new and veteran principals.** Licensing can be a gatekeeping function to ensure only high-quality professionals are allowed into the profession.
5. **Support principals' growth with professional development.** Investments in professional development must be made to help leaders adjust to new and shifting policies, technologies, local needs, and demographic changes.
6. **Evaluate principals.** All states have teacher evaluation systems, but principal/leader evaluation systems have received less focus. Since 2010, 36 states (including Georgia) have passed laws related to principal/leader evaluation systems, and 22 began rolling out new systems in 2014. Because this is a relatively new area, there are no set best practices for leader evaluations. States should be flexible during implementation and learn from other states' promising practices.

97 Ibid.
98 Manna, P. (2015). Developing Excellent School Principals to Advance Teaching and Learning. New York: The Wallace Foundation.

The Wallace Foundation also commissioned a series of studies to identify best practices focused exclusively on principal preparation.[99] The research found five "high-leverage" policy indicators for states:

1. Explicit selection processes that include targeted recruitment and performance-based assessments
2. Clinical experiences that are tightly aligned with a curriculum of at least 300 hours with mentor supervision
3. University–district partnerships that align mentors with district needs
4. Program oversight requiring state review with a feedback mechanism for program improvement
5. Licensure requirements including three or more years of teaching, a master's degree in leadership or a related field, and completion of an approved preparation program

In a nationwide review, researchers found that 44% of states had no high-leverage policies in place. Three states — Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee — had the most favorable policy conditions. The following 10 states had what were considered favorable conditions to further apply or implement the high-leverage policies: California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Virginia.[100]

Georgia Leadership Data – By the Numbers

3.2 – Average number of years of tenure of a district superintendent in Georgia; equivalent to thenational average[101]

22% – Average percentage of districts in Georgia with a change in superintendent every year[102]

19% – Annual turnover of principals in Georgia[103]

23% – Annual turnover of principals in Georgia schools in the highest poverty quartile[104]

22% – Annual principal turnover in Georgia schools in the highest minority quartile[105]

99 Wallace Foundation. (2016). *Improving University Principal Preparation Programs: Five Themes from the Field.* New York: Wallace Foundation.
100 Ibid.
101 Data provided by the Georgia School Superintendents Association.
102 Ibid.
103 Georgia Department of Education. (2015). *Georgia's Equity Plan: Equitable Access to Effective Educators.* Atlanta: Georgia Department of Education.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.

III. Georgia Landscape - Quality Leadership

Georgia has been moving away from state-mandated centralization toward a decentralized approach that values local input and control. To help facilitate this move to local control, district leaders have been empowered with the flexibility and authority to head their districts. In 2007, the Georgia General Assembly passed the Charter Systems Act. This act granted school systems considerable autonomy by freeing them from many of the state's education regulations, which are specified in Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia.[106]

Given the state's growing diversity, this trend will allow for greater innovation in the classroom and at the district level to support the needs of students. For example, districts with a high percentage of refugees or English-language learners will need to prioritize resources differently from districts with a significantly smaller number. Some urban districts and those near military bases have a highly transient student population whose needs are different from those whose enrollments are more stable.

As new policies are implemented across the state that prioritize local control and increased student outcomes amid growing diversity and increasing poverty, the question of leadership becomes paramount. Much like the conversation around how to recruit and retain highly effective teachers, Georgia is working to recruit and retain highly effective leaders at both the state and local levels who embrace these challenges and responsibilities.

State Level

Georgia is actively implementing or developing several of the six state policy levers identified by the Wallace Foundation as best practices to ensure leaders are well-trained and supported.[107] Many of these strategies are supported and coordinated by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC), especially in the areas of leadership training programs, standards, and licensing.

GaPSC is instituting a Preparation Program Effectiveness Measure (PPEM) to evaluate educator preparation programs (both university-based and alternative certification programs). The new evaluation program has the following goals:

- To hold educator preparation programs accountable to high program standards
- To apply a consistent set of state-determined effectiveness measures across all teacher and leader preparation programs
- To improve the effectiveness of teacher and leader preparation programs
- To inform the citizens of Georgia about preparation program quality
- To ultimately improve teaching and learning in P-12 schools[108]

The effectiveness measures for each program provider will be made up of two elements: outcomes from those who completed the program and are working in education leadership roles (50%) and programmatic measures (50%). The outcome measures will encompass employer perceptions of a program completer's preparation and the completer's performance on the Georgia leader evaluation system. The programmatic measures are related to completion rates and completers' perceptions of how well prepared they were for their leadership role.

106 Title 20 specifies broad areas of education such as the required qualifications for teachers, the number of school days, and where and how state money must be spent. Other specific issues governed in this section of the official state code range from protective eyewear for students to directions for traffic crossing guards.

107 The six policy levers are principal leadership standards, recruiting professionals, approving and overseeing principal preparation programs, licensing, leader professional development, and leader evaluation. See Manna, P. (2015). *Developing Excellent School Principals to Advance Teaching and Learning.* New York: The Wallace Foundation.

108 Georgia Professional Standards Commission. (2016). Preparation Program Effectiveness Measures (PPEMs). *Georgia Education Reform.* Retrieved from http://www.gapsc.com/GaEducationReform/PPEMs/PPEMs.aspx.

Georgia is finalizing the components of the PPEM and nonconsequential implementation is expected to take place during the 2017–2018 school year. Consequential implementation is expected in the 2018–2019 school year. Programs will be rated based on their PPEM score as exemplary, effective, at-risk, or low-performing. Low-performing programs will have two years of support from GaPSC and/or exemplary peers to improve their rating. Three years of a low-performing rating may cause a program to be closed. As the demands on leaders change, these types of evaluation tools are expected to spur changes in how leaders are educated and prepared for their positions.

Not only have the certification and monitoring of leader preparation programs changed, the preparation and licensure/certifications for education leaders have also changed. Beginning in January 2016, the Georgia Educational Leadership Certificate offered by GaPSC was made available in two tiers:

- Tier 1 programs, which focus on instructional leadership, are for future leaders who are still in the classroom but looking to make the transition to school-level leadership.
  - Not performance-based
  - Master's-level programs focused on instructional leadership and culture building
- Tier 2 programs are for current leaders in a school or within a district.
  - Performance-based preparation
  - Specialist or doctoral-level programs focused on job-embedded learning

Georgia leader preparation programs are based upon the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders published by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration. They are student-centered standards and reflect the recognition that effective school leadership can be performed by many within a school, particularly teachers. To that end, Georgia educational leadership programs stress the importance of shared leadership and the vital role teacher leaders, if used effectively, can play in improving teaching and learning in a school. Upon completion of the tiered leadership programs, leaders will earn a "leadership level" corresponding to a designated compensation level if that person is in a leadership role in their school or system.[109]

To further improve leader preparation and training, Georgia is one of seven states participating in a $47 million initiative funded by the Wallace Foundation to develop models over the next four years to improve principal preparation programs at universities. The seven states will be reviewing their policies concerning university-based principal training and investigate whether changes, such as program accreditation and principal licensure requirements, would result in more effective preparation programs statewide.[110] The grant will focus on long-term changes centered on evidence-based policies and practices in three areas:

1. Developing and implementing a high-quality course of study with practical, on-the-job experiences
2. Establishing strong university–district partnerships
3. Developing and/or implementing state policies around program accreditation, principal licensure/certification, and other opportunities—such as funded internships—to promote more effective training statewide

Other state entities are also focused on improving education leadership. For example, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), with support and collaboration from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, convened a statewide Induction Task Force beginning in June 2011. GaDOE

109 Georgia Professional Standards Commission. (2016, January 15). Educational Leadership Tiered Transition Guidance. Atlanta, Georgia. Retrieved from http://www.gapsc.com/Commission/policies_guidelines/Downloads/LeadershipTieredTransitionGuidance_20160825.pdf.

110 Selected university participants and their states include Albany State University (Georgia), Florida Atlantic University, North Carolina State University, San Diego State University (California), the University of Connecticut, Virginia State University, and Western Kentucky University.

worked with districts, institutions of higher education, and regional education support agencies (RESAs) to guide the development and implementation of effective teacher and leader district induction programs. The GaDOE Teacher and Leader Induction Guidance focuses on recruiting, retaining, and supporting induction-phase teachers and leaders.

In the draft proposal for a new state education plan under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), GaDOE highlighted effective leadership as a key area for school success. The plan focuses on building leadership capacity within the school improvement framework through expanded collaboration with institutions of higher education and local districts, personalized professional learning, and coaching and ongoing support, and focusing on effective leadership within the school improvement framework.

Georgia lawmakers have also recognized the need to enhance leadership capacity across the state. In 2017, the Georgia General Assembly passed House Bill 338, the First Priority Act. While the majority of the bill addressed turning around chronically struggling schools, the legislation also created a Joint Study Committee on the Establishment of a Leadership Academy. The committee is charged to

> study the possibility of establishing a leadership academy to provide opportunities for principals and other school leaders to update and expand their leadership knowledge and skills. The committee shall study and recommend the scope of a potential leadership academy…focusing on leadership in schools that have unacceptable ratings, criteria for participants and faculty, and any other matters deemed appropriate by the committee. The committee shall identify a process for establishing such leadership academy, which may be known as the Georgia Academic Leadership Academy, with a proposed beginning date of July 1, 2018.[111]

THE UNIVERSITY PRINCIPAL PREPARATION INITIATIVE (UPPI) IN GEORGIA

Funded by the Wallace Foundation, the UPPI is exploring how university programs can improve training so that they reflect the evidence on how best to prepare effective principals. Seven universities and their state and district partners were selected to participate, including Albany State University in Georgia.

Participating universities, along with their district partners and states, will receive a total of $15.5 million in the first year, an average of $2.2 million per university and its partners.

Albany State University is a public college in Southwest Georgia serving a diverse student body. As of 2017, it offered master's and specialist degrees in education leadership. Led by four full-time faculty members, the program enrolled 34 candidates in 2016. The university will work with the **Pelham City School System, Calhoun County School System,** and **Dougherty County School System,** most of whose leaders graduated from the university's program. Partners are the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, the Gwinnett County Public School's Quality-Plus Leader Academy, and the NYC Leadership Academy.

District Examples

Work is also being done at the district level to improve leadership and the leadership pipeline. The Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI) is an independent, nonprofit organization committed to developing world-class education leaders for all of Georgia's students. GLISI's support is about more than building the capacity of a single leader. The nonprofit aims to reduce or eliminate vacancies by making the job and working environment one that attracts and retains teachers and leaders who collegially push and encourage each other to get better every day — and do. Leadership training at GLISI focuses on the root causes of leader turnover: toxic cultures among adults that keep teachers in isolation, discourage experimentation, and undercut decision-making authority at every level.

111 See: http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20172018/170167.pdf

In 2016, GLISI partnered with 34 school districts and supported the development of 1,383 educators leading in classrooms, schools, and central offices across the state. Thirty-seven percent of graduates from GLISI's aspiring leaders programs have already been promoted to leadership positions within their districts. Teams who have participated in GLISI's flagship training program, Base Camp and Leadership Summit, report being better equipped to analyze data, communicate with their colleagues about student performance, and make targeted improvements to teaching and instruction that drive student success. As teachers and leaders take risks in their learning, challenge one another, and have repeated opportunities to practice new skills and receive feedback from experts in their craft, they grow as individuals and as a team and begin to build a thriving school culture that attracts and retains talent. Ultimately, it is students who reap the benefits of these shifts.

GLISI LEADERSHIP TRAINING, CARROLL COUNTY

Carroll County, now in its fourth year of a partnership with GLISI targeting high school transformation, has seen double-digit gains in College and Career Ready Performance Index scores and an 11.8% increase in its cohort graduation rate. This translates to over 580 students enrolled in high schools across the county in the 2017–2018 school year who would have dropped out. A precursor to these gains was learning and growing as teams in each of the five high schools, combined with a paradigm shift in the district's approach to its role in creating supportive conditions for schools and school leaders. In Carroll County, teachers and leaders expanded their leadership skills and practiced together as authentic teams, working on problems of practice in their schools with guidance from coaches to push dialog deeper and reinforce new work. As a by-product of that work, district and school leaders had a chance to see emerging leaders in action, contributing to the improvement work of the school. Since the inception of the partnership, 14 emerging leaders who participated in the leadership development teams have been promoted to school and central office leadership positions.

The Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA) offers a Superintendent Professional Development Program (SPDP). This program is designed to develop new leaders in the pipeline and is open to aspiring superintendents. The SPDP is a two-year program of study emphasizing executive knowledge around strategic leadership, school governance, community relations, and organizational leadership. GSSA also offers a full-year executive coaching program for all superintendents who are either new to the role or new to the state.[112]

Other efforts in Georgia to develop leaders are more local. One of the best examples is the Gwinnett County Public Schools Quality-Plus Leader Academy (QPLA). This program's goal is to increase student achievement by identifying, recruiting, and preparing introspective school leaders. The program also selects, develops, trains, and supports them to become highly effective instructional leaders in today's schools. Participants can choose from a variety of leadership development tracks, each of which corresponds to a different professional development need and level of leadership. The programs that comprise the QPLA are the Aspiring Leader Program, the Aspiring Principal Program, the Certified Quality Leader Training Program, an array of leadership seminars, and ongoing leadership support. This training model boasts a balance between pedagogy and curriculum, and classroom or knowledge-based instruction and experiential learning. The model also strongly emphasizes an appropriate, reliable, and valid selection of aspiring assistant principals and principals.[113] Mentoring is available through the program to first- and second-year principals and assistant principals. The QPLA directly supports the Gwinnett County School District's vision of building internal capacity.

112 For more information on the SPDP, see http://gssaweb.org/superintendent-pof-dev/.
113 Gwinnett County Public Schools. (2016). The Leadership Development Programs. Retrieved from https://publish.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcps/home/public/about/content/key-initiatives/the+leadership+development+programs.

IV. Opportunities - Quality Leadership

To realize the benefits of local control and maximum flexibility, Georgia must have strong leaders and support the development of a leadership pipeline that is equally distributed across a diverse state. Policymakers have begun to investigate the supply and equitable distribution of highly qualified teachers, largely because evidence shows that poor and minority students are less likely to encounter highly experienced teachers. The same question must be asked of the distribution and supply of highly qualified leaders. There are pockets of leader excellence across the state, both urban and rural. Georgia has several opportunities to ensure that every district has a focused, innovative leader able to set a positive culture of learning and student success.

GO! KEEP MOVING FORWARD: STRONG POLICIES IN PLACE

Support the leader training, certification, and professional development reforms being developed and implemented by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

Georgia was highlighted as one of only a few states that already has a policy foundation from which to support or implement high-leverage policies to bolster leader development statewide. In partnership with other state agencies, GaPSC has been actively increasing the rigor around program and licensure requirements and university–district partnerships focused on developing mentors and district need alignment.

The University Principal Preparation Initiative being piloted at Albany State University will also test best practices in a high-quality course of study that will include practical on-the-job experiences, clinical studies, and mentorships, among others.

YIELD! PROCEED WITH CAUTION, MORE WORK TO BE DONE

Implement and fully support the recommendations concerning leader development in Georgia's Every Student Succeeds Act proposed state plan, including an increased focus on effective leadership and professional capacity, equitable distribution of strong leaders, and leveraging of the P-20 collaboratives.

The state ESSA plan developed under GaDOE's leadership prioritizes empowering and supporting school leaders in several important ways. The plan includes continued support for the licensure and training work being conducted by GaPSC. However, it also highlights the importance of building leader capacity through expanded professional learning and supports. This includes using the leader evaluation tool to identify and align needs, not just as an effectiveness measure.

The plan also speaks to the importance of the P-20 collaboratives and the need to leverage them further. The P-20 collaboratives are systems of supports for ongoing efforts among local school districts, Regional Education Service Agencies, public and private educator preparation programs, GaPSC, the University System of Georgia, and GaDOE. The regional collaboratives coordinate opportunities for ongoing, job-embedded, sustainable professional learning across the career continuum from induction to retirement. These collaboratives can support leaders in their own professional development as well as allowing them to support each other as they lead their districts and schools.

The state ESSA plan also attempts to address the equitable distribution of teachers and leaders throughout the state. In 2018, GaDOE anticipates that equity data from the state Equity Report will be made available to districts through an online equity dashboard. The report relies on variables reported at the district and school level regarding the effectiveness, experience, and background of teachers and leaders.

The state Equity Report includes an equity plan, and district- and building-level leaders are required to review placement procedures to ensure an equitable distribution of effective teachers by 2018. Likewise, at the district level, leaders will work to ensure placement of effective school leaders in the highest need situations. The successful completion of this plan depends on current leaders having the capacity to differentiate school-level needs and plan for support. It also depends on a pipeline of strong leaders ready to step into those positions where needed.

ALERT! POLICY MISSING OR NEEDS IMMEDIATE ACTION

Develop a comprehensive, statewide plan to support the recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development of leaders at all levels, including schools, districts, school boards, and the state.

Georgia needs to build upon and leverage successful leadership efforts that already exist, such as GLISI and the GSSA programs. State innovation funds could be used to replicate successful models being used in local districts that support innovative leaders and trains the next generation, such as the QPLA in Gwinnett County.

Moreover, responsibility for school leadership should be found at all levels. Much like CEOs of a corporation, district and school leaders create and maintain the culture. They can create a set of values that shape how people think, feel, and act in schools. The vision for Georgia is that every district and every school has a focused, innovative leader able to set a positive culture of learning and student success.

Everyone has a role to play in making this vision a reality. State leaders can focus on policies that support local districts and the development and maintenance of a leadership pipeline. While the primary goal of district leaders is to maximize student learning, district superintendents also operate as CEOs with management responsibilities related to finance, human resources, transportation, security, building operations, food services, and the like. Business leaders can provide guidance on the operations side of running a district. Families and community members can get involved in their school systems by providing input into district priorities, and can even share in governance responsibilities.

Address leadership turnover.

Georgia needs to address the relationship between superintendent turnover, principal turnover, and teacher turnover and understand the common reason for that turnover: culture. Strong leadership development systems and policies go beyond deepening the bench or increasing the pipeline. While that is an important step, it assumes that turnover will continue at the same rate without addressing the root causes of that turnover. The climate and culture of schools and districts must be hospitable to the most talented teachers and leaders. Often, the notion of what makes an effective leader and the push to connect leadership with student test scores can distract and discourage the best leaders from doing the crucial work of casting a captivating vision and creating structures and processes that nurture their professional community. The current shift to focusing on the whole child and student progress as well as overall learning is a step in the right direction.

CHAPTER 5

Supportive Learning Environments

I. Issue Definition

Many factors affect a student's ability to succeed in school. Some of these are directly related to academic instruction; others, like the safety and health of the environments in which students learn and grow, are instrumental to student performance. Supportive learning environments provide safe and healthy spaces where individuals can respond to the needs of students that might otherwise create obstacles to learning.

Research shows that for students to thrive, they must feel safe, welcomed, and respected at school and in their communities. They must be given opportunities to learn, engage, interact, mature, and grow in order to reach their academic potential, develop emotionally, and learn positive social lessons. Students need support to succeed. Trauma and untreated mental health issues impair a student's ability to perform well in school. People who live in poverty are at increased risk of not receiving treatment for mental health issues. Poverty and related circumstances, such as childhood trauma, adverse features of housing and neighborhoods, and food and housing insecurity, are contributing factors to many behavioral and mental health issues in children.[114]

Furthermore, in a recent national survey of school social workers, only 11% of respondents reported that all or most students on their caseloads received mental health services outside of school.[115] Thus, 89% of students were receiving mental health treatment only at school. As the number of families living in poverty increases in Georgia, policies that support these most vulnerable student groups become increasingly necessary.

II. Elements of an Effective System

Countries with the highest academic performance provide strong supports for children and their families that go beyond academic instruction in classrooms. Most high-performing countries have extensive government health supports and supports for working mothers, thereby promoting healthy child development and families.[116] To perform their best, children must come to school healthy, eager to learn, and ready to profit from instruction.

Of course, to do well in school, students must attend school. Research shows that attendance plays a large role in graduation outcomes, and many of the factors that influence student attendance correspond to the health and home life of students. For their best chance at success, students must hav. support in key areas. Students require four main categories of supports from schools and communities in order to succeed: positive conditions for learning, physical and mental health supports, specialized school supports, and out-of-school time options.

114 Kelly, M.B. (2015). *The State of American School Social Work 2014: Initial Findings from the Second National School Social Work Survey.* New Orleans: Society for Social Work and Research.
115 Ibid.
116 Tucker, M. (2016). *9 Building Blocks for a World-Class Education System.* Washington, DC: National Center on Education and the Economy.

1. Positive Conditions for Learning

- Safe and respectful climate
  - In a safe and respectful climate, students and teachers feel safe and comfortable in school and are not worried about the threat of violence. Teachers and students show mutual respect to one another and to the school.
  - A caring school climate has been shown to positively affect the achievement of both third- and fourth-grade students in mathematics and reading/ language arts.[117]
- High expectations
  - Schools with high expectations for student behavior and student performance encourage pupils to work hard and follow the rules to continue with their academic progress.
- In-school student support
  - Students must feel supported and that they can trust the teachers and administrators to have their best interests in mind and to always make decisions with the goal of student and school safety and happiness. Students should be able to communicate with teachers and counselors about extra supports they may need due to life situations.
- Social and emotional learning
  - To truly foster a positive school climate, students need social and emotional instruction to know how to respectfully interact with each other and avoid objectionable behavior that will be disciplined.[118]

2. Physical and Mental Health Supports

- Vision
  - The level of visual functioning predicts academic performance in school-age children.[119]
  - Nationally, 25% of children and adolescents are estimated to have vision deficiencies that need correction or services.[120]
- Hearing
  - Nearly 15% of children between the ages of six and 19 have hearing loss severe enough to put them at risk of failing at least one grade level.[121]
  - Research shows that children with even minimal hearing loss are 10 times more likely to suffer academic difficulties than their counterparts.[122]
- Oral health
  - Children with poor oral health miss school due to dental pain almost three times more often than other students. In a 2011 study, absences due to pain were associated with poorer school performance, but absences for routine oral care were not.[123]
- Nutrition and physical activity
  - Access to nutrition, that is, food necessary for health and growth, can improve a student's social and emotional well-being, reduce aggression, decrease discipline problems, and improve academic outcomes.[124]
  - Research also shows that physical activity helps improve academic achievement like grades and standardized test scores.[125]

117 Smallwood, G. (2014). *The Impact of School Climate on the Achievement of Elementary School Students Who Are Economically Disadvantaged: A Quantitative Study* (Doctoral Dissertation). Tennessee State University, Nashville.
118 AIR Institutes for Research. (2017). Conditions for Learning Survey Project. Retrieved from www.air.org/project/conditions-learning-survey.
119 Maples, W.C. (2003). Visual Factors That Significantly Impact Academic Performance. *Optometry* 74(2).
120 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2006). *Improving the Nation's Vision Health: A Coordinated Public Health Approach.* Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
121 Packer, L. (2015, April 23). How Hearing Loss Affects School Performance. *Healthy Hearing.* Retrieved from www.healthyhearing.com/report/52433-How-hearing-loss-affects-school-performance.
122 American Speech Language and Hearing Association. (2004). Even Minimal, Undetected Hearing Loss Hurts Academic Performance. *Science Daily.*
123 Jackson, S.L., Vann, W.F., Kotch, J.B., Pahel, B.T., and Lee, J.L. (2011). Impact of Poor Oral Health on Children's School Attendance and Performance. *American Journal of Public Health* 101(10), 1900–1906.
124 Stuber, N. (2014). *Nutrition and Students' Academic Performance.* St. Paul, MN: Wilder Research.
125 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010). The Association Between School-Based Physical Activity, Including Physical Education, and Academic Performance. US Department of Health and Human Services Atlanta.

- Mental health
  - When left untreated, children who experience early behavioral problems can develop more serious mental health conditions that impact their learning and achievement.[126]

3. Specialized School Supports

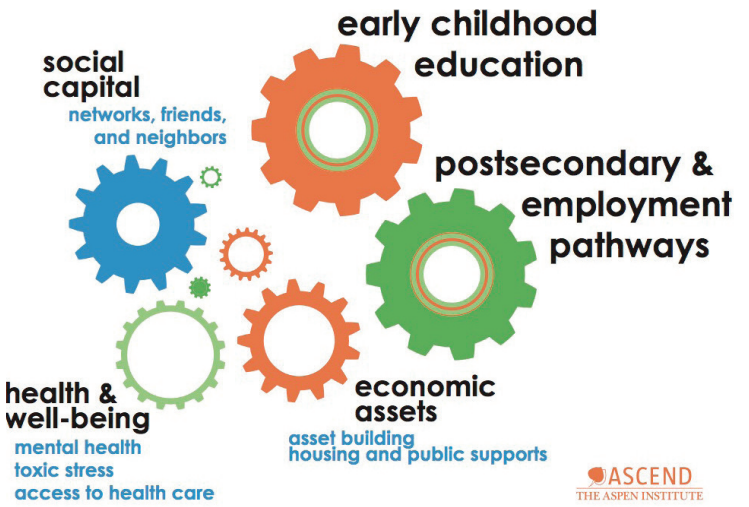
- Language development
  - About 12% of children entering school in the United States have some form of language impairment.[127]
- Extra supports for special populations
  - English-language learner (ELL) students, especially those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, are typically behind their peers in language and readiness skills and need empirically validated and responsive instruction.[128]
  - Children in foster care are at a much higher risk of learning disabilities, developmental delays, depression, anxiety, behavioral issues, asthma, obesity, and hearing, vision, and language impairment.[129]

4. Out-of-School Time Options

- Out-of-school time programs can play a key role in providing positive relationships, supports, and opportunities that are fundamental to social-emotional and academic learning.
- These programs offer safe environments for young people from low-income neighborhoods where they can relax, play, and be with friends.[130]
- Many children need access to learning and nutrition in the summer. Libraries, summer learning programs, and camps that provide free summer meals help fill this critical gap.

The strongest communities focus supports in ways that impact both children and their parents, known as a two-generation approach. This approach provides many ways for communities to galvanize around supporting vulnerable community members. Efforts can be child-focused, child-focused with parent elements, whole-family oriented, parent-focused with child elements, or solely parent-focused. The Aspen Institute has identified five key components of the two-generation approach: social capital, health and well-being, economic assets, early childhood education, and post-secondary employment and pathways to achieve collective impact.

FIGURE 5.1 ASPEN INSTITUTE'S FIVE KEY COMPONENTS OF THE TWO-GENERATION APPROACH [131]



These components are illustrated in Figure 5.1.

126 Perry, D., Holland, C., Darling-Kurla, N., and Nadiv, S. (2011). Challenging Behavior and Expulsion from Child Care: The Role of Mental Health Consultation. *Zero to Three.*
127 Rvachew, S. (2010, September). Language Development and Literacy. *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development.* Canada.
128 Cartledge, G., and Kourea, L. (2008). Culturally Responsive Classrooms for Culturally Diverse Students with and at Risk for Disabilities. *Exceptional Children.*
129 Turney, K., and Wilderman, C. (2016). Mental and Physical Health of Children in Foster Care. *Pediatrics* 138(5).
130 Peck, J., and Plank, D. (2016). Summer and After-School Programs Can Promote Social and Emotional Learning. *EdSource.*
131 Aspen Institute. (2017). *Two-Generation Approach Components.* Retrieved from ascend.aspeninstitute.org.

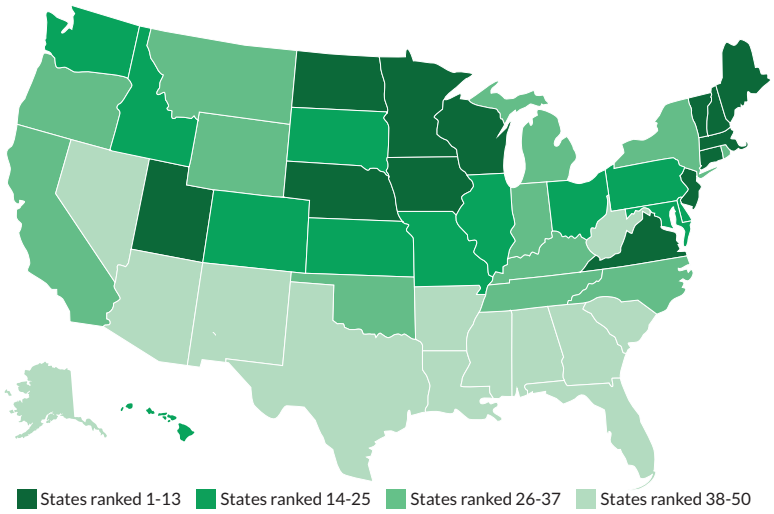
Georgia Supportive Learning Environments Data – By the Numbers

Well-Being

- **8%** of Georgia's children are estimated to have a serious emotional disorder.
- **93%** of those children are not receiving support or treatment.
- **24%** of children in Georgia under 18 are living in homes with incomes at or below the federal poverty level as of 2015.
- **22%** of Georgia's children were living in households that were food insecure at some point during 2014.[132]

FIGURE 5.2 KIDS COUNT OVERALL CHILD WELL-BEING RANKINGS[133]

A STATE-TO-STATE COMPARISON OF OVERALL CHILD WELL-BEING, 2017



TOP 5 STATES

1. New Hampshire
2. Massachusetts
3. Vermont
4. Minnesota
5. Iowa

42. Georgia Overall Rank

OVERALL KIDS COUNT RANKINGS FOR GEORGIA AND NEIGHBORING STATES[134]

Virginia	10
North Carolina	33
Kentucky	34
Tennessee	35
South Carolina	39
Florida	40
Georgia	**42**
Alabama	44
Mississippi	50

132 The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center. Retrieved from datacenter.kidscount.org.

133 The indicators tracked by KIDS COUNT reflect a range of milestones and supportive conditions that young people need to succeed as adults. The overall ranking combines 16 indicators of child well-being across four domains: economic well-being, education, health, and family and community support. For more information, see www.aecf.org/resources/2017-kids-count-data-book/.

134 Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2017, June). 2017 *KIDS COUNT Data Book: State Trends in Child Well-Being*. Retrieved from www.aecf.org/resources/2017-kids-count-data-book/.

Health

TABLE 5.1 HEALTH STATISTICS FOR GEORGIA'S CHILDREN

KIDS COUNT HEALTH INDICATORS	GEORGIA	U.S
Low-birthweight babies[135]	9.5%	8.1%
Children *without* health insurance[136]	7%	5%
Births to women receiving late or no prenatal care[137]	8%	6%
Children with one or more emotional, behavioral or developmental condition[138]	17%	17%
Households that are food insecure[139]	14.9%	13.7%

KIDS COUNT OVERALL HEALTH RANKINGS OF GEORGIA AND NEIGHBORING STATES[140]	
Virginia	16
Kentucky	22
Tennessee	26
North Carolina	31
South Carolina	34
Georgia	**38**
Alabama	42
Florida	44
Mississippi	48

135 KIDS COUNT Data Center. (2017). *KIDS COUNT.* Retrieved from Georgia Family Connection Partnership: gafcp.org/kids-count/.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 Food Research and Action Center. (2016). *State of the States: Georgia.* Retrieved from frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ga.pdf.
140 Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2017, June). 2017 *KIDS COUNT Data Book - State Trends in Child Well-Being*. Retrieved from www.aecf.org/resources/2017-kids-count-data-book/.

III. Georgia Landscape - Supportive Learning Environments

Nearly 25% of Georgia's children currently live in households with an income at or below the federal poverty level, and more than 60% of all public-school students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Many of these students need extra supports that can be provided by their communities and schools, because they are at high risk of not receiving those supports at home. One way the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has responded to this challenge is by emphasizing the "whole child" at the center of its internal System of Continuous Improvement.[141]

According to the plan GaDOE submitted to the US Department of Education in fulfillment of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the department's efforts toward addressing the whole child begin with supporting the well-being of children. Many state agencies, statewide coalitions, and local governments have joined GaDOE in this effort and are working with local schools. These partnerships are addressing child well-being across the four areas of support where students most need it: positive conditions for learning, physical and mental health supports, specialized school supports, and out-of-school time options.

Positive Conditions for Learning

School Climate

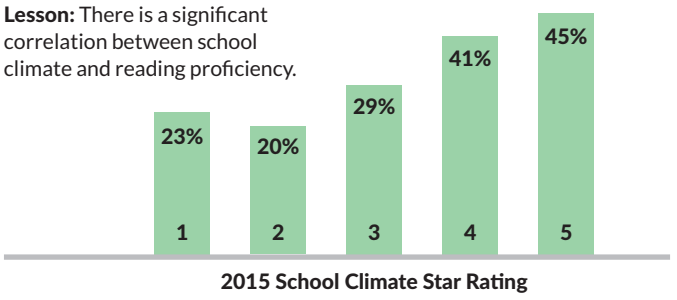
Students will not meet their academic potential if they do not feel safe, welcome, and respected within schools. When the school climate is positive, students show improved performance in school both academically and socially. A positive school climate has been associated with increased student achievement and decreased student absenteeism.[142]

As of 2013, Georgia has two state statutes that ensure school climate is measured.

- GA. CODE ANN. § 20-2-155 (2013): The State Board of Education shall establish a statewide school climate management program to help local schools and systems requesting assistance in developing school climate improvement and management processes.
- GA. CODE ANN. § 20-14-33(a) (2013): The Department of Education shall adopt and annually review…indicators of the quality of learning by students, financial efficiency, and school climate for individual schools and for school systems.

Georgia is one of only four states as of December 2016 that includes a culture or climate variable in its accountability system, the College and Career Ready Performance Index. The School Climate Rating shows whether a school is working to improve its school climate, and schools earn a rating of one to five stars. This rating incorporates results from student, teacher, and parent surveys of perceptions on climate; data on student discipline; and data on attendance of both students and staff. Research shows a significant correlation between student academic performance on state standardized tests and school climate (see Figure 5.3).

FIGURE 5.3 SCHOOL CLIMATE AND GEORGIA MILESTONES THIRD-GRADE ENGLISH/ LANGUAGE ARTS SCORES, 2015[143]



141 Georgia Department of Education. (2017). Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Retrieved from www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/default.aspx.
142 Duckworth, K., and DeJung, J. (1989). Inhibiting Class Cutting Among High School Students. *The High School Journal*, 72, 188–195.
143 McGibeony, G. (2016). *Changing the Conversation.* Atlanta: Georgia Department of Education.

Percentages in the table reflect the percent of students score "Proficient or Above" on the Georgia Milestones Assessment in English Language Arts at schools with the corresponding School Climate Rating, i.e. at schools with a 5 star School Climate Rating the average percentage of students scoring Proficient or Above was 45%.

GaDOE has instituted a system of practices geared at improving school climate across the state. This system of practices has three primary strategies:

- PBIS – Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- MTSS – Multi-Tiered System of Supports
- ISF – Interconnected Systems Framework

These efforts are evidence-based and data-driven with the goal of reducing disciplinary incidents, increasing safety, and providing students with the support they need. PBIS is the cornerstone of these practices, and more than 24,500 US schools are implementing this system. Its premise is that continual teaching, combined with acknowledging positive student behavior, will reduce unnecessary discipline and promote a climate of greater productivity, safety, and learning.[144]

Physical and Mental Health Supports

School Nutrition

Georgia participates in the US Department of Agriculture's federal school lunch program, which provides free and reduced-price lunches to students from low-income families. The School Nutrition Program helps local school systems provide more than 60% of public school students with breakfast and lunch meals, along with nutritional education.

Health and Physical Education

State law requires that all Georgia students must be enrolled in a physical education course in grades one through 12. According to the 2009 Student Health and Physical Education Act, students must also participate in an annual fitness assessment.

Additionally, Georgia Shape was launched by Governor Nathan Deal as a statewide, multi-agency initiative combining government, philanthropic, academic, and business community supports to address childhood obesity in Georgia. The Governor's Advisory Council on Childhood Obesity oversees this initiative. Strategies of Georgia Shape include physical activity before class, physical activity during class, and more structured recess.[145] The program received significant investment from the business community, including $1 million from iconic Georgia company Coca-Cola in 2013.[146]

Another cross-agency initiative working in concert with Georgia Shape is Power Up for 30, a statewide collaboration between the Georgia Department of Public Health and GaDOE. Power Up for 30 promotes increasing physical activity before, during, and after the school day in public schools across Georgia. Schools receive professional development for staff that focuses on integrating an additional 30 minutes or more of physical activity into before-, during-, or after-school time. Nearly 2,000 teachers and administrators have received direct professional development through this program and the training delivery partner, HealthMPowers, since 2013.[147]

144 Georgia Department of Education. (2017). Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Retrieved from www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Positive-Behavioral-Interventions-and-Support.aspx.
145 Georgia Shape. (2017). Communications and Research. Retrieved from www.georgiashape.org/story/communications-and-research.
146 Gann, C. (2013, May 13). Coca-Cola Awards $1 Million to Georgia SHAPE: Contribution Will Help Add 30 Minutes of Physical Activity to School Days [Blog Post]. *Georgia Department of Public Health*.
147 Georgia Shape. (n.d.). Power Up for 30. Retrieved from georgiashape.org/story/power-30-0.

In 2015 the Georgia House of Representatives established a study committee on school-based health centers or clinics (SBHCs), though these centers began to be established in Georgia as early as 1994. SBHCs place a general medical clinic on the grounds of a public school, bridging the access gap for health care faced by many students. An estimated 166,000 children in Georgia are uninsured, and 250,000 children in Georgia stay home sick more than six days each year.[148]

SBHCs work to ensure that more children are healthy and able to attend school. SHBCs are currently in 41 Georgia counties thanks in part to PARTNERS for Equity in Child and Adolescent Health, a grant-making organization based out of Emory University that has helped to provide startup funds to centers since 2010.[149]

One way that SBHCs have expanded their capacity is through telemedicine. Since 2009, the Georgia Partnership for Telehealth has introduced telemedicine to Georgia schools, and as of 2017, there were 63 SBHCs equipped for telehealth. These centers operate in a "hub and spoke" model. Hospitals are the "hubs," and the "spokes" include smaller extension services and facilities like wifi- and telemedicine-equipped ambulances and school clinics. The 2005 Georgia Telemedicine Act supports telehealth by ensuring health service providers can receive standard insurance reimbursement for patient services.

Mental Health

With increased attention given to school climate, many Georgia schools are also focusing on addressing and identifying behavioral issues and their relationship to student mental health. The US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency is working with GaDOE to institute Now Is The Time: Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education) to increase awareness of mental health issues among school-aged youth. The project provides training in youth mental health first aid and connects students and families struggling with behavioral or mental health issues to appropriate services.

As of 2017, Project AWARE was in three school districts, but the youth mental health first aid training had expanded across the state, with more than 1,500 school staff members trained so far. Project AWARE has three primary goals:

1. Increase participation of the community and mental health providers in identifying resources available to help students.
2. Raise awareness and identification of mental health and behavior concerns, and increase student and family access to mental health providers.
3. Train educators, first responders, and parents to appropriately respond to youth mental health needs.[150]

GaDOE has also teamed up with the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities and the Georgia Health Policy Center at Georgia State University to strengthen mental health services through the Georgia Apex Project. The project works to build infrastructure and increase access to services for school-aged youth.[151]

148 Voices for Georgia's Children. (2017, January 14). School-Based Health Centers in Georgia. Retrieved from georgiavoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/SBHC-GA_Centers_12317.pdf.
149 Georgia School-Based Health Alliance. (n.d.). Georgia Planning Grantees. Retrieved from gasbha.org/georgia-planning-grantees/.
150 Georgia Department of Education. (2017). Georgia Project AWARE. Retrieved from www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Georgia-Project-AWARE.aspx.
151 Georgia Health Policy Center. (2017). Georgia Apex Project. Retrieved from ghpc.gsu.edu/project/4745415/.

Specialized School Supports

Language Development

Being read to at an early age exposes children to language, fostering the development of language and early literacy skills. Literacy, especially third-grade reading proficiency, is commonly shown to predict student academic performance later in life.[152] Children experiencing impairment in language skills are at a greater risk for behavioral, social, and emotional problems.[153]

One strong effort addressing child literacy skills in Georgia is the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. Known as "Get Georgia Reading," this campaign is working throughout the state to educate students, parents, and teachers on the importance of literacy and reading by third grade. The campaign consists of a coalition of more than 100 public and private partners that are working together across sectors, agencies, and organizations to promote the use of a common agenda and shared language around the goal of all students on a path to reading proficiency by the third grade. The campaign operates under the guidance of a cabinet composed of high-level statewide public and private organizations and leaders.[154] The program consists of four main research-based pillars: language nutrition, access, productive learning climates, and teacher preparation and effectiveness.

"Language nutrition" is a term coined by the campaign that refers to the use of language, beginning at birth that is sufficiently rich in engagement, quality, quantity, and context that it nourishes the child socially, neurologically, and linguistically.[155] Get Georgia Reading has developed programs for parents to enable them to better provide language nutrition to their children, set up a statewide mentor program for low-income students, and provided widespread teacher education on the benefits of supporting the pillars of Get Georgia Reading.

Governor Deal has further supported literacy and language through the 2017 founding of the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy at Georgia College. This center will work with universities, technical college early childhood education programs, alternative educator preparation programs, and other public and private stakeholders to engage the community at large. Its mission is to improve Georgia's literacy rate by promoting research-based practices for children from birth to age eight and providing professional learning and training to educators in K-3 classrooms, child care centers, and preschools.

Extra Support for Special Populations

English Language Learners (ELL)

English to Speakers of Other Languages is a state-funded instructional program for eligible ELL students in grades K-12, included in Georgia statute since 1985. This standards-based curriculum emphasizes academic and social language development. Classroom teachers integrate English Language

152 Hernandez, Donald J. 2011. Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation. The Annie E. Casey Foundation: New York, NY.

153 Rvachew, S. (2010, September). Language Development and Literacy. *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development. Canada.*

154 Cabinet members include the Alliance of Education Agency Heads, the Annie E. Casey Foundation – Atlanta Civic Site, Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care and Learning, Governor Nathan Deal, First Lady Sandra Deal, the Department of Community Health, the Division of Family and Children Services, GaDOE, the Department of Public Health, the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, the Georgia Family Connection Partnership, the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, the Georgia Public Library, the Georgia School Superintendents Association, the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, the Marcus Autism Center, Polk Family Connection, the Rollins Center for Language and Literacy at the Atlanta Speech School, the Technical College System of Georgia, and Voices for Georgia's Children.

155 Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. 2014. Pacesetters 2014: Georgia.

Development Standards in conjunction with Georgia Performance Standards to encourage ELL students to communicate in English and demonstrate academic, cultural, and social proficiency.[156]

Additionally, GaDOE administers ACCESS for ELLs (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State for English Language Learners), a standards-based, criterion-referenced English language proficiency test designed to measure English learners' social and academic proficiency in English.[157] This test helps to provide developmentally appropriate instruction for ELL students and helps teachers ensure that students receive the support they need to continue to strengthen their English language proficiency and progress academically.

Students with Special Needs

To provide all children with a free and appropriate public education, the GaDOE Division of Special Education Services and Supports helps local school districts provide special education and related services to students with disabilities. Targeted areas for services and supports include accessible instructional materials, assistive technology, curriculum access and alignment, dropout prevention, family engagement, least restrictive environments, positive behavior supports, and transitions.[158]

Foster and Homeless Children Supports

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is a federal law designed to ensure educational enrollment and stability for homeless children and youth. Under this act, each state education agency must identify homeless children and work to assess their needs. The GaDOE fulfills this requirement by requiring each local education agency to have a designated homeless education liaison who has been trained by the GaDOE to determine enrollment in this program and supports needed.

Out-of-School Time Options

Before School, Afterschool, and During the Summer

Georgia has a network of afterschool services supported through the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). The Afterschool Care Program provides federal funding to public agencies and nonprofit organizations that serve youth and families during out-of-school time. The program aims to increase academic attainment and enhanced well-being through positive youth development. The program also works to ensure successful transition to young adulthood, especially for students from economically disadvantaged communities. The Afterschool Care Program funds Boys and Girls Clubs and other similar organizations across the state, and recent investment has allowed the program to support STE(A)M education at these organizations.

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CLC) program is a federally funded program that provides afterschool, before school, and summer learning opportunities for students. Programs feature enrichment opportunities and activities designed to complement students' regular academic programs. Georgia receives approximately $38 million in funding for the 21st CLC program, which serves 27,000 children in the state at nearly 250 sites.[159] Funds for these programs are administered through the GaDOE.[160]

156 Georgia Department of Education. (2017). English to Speakers of Other Languages. Retrieved from www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/English-to-Speakers-of-Other-Languages-(ESOL)-and-Title-III.aspx.
157 Georgia Department of Education. (2017). ACCESS for ELLs. Retrieved from www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/ACCESS-for-ELLs.aspx.
158 Georgia Department of Education. (2017). Special Education Services and Supports. Retrieved from www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/default.aspx.
159 Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network. (2017). 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Retrieved from www.afterschoolga.org/21st-cclc/.
160 Georgia Department of Education. (2017). 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Retrieved from www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Pages/21st-Century-Community-Learning-Centers.aspx.

One important inter-agency contribution to afterschool programs is the Georgia Afterschool & Youth Development Standards, which were developed through a partnership between the DFCS Office of Prevention and Family Support, GaDOE, and the Georgia Department of Public Health. These standards, which were released in 2015, ensure that afterschool and youth development programs provide environments and experiences that benefit youth socially, emotionally, and academically.[161]

Licensing for afterschool and child care programs is done through the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). This department licenses programs serving school-age children up to age 12. In addition, Quality Rated is Georgia's system to determine, improve, and communicate the quality of programs that provide child care. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, Quality Rated assigns one, two, or three stars to early education and school-age care programs that meet or exceed the minimum state requirements. By participating in Georgia's voluntary Quality Rated program, programs make a commitment to work continuously to improve the quality of care they provide to children and families.[162]

DECAL also administers a Summer Transition Program annually. This is an academic program for rising kindergartners in high-need populations who need additional academic support the summer before entering kindergarten.[163]

In addition to these efforts, the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network is a public-private collaborative that works to advance, connect, and support quality afterschool programs that promote the success of children and youth throughout Georgia. The Afterschool Network also supports local governments in creating policy priorities to advance support for afterschool services in communities across the state. Many of these programs provide not only afterschool care during the school year, but also summer options for students. Summer services are crucial in helping prevent summer learning loss and to ensure students do not miss out on critical nutrition during that time.

161 The Georgia Afterschool & Youth Development. (2017). Quality Standards, Division of Family and Children Services. Retrieved from dfcs.georgia.gov/georgia-afterschool-youth-development-asyd-quality-standards.
162 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (2017). FAQ for Quality Rated. Retrieved from decal.ga.gov/BftS/Faq.aspx?cat=QualityRSRated.
163 Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (2017). Pre-K Summer Transition Program. Retrieved from decal.ga.gov/Prek/SummerTransitionProgram.aspx.

IV. Opportunities - Supportive Learning Environments

GO! KEEP MOVING FORWARD: STRONG POLICIES IN PLACE

GaDOE's School Climate Rating system and PBIS program provide strong, ongoing supports for students.

Georgia is a leader in the United States in developing a School Climate Rating and including it in the state education accountability system. By instituting the rating system in addition to the PBIS program, the state has seen School Climate Ratings improve. In 2015, 84% of schools that had fully implemented PBIS received a four- or five-star School Climate Rating, compared to 56% of all other schools.[164] Georgia must continue to support this program, which has been correlated with improved academic performance where implemented.

Governor Deal's Childhood Obesity Initiative, Georgia Shape, continues to make statewide progress in improving the physical health and nutritional wellness of children from birth to age 18.

Georgia Shape, a multi-agency initiative, features diverse partnerships and innovative programming in various settings including birthing hospitals, early care environments, schools, and afterschool programs. Through strategies like physical activity before class, physical activity during class, and more structured recess time, this program is designed to meet the state's ultimate goal of combatting childhood obesity and increasing the number of students in Georgia in the healthy fitness zone for body mass index by 10%. In conjunction with Power Up for 30, teachers and administrators are learning how to incorporate physical activity into the school day and out-of-school time to make a positive difference in the physical health and wellness of students.

YIELD! PROCEED WITH CAUTION, MORE WORK TO BE DONE

Governor Nathan Deal's Commission on Children's Mental Health is a positive step in planning further supports for vulnerable, underserved children.

Another positive development in support of child well-being in Georgia is Governor Deal's Commission on Children's Mental Health, which was announced in June 2017. This commission includes health care, advocacy, and policy leaders who will work together to identify potential improvements to state Medicaid services and ways to increase access to care for uninsured children. The commission is modeled after other past successful interagency collaborations such as the First Lady's Children's Cabinet, the Child Welfare Reform Council, and the Criminal Justice Reform Council. This commission has the potential to increase access to support services for many of Georgia's most vulnerable students. To fully increase this access, the commission should also address workforce deficiencies in this sector—an issue not currently included in the commission's agenda.[165]

Health supports should be expanded and made accessible for all Georgia students in the areas of physical and mental health and through expanding programs like telemedicine in conjunction with school-based health centers.

164 McGibeony, G. (2016). Changing the Conversation. Atlanta: Georgia Department of Education.
165 Office of the Governor. (2017, May). Deal Forms Commission on Children's Mental Health [Press Release]. Retrieved from gov.georgia.gov/press-releases/2017-06-07/deal-forms-commission-children%E2%80%99s-mental-health.

While GaDOE acknowledges the need to support students' physical health including oral and vision support, there is an opportunity to codify partnerships within schools and across the state to better address children's physical, nutritional, oral, and vision-centered health needs. Insufficient access to health supports is an issue for many children, especially those from low-income families and in rural, underserved areas.

Access issues exist in the areas of mental health as well, and while state agencies do have some initiatives to expand mental health care for students, like Project AWARE, these are typically limited to a few districts. Georgia has less than the recommended ratio of counselor-to-student at most schools, and many districts do not have psychologists or social workers at all.

The state has made some strides toward incorporating telehealth, the use of electronic information and telecommunications technologies to support and promote long-distance clinical health care, patient and professional health-related education, public health, and health administration. As of fall 2017, approximately 16 of Georgia's 159 counties were equipped for telehealth. The services are provided through 63 school-based health centers (SBHCs) across the state.[166] The Georgia Partnership for Telehealth is one organization working to expand and establish telemedicine programs in communities throughout the state. Georgia can expand the reach of SBHCs by investing in startup funds for communities to found new SBHCs. Currently 19 states provide funding for these centers.

Georgia should increase support for out-of-school time programs.

Efforts by multiple state agencies and public-private partnerships to provide out-of-school programs, like the 21st Century Learning Centers, represent the potential for collective impact when concerned partners unite to address a community need. There is significant room for greater state investment to expand access to and improve the quality of Georgia's afterschool programs for children. Out-of-school time is truly a community concern. The benefits of quality afterschool programs include a boost in academic performance, reduction of risky behaviors, promotion of physical health, and safety and structure for children of working parents.[167]

These programs are especially important for children living in poverty — nearly 25% of Georgia's children — whose families are less likely to be able to afford afterschool options. As of 2017, about 16% of school-aged children attend afterschool programs. In a recent survey, however, parents indicated that nearly 600,000 more children would be attending an afterschool program if one were available.[168] The Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network offers a wide range of opportunities that reflect the various stakeholder groups collaborating to address this issue for students across the state. However, 62 of Georgia's 159 counties do not have any state-funded afterschool programs, meaning access is an issue for many students.

ALERT! POLICY MISSING OR NEEDS IMMEDIATE ACTION

Supports for homeless and foster youth must be strengthened.

The state has complied with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act by requiring a homeless youth liaison in all local education agencies; however, the state has not yet specified supports for homeless students. Furthermore, the special needs of children in foster care are not addressed in the state plan for education.

166 Anthony, A. (2017, May). Telemedicine in Georgia Schools. T*elehealth and Medicine Today.* Retrieved from www.telhealthandmedtoday.com/telemedicine-in-georgia-schools/.
167 Youth.gov. (2017). Benefits for Youth, Family & Communities. Retrieved from youth.gov/youth-topics/afterschool-programs/benefits-youth-families-and-communities..
168 Afterschool Alliance. (2017). Afterschool in Georgia. Retrieved from www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyStateFacts.cfm?state=GA.

Homeless and foster children are among the state's most vulnerable citizens. Children in foster care are at a significantly higher risk of learning disabilities, developmental delays, depression, anxiety, and many physical illnesses.

Furthermore, nearly half of the population of children living in foster care in Georgia are under the age of 10. To fully support these students, the state should specify partnerships, opportunities, and interventions available to and encouraged for this population. Children in foster care and homeless children need educational interventions as early as possible and should be recommended for Head Start and similar programs as soon as they are be identified. A shortage of social workers across the state has exacerbated this problem.

One positive effort to support foster youth, Project Graduate, was piloted during the 2016–2017 school year in four Georgia school districts with plans to expand the program in 2017–2018. Project Graduate is a collaborative effort between DFCS and other key stakeholders that is designed to improve the graduation rates of foster youth by providing coordinated supports and leveraging existing resources. Over half of the 30 student participants achieved the goals they set at the start of the school year, and the program was able to refine methods for greater success in subsequent implementation. If this program were expanded statewide, it could potentially positively impact the lives of hundreds of vulnerable students.

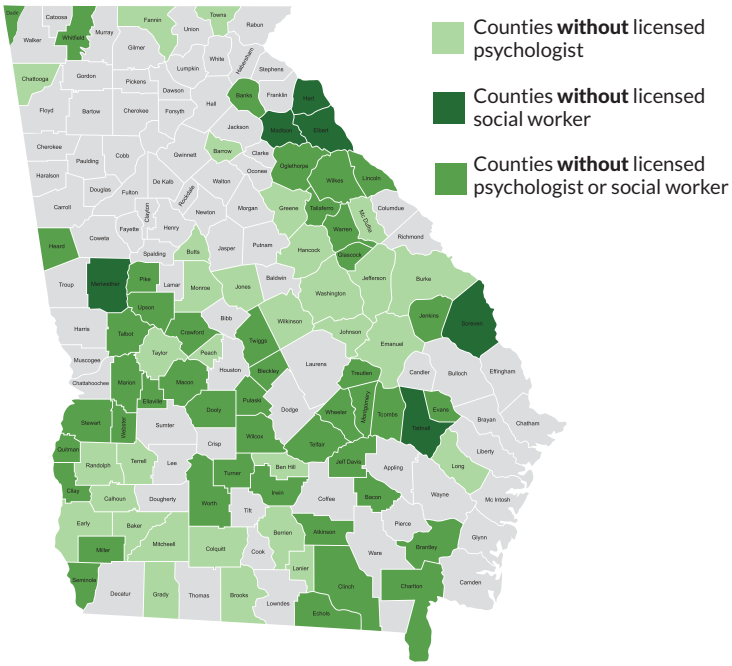
Georgia must take steps to increase the mental health workforce.

Georgia is experiencing a significant workforce deficiency in the field of mental health and in social and emotional health care support workers. The map in Figure 4, produced in 2016 by Voices for Georgia's Children, a nonprofit youth advocacy organization, shows just how critical this issue is for the state. Nearly half of all Georgia counties do not have a licensed psychologist, and over one-third of counties do not have a licensed social worker.

Access to support services is already a massive challenge for many children due to family resources, but Georgia has a geographic access challenge too. Georgia policymakers must think of creative ways to address the shortage of workers in these fields across the state. Similar incentives could be used to attract social workers and mental health care workers to high-need areas of the state. Another potential strategy is to use telehealth and telemedicine tools to address the needs of students who are geographically isolated from needed health services.

FIGURE 5.4 DISTRIBUTIONS OF MENTAL HEALTH WORKERS IN GEORGIA

Source: Voices for Georgia's Children 2016[169]



169 Voices for Georgia's Children. (2016). Georgia's Crisis in Child & Adolescent Behavioral Health. Retrieved from georgiavoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/HealthPolicy_Recs_12115.pdf.

CHAPTER 6

Advanced Instructional System

I. Issue Definition

For public education to function optimally, it requires an instructional system that makes the acquisition of knowledge and skills efficient, effective, and appealing.[170] These systems have evolved to include systems of standards, instruction, assessment, and accountability for all those involved in the extremely critical and important role of educating students.

Advanced instructional systems serve as the foundation for students' educational journeys. These systems provide a comprehensive framework for educators and allow those working in schools to support students in the best ways possible. Teachers, counselors, and principals — to name just a few of the important groups of personnel that interact with students daily — can share insights about students that will help them to best guide their students on their educational paths.

These systems also provide information to other stakeholders. Students can better monitor their own progress in a strong instructional system that includes tools and assessments to clearly benchmark their performance. Clearly defined standards that are part of a curriculum framework ensure that students and parents are aware of expectations and milestones that must be achieved to move forward. These elements also help ensure that parents can make fully informed decisions about their children's education based on these indicators. Policymakers are also aided in making optimal decisions to support public education when they can use results from accountability systems and assessments that are widely publicized. To provide Georgia students with the best possibilities for future success, the state must ensure that our policies support and promote an advanced instructional system.

II. Elements of an Effective System

Top-performing states and education systems have well-developed, coherent instructional systems that incorporate standards, curricula, and assessments that allow instruction to be personalized and teachers to use appropriate methods of teaching. Combined, such a system allows all students to achieve goals and meet standards. Top-performing countries also benchmark their standards, curricula, and assessments to other leading countries.[171]

- **Student performance standards** are either standalone statements about what students should know and be able to do or are incorporated into a syllabus for courses.
  - Standards typically incorporate three elements:
    1. A narrative statement about the content students are expected to learn
    2. Examples of student work that meet those standards, with commentary detailing why the work meets the standard
    3. Performance levels, usually cut scores, on aligned examinations
  - The standards themselves emphasize
    - a wide range of complex knowledge,
    - a deep conceptual understanding of the subject,
    - the ability to write well,

170 Merrill, M.D., Drake, L., Lacy, M.J., and Pratt, J. (1996). Reclaiming Instructional Design. *Educational Technology* 36 (5): 5–7.
171 Center on International Benchmarking. (2016). *9 Building Blocks for a World-Class Education System.* Washington, DC: National Center on Education and the Economy.

- the ability to synthesize material from across disciplines and apply it to real-world problems, and
- a strong analytical, creative, and innovative capacity.[172]

- **Curriculum frameworks** specify the sequence of topics to be covered grade-by-grade and subject-by-subject. Teachers generally create their own lesson plans but are provided extensive support and curriculum guidance from the state. Textbooks follow that guidance closely.[173]

- **Summative assessments** require students to respond with essays, or in mathematics to show how they solved a multistep problem.[174]

- **Accountability** looks different in high-performing nations than in US accountability systems.
  - Summative assessments in high-performing countries, especially in the higher grades, are tightly aligned to course-specific standards and qualifications. Thus, they are typically used to hold students, not teachers, accountable for their performance.
  - Based on exam performance, students are provided options for work and further study.
  - Content and results are typically made public with examples of high-performing student work to provide guidance to students and teachers.
  - Scores by schools are published.
  - In some countries, schools with lower scores are assigned expert principals and teachers to offer recommendations for improving overall school performance.[175]

EXAMPLES FROM TOP-PERFORMING COUNTRIES –THE CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION BENCHMARKING[176]

Canada does not have a national curriculum; rather, the provincial governments are responsible for establishing the curriculum for their schools, and each province has its own, ministry-established common curriculum. However, the ministers of education from each province have joined together in the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, to establish best practices. All provinces develop their own assessments and curriculum frameworks. Most have province-wide examinations for certain year groups. The assessments measure numeracy and literacy, and core-subject tests determine graduation eligibility in senior high school. In primary and lower secondary school, test scores do not typically determine progression to the next phase of education. Graduation from upper secondary school, however, is often based on exam performance and course credits. British Columbia has most recently revamped its primary and secondary school curricula, ensuring that assessments are aligned.

In **Japan,** the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, in conjunction with university professors and the Central Council for Education, establishes broad guidelines for the content of each school subject from pre-school education through senior high school. The curriculum for each grade level is carefully calibrated to pick up each year where the previous grade left off and to ensure preparation for the following grade. Students take school-developed exams at the end of lower secondary and upper secondary schools, both of which have an impact on their placement in the next level of the education system. Admission into senior high schools is extremely competitive, and in addition to entrance examinations, the student's academic work, behavior and attitude, and record of participation in the community is taken into account. Following senior high school, Japanese students' futures depend on their scores on the national achievement exam, as well as their performance on the individual exams administered by each university.

172 Tucker, M. (2016, February 19). *Building a Powerful State Instructional System for All Students*. Retrieved from National Center on Education and the Economy: ncee.org/2016/02/building-a-powerful-state-instructional-system-for-all-students/.
173 Center on International Benchmarking. (2016). *9 Building Blocks for a World-Class Education System*. Washington, DC: National Center on Education and the Economy.
174 Ibid.
175 Ibid.
176 Center on International Education Benchmarking. (2016). *Learning Systems: Examples from Top Performers.* Retrieved from the National Center on Education and the Economy: ncee.org/what-we-do/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/9-building-blocks/learning-systems/.

GEORGIA ADVANCED INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEM DATA – BY THE NUMBERS

The Education Commission of the States identified 10 state policies to promote college and career readiness and align K-12 and post-secondary expectations and success (see Table 6.1). These recommendations mirror best-practice research from other high-performing countries about the clear articulation of expectations at each level of study and the necessary standards that should be met at each level.[177]

- Georgia has addressed all **10** policies.
- Georgia is one of **12** states that has aligned high school graduation requirements with college admission requirements in all core subjects, except foreign language.

TABLE 6.1 EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES BLUEPRINT POLICIES[178]

POLICY REVIEW	GEORGIA	NATIONAL
1. COLLEGE AND CAREER READY (CCR) STANDARDS AP, IB and/or dual credit required	**YES** No	48 states + D.C. 25 states
2. ASSESSMENTS	**YES,** state-developed/ contracted	14 – SBAC 11 – PARCC 18 – ACT 4 – SAT 10 – state developed 14 – end-of-course
3. GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS HS course requirements match statewide college admissions	**YES,** except foreign language	18 states match courses Including 6 states that align all courses and 12 states that align all courses but foreign language
4. K-12 ACCOUNTABILITY CCR is indicator in systemwide	**YES**	24 states use CCR to determine performance
5. ADMISSIONS STANDARDS Statewide or systemwide	**YES,** systemwide (single system) GPA; assessments; high school coursework	28 – common admissions standards 15 – systemwide 13 – statewide
6. REMEDIAL *AND* PLACEMENT POLICIES Statewide or systemwide remedial policies Statewide or systemwide placement policies	**YES** systemwide systemwide	27 – both remedial and placement policies 39 – remedial policies 27 – placement policies
7. TRANSFER (3 OUT OF 4 POLICIES) Transferable core of lower-division courses Common course numbering Guaranteed transfer of associate degree Credit by assessment	**YES** Yes Yes Yes Yes	23 have at least 3 of the following policies: 36 – transferable core 16 – common course numbering 36 – guaranteed transfer of associate degrees 17 – credit by assessment
8. HIGHER-ED ACCOUNTABILITY (ALL 3) Statewide attainment goals Completion or attainment goal in master plan Performance-funding model and metrics	**YES** Yes Yes Yes, persistence; graduation	19 have all 3 of the following policies: 26 states have a statewide attainment goal 36 states have a completion or attainment goal in master plan 32 states have performance-funding
9. STATEWIDE CCR DEFINITION	**YES**	32 states + D.C. have CCR definition
10. P-20 DATA High school feedback report annually	**YES** Yes	50 states + D.C. have data system 42 states + D.C. have feedback report

177 Glancy, E., Fulton, M., Anderson, L., Dounay Zenith, J., and Millard, M. (2014). *Blueprint for College Readiness.* Denver: Education Commission of the States.

178 Ibid.

III. Georgia Landscape - Advanced Instructional Systems

Over the past several years, Georgia has worked hard to develop a coherent instructional system that incorporates high standards and aligned assessments that will allow for the personalization of instruction. The state has also implemented an accountability system to ensure that students are meeting the high expectations that have been set for them. Much of this work was supported by Georgia's Race to the Top grant, but continues to be refined to this day and is being incorporated into Georgia's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) state plan developed by the Georgia Department of Education. Georgia's goal is to ensure that every school has the proper foundational supports to promote teaching and learning. Once those foundational supports are solidified, teachers, schools, and districts can use innovative approaches to meet the individual needs of their students.

Foundations of the Instructional System

The foundations of any instructional system are to clearly identify what a student should know and be able to do, monitor if students are understanding the content, and know what to do if they are not. Realizing this goal requires a combination of standards, assessments, and accountability.

Standards

Implementing rigorous college- and career-ready standards that prepare students for success has been an integral aspect of education reform in Georgia for years. In 2010, Georgia infused the Common Core State Standards[179] into its existing standards, the Georgia Performance Standards, to add a level of rigor, resulting in the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS). Districts implemented them at the start of the 2012 school year for all grades in English/language arts (ELA) and K-9 mathematics.

On February 19, 2015, the State Board of Education voted on revisions to the CCGPS and renamed the ELA and mathematics standards the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE). These standards were implemented beginning in the 2015–2016 school year. Georgia has continued its commitment to more rigorous standards by revising and updating both the science and social studies standards. The GSEs for science and social studies began to be implemented during the 2017–2018 school year.

The GSEs that Georgia has today are a set of standards, not to be confused with a curriculum. Standards are designed to outline what students should know at a certain point in their education so that when they graduate from high school, they are ready for college and/or a career. A curriculum involves how standards are taught, including teaching methods, lesson plans, textbooks, reading materials, and so forth. The GSEs outline the standards — the goals. Local school districts and teachers are left to develop their own curricula and are responsible for determining the resources and strategies that will be used for instruction to support their students' needs and interests.

To support local districts, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) provides frameworks, which are "models of instruction" designed to help teachers implement the standards. GaDOE presents curriculum examples for each grade level and examples of frameworks aligned with the standards to illustrate potential ways to cover the standards within the grade level. School systems and teachers may use these models as they are, modify them, or create their own curriculum maps, units, and tasks.

179 Former Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue helped lead the coordinated effort of the National Governors Association and Council for Chief State School Officers to support states in developing internationally benchmarked ELA and mathematics standards. These standards became known as the Common Core State Standards.

Assessments

When Georgia decided to improve its standards, the state also decided to create a corresponding assessment system for measuring student learning, now called the Georgia Milestones Assessment System (Ga Milestones). This new system replaced the previously used Criteria-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) in grades three through eight and old end-of-course tests in high school. Georgia Milestones were first taken by students in the 2014–2015 school year.

The Georgia Milestones assessment system has changed Georgia's assessment landscape. A formative assessment toolkit — comprising instructional practice techniques, assessment bank items, and benchmark assessments — was developed and lays a foundation for educators from which to prepare for the high-stakes end-of-grade (EOG) and end-of-course (EOC) tests that are part of the Georgia Milestones.

Recently, however, Georgia has been exploring ways to change the culture and purpose of testing through the implementation of GaDOE's Vision 2020 Strategic Plan and its alignment with Georgia's state ESSA plan, submitted to the US Department of Education (US Ed) in September 2017.

The first step is a shift away from the focus on high-stakes EOG and EOC tests, known as summative assessments, and more emphasis on formative assessments, which are used to provide the information necessary to adjust classroom strategies while teaching and learning are under way in the classroom.

In its strategic plan, GaDOE is committed to assessments that *inform* instruction, rather than *drive* instruction. Teachers can use the following quality, effective diagnostic tools in their classrooms:[180]

- **Formative Instructional Practices –** Online modules that support teachers in creating, administering, and using quality formative assessments in the classroom
- **Georgia Online Formative Assessment Resource (GOFAR) –** Gives teachers access to items aligned to the state's Milestones assessments and gives them additional tools to build and administer diagnostic assessments in a classroom setting

In addition, in the strategic plan, GaDOE seeks to support local districts in developing formative assessments, such as portfolios, performance tasks, competency-based pathways, and embedded assessments.

Finally, for first and second grades, GaDOE is exploring innovative ways to assess students through online games. These games engage students in short tasks and carry information back to the student, teachers, and parents to help them understand what they know and what they need to learn next. This "gamification" of assessments gives learners a fun, engaging experience while also providing educators and parents with timely information about how to support the learner.[181]

To support the use of formative assessments and to work toward ensuring every child is on a path to reading on grade level by the third grade, Georgia is also making changes to GKIDS, the Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills. A year-long assessment, GKIDS is aligned to standards and provides teachers with information about the level of instructional support needed by individual students entering kindergarten and first grade.[182]

180 Georgia Department of Education. (2016). Vision 2020: *Educating Georgia's Future.* Retrieved from www.gadoe.org/Documents/VISION_2020.pdf.
181 Ibid.
182 See www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/GKIDS.aspx.

In partnership with Bright From the Start: The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, GaDOE has been developing a new component to the GKIDS, the Kindergarten Readiness Check. The Readiness Check is administered during the first six weeks of the kindergarten year and is aligned to the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards. It is also correlated to the kindergarten content standards. The goal of the assessment is to provide information about the skills of students entering kindergarten.[183] This will help kindergarten teachers more quickly individualize instruction for young students.

While shifting focus to more diagnostic and formative assessments, Georgia has also reduced the number of high-stakes tests to a number closer to the federal minimum. In 2016, Senate Bill (SB) 364 eliminated eight high-stakes Georgia Milestones tests and gave districts the option to eliminate high-stakes Student Learning Objectives tests for teachers of non-tested subjects.[184]

In 2017, SB 211 directly addressed the issue of assessments and Georgia's state plan required under ESSA. It calls for the ESSA plan to take advantage of the full flexibility allowed by US Ed. This flexibility will potentially allow local districts to pilot innovative approaches to assessments in grades other than high school. It also allows the state and local districts to potentially use nationally recognized high school assessments, provided comparability can be established, in place of the Georgia Milestones EOC assessments. However, it is important to note that this is not blanket flexibility given to all states. ESSA allows up to seven states to apply for an innovative assessment pilot that would involve a group of districts administering the same innovative assessment for a specified number of years, with the intent of ultimately scaling it statewide. The innovative assessment must be built and ready to implement before applying to participate in the pilot.

Therefore, SB 211 calls for a comparability study of other assessments aligned with state standards, such as the SAT/ACT and Accuplacer. Overall, this legislation is viewed as trying to separate out assessments used to inform teaching (formative) from those used for accountability.

Accountability

Accountability systems are used to assure college- and career-ready standards are being met as students move through the K-12 system. In Georgia, the accountability system is called the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). The CCRPI is the school and district accountability system that replaced Adequate Yearly Progress when the state received a waiver from US Ed in 2012 of the federal requirements dictated by No Child Left Behind.

The CCRPI was designed as a school improvement, accountability, and communications measure. It rates schools using an index score comprising multiple measures, including student achievement, progress measures of student growth, achievement gap closures, and efforts to prepare students for college and/or career. School climate and financial effectiveness measures are also reported, but not included in the overall score calculation.

The new state ESSA plan developed by GaDOE also adjusts the CCRPI, both in its scope and in specific measures. Under the new plan, accountability is generally viewed as having a supporting role for schools and districts. Objective measures would be used to illustrate how well schools and districts are succeeding in providing improved opportunities and outcomes for all students.[185]

183 See www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/Readiness.aspx.
184 Ibid.
185 Georgia Department of Education. (2017). ESSA State Advisory Committee Meeting, January 17, 2017. Atlanta: Georgia Department of Education.

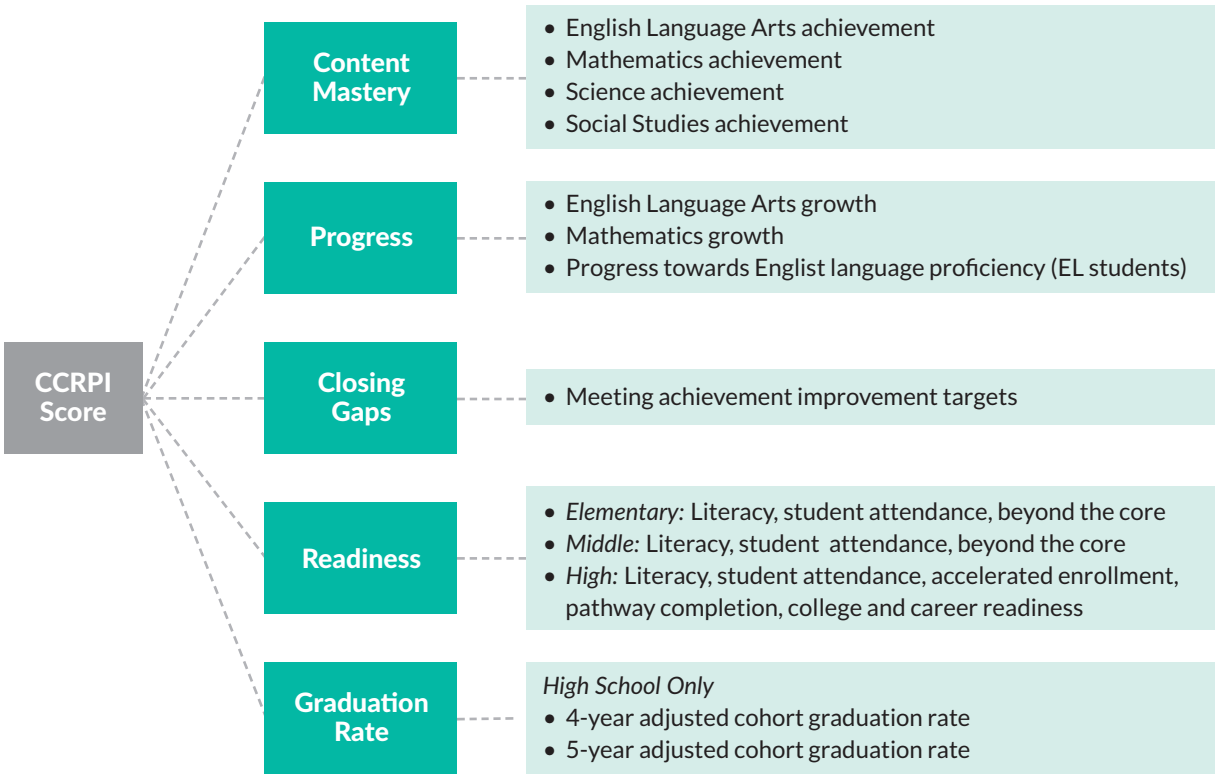
The ESSA state plan intentionally redesigns the CCRPI to be the ultimate school continuous improvement tool that will help guide long-term, sustainable improvement, not quick fixes. For Georgia, the CCRPI has several specific goals:[186]

- Increasing student achievement for all students and making progress in closing achievement gaps
- Increasing graduation rates
- Increasing student performance in literacy and numeracy in the early grades
- Increasing student completion of advanced courses
- Increasing the percentage of students on the path to college and career readiness

The CCRPI combines scores across the five components shown in Figure 6.1[187]

1. **Content Mastery –** Are students achieving at the level necessary to be prepared for the next grade, college, or career?
2. **Progress –** How much growth are students demonstrating relative to academically similar students?
3. **Closing Gaps –** Are all students and all student subgroups making improvements in achievement rates?
4. **Readiness –** Are students participating in activities preparing them for and demonstrating readiness for the next level, college, or career?
5. **Graduation Rate –** Are students graduating from high school with a regular diploma in four or five years?

FIGURE 6.1 REVISED CCRPI INDICATORS UNDER THE GADOE'S STATE ESSA PLAN[188]



186 Ibid.
187 Georgia Department of Education. (2017). *Redesigned College and Career Ready Performance Index*. Retrieved from www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Documents/RedesignedCCRPIOverview.pdf.
188 Ibid.

Combining the Foundations

Under the leadership of Superintendent Richard Woods, GaDOE implemented a strategic plan that emphasizes the development of a common, continuous improvement framework to ensure all schools are receiving meaningful support in the foundational elements. Georgia's System of Continuous Improvement framework focuses on the specific systems and structures that must be in place (the what) for sustained improvement. It also uses a problem-solving model (the how) to ensure these foundational elements are leading to stronger student outcomes.[189] Figure 6.2 illustrates how the GaDOE's Continuous Improvement framework works.

FIGURE 6.2 GEORGIA'S SYSTEM OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT[190]

To deliver a coherent instructional system, Georgia focuses on four primary elements:[191]

1. **Planning for Quality Instruction –** The instructional system is structured so that teams use the Georgia standards to plan what the students should know and do, and they determine how their students will show that they know the content and can do a skill or performance task.
2. **Delivering Quality Instruction –** The structure of the instructional system guides teachers in how in how to introduce content in engaging and relevant ways, to ensure that students gradually become independent in their understanding of content, and to provide students opportunities to apply their knowledge. This gradual release of responsibility for learning is made possible through regular feedback and attention to what "mastery" looks like.
3. **Monitoring Student Progress –** The instructional system includes the use of formative assessments that methodically determine whether the students are understanding the content, and what to do when they are or are not.
4. **Refining the Instructional System –** The system is structured to examine how to improve the planning for quality instruction, deliver quality instruction, and monitor student progress.

Innovation in the Instructional System

In any school or district, once the foundational systems are solidified, teachers, schools, and districts can use innovative approaches to meet the individual needs of their students. Georgia has many opportunities for innovation and multiple pathways that allow for educational innovation.

The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) administers the Innovation Fund. The fund provides grants to organizations focused on planning, implementing, or scaling programs aligned with the Innovation Fund's priority areas. The Innovation Fund began as a $19.4 million fund under Georgia's

189 Georgia Department of Education. (2017). Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Retrieved from www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/default.aspx.
190 See www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/School-Improvement-Services/Pages/Georgia%E2%80%99s-Systems-of-Continuous-Improvement.aspx.
191 Ibid.

Race to the Top plan. During Race to the Top, the Innovation Fund focused on best practices to influence future education policy efforts in (1) science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education, (2) applied learning, and (3) teacher and leader recruitment and development.

To continue the Innovation Fund's Work beyond Race to the Top, Governor Nathan Deal appropriated state funding in fiscal years 2015, 2016, and 2017 to foster innovation in priority areas, including the following:

- Applied learning with a focus on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math)
- Birth-to–age eight language and literacy development
- The development and replication of blended learning models
- Teacher and leader development for high-needs schools[192]

Through the end of 2016, the Innovation Fund provided more than $31 million in state and federal funding through 78 grants to 50 school districts, traditional public schools, charter schools, post-secondary institutions, and nonprofit organizations.[193] In 2017, GOSA awarded 20 additional Innovation Fund Tiny Grant awards[194] and 18 Innovation Fund awards for planning, implementing, or scaling projects.[195]

Related to the Innovation Fund, GOSA also administers the Innovation in Teaching Competition, a recognition and reward opportunity for Georgia's most innovative educators. Since 2013, the Innovation in Teaching Competition has selected 33 winning teachers, provided more than $237,500 in grant funding directly to those teachers and their schools, and made videos of each teacher, along with their unit plans and supplementary materials, available online for other educators.

The Innovation Fund also focuses much of its work around encouraging STEM programs and has more recently expanded that to STEAM, acknowledging the importance of infusing fine arts into a STEM curriculum. In addition to individual STEAM-focused grants, GOSA also funds three other STEAM-initiatives:[196]

1. **Innovation in K-8 Math/ K-12 Computer Science and Coding Grants –** These grants are focused on improving instruction in the areas of mathematics and computer science/coding through targeted, intentional professional learning. The goal is to increase the availability of high-quality mathematics instruction and computer science/coding opportunities for students.
2. **Rural Advanced Placement (AP) STEM Initiative –** The Georgia Rural AP STEM Initiative is the result of a partnership between GOSA and the College Board designed to create a vertical pathway to success in AP STEM courses in high-need, rural districts throughout Georgia.
3. **Project Lead the Way –** These programs, described in the sidebar Project Lead the Way: Transforming and Expanding STEM Education in Rural Georgia, offer K-12 pathways in computer science, engineering, and biomedical sciences, along with in-depth teacher professional development in rural Georgia.

192 Ellis, R., and Colona, J. (2016). *Innovation Fund Annual Report, December 2016.* Atlanta: Governor's Office of Student Achievement.
193 Ibid.
194 Tiny GRANTS provide traditional public schools, charter schools, and school districts between $1,000 and $10,000 to implement an innovative project that will deeply engage students.
195 See gosa.georgia.gov/.
196 See gosa.georgia.gov/grants-initiatives.

In support of STEAM in Georgia, GaDOE's Vision 2020 strategic plan has the specific goal that "every child in Georgia will have access to a STEM- or STEAM-certified school."[198] As of 2017, more than 1,000 schools are in the pipeline to become STEM certified.[199] In 2015–2016, GaDOE developed criteria for STEAM, which adds a fine arts component to ongoing STEM education. STEAM guidelines layer on to existing STEM guidelines. A STEM and STEAM approach promotes a project-based, teamwork-driven, and solution-focused framework for education.[200]

Throughout Georgia, educators are also personalizing the learning process. To keep students engaged, educators are infusing technology into course curricula to make the learning experience more rigorous, relevant, and personalized to the student, their learning goals, and their individual needs.

These approaches have been described as personalized learning, learner-centered, or student-driven. Regardless of the name, these approaches all have specific elements in common that support rigorous college and career expectations.[201]

Personalized Learning – Data-driven frameworks that set goals, assess progress, and ensure students receive the academic and development supports they need
Performance-Based Learning – Also called competency-based education, allows students to demonstrate mastery of skills based on high, clear, and commonly shared expectations
Anytime, Anywhere Opportunities – Flexible and constructive learning environments beyond the boundaries of a classroom or traditional school schedules

This shift away from teacher-as-lecturer to a personalized learning culture has been shaped by technology and has led to the creation of e-learning systems that seek to manage and engage the needs of all students. Through online classes, schools, and blended learning models, resources and learning opportunities are now available to students beyond the traditional classroom.

PROJECT LEAD THE WAY: TRANSFORMING AND EXPANDING STEM EDUCATION IN RURAL GEORGIA

In 2015, Governor Deal and GOSA announced a significant Innovation Fund grant to Project Lead the Way (PLTW) to give schools in Southwest Georgia the opportunity to implement the program's K-12 pathways in computer science, engineering, and biomedical science.[197] PLTW is a national nonprofit organization that promotes STEM education in K-12 classrooms through course module development and teacher training. Programs by PLTW have been adopted at more than 8,000 schools across all 50 states. The organization seeks to provide transformative learning experiences by creating an engaging, hands-on classroom environment supporting empowered students. The program encourages students to apply knowledge from many disciplines to real-world scenarios and challenges. PLTW students are connected to college and career opportunities through the nonprofit's exclusive network. They can be recognized through scholarships, preferred admission at colleges and universities, and internships. Occupations in the STEM fields will bring nearly 80,000 jobs to Georgia by 2020; thus, PLTW is a great way to ensure that schools in the southwestern region of the state can better prepare their students to be part of the future workforce.

197 See gosa.georgia.gov/project-lead-way.
198 Georgia Department of Education. (2016). *Vision 2020: Educating Georgia's Future.* Retrieved from www.gadoe.org/Documents/VISION_2020.pdf.
199 Certification is a rigorous process that requires schools to transform instruction to focus on innovation, collaboration, and creative thinking. For more information, see www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Pages/STEM.aspx.
200 Georgia Department of Education. (2016). *Vision 2020: Educating Georgia's Future.* Retrieved from www.gadoe.org/Documents/VISION_2020.pdf.
201 See Martinez, A., and Poon, J.D. (2015). *Innovation in Action: State Pathways for Advancing Student-Centered Learning.* Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers; Wolf, M.A. (2012). Culture Shift: Teaching in a Learner-Centered Environment Powered by Digital Learning. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

In terms of functionality, GaDOE has created multiple resources for digital learning, such as the Georgia Virtual School courses for grades six to 12, and free, downloadable courses and learning resources available online. Along with many local districts, GaDOE supports virtual learning opportunities so that students can move through the educational system at their own pace. These virtual options provide course flexibility and access, thereby cutting down on seat time for accelerated students and allowing extra time for students who need it.

Virtual classes (or online courses) are not the only innovative content delivery option being used in Georgia, or nationwide. Increasingly common is blended learning, which brings digital resources into the physical classroom. In this model, students continue to receive in-class instruction from their teachers and continue to participate in other traditional classroom activities. That earning is supplemented by online activities, some of which can be self-directed and self-paced, while others promote student collaboration. Research has shown that this combination of traditional classroom instruction and the digital environment has the potential to create a highly personalized and productive learning environment that may lead to better outcomes.[202]

For example, one of the most prominent of the blended learning models in Georgia has been the Direct to Discovery Program, which is a partnership between Barrow County Schools and the Georgia Institute of Technology. Direct to Discovery was supported by Georgia's Innovation Fund, which was part of the state's Race to the Top grant program.

Finally, the use of technology and digital learning has impacts beyond how and when students receive the material. Technology has a large role to play as education searches for new ways to translate rigorous standards of learning into actual skills. One such approach is competency-based education, which moves away from seat time (credit-hour measurements of courses/ classes completed) to content mastery. Once students demonstrate mastery of course content, they can gain credit for that course and move to the next level of learning. New Hampshire, Iowa, and Ohio have all recently established competency-based education systems.[203]

In February 2015, Governor Nathan Deal established the Education Reform Commission (ERC) to conduct a "top to bottom review of public education" during his second term.[204] As part of this review, the ERC proposed that Georgia also move to a competency-based system. The Move On When Ready Subcommittee offered two primary recommendations to support this reform.[205]

1. **Begin transitioning to a competency-based education system.** Allocate $10 million for pilot programs that address the planning and development of proficiency-based competencies, professional development for implementation, appropriate assessments, and necessary data-reporting tools.
2. **Increase the opportunity for advancement or remediation through flexible Georgia Milestones testing.** Develop a flexible assessment window, allowing testing every nine weeks to maximize instructional effectiveness.

The flexibility provided in these approaches, combined with other opportunities, especially in regard to high school–level academic pathways, allows students to personalize their K-12 experiences to meet their needs. For a full discussion on academic and career pathways, see *Chapter 7 – Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success.*

202 schoolwires. (2012). *Blending the Best of Online and Face-to-Face Learning to Improve Student Outcomes.* Retrieved from www.schoolwires.com.
203 Wolk, R.A. (2015, March 18). Competency-Based Education Is Working. *Education Week.*
204 Yarbrough, D. (2014, October 21). Everything on the Table, Public Educaiton Reform, says Gov. Deal. *The Telegraph.*
205 Education Reform Commission. (2015, December 15). *Final Recommendations to Governor Nathan Deal.* Atlanta: Office of the Governor. Retrieved from gov.georgia.gov/education-reform-commission.

IV. Opportunities - Advanced Instructional Systems

Over the past several years, Georgia has worked hard to develop a coherent instructional system that incorporates high standards and aligned assessments and allows instruction to be personalized. College- and career-ready indicators show that Georgia is on the right track. Between 2011 and 2016, the high school graduation rate increased from 67.5% to 79.4%.[206] Other evidence suggests that those graduating from high school are better prepared for college or a career than in the past. Although overall SAT scores between 2013 and 2016 have remained flat, more students are taking the SAT in hopes of going on to a post-secondary institution. Similarly, the number of students taking the ACT has dramatically increased while the scores have remained steady. This is unusual. Traditionally, when more students take college entrance exams, the state average falls. This has not happened in Georgia on either test.

As Georgia moves forward, there are opportunities to build upon the strengths of recent efforts.

GO! KEEP MOVING FORWARD: STRONG POLICIES IN PLACE

Continue the commitment to college- and career-ready standards.

Georgia has implemented college- and career-ready standards in ELA and mathematics. In 2017, the state introduced them in science and social studies. Georgia is also in the process of updating fine arts standards for music and dance. In June 2017, the State Board of Education approved the first Georgia Standards of Excellence for media arts, theatre arts, and visual arts. The fine arts standards for music, visual arts, dance, and theatre were last revised in 2010. Media arts is a new content area that encompasses works created with new media technologies, including digital art, computer graphics, computer animation, virtual art, Internet art, interactive art, video games, computer robotics, 3D printing, and art as biotechnology. Media arts was added to address the rising demand and interest in this area of business and industry in Georgia.

Continue Georgia's rigorous graduation requirements.

Georgia's graduation requirements are seen as among the highest in the nation. It is one of only 16 states that require four years of ELA, math, and science.[207]

YIELD! PROCEED WITH CAUTION, MORE WORK TO BE DONE

Support the Georgia Milestones Assessment System.

Georgia has made progress in implementing the Georgia Milestones to align with the higher standards and increased rigor of the Georgia Standards of Excellence. EdCount, LLC, conducted an independent alignment study of the Georgia Milestones and the results were released in the spring of 2017. The study found that in developing the Georgia Milestones Assessment System, "GaDOE engaged in a test and item development process that meets professional standards for quality and rigor and that the EOG and EOC assessments in its Georgia Milestones Assessment System adequately reflect the Georgia state-mandated academic content standards."[208]

206 Governor's Office of Student Achievement. For State Report Cards, see www.gosa.org.
207 See www.achieve.org/publications/state-state-graduation-requirements-class-2015.
208 Forte, E., Towels, E., Greninger, E., Buchanan, E., and Lauren, D. (2017). *Evaluation of the Alignment Quality in the Georgia Milestones Assessment System in ELA, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies*. Georgia Department of Education. Alexandria, VA: EdCount, LLC.

Georgia's ESSA plan, developed by GaDOE, includes strategies for clearly communicating the relevance and utility of statewide assessments; providing more interpretative guidance; enhancing and increasing access to sample items, student exemplars, and other related resources for parents and educators; and strengthening technology-enhanced items. Each of these recommendations would significantly strengthen the assessment system in Georgia.

Increase the use of formative assessments to inform instruction.

GaDOE's ESSA plan also aims to change the focus of assessments away from just being used for high-stakes purposes that drive instruction to formative assessments that help inform instruction and allow for greater personalization. The flexibility being requested in the state plan will also allow districts to use assessments to meet the particular needs of their students and educators while trying to limit the amount of time students spend taking tests.

The combined effects of SB 364 and SB 211 continue to shift focus away from high-stakes testing to formative assessments, especially in the younger grades. As reading on grade level by the third grade is a state priority, these types of changes will help educators achieve that goal.

Incorporate benchmarks to measure Georgia's progress.

Note that all other high-performing countries continually benchmark their standards, curricula, and assessments against other countries to ensure their students are globally competitive. While Georgia does imbed some normed measures in the Georgia Milestones, there is no systematic way to compare Georgia students to those in other states other than the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores that are released every two years. As Georgia continues to experiment with the types and purposes of assessments, the state should be careful to balance a positive assessment environment that informs student learning with the ability to compare our students with those from other states and countries.

One impact of SB 364 was the elimination of the student learning objectives (SLOs), which were the state tests for subjects not covered by the Georgia Milestones. Approximately 70% of teachers teach a course in one of these subject areas (e.g., foreign language, health, reading specialists, music). The SLOs were an attempt to uniformly measure student progress across all of these subjects within Georgia. The impact, though, was an overly burdensome testing system. Now districts can choose how they measure student learning in these subjects, allowing them to set their own benchmarks for student progress. However, this change makes it impossible to compare the rigor of these courses across districts.

Ensure the accountability system holds schools and districts responsible for the success of all students.

In Georgia's proposed ESSA state plan, the accountability system balances progress and achievement. Georgia has the opportunity to use the accountability system to highlight achievement gaps, especially among low-income students, students of color, special needs students, and English language learners. To reduce the achievement gaps and provide equity for all students, Georgia should include the disaggregated performance of each student subgroup on each indicator so that subgroup gaps are not masked by overall schoolwide averages.

In its current form, only the "closing the gaps" indicator counts disaggregated performance. However, this indicator only measures whether schools are improving proficiency rates and does not hold schools accountable for the overall mastery rates of student subgroups.

Support districts' use of technology.

In fall 2013, districts across the country were implementing ambitious one-to-one computing initiatives to expand the use of digital curricula and transform learning. Los Angeles Unified School District halted the first phase of a plan to provide iPads to all 651,000 students over readiness and price issues. In North Carolina, Guilford County recalled thousands of tablets due to hardware problems. The Fort Bend Independent School District in Texas abandoned a plan to deliver an interactive science curriculum via iPads after 19 months of problems, including poor wireless coverage and digital lessons that did not align to standards.[209]

These costly mistakes were caused by a lack of clarity of purpose and underestimating the costs and infrastructure needs of the plan. Many districts try to do too much too fast, which can tax their ability to provide the needed resources to support a district-wide rollout of a new technology program.[210]

To contain costs, many districts, like Forsyth County, have turned to a BYOT — Bring Your Own Tablet — program. The BYOT option has proven to be a more cost-effective and flexible alternative to the one-to-one computing goals to expand the use of digital curricula. However, there are challenges with BYOT as well. The professional development required to effectively implement the program is substantial. Not only is it a cultural shift for the role of the educator, the logistics of incorporating a variety of devices of differing capabilities within one classroom or project can be daunting for any educator.[211]

In addition to the lessons learned from Forsyth's experiences with BYOT, Georgia can also learn from Hall County Schools. That school district has also implemented a BYOT program and has a significantly higher percentage of low-income students than Forsyth. Nearly 60% of students are low-income, and only about half own a device they can bring to school.[212] To make up for this device gap, Hall County Schools has worked to make computing devices available for check-out on the school campus, loaning them out for home use and encouraging teachers to allow students to choose between completing the work online or on paper. Because the district is outside the Atlanta metropolitan area, Internet connectivity is also a problem, especially outside the school building. Hall County Schools supports a discounted Internet service and circulates information about free wi-fi locations throughout the district.[213]

Support the Innovation Fund, research, and evaluation.

The Innovation Fund, administered by GOSA, provides grants to organizations focused on planning, implementing, or scaling programs aligned with the Innovation Fund's priority areas, which are currently applied learning with a focus on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math), birth-to–age eight language and literacy development, the development and replication of blended learning models, and teacher and leader development for high-needs schools. The continued rigorous evaluations of Innovation Fund projects could go a long way toward scaling up best-practices across the state.

For example, when looking for best practices to follow, there continues to be little consensus about which aspects of blended learning and classroom technology will improve student outcomes. A main problem is that blended learning and technology uses look significantly different, not only between districts but between schools and classrooms. What researchers do know is that the success of digital learning in the classroom depends on two primary elements: 1) how it is being implemented, and 2) how well teachers are being trained.[214]

209 Herman, M. (2015, June 11). Districts Learn Lessons on 1-to-1 from Others' Missteps. *Education Week.*
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
212 Cavanagh, T. (2015, June 11). Districts Turn "BYOT" Disorder to Their Advantage. *Education Week.*
213 Ibid.
214 Sparks, S.D. (2015, April 13). Blended Learning Research Yields Limited Results. *Education Week.*

Develop and expand supports for student-centered personalized learning.

As Georgia expands technology-enhanced learning, the state must recognize that technology alone does not improve learning. Real student-centered, personalized learning requires close knowledge of a student's interests, abilities, and motivations. This is most often dependent on a teacher-student relationship and can be supported by tech-enhanced analytics that provide more nuanced and real-time data. However, teachers need to understand the value in that technology and how to effectively integrate it into their daily practice.

Georgia has laid a foundation of strong standards and is working on high-quality aligned assessments and accountability. The GaDOE strategic plan is committed to ensuring all schools have the foundational elements of a high-quality instructional system in place that then allows for innovation and personalized learning. Due to these efforts, Georgia is well positioned to undertake new and innovative methods of improving teaching and learning. However, these opportunities create a two-fold challenge for the state moving forward. First, the systematic changes put in place under the Race to the Top grant are still relatively new. In a 2013 piece, Rick Hess described implementation as the "missing half of school reform," as stakeholders, officials, and advocates tend to show less interest in implementing existing reforms than in tackling new initiatives.[215] When new ideas and initiatives come into fashion, existing efforts often are left only partially implemented or not supported in the classroom as resources are diverted to new projects.

215 Policy Innovators Network. (2014). *2014 PIE Network Implementation Case Study.* Minneapolis: PIE.

CHAPTER 7

Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success

I. Issue Definition

Key goals of the public education system are to help students plan for their next steps in life and to prepare them for college and careers. It is important for school systems to offer students clear pathways for post-secondary success. Over time, the needs of the workforce change, and the education system must stay abreast of these changes to provide students with their best chance for success. To ensure that Georgia continues to have a prepared workforce and economic opportunities for all, the state must have policies in place that support career education and college preparation, and innovative programs that promote and ensure post-secondary achievement.

II. Elements of an Effective System

Top-performing systems and best practice research point to key elements to ensure that every student completes a post-secondary option. These elements include clear pathways, innovative policies to increase completion rates, and financial resources for all students.

High-performing systems create clear gateways for students throughout the educational system.[216]

- Instead of focusing on a high school diploma, top-performing countries focus on qualifications that show what high school courses the holder has taken and the grades earned in those courses.
- Countries with well-developed qualification systems arrange them into pathways such that an individual can always go back later and pick up a qualification that he or she missed earlier.
- Within these pathways are robust career and technical education training pathways that
    - offer viable routes for enrolled students to acquire further education and training,
    - allow students to study in settings that have all the elements of a real industrial setting,
    - match the skills being taught to industry demand for workers, and
    - involve industry in providing up-to-date equipment and training of staff as well as ensuring a smooth transition from schooling to training to employment.
- These systems have no dead ends; all paths can be linked to others so that individuals can always go further in their education without having to start at the beginning.[217]

216 Center on International Education Benchmarking. (2016). *9 Building Blocks for a World-Class Education System*. Washington, DC: National Center on Education and the Economy.

217 Ibid.

TOP CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PERFORMER SWITZERLAND

Switzerland is one of several European countries with a "dual" career and technical education (CTE) training system in which students combine learning in school with learning in workplace settings. Approximately 70% of Swiss teenagers enroll in the CTE upper secondary program (rather than its academic counterpart), which offers a hands-on, contextualized, and applied approach to learning. Employers play an important role in developing qualifications and assessments for the industry, establishing curricula, and providing apprenticeships that give students paid work experience in the field. The Swiss system also intentionally allows students to move seamlessly between academic and career-focused studies as well as from CTE to higher education, motivating students to pursue additional qualifications.[218]

The State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), in partnership with Complete College America, promotes five policy game changers that support innovation at post-secondary institutions. These policies can be used to increase overall post-secondary credential attainment and to close achievement gaps for low-income and minority students.[219] Table 7.1 outlines the game changing strategies and states currently implementing them.[220]

TABLE 7.1 SHEEO – POLICY GAME CHANGERS FOR POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTION

GAME CHANGING STRATEGY	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE STATES IMPLEMENTING	EXAMPLE
Outcome-based funding	Shift state higher education funding, at least partially, to completion outcomes rather than enrollments	Tennessee, Ohio, Florida (**Georgia** is transitioning)	Tennessee and Ohio include weighted funding for institutions of higher education that show success with at-risk students, such as low-income and adult students.
Co-requisite remediation	Remedial supports provided alongside college coursework as a requisite rather than a prerequisite	Colorado, **Georgia,** Indiana, Tennessee, West Virginia	In **Georgia,** 63% of students enrolled in the co-requisite model also completed the required math gateway course, compared to 20% enrolled in a prerequisite model.
15 to Finish	Shift the "full-time enrollment" definition to 15 credit hours per semester, rather than the 12 credit hours from the Pell Grant definition	Utah, Nevada, Kentucky, Indiana	Indiana tied state financial aid policies to 30 credits per year by providing bonuses to students meeting that goal.
Structured schedules	Create class blocks during a specific time period throughout the degree program	Indiana, Tennessee, New York	City University of New York students participate in a structured cohort-based Accelerated Study in Associate Programs. The program has doubled graduation rates and decreased the equity gap.
Guided pathways to success	Provide support systems to students to keep them enrolled and on a clear path to graduation; include services to reduce equity gaps; be clear about completion expectations	Florida, **Georgia**	**Georgia State University (GSU)** uses degree maps, advising. and targeted financial assistance. GSU confers the most degrees to black students in Georgia, and has a 57% graduation rate for blacks and 66% for Hispanics.

218 Taken almost verbatim from: National Center on Education and the Economy. (2016). *Building Block 7: Create Effective Systems of Career and Technical Education and Training.* Retrieved from Center on International Benchmarking, Career and Technical Education: http://ncee.org/what-we-do/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/9-building-blocks/career-and-technical-education

219 Zaback, K., Carlson, A., Laderman, S., and Mann, S. (2016). *Serving the Equity Imperative: Intentional Action Toward Greater Student Success.* Boulder, CO: The State Higher Education Executive Officers and Complete College America.

220 Ibid.

Affordability is another key factor in the successful completion of post-secondary education. Maximizing access through financial aid is an absolute necessity. Supported by the Lumina Foundation, Strategy Labs has articulated a series of research-based recommendations for how states can maximize their investments in a need-based financial aid program.[221]

1. **Is the investment well targeted?** To have the greatest impact, the investment must be targeted based on financial need. For institutional targets, these programs make a difference only to the extent that the institutions serve low-income students. For example, Tennessee provides a 40% premium in the state funding formula to institutions for low-income students.
2. **Does it create the right incentives?** Grade-based incentives in excess of degree requirements can reduce student course loads; discourage science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors; and decrease retention rates for low-income students. However, progress-based incentives related to completion of credit hours increase students' rates of progress toward degrees.
3. **Is it timed to maximize impact?** Students and institutions need to know about the program and receive the money in time for it to make a difference. Tax credit programs do not impact low-income families.
4. **Is it clearly communicated and well understood?** The program should not be overly complex. Students and families do not take advantage of programs they do not understand.
5. **It is well coordinated with other resources, such as other private, state, and federal sources?** Need-based financial aid programs should be implemented with an eye to filling gaps left by other investments.

Georgia Post-Secondary Success Data – By the Numbers

Readiness for College and Career

- **79%** of high school graduates completed a CTAE[222] pathway, advanced academic pathway, IB career-related programme, or fine arts or world language pathway[223]
- **51%** of high school graduates completed a CTAE pathway and earned a national industry-recognized credential in 2016[224]

Post-Secondary Progress – High School Graduating Class of 2014[225]

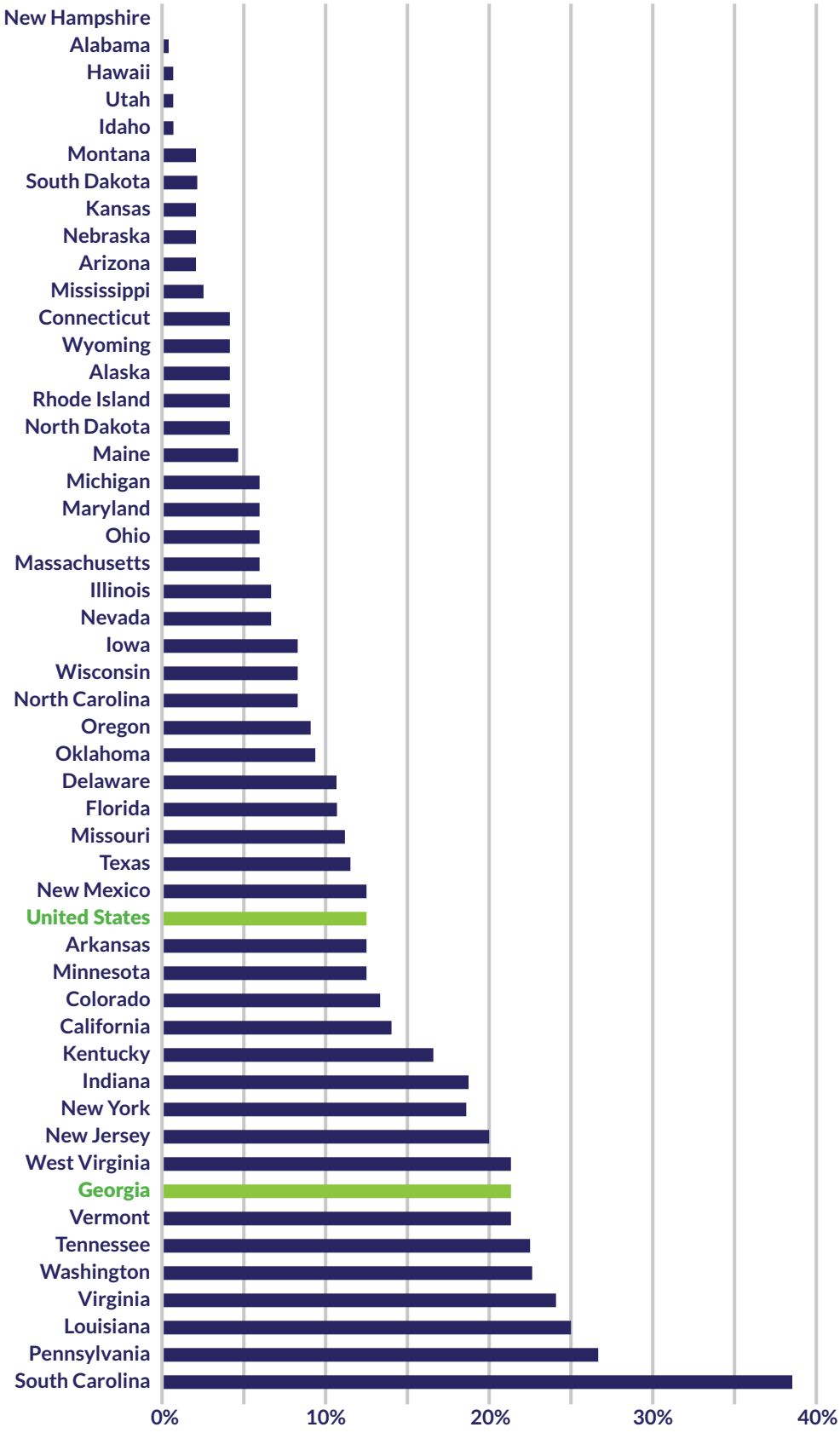
- **68%** enrolled in a post-secondary institution
- **11%** required remediation in English
- **20%** required remediation in math
- **63%** were still enrolled or earned a post-secondary credential in 2016 (two years)

Financial Aid

- **36%** of students enrolled in the University System of Georgia receive the HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarship in 2016[226]

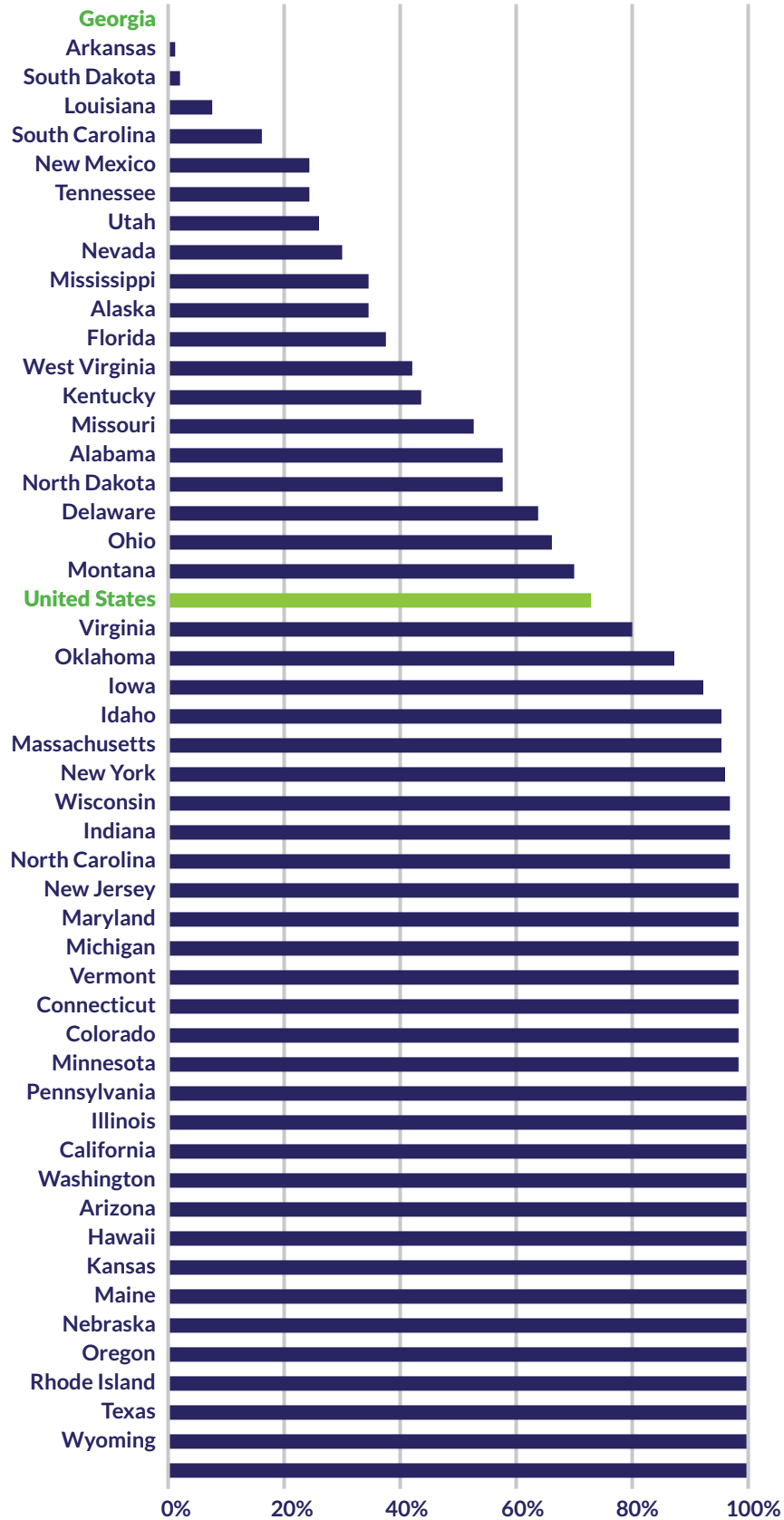
221 Johnson, N. (2016, September 22). State Investments in Affordability. *Forum on the Future: Need-Based Aid and Preparing a Competitive Workforce for Georgia.* Atlanta: Strategy Labs: State Policy to Increase Higher Education Attainment.
222 CTAE stands for Career, Technical, Agricultural Education.
223 Georgia Department of Education. 2016 College and Career Ready Performance Index.
224 Ibid.
225 All data from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, High School Graduate Outcomes Report, can be found at https://hsgrad.gosa.ga.gov/.
226 Suggs, C. (2016). *Troubling Gaps in HOPE Point to Need-Based Aid Solutions, Policy Brief.* Atlanta: Georgia Budget and Policy Insitute.

FIGURE 7.1 TOTAL STATE GRANT EXPENDITURES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STATE SUPPORT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, 2014–2015[227]



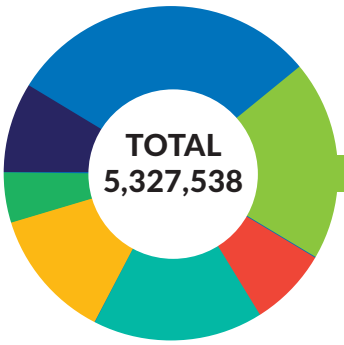
227 College Board. (2016). *Trends in Student Aid 2016.* New York: College Board.

FIGURE 7.2 NEED-BASED STATE GRANT AID AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL UNDERGRADUATE STATE GRANT AID, 2014–2015[228]



228 Ibid.

FIGURE 7.3 LEVELS OF EDUCATION FOR GEORGIA RESIDENTS, AGES 25-64[229]



Less than 9th grade	233,001	4.37%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	451,780	8.48%
High school graduate (including equivalency)	1,456,675	27.34%
Some college, no degree	1,159,688	21.77%
Associate's degree	405,927	7.62%
Bachelor's degree	1,034,598	19.42%
Graduate or professional degree	585,869	11.00%

Estimated attainment of certificates: 8%

Note: The accompanying pie chart does not account for residents who have earned high-value post-secondary certificates. The percentage above – admittedly, an ***estimate*** – aims to fill that gap. To calculate this percentage, labor market experts at the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce used Survey of Income Program Participation 2008 Wave 12 data (2012) and data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) 2014.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey

229 Lumina Foundation. (2016). *A Stronger Nation – Georgia.* Indianapolis: The Lumina Foundation.

III. Georgia Landscape - Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success

Economic opportunities are on the rise in Georgia as the economy is expanding. Employer job postings have grown over 150% since 2010, outpacing the national growth rate.[230] Meanwhile, Georgia ranks 34th among states for unemployment. Though the number of jobs available is increasing, many potential workers are unemployed or underemployed. These factors indicate that Georgia is experiencing a talent gap, meaning there is a mismatch between the degrees and skills needed by employers and the degrees and skills of the population.

Currently, a low 31% of job postings require only a high school diploma or just some college, while 60% of job postings require at least an associate's degree — a level of education that only 38% of the Georgia's adult population has achieved.

In recent years, Georgia has been aggressively putting in place multiple pathways for post-secondary success to close this gap. The state has been focusing on increasing the rigor of traditional pathways to high school graduation; readying students for post-secondary education; implementing innovative programs that blend high school, career, and post-secondary education; and increasing access to and success in post-secondary education.

Traditional Pathways

Consideration of graduation pathways begins in middle school. As part of the BRIDGE Act (Building Resourceful Individuals to Develop Georgia's Economy) passed in 2010, students must complete an Individual Graduation Plan (IGP), which helps map out the academic core subjects and focused work students plan to take in math, science, the humanities, the fine arts, world languages, or a sequenced career pathway.[231,232]

In addition to the regular high school graduation requirements, once students enter high school, they must also complete a pathway selected from four primary options shown in Table 7.2 in order to complete their IGP.

230 Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. (2016). Georgia: Your Talent Your Future, *Educators and Policy Makers Report.* Atlanta: Metro Atlanta Chamber.

231 Georgia Department of Education. (2015). What Is the BRIDGE Law? Retrieved from GaDOE, Transition Career Partnerships, Move On When Ready, Dual Enrollment/ Dual Credit: http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Documents/BRIDGE-separatecard.pdf.

232 The BRIDGE ACT also calls for career counseling and regularly scheduled advisement for middle and high school students with career counseling to choose a focused plan of study. Note that even in high school, students can change their career path as their interests change.

TABLE 7.2 GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION PATHWAYS[233]

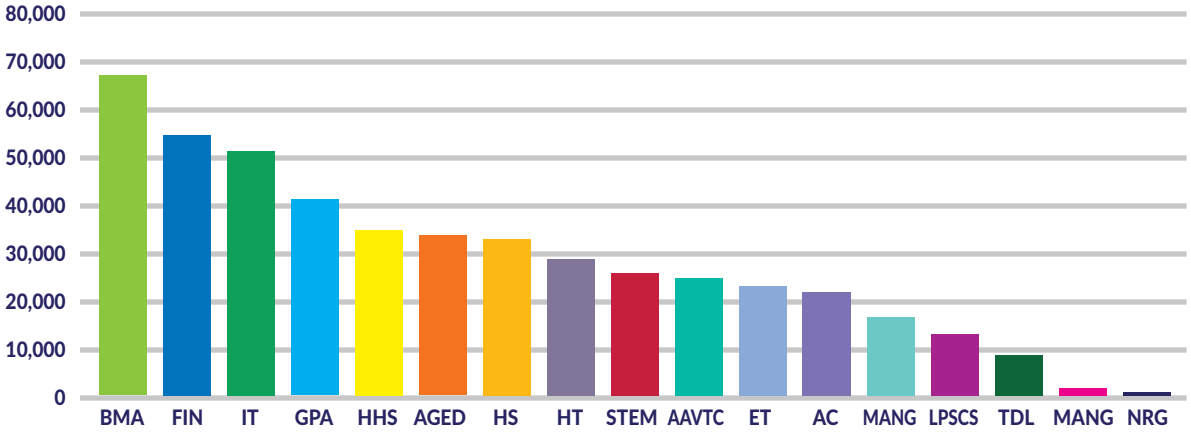
PATHWAY	DESCRIPTION	COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS
Advanced academics	Allows a focus on English/ language arts, math, science, or social studies	1. 4 credits in selected subject[234] 2. 1 Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) course in selected subject 3. 2 credits in one world language
Fine arts	Allows a focus on dance, journalism, music, theater arts, or visual arts	3 courses successfully completed in one of the five areas
World language	Allows a focus in French, Spanish, German, Latin, Chinese, or Japanese	3 successive courses in selected language; third course may or may not be an AP or IB course
Career, technical, and agricultural education	One of 17 career pathway options	Requirements specific to the pathway are completed

Georgia's most robust set of pathways is career, technical, and agricultural education (CTAE). CTAE offers students more than 130 pathways to graduation within 17 career clusters. Each cluster includes multiple career pathways. For example, the STEM career cluster includes separate pathways for electronics; engineering and technology; and engineering drafting and design. The clusters are based on the National Career Cluster program used across the United States. Five of the programs saw enrollments of more than 32,000 students in the 2014–2015 school year: business management and administration, finance, information technology, government and public administration, and health science.[235] Two of those clusters — health science and information technology — are directly focused on areas experiencing a workforce shortage, thereby linking post-secondary preparation with industry needs. See Figure 7.4 for pathway enrollments.

233 http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Pages/pathways.aspx.
234 For the social studies pathway, students need three credits in social studies.
[235 Georgia CTAE. (2015). *CTAE Georgia's Pathways to Future Workforce: CTAE Annual Report 2015.* Atlanta: Georgia Department of Education.

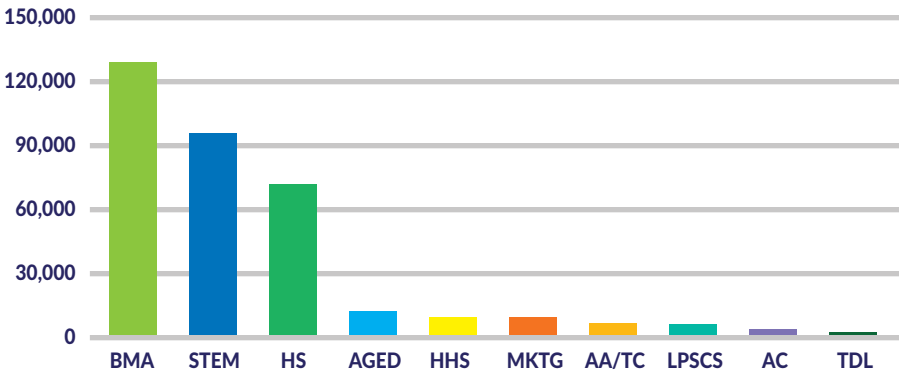
FIGURE 7.4 CTAE PROGRAM PATHWAYS AND ENROLLMENTS[236]

CTAE HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM ENROLLMENT: 2014-2015
Total HS Enrollment 513,003



Business Management and Adminstration (BMA)	66,269
Finance (FIN)	53,525
Information Technology (IT)	50,345
Government & Public Adminstration (GPA)	40,317
Health Science (HHS)	33,260
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources (AGED)	32,801
Human Services (HS)/Family and Consumer Sciences	32,747
Hospitality and Tourism (HT)	29,616
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)	27,378
Arts, AV/Technology and Communications (AATVC)	25,762
Education and Training (ET)	21,491
Architecture and Construction (AC)	20,932
Marketing (MKTG)	17,232
Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security (LPSCS)	12,027
Transporation, Distribution and Logistics (TDL)	9,941
Manufacturing (MANG)	1,617
Energy (NRG)	1,027

CTAE MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM ENROLLMENT: 2014-2015
Total MS Enrollment 496,361



Business Management and Adminstration (BMA)	130,240
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)	94,239
Human Services (HS)/Family and Consumer Sciences	54,007
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources (AGED)	24,906
Health Science (HHS)	5,873
Marketing (MKTG)	5,369
Arts, AV/Technology and Communications (AATVC)	3,299
Law, Public Safety, Corrections and Security (LPSCS)	1,208
Architecture and Construction (AC)	472
Transporation, Distribution and Logistics (TDL)	267

236 Ibid.

The results of the CTAE pathways have been impressive.[237]

- 96% graduation rate for CTAE career pathway completers in 2017
- First state to adopt a career pathway requirement for all high school students
- One of the first two states to offer an International Skills Diploma Seal

Innovative Pathways

Georgia CTAE has also led the way in innovative pathways to increase post-secondary credentials by partnering with other state agencies, businesses, community leaders, and other statewide initiatives.

The Georgia Competitiveness Initiative brought state government and the business community together to develop a long-term strategy for economic development in the state. Led by the Georgia Department of Economic Development and Georgia Chamber of Commerce, the Georgia Competitiveness Initiative examined Georgia's strengths and weaknesses, gathered information and ideas from leaders from various regions and industries, and developed recommendations to stimulate job creation and economic growth.[238]

As an outgrowth of the Georgia Competitiveness Initiative Report, in 2014 Governor Deal created the High Demand Career Initiative to allow state partners involved in training Georgia's future workforce to hear directly from the private sector about industry needs (i.e., degrees/majors, certificates, courses, skill sets desired).[239]

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), specifically the CTAE division, has taken the recommendations seriously and has been working with the business community and Georgia industries to meet the needs of a 21st century workforce. Georgia CTAE has two primary goals: 1) to increase business and industry involvement with the CTAE pathways throughout Georgia, and 2) to increase the visibility of CTAE pathway options and opportunities among parents and students.[240]

Several initiatives and partnerships are being undertaken to achieve those goals. One is a partnership with Harvard University's Jobs for the Future Pathways to Prosperity project. Pathways to Prosperity is focused on creating a seamless P-20 pathway for students from elementary school through college, vocational training, and into a successful career. In Georgia, 10 state agencies are working together to implement the vision of the Pathways project.[241]

CTAE is also working with local communities, businesses, and technical colleges to leverage partnerships and highlight best practices between industry and CTAE. One example is the Carrollton/Carroll County Education Collaborative (CCEC). Consisting of leadership from both school districts, West Georgia Technical College, and the University of West Georgia and representatives of the local chamber of commerce and the community, the CCEC has established a common vision for K-16 success. Established in late 2014, this regional effort is focused on aligning curricula and post-secondary success through dual enrollments, post-secondary education early readiness in the middle schools, and data sharing on student performance to inform programming and necessary interventions. The goal of this collaborative is for every student to identify and be supported in their own pathway to post-secondary success.

237 Georgia Department of Education. (2016). *Educating Georgia's Future, 2016.* Atlanta: Georgia Department of Education.
238 See more at: http://www.georgiacompetitiveness.org/about/#sthash.XBrWaj6N.dpuf.
239 Georgia Department of Economic Development. (2014). High Demand Career Initiative, Preparing Georgia's Future Workforce Now. Retrieved from http://www.georgia.org/competitive-advantages/workforce-division/programs-initiatives/high-demand-career-initiative-hdci/.
240 Ibid.
241 Those agencies are GaDOE, Georgia Department of Economic Development, the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), the University System of Georgia (USG), Office of Governor Nathan Deal, Office of Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle, Georgia Department of Labor, the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC), the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement.

To encourage industry participation, Georgia is also promoting work-based learning opportunities through CTAE. Students earn CTAE class credit while also working at a local business, aiding in the transition from school to work. In 2016, the Governor signed into law House Bill (HB) 402, which provides incentives for businesses to engage students in their communities in work-based learning opportunities.

Another important initiative seeking to prepare students for the workforce is the Georgia College and Career Academy Network, founded by Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle in 2006. Partnerships throughout the state with the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and businesses have opened 37 of these charter schools, giving students another option to choose from instead of the traditional school model. Many of the schools are based on academic partnerships between multiple school systems and incorporate project-based learning in math and science problem-solving.[242]

Finally, in 2015, the Georgia General Assembly passed two bills that consolidated Georgia's multiple dual enrollment programs into one, the new Move On When Ready program (now simply called Dual Enrollment). Based on recommendations from Governor Deal's Dual Enrollment Task Force,[243] these two bills expanded dual enrollment opportunities for all students in grades nine to 12 and provided a new option for high school graduation. These changes were effective July 2015.

TABLE 7.3 ELEMENTS OF THE 2015 MOVE ON WHEN READY LEGISLATION[244]

MOVE ON WHEN READY/DUAL ENROLLMENT	HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION OPTION
High school students may enroll in eligible participating post-secondary institutions while in 9th–12th grades	Students complete 10th grade with the required courses (two English, math, science, social studies; one health and PE and required tests)
Earn dual credit	Eight courses that require end-of-course assessments must be completed
May take any course, academic or CTAE	Complete an associate's degree, technical diploma, or two technical certificate programs in a career pathway
OR	
May enroll in a post-secondary program (associate's degree, diploma or technical certificate or credit)	Awarded a high school diploma

Under dual enrollment, students receive both secondary and post-secondary credit. Courses include academic courses related to English, math, science, social studies, and foreign language and CTAE courses. These can be taught either on the high school or college campus or through distance learning. Participating high school students must meet all the entrance requirements of the post-secondary institution, and specific classes, programs, and certificate offerings vary by the individual institution.

242 Fink, A. (2016, May 12). Georgia's College and Career Academies Preparing 21st Century Workforce. *OnGeorgia.* Retrieved from http://www.ongeorgia.org/education/georgias-college-and-career-academies.html.

243 Members of the Dual Enrollment Task Force include leaders from the USG, the TCSG, the GSFC, the Professional Standards Commission, and the Governor's Office as well as state legislators.

244 Mealer, G. (2015, July). *The New Move On When Ready Dual Enrollment Program.* Retrieved from GaDOE, Transition Career Partnerships: http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Documents/New-Move-On-When-Ready-General.pdf.

CTAE and dual enrollment programs can be combined with other credit-earning programs such as AP, IB, and Early College and Career Academies to improve students' college readiness and potentially shorten the time to earn a degree or professional certificate once in college.

These priorities are reflected in Georgia's revisions to the state accountability plan, the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). These revisions are part of the larger state plan developed by GaDOE under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, which replaces federal requirements put in place under No Child Left Behind. One component of the revised CCRPI measures readiness by assessing whether students are participating in activities that prepare them for the next level of schooling, college, or career. For high schools, the readiness measures try to balance college and career readiness. Schools are held accountable for the percentage of students participating in accelerated enrollment courses — academic or technical — dual enrollment, AP, or IB. High schools are also held accountable for the percentage of students successfully completing a career pathway and receiving a nationally recognized industry credential or passing an end-of-pathway assessment.

Success in Post-Secondary Education

Once students enroll in post-secondary education, many slow down, never earn a degree, or drop out altogether due to unclear expectations and obstacles. The most common hurdles faced by students are lack of clear graduation pathways and inadequate financial resources.

The rising cost of post-secondary programs, combined with an increase in the number of students and families living in poverty, is limiting students' ability to complete a post-secondary pathway. Georgia's allocation for higher education funding for the TCSG and the University System of Georgia (USG) has dropped dramatically over the last decade and has yet to return to pre-recession levels. For fiscal year (FY) 2017, state funding per full-time student in the TCSG was about 3% below 2007 levels in inflation-adjusted dollars.[245] For the USG, state funding was a full 50% below 2001 levels in inflation-adjusted dollars.[246]

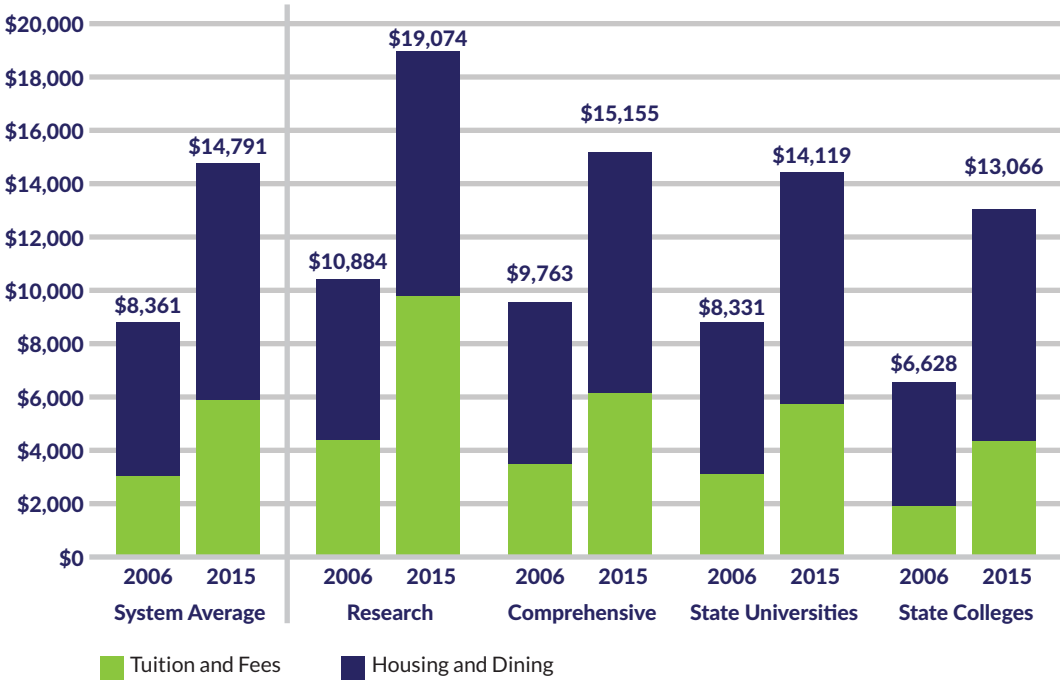
The Board of Regents recently released an audit of the cost of higher education within the USG. The audit found that costs rose substantially between FY 2006 and 2015.[247]

- Decreased state expenditures and changes in the HOPE Scholarship (discussed later in this section) have shifted a larger portion of costs to students through increased tuition.
- Costs have also risen due to institution-level policy decisions to expand requirements to live on campus and purchase meal plans as well as increases in mandatory fees.
- USG students' average costs of attendance increased 77%.
- State appropriations did not keep pace with enrollment, which translated into a 15% decrease in per pupil funding.
- Typical housing expenses increased 56% and typical dining expenses increased 60%, both more than double inflation.

245 Georgia Budget and Policy Institute. (2016). *Georgia Budget Primer 2017.* Retrieved from https://gbpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/GBPI-Budget-Primer-2017.pdf.
246 Ibid.
247 Griffin, G. S., and Leslie, M. (2016). *Board of Regents: Requested Information on Higher Education Cost Drivers.* Atlanta: Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts, Performance Audit Division.

FIGURE 7.5

Increases in Tuition, Fees, Housing and Dining Rates* Have Increased the Cost of Attendance for In-State Students Residing On-Campus, Fiscal Years 2006-2015



*Includes average tuition and fees rates for all USG institutions and average typical housing and dining costs reported by USG institutions to NCES.

Georgia has two primary strategies for providing post-secondary financial aid. The HOPE Scholarship and the associated Zell Miller Scholarship offer merit-based aid to students pursuing bachelors or associates degree in the USG or TCSG. The HOPE Grant is targeted at students in diploma and certificate fields in the TCSG and is not based on merit.

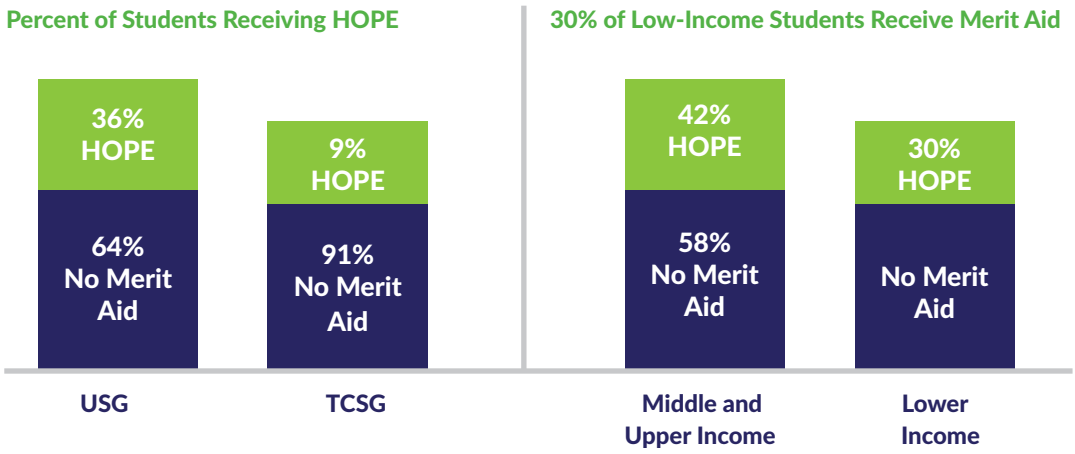
During the 2012 legislative session, HB 326 was passed, reducing the HOPE Scholarship award from funding 100% of tuition to only a portion of tuition. As of 2016, it ranges from 71% at the Georgia Institute of Technology to 88% at state colleges.[248] Students must have and maintain a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) to receive and remain eligible. The HOPE Scholarship does not cover any costs related to room and board, student fees, and so forth. HB 326 also created a new scholarship program, the Zell Miller Scholarship, which provides 100% of tuition for Georgia residents who graduate from high school with a 3.7 GPA and have a combined math/ reading SAT score of at least 1200. Students must maintain a minimum 3.3 GPA in college to remain eligible.

The HOPE Scholarship merit-based program leaves a large unmet need, especially among Georgia's low-income population. Researchers at the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute found that the scholarship programs are not reaching low-income students.[249]

248 Ibid.
249 Suggs, C. (2016). *Troubling Gaps in HOPE Point to Need-Based Aid Solutions, Policy Brief.* Atlanta: Georgia Budget and Policy Insitute.

- Less than half of in-state students benefit from the HOPE and Zell Miller Scholarships. The programs only reach about 36% of USG students and 8% of TCSG students.
- The HOPE and Zell Miller Scholarship programs are not equitable in their distribution.
  - 30% of low-income students receive either the HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarship, compared to 42% of middle-upper-income students.
  - 20% of black students and 36% of Hispanic students receive either the HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarship, compared to 46% of white students.

FIGURE 7.6 THE LIMITS OF THE HOPE SCHOLARSHIP[250]



Georgia does have an aid program based on financial need that is designed to increase the number of low-income students needing further aid: the Realizing Educational Achievement Can Happen (REACH) Program. Part of the Complete College Georgia initiative, REACH was created by Governor Nathan Deal as a public-private partnership available to low-income eighth graders, who are paired with an academic coach and mentor through high school. Upon high school graduation, participants are awarded scholarships of up to $10,000. REACH is expanding across Georgia. In 2017, it was available in 69 of the state's 181 school districts. Important to note for statewide expansion, local school districts must raise anywhere from $1,500 to $5,000 to contribute toward the cost of each student's scholarship.

In addition to financial needs, students have historically faced other barriers to successfully navigating post-secondary options. To address these issues, in 2011, Governor Deal launched Complete College Georgia (CCG), a statewide initiative to improve college completion and produce 250,000 more adult post-secondary credentials by 2025. The TCSG and USG have been central to carrying out the initiative.

Since implementation, shortening the time to a degree, restructuring education delivery models, and strengthening remedial courses have all been central to the CCG plans across institutions of higher education. Georgia State University (GSU) is one example of the work being done. GSU has been using innovations in data and technology to implement an early warning system that identifies students who may be struggling and in danger of dropping out. Such systems allow academic advisors to focus their attention and resources on students who are the most in need of support services, and together with the student they devise plans to move toward degree completion. At GSU, this system has contributed to increased graduation rates among students overall and among specific minority and economically disadvantaged students.

250 Ibid.

To help low-income students, GSU has also established Panther Retention Grants. These targeted grants are for students at risk for leaving school due to nonpayment of tuition and fees. The results are astounding: 71% of seniors who received the grant graduated within two semesters, and a full 90% of freshmen receiving a Panther Retention Grant were retained.[251]

As a result of the overall CCG strategy, GSU's graduation rate has improved 22 percentage points.

TABLE 7.4 GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE CONFERRALS, SINCE LAUNCH OF COMPLETE COLLEGE GEORGIA STRATEGIC PLAN[252]

	ACADEMIC YEAR					
	2010–2011	2011–2012	2012–2013	2013–2014	2014–2015	4-Year Change
Pell-eligible students	2,015	2,321	2,607	2,711	2,742	36%
Black students	1,300	1,440	1,552	1,682	1,777	37%
Hispanic students	288	313	360	394	415	44%

Complete College Georgia has also targeted nontraditional students. Typically, policymakers and practitioners track outcomes of first-time freshmen attending school full-time. These "traditional" students are the targets of most higher education policies and programs. However, only a quarter of students attend full-time, go to residential colleges, and have most of their bills paid by their parents. Moreover, a full 40% of students enrolled in post-secondary institutions are enrolled part-time, which lengthens their time to completion and increases the likelihood they will accumulate debt without earning a degree.[253]

Because most policies and programs focus on traditional students, older students, students trapped in remediation classes, and students pursuing career certificates and technical degrees have been virtually ignored.

Georgia has recognized the importance of "nontraditional" students and is now including them in statewide efforts, such as Complete College Georgia, to raise the skill level of the workforce and increase the percentage of the population with a higher education degree. Both the USG and TCSG are restructuring their delivery systems to meet the needs of the diversifying student body. The USG restructuring will be concentrated in five areas:

1. Building and sustaining effective teaching
2. Exploring and expanding the use of effective technology models
3. Distance education
4. Adult and military outreach
5. STEM initiatives[254]

251 Renick, T. (2016, September 22). What Do We Know About College Affordability? *Forum on the Future - Georgia's Workforce Pipeline, College Affordability and the Impact of Need-Based Financial Aid.* Atlanta: Metro Atlanta Chamber/ Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta.
252 Ibid.
253 See http://completecollege.org/helping-the-new-majority-graduate/.
254 USG and TCSG. (2012). *Complete College Georgia: Georgia's Higher Education Completion Plan 2012.*

The TCSG is focusing on two areas of restructuring: accelerating success and developing clearer pathways for completion. These changes are intended to create faster, more structured pathways to the completion of a degree or certificate.[255]

The TCSG in particular has targeted adult learners through education programs that enable them to study for and earn a GED diploma. During FY 2017, more than 55,000 Georgia adult learners took part in the TCSG's GED instruction and testing, English as a Second Language programs, or Adult Basic and Secondary Education programs. Since 2006, the TCSG has awarded nearly 160,000 GED diplomas.[256] These GED graduates can now transition to a college education and join the growing number of nontraditional students our institutions are being asked to serve.

255 Ibid.
256 TCSG. (2017). Technical College System of Georgia Fast Facts and College Directoy 2017. Retrieved from https://tcsg.edu/download/TCSG_Fast_Facts_Directory_v.2017_web.pdf.

IV. Opportunities - Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success

Best practice research indicates that clear pathways through the educational system are linked to employability and economic growth. These best practices also focus on removing barriers to post-secondary education completion, especially by providing needed resources and a clear understanding of expectations. Georgia has multiple opportunities to excel in these areas.

GO! KEEP MOVING FORWARD: STRONG POLICIES IN PLACE

Continue to promote and expand high school graduation pathways and CTAE programs.

Georgia is a national leader in the career pathway requirement and has strong results with its CTAE programs. The community partnerships between GaDOE-CTAE, community economic development entities, and local post-secondary institutions are reshaping curricula, student engagement, and economic development strategies for entire communities. The twin goals of the CTAE program are to (1) increase business and industry involvement with the CTAE pathways throughout Georgia and (2) increase the visibility of CTAE pathway options and opportunities among parents and students.[257]

Related, Governor Deal's Education Reform Commission (ERC) worked throughout 2015 to provide recommendations to improve Georgia's educational system. Governor Deal charged the ERC's Move On When Ready Subcommittee to examine all options across the pre-K-12 pipeline to support student learning where students are and allow them to "move on when ready." While the recommendations of this subcommittee encompass elementary and middle grades, there are specific recommendations related to dual enrollment that could directly impact Georgia's workforce pipeline.

The Move On When Ready Subcommittee recommended Georgia take steps to increase the number of high school students earning post-secondary credentials through intense professional development for both high school and post-secondary teachers. The subcommittee also recommended expanding the pathways toward earning a high school diploma, particularly by enlarging the Move On When Ready/ dual enrollment programs to include several high-demand career industry certificates.[258]

YIELD! PROCEED WITH CAUTION, MORE WORK TO BE DONE

Focus on nontraditional students.

To address the growing population of nontraditional students, Complete College Georgia targets older students and those from more diverse populations further removed from secondary completion.[259] Following best practice research, Georgia post-secondary institutions are experimenting with flexible scheduling (for example, offering course sections during the day and in the evening) to accommodate working adults, creative formatting such as online and hybrid course delivery options, and professional development outreach to faculty and staff on issues related to first generation college students and nontraditional students.

257 Ibid.
258 Education Reform Commission. (2015, November 19). *Recommendations from Sub-Committees to Full Commission.* Retrieved from Meeting 10 Materials: https://gov.georgia.gov/meeting-10-materials-november-19-2015.
259 Education Commission of the States. (2015, April). *Redesigning State Financial Aid: Principles to Guide State Aid Policymaking.* Retrieved from http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/18/28/11828.pdf.

One impediment to the CCG goal of reengaging adult learners is the fact that Georgia has the ninth highest percentage of adults between the ages of 18 and 64 in the United States without a high school diploma or GED.[260] Nearly 14% of Georgians in this age group must overcome the high school completion hurdle before they can begin to help Georgia meet its college completion goals.[261]

Through the TCSG, since 2006, nearly 160,000 GED diplomas have been awarded.[262] However, more can be done in the area of adult literacy. The TCSG also coordinates multiple adult learning programs such as Accelerating Opportunity and the Certified Literate Community program, which is a collaboration with the Council on Adult Literacy. The TCSG also focuses on adult learners in the workplace. Successful programs such as these can be further leveraged to reach a broader population so all have access to the opportunities provided by post-secondary training.

To reach Georgia's goal of 250,000 new post-secondary graduates by 2025, a significant portion (60,000–90,000) will have to be former students returning to campus. Governor Deal launched the "Go Back. Move Ahead." initiative in 2014, re-inviting and supporting former students in higher education completion.

ALERT! POLICY MISSING OR NEEDS IMMEDIATE ACTION

Georgia must develop a statewide need-based aid program.

The Complete College Georgia initiative has shown excellent results in streamlining time to completion for a post-secondary degree or certificate. However, too many students in Georgia still face financial barriers to success. Individual institutions, such as Georgia State University, have demonstrated the positive impact of targeted need-based aid programs. As Georgia looks to increase its overall educational attainment across all of its post-secondary institutions, state policymakers should consider this question: Taken to scale, what does a good need-based financial aid program look like? A statewide need-based funding program must be made available to ensure successful post-secondary education completion for all students.

260 Johnson, M. (2015, August). *Improved Adult Education Support Critical to Georgia's Bottom Line.* Retrieved from the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute: http://gbpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Improved-Adult-Education-Support-Critical-to-Georgia%E2%80%99s-Bottom-Line.pdf.
261 Ibid.
262 Technical College System of Georgia. (2017). Technical College System of Georgia Fast Facts and College Directoy 2015–2016.

CHAPTER 8

Adequate and Equitable Funding

I. Issue Definition

Nationally, discussions and policies around funding formulas for K-12 systems are shifting from a focus on equal funding across districts to considerations of equity. The equity approach takes into account that it simply costs more to educate some students than others. For example, low-income students tend to start school academically behind, requiring additional academic supports, extra learning time, and potentially outside services related to social services or foster care.[263]

One national study found that funding inequalities are large. The districts with the highest percentage of the student-age population living in poverty receive about $1,200 less per student than the lowest poverty districts.[264] Nationally, when accounting for the needs of low-income students, the highest poverty districts receive an average of $2,200, or 18% percent, less per-student than low-poverty districts.[265]

Clearly, money is not the only thing that matters to school success. Districts with similar demographics and similar funding levels can, and do, produce very different outcomes for their students. However, inequalities in funding can exacerbate increasing inequalities within and across school systems. Districts with more resources can pay teachers more and attract higher quality teaching candidates. More affluent districts can provide students with enrichment activities and support services missing in cash-strapped districts.

To address inequalities in student outcomes, increasing evidence shows that substantive and sustained state school finance reform can improve both short-term and longer-term student outcomes. Tied to effective policies, school finance reforms can reduce outcome disparities and increase overall outcomes for all students.[266]

II. Elements of an Effective System

Top-performing systems make explicit decisions to ensure all students are educated to the high standards set by the state and all schools have the resources to do so. More resources are allocated to students who come to school with greater disadvantages. Most high-performing countries allot more teachers to hard-to-educate students, along with strong incentives for their best teachers to work in classes and schools serving students and families from low-income and minority groups.[267]

263 The Education Trust. (2015). *Funding Gaps 2015: Too Many States Still Spend Less on Educating Students Who Need the Most*. Washington, DC: The Education Trust.
264 Ibid.
265 Ibid.
266 Baker, B. (2014). *School Finance 101: The Real Path to Quality, Equitable, and Adequate Schooling.* Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center.
267 Center on International Education Benchmarking. (2016). *9 Building Blocks for a World-Class Education System*. Washington, DC: National Center on Education and the Economy.

High-performing countries and states aim to ensure their K-12 funding systems have a combination of the following elements:[268]

- The funding system provides the basis for the general recurring funding for all students.
- It includes additional resources associated with the costs of meeting educational needs, taking into account socioeconomic background, disability, language proficiency, school size, and location.
- Funding is based on actual resources used by schools already achieving high educational outcomes for students over a sustained period of time.
- Schools with similar student populations require and receive the same level of resources.
- Funding schemes are periodically reviewed to continually reflect community needs and aspirations.
- The total resource amount is indexed to take into account increasing costs over time. The goal is to maintain at least current levels of achievement over time.

National Benchmarks on Equity and School Finance

Education Week publishes an annual assessment of state education policies, including the area of school finance. Its analysis examines both education spending patterns and equity in the distribution of funding across the districts within each state.[269]

In 2017, Georgia received a D+, placing the state 36th in the nation for K-12 finance policies, when taking into account overall funding levels and equity.

TABLE 8.1 GEORGIA COMPARED TO TOP FIVE PERFORMING STATES – *EDUCATION WEEK'S* QUALITY COUNTS 2017[270]

State	Grade	Rank
Wyoming	A-	1
New York	B+	2
New Jersey	B+	3
Connecticut	B+	4
Maryland	B+	5
Georgia	**D+**	**36**

TABLE 8.2 GEORGIA COMPARED TO SOUTHERN NEIGHBORS – *EDUCATION WEEK'S* QUALITY COUNTS 2017[271]

State	Grade	Rank
Virginia	C	19
South Carolina	C	25
Kentucky	C-	33
Alabama	D+	35
Georgia	**D+**	**36**
Florida	D+	37
Mississippi	D+	38
Tennessee	D+	42
North Carolina	D	45
US Average	**C**	

268 Gonski, D., Boston, K., Greiner, K., Lawrence, C., Scales, B., and Tannock, P. (2011, December). Review of Funding for Schooling. NCEE: *Empowered Educators.* Retrieved from ncee.org/2016/12/review-of-funding-for-schools-gonski/.
269 Education Week. (2016, December 30). Quality Counts 2017: Building on ESSA's K-12 Foundation. *Education Week.* Retrieved from www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2017/01/04/index.html?intc=EW-QC17-LFTNAV.
270 Ibid.
271 Ibid.

EXEMPLAR – WYOMING – ACHIEVEMENT OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

In 2015, the percentage of low-income students in Wyoming meeting the proficient standard on the National Assessment of Education Progress was ranked in the top 10 nationally across all subjects and grade levels.

National Ranking	Subject
2nd	4th grade math
4th	4th grade reading
8th	8th grade math
9th	8th grade reading

The Wyoming funding model is a court-ordered "cost-based" model that is recalibrated every five years (as per court order). The model covers at-risk students, alternative schools, salaries for all school and district staffing categories (salaries are initially based upon the state average, but then adjusted for factors such as education and experience levels of staff and also for regional cost differences), career and vocational education, transportation, special education, extra teacher compensation (e.g., bonus for national certification), health insurance, and maintenance and operations of facilities. The amounts are adjusted for inflation between review periods, except for transportation, special education, extra teacher compensation, and health insurance.[272]

Wyoming provides an additional poverty supplement through the Foundation Program based upon the number of at-risk students, defined as free and reduced-price lunch participants, English language learners, and transient children. These funds are used to supplement extended-day and summer school interventions as well as remediation programs. These funds are in addition to the base amount provided by the cost-based model.[273]

Georgia School Funding Data – By the Numbers

28 Number of states that provide increased funding for low-income students. Georgia does not.[274]

40 Number of states — including Georgia — that provide increased funding for English language learners[275]

35th Georgia's national ranking in total spending per student ($9,403 per student in 2014)[276]

34% The percentage difference in total revenues per-student between Georgia's highest funded and lowest funded districts[277,278]

40% The average local share of total dollars as a percentage of total per-student spending[279]

272 legisweb.state.wy.us/statutes/compress/title21.docx, 21-13-309, m, v (pgs 169-176).
273 See legisweb.state.wy.us/LSOWeb/SchoolFinance/2015WYFundingModelDeskAudit.pdf; legisweb.state.wy.us/statutes/compress/title21.docx; and legisweb.state.wy.us/InterimCommittee/2015/SSRRpt1001AppendixF.pdf.
274 EdBuild. (2016, May 20). *Funded: National Policy Maps*. Retrieved from funded.edbuild.org/national#formula-type.
275 Ibid.
276 Education Week. (2016, December 30). Quality Counts 2017: Building on ESSA's K-12 Foundation. *Education Week*. Retrieved from www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2017/01/04/index.html?intc=EW-QC17-LFTNAV.
277 Georgia Department of Education. (2017). *Local, State, and Federal Revenue Report, FY 2016*. Retrieved from app3.doe.k12.ga.us/ows-bin/owa/fin_pack_revenue.display_proc.
278 Calculations exclude online charter schools. They also exclude Taliaferro County, which enrolls 148 students and has a per-pupil total of $23,964. The next highest revenue county is Clay County, with total per-pupil revenues of $15,337, and the lowest is Vidalia City, with total per-pupil revenues of $5,614.
279 Ibid.

III. Georgia Landscape - Adequate and Equitable Funding

Across the United States, states distribute education funds to school districts through a funding formula set forth in state law. State funding formulas typically have two distinct parts: the foundation (or base) and categorical funding. In most states, the foundation amount is designed to cover the basic cost of education, while categorical funding is applied to specific initiatives such as special education, reduced class size, or summer school programs.[280]

In Georgia, the majority of state funds for public schools are provided according to the Quality Basic Education (QBE) formula, which was established by state legislation in 1985. The total amount of state revenue received by local districts has three components: QBE earnings, categorical grants, and equalization grants.

The QBE is a highly complex formula consisting of 18 student categories based on grade and academic level, such as special education; career, technical, and agricultural education programs (CTAE); and so forth. The weights are based on the class size of each category, which determines the number of teachers the state will fund for each district. The state's salary schedule for teachers is based on education level and years of experience, and it determines how much money is allocated for each teacher. Essentially, districts "earn" money from the state based on how many teachers they need to meet their class size demand.

The formula also provides funding for maintenance and operations, instructional materials, other instructional and administrative staff, and other routine costs. These amounts are determined on a per-student basis.

Local school systems receive additional funding from the state in the form of categorical grants. These grants can include funds for transportation, sparsity (designated for areas with sparse populations), and low-incidence special education students.

Finally, because not all counties in Georgia have equal property tax wealth, the amount of funds localities can raise through the local 5 mills share varies greatly.[281] The state provides additional funding to low-wealth counties according to an equalization formula that compares the relative property tax wealth of all counties in the state. Table 8.3 shows the three components of state funding for education in fiscal year (FY) 2017 as an example.

280 Education Commission of the States. "Finance: Funding Formulas." Retrieved from www.ecs.org.

281 Currently, the law mandates that all local systems in Georgia pay an amount equal to 5 mills of property tax generated within their taxing authority. By law, the amount of money represented by the 5 mills cannot exceed 20% of the total QBE formula earnings. Funds that are raised through locally levied property taxes do not leave the school system and are not sent to the state or to other school systems. (Funds raised from bonds and special-purpose local-option sales taxes also are kept locally.) The 5-mill share is simply the amount of the local funding "obligation" the state requires each system to pay.

TABLE 8.3 GEORGIA STATE EDUCATION FUNDING FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017

		QBE Earnings		Categorical Grants		Equalization Grants
State Funding for Public Education	=	Direct and indirect instructional costs, from which a local share of funds is deducted	+	State funds for specific education expenses, such as transportation, nurses, and the State Commission Charter Supplement	+	Additional funding for school systems with lower property wealth
$8,589,483,825		$7,843,802,010		$246,955,289		$498,726,526

Source: Georgia Department of Education. (2016, November 9). "Earnings Sheet for FY 2017."

Over the years, only minor adjustments have been made to the funding formula, the most notable of which has been state austerity cuts. These state-level reductions in funding levels, which were initiated during a time of economic decline, have significantly limited the amount local school systems receive from the state, despite the level of funding guaranteed by the QBE law.

Recently, Georgia took a serious look at how the state funds public K-12 education. In February 2015, Governor Nathan Deal established the Education Reform Commission (ERC) to conduct a "top to bottom review of public education" during his second term.[282] As part of this review, Governor Deal directed the Subcommittee on Funding to develop a new formula to distribute state dollars to public schools. He also requested that the state provide district leaders with greater flexibility in how they spend state money.

One budget model that allows for increased flexibility and could also afford increased equity based on student need is called student-based budgeting (SBB), or the weighted student-funding model. Under SBB, schools receive funding based on the number of enrolled students and their individual needs. These needs can vary from disadvantages associated with living in poverty, special education status, English language learners, low academic performance, and gifted children, among others.[283]

Across the country, more than 10 of the largest urban districts have adopted SBB. A few states, including New Jersey and most recently California, have adopted similar funding systems that distribute money to districts based on student need, including poverty status.[284] The ERC Subcommittee on Funding recommended Georgia move to an SBB model.

The SBB model proposed by the ERC sets a base amount that districts receive for every student and then identifies additional categories for students whose needs will require increased financial resources. The final proposal being considered by Governor Deal recommends the base amount for students in grades six through eight be set at $2,393.13 per student.[285] Students in the remaining categories would receive the base amount, plus extra dollars determined by a weight intended to account for providing additional services.

282 Yarbrough, D. (2014, October 21). Everything on the Table, Public Education Reform, says Gov. Deal. *The Telegraph.*
283 Travers, J., and Catallo, C. (2015). *Following the Dollars to the Classroom Doors: Why and How Effective Student-Based Budgeting Must Be Linked with Strategic School Design.* Watertown, MA: Education Resource Strategies.
284 Ibid.
285 Education Reform Commission. (2015, December 15). *Final Recommendations to Governor Nathan Deal.* Atlanta: Office of the Governor. Retrieved from gov.georgia.gov/education-reform-commission.

The recommended move to an SBB model would award dollars to districts based on student need, rather than staff allotments. It would also provide greater flexibility to districts to strategically target resources around student need. With this increased flexibility, all SBB models increase accountability to districts over student outcomes. This accountability shifts the focus from questions around funding resource inputs to questions concerning funding student outcomes.[286] However, note that the weights proposed by the ERC are not based on an assessment of the actual costs of educating students in each category in Georgia. Rather, the Governor's Office of Student Achievement staff developed preliminary weights based on a review of similar categories assigned by other states and the current QBE formula while considering that total funding was not to exceed the already established 2016 level.[287]

In addition to changing the funding formula, the ERC recommended changing how districts earn money from the state to pay teachers. The proposed formula would provide districts with the 2016 statewide average teacher salary ($50,768) for each teacher, which is reflected in the base amount provided to districts. This is not how much teachers would actually be paid, but the amount districts would earn from the state. Districts would then develop their own compensation models to be approved by the state. These new models would be required to include at least one measure of teacher performance. All new teachers hired after this proposal is approved would be subject to the new pay models.

These funding changes have yet to be debated by the General Assembly. However, even without legislation, many districts are using the flexibility allowed to districts under their Charter System or Strategic Waiver System contracts to pilot alternative budgeting strategies that align with district goals. See the sidebar Experiments in Funding Flexibility: Consolidated Funds Pilot Program.

EXPERIMENTS IN FUNDING FLEXIBILITY: CONSOLIDATED FUNDS PILOT PROGRAM

Organized by the Charter System Foundation, three charter systems in Georgia — Calhoun City Schools, Cartersville City Schools, and Madison County Schools — participated in the Consolidated Funds Pilot Program, which allowed the consolidation of state, local, and federal funds.

Traditionally, requirements from different funding streams dictate how the dollars are to be used within a school or district. From a district perspective, this compliance-based process makes it difficult to align available budgets and resources with identified needs. By being able to blend different funding streams under the pilot, districts have maximum flexibility to match student and school needs with resources.

Under the Consolidated Funds Pilot Program, districts are able to develop their school and district strategic plans, identify goals and needed resources, then build budgets around those goals. Within the districts, the pilot has fostered critical discussions around a key question: What resources are necessary to meet student need and achieve our goals?

The pilot districts are seeing positive results. Using this flexibility, Madison County developed new programs and opportunities that were not previously available targeting highlighted needs, including a parent engagement specialist to work with and support the refugee population at one school, a behavior specialist hired at another school to address needs, and a nontraditional after-school option for students at yet another school.

Consolidating funds can be a time-consuming process, but the goal of this pilot is to create a process for all systems in Georgia to replicate. This program is now open to districts across the state.

286 Ibid.
287 Governor's Office of Student Achievement. (2015, August 12). Student-Based Funding Formula. Retrieved from gov.georgia.gov/sites/gov.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/Narrative%20August%2012%20FINAL.pdf.

Finally, during the 2017 legislative session, the Georgia General Assembly passed House Bill (HB) 139, which is intended to increase the transparency of the financial information of local school systems and schools. The new law requires local public schools and districts to publish how much they spend on average per-student and how funds are spent. Accurately reported, this type of information will be helpful in identifying best practices related to how to target resources to effectively drive student achievement.

IV. Opportunities - Adequate and Equitable Funding

The Georgia Constitution includes language guaranteeing an adequate public education for all citizens. However, determining whether the state actually provides adequate resources to schools is a dominant issue in school finance in Georgia, as well as in many other states. Best practices from other states and countries indicate that all students should have adequate funding to reach the high standards set out for them and that additional resources should be targeted at students who come to school with greater disadvantages. Best practice research also shows that these funding levels should be tied to actual costs and periodically reviewed to reflect community needs and aspirations.

YIELD! PROCEED WITH CAUTION, MORE WORK TO BE DONE

Pass funding reform legislation that allows for greater flexibility to target resources to district needs.

The ERC proposal offers Georgia an opportunity to address issues of both adequacy and equity for all students. After studying Georgia's funding structure, the ERC recommended that the state move to an SBB formula. This proposal was not made because the QBE formula is inequitable, but rather because an SBB formula would create considerable flexibility for districts.

An SBB formula would allow districts to allocate resources in line with student needs and focus on factors that research shows drive student outcomes.[288] In fact, proponents of SBB recommend that funding formulas be developed in concert with district and state goals.

The first step is to identify fundamental needs and build budgets and strategic plans based on those needs and goals.[289] When California adopted a version of SBB, the state also required districts to create a three-year local control accountability plan. These plans must show how districts are supporting disadvantaged students while also addressing eight state educational priorities.[290] As previously mentioned, many Georgia districts are currently working toward this approach, even without a funding overhaul. For example, several charter systems are participating in the Consolidated Funds Pilot Program, highlighted in the sidebar.

One of Governor Deal's directives to the ERC's Subcommittee on Funding was to allow greater flexibility to districts in how they use state funds. An SBB approach certainly supports this vision, and when coupled with district strategic planning, this type of formula could have large impacts on student outcomes.

288 Education Resource Strategies. (2014). *Awarding Dollars Based on Student Need.* Watertown, MA: Education Resource Strategies.
289 Travers, J., and Catallo, C. (2015). *Following the Dollars to the Classroom Doors: Why and How Effective Student-Based Budgeting Must Be Linked with Strategic School Design.* Watertown, MA: Education Resource Strategies.
290 Ujifusa, A. (2014, December 4). California's K-12 Funding Overhaul Slowly Takes Root. *Education Week.*

Consider both equity and adequacy in funding decisions.

Georgia already does relatively well when compared to most other states in distributing more funds to districts with higher percentages of low-income students through the use of sparsity, low-wealth equalization, and other categorical grants. For example, a recent study from the Urban Institute found that Georgia is a relatively progressive state in terms of equitable funding between poor and non-poor students, with poor students, on average, receiving $282 more than non-poor students. Comparatively, in nearly half of all states, students from low-income families receive less state and local funding than their non-poor counterparts.[291]

Education Week publishes an annual assessment of state education policy, including the area of school finance. Its analysis examines both education spending patterns and the equity in the distribution of funding across the districts within each state.[292] In terms of equity, Georgia received a B.

Where Georgia struggles is on the adequacy question. The same Urban Institute report that cited the progressiveness in terms of equity, ranked Georgia as eighth from the bottom in overall per-student spending.[293] Education Week gave Georgia an F grade on spending, bringing the state's overall school finance grade to a D+ when combined with the B in equity.[294]

ALERT! POLICY MISSING OR NEEDS IMMEDIATE ACTION

Conduct a study to determine actual costs associated with supporting student achievement, and use the results to guide state and district policy.

For states considering a new funding formula, cost assessments are a commonly used tool. Recent examples include an effort underway in Maryland, an effort in Wyoming that finished in 2015 and one in Michigan that was completed in 2016.[295] In Georgia, instead of assessing the cost of education, the ERC focused on ways to reallocate the funds generated by the current QBE.

When the actual cost of education is not considered as part of the funding formula, a local district's ability to meet the needs of its students could be limited, while at the same time districts are being increasingly held accountable for student outcomes. This could also increase inequalities between districts instead of alleviating them.

Students living in poverty frequently need extra supports from the school systems to meet high levels of academic achievement. Strategies such as longer school days and years, and smaller class sizes can help low-income students catch up with their more affluent peers. However, the districts with the highest percentages of low-income students tend to be the least resourced to offer these support programs.

291 Urban Institute. (2017, May). *School Funding: Do Poor Kids Get Their Fair Share?* Retrieved from apps.urban.org/features/school-funding-do-poor-kids-get-fair-share/.
292 Education Week. (2016, December 30). Quality Counts 2017: Building on ESSA's K-12 Foundation. *Education Week.* Retrieved from www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2017/01/04/index.html?intc=EW-QC17-LFTNAV.
293 Chingos, M.M., and Blagg, K. (2017). *Do Poor Kids Get Their Fair Share of School Funding?* Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
294 Education Week. (2016, December 30). Quality Counts 2017: Building on ESSA's K-12 Foundation. *Education Week.* Retrieved from www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2017/01/04/index.html?intc=EW-QC17-LFTNAV.
295 Suggs, C. (2016). *Student Success in the Balance: Update for 2017.* Atlanta: Georgia Budget and Policy Institute.

The proposed SBB formula does allow extra funds to account for low-income students; however, the amount is very low. The current recommendation would provide an extra $232.23 per low-income student per year.[296] It is unknown if this amount is adequate to cover the additional resources needed to implement strategies known to meet the needs of low-income students. Local districts would be left having to make up the difference. Many districts with high concentrations of low-income students lack the tax base to offset this problem.

Provide districts resources to uniformly track expenditures to the school level.

Georgia has an opportunity to study how a new formula could adequately align resources and policies targeted at struggling students. Georgia districts are experimenting with different options to meet their challenges. However, the state cannot currently track education expenditures to the school level, which would be required to track state dollars to the student level. HB 139 was passed to help address this issue. It requires schools and districts to report their expenditures, but the bill does not provide additional resources to increase district capacity to do so.

Moreover, new federal laws under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) require that "the State report card must include the per-pupil expenditures of federal, state, and local funds, including actual personnel expenditures and non-personnel expenditures of federal, state and local funds disaggregated by source of funds for each LEA [local education agency] and each school in the state for the preceding fiscal year."[297] Local school districts need to increase their capacity and resources to be compliant with these new federal reporting requirements.

Initiate a process to evaluate local school and district expenditures.

As the state and local districts build the capacity necessary to track expenditures to the school level, evaluation studies are needed to examine the impact of school spending on student outcomes, with a special focus on equity. Such evaluations should also include cost studies of economically disadvantaged students and their outcomes as well as cost studies of high-performing schools. Being able to identify best instructional practices and efficient financial practices would go a long way toward informing any funding reforms being considered at the state level.

The Georgia Vision Project for Public Education has three recommended steps that could help further this opportunity:

1. Provide state and local funds needed to implement a comprehensive data system and an evaluation system that use data to measure and improve effectiveness in meeting objectives for enhanced student learning.
2. Initiate processes for evaluating local school district expenditures that ensure development and adoption of budgets that are focused on strategies for maximizing student learning.
3. Provide a high level of flexibility to local school districts for expenditure of funds, coupled with the capacity to and methods for evaluating success and for positive state interventions when needed.

Without these steps in place, the state and local districts lack the ability to link a school's financial data to the state's longitudinal data system. There is currently no base for understanding the relationship between expenditures and student outcomes. How much does it cost to provide an adequate education? That is a question that currently cannot be answered by state or local entities nor even reasonably considered, primarily due to a lack of data.

296 Ibid.
297 See ESSA section 111(h)(1)C (xi).

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion

Georgia has a history of dramatic efforts and progress in education reform. State leaders stepped up to the challenge in 2010 during a national push for higher standards and better results for all students. Georgia has seen improvements over time, moving up from the lower tier of states to average or above average on many national assessments. Georgia is a national leader in early learning, career pathways and longitudinal data systems, and the Career, Technical, Agricultural, and Education (CTAE) program and its results.

However, significant work still must be done to make Georgia a top-performing state where all children, regardless of race, economic background, or community, have the same access to a high-quality education. The research presented in this report identifies common factors that account for the success of other countries and states that have the best education outcomes for their citizenry. In one form or another, they all share and support the following core policy areas:

1. **Foundations for learning,** which include supports from birth for families, schools, and communities as well as access to high-quality early learning
2. **Quality teaching** for all students ensured by providing supports for teachers across recruitment, retention, and professional development and learning
3. **Quality leadership** within schools — such as teacher-leaders, counselors, and principals — and those outside the school building such as district and state leaders
4. **Supportive learning environments** that promote positive conditions for learning both within schools through fostering positive school climate and social and emotional learning for students, and outside of school in the home and throughout the community
5. **Advanced instructional systems** that support high standards, personalized learning, innovation, a strong accountability system, and aligned curricula
6. **Clear pathways to post-secondary success** that support the transition from high school into post-secondary education, and ensure post-secondary education access and success
7. **Adequate and equitable funding** for all students

More importantly, successful states and nations view these core areas as a coherent system, with each area working hand-in-hand with the others. Historically, education research has examined the effectiveness of individual initiatives. While evaluating and assessing the success of individual programs is vitally important, focusing only on programmatic outcomes limits their impact. No matter how well designed and implemented, a single program — or series of programs — in isolation has a relatively small impact on student achievement. For example, an increase in the rigor of standards does nothing to raise student achievement if textbooks and curricula are not aligned to the new standards, teachers are not trained on teaching them, or the school environment is not conducive to learning.

EdQuest provides a policy framework for understanding Georgia's system of education. It shows how the parts and pieces of the system fit together and reinforce one another. EdQuest will serve as a reminder that as education reformers work to strengthen leadership, for example, that work will have a tremendous impact on teachers, learning environments, and access to post-secondary opportunities. Based in best practice research, EdQuest also highlights policy areas where Georgia is strong and should continue the great work being done, as well as opportunities that need to be addressed to move the state forward.

Georgia has been moving away from state-mandated centralization toward a decentralized approach that values local input and control. District leaders have been empowered with the flexibility and authority to lead their districts through the creation of student performance contracts that facilitate this flexibility while maintaining accountability. Considering the state's growing diversity, this trend will allow for greater innovation in the classroom and at the district level to support the needs of students.

To truly empower local leaders to make decisions that best support their students, a strong state policy framework should ensure that each of these seven core areas are working in concert. Local districts that are sustained by strong families, have access to quality teachers and leaders, can provide supportive learning environments to their students, are engaged with advanced instructional systems that provide clear pathways to post-secondary success, and have equitable access to resources are significantly more likely to be able to innovate, customize, and meet the needs of their students.

EdQuest is a compass for the quest we are all on — the quest to make Georgia's public education system one of the top performers in the nation. We ask all stakeholders who care about education and the economy of our state to join us, contribute to the discussion, leverage their work with others, and keep the gears moving.

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