

EdQuest Georgia
2023 State Policy Plan
August 2023



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Introduction — Calling for Change

The Challenge

Georgia faces a serious challenge in meeting its workforce needs by 2030.

“If state and business leaders do not act, 1.5 million workers and their children could be unemployable or stuck in low-wage jobs: an endless cycle of poverty.”¹

This is according to research conducted by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) in 2019 on Georgia’s 2030 economic outlook. The study concluded that the impact of automation and the changing economy, coupled with the current education level of the state’s population, would leave approximately 1.5 million more Georgia workers not just unemployed, but unemployable. Across Georgia, more residents will earn incomes below the poverty level and draw more heavily on state health and human services.²

In a follow-up report released in November 2020, SREB updated their estimate: because of the pandemic and the corporate sector’s accelerated investments in automation and artificial intelligence, approximately 2 million workers, or 45% of the state’s workforce, were now at risk for unemployment or underemployment by 2025.³

This trend is playing out in Georgia’s post-pandemic economic recovery. For instance, the state has seen four years of overall economic growth between 2019 and 2022, adding over 165,000 jobs and \$51 billion in real GDP growth. However, the shortage of qualified candidates for employment threatens this growth and endangers future opportunity for individual Georgians. In 2023, it was estimated that 3.2 million employment-eligible Georgians were not working.⁴ While Georgia’s unemployment rates returned to pre-pandemic levels by the 4th quarter of 2022, labor market participation rates in mid-2023 were still lower than they were in January 2020, with the state reporting a workforce shortage of 230,000 in 2023.⁵

By transforming some positions and eliminating others altogether, rapid advances in automation and changes in global economic trends have increasingly displaced adults with no degree or credential beyond a high school diploma. In fact, most new jobs — especially ones that pay well — will require education and training beyond high school. Currently, roughly four in ten Georgians (42.4%) have earned at least an associate degree, and another 10.4% of Georgians has earned non-degree credentials like certificates, certifications, and occupational licenses. While attainment rates have increased significantly over the last 15 years, only 52.8% of residents have earned degrees and credentials — 12.2% short of the 10-year, 65% target needed to maintain Georgia’s economic growth and global competitiveness.

1 Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). (2019, June). *Georgia’s Economic Outlook*. Retrieved from State Workforce Outlooks: <https://www.sreb.org/publication/georgia-0>

2 Ibid.

3 Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). (2020, Nov.) *The Pandemic’s Dual Threat for Vulnerable Workers – Accelerated automation and post-pandemic impacts could displace millions*. Retrieved from: https://www.sreb.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/pandemic_brief.pdf?1609858659

4 Georgia Chamber of Commerce. (2023, July). *The New Georgia Economy – 2023 War for Talent*. Presentation at the Georgia Chamber of Commerce Rural Prosperity Conference.

5 Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (n.d.). “Labor Force Participation Rate for Georgia.” Retrieved from <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/LBSSA13>.

The Opportunity

The past few years have been like no others. While it appears that in 2023 we are emerging from the pandemic and Georgia's economic recovery is strong, we still face challenges. The state's education systems from early learning through post-secondary are pushing through unprecedented headwinds as they continue to support long-term recovery while simultaneously addressing the needs of students and their families, including the persistent, and sometime worsening, achievement disparities across income levels and between white students and students of color.

Public education systems are also facing increased social and political polarization that distracts from core issues of teaching and learning and discourages nuanced and substantive dialogue about what strategies will propel the state forward. What is needed now is unity: a common vision for excellence that rises above the divisive rhetoric. We need a vision that allows Georgia to leverage all its unique strengths and reconfigure state systems and investments to ensure that Georgia leads the nation in educational opportunity and economic growth.

In this context, the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (the Georgia Partnership) calls on state policymakers, education leaders, the business community and other stakeholders to unite around a common **North Star Goal – ensuring that 65% of Georgians aged 25 to 64 have earned post-secondary credentials of value by 2033**. By aligning education policy and workforce development policies, this singular goal should motivate and inspire collective action while also promoting personal well-being, community resilience, and state economic security.

EdQuest Georgia - 2023

The Georgia Partnership is working with state policymakers, education leaders, advocates, and the business sector to reach the North Star. In 10 years, Georgia will need to increase postsecondary attainment rates by about 12.2% to achieve the North Star goal and keep up with the state's economic growth demands. While an annual increase of 1% attainment is feasible, two factors make achieving the goal more difficult: 1) a generation of skilled and credentialed workers reaching retirement age; and 2) a growing share of the youth population lacking access to high-quality educational opportunities.

Throughout 2022, working with a coalition of state agency and nonprofit, business, and local leaders, the Georgia Partnership took the first step toward developing a state plan by revising the original *2017 EdQuest Georgia Framework*. The original framework was based on researched policies and practices that high-performing states, countries, and school systems shared and created a state-level policy blueprint to ensure that those same policies that enable and accelerate strong public education are in place in Georgia. The 2017 framework identified seven core areas integral to maintaining high-quality state education and workforce systems.

Building on the foundation laid in 2017, *EdQuest Georgia 2023* is a multifaceted strategy (a framework and a state plan) designed to strengthen Georgia's education system and workforce pipeline. First, the EdQuest Framework is the overall map for the next 10 years about what should be done. Second, the EdQuest State Policy Plan is an implementation guide for the next two years (2023-2025), prioritizing 'must dos' to move the overall framework forward.

Building on Georgia’s existing strengths and assets, EdQuest Georgia aims to inform, engage, and mobilize stakeholders – particularly in the education, business, philanthropic, and policy-making communities – to work together to support innovative and evidence-based educational reform, from early learning through adults, to achieve the North Star goal.

EdQuest Georgia 2023 – Framework

The 2023 EdQuest Georgia Framework includes seven core policy areas that, when fully implemented and working together, produce optimum outcomes for students. It prioritizes rebuilding systems and improving the capacity of individuals and organizations to support innovation.

1. ***Foundations for learning***, promoting child development and family well-being through integrated early education, health, and family supports.
2. ***Quality teaching***, supporting the educator workforce by prioritizing professional growth and career advancement strategies.
3. ***Quality leadership***, identifying, recruiting, and retaining highly effective leaders within schools and those outside the school building, such as district and school board leaders.
4. ***Supportive learning environments***, developing positive conditions for learning through the development of comprehensive school plans that address student health, school safety, and school culture and climate.
5. ***Advanced instructional systems***, maintaining rigorous instructional standards, accelerated learning for all students, and accountability systems that support school and district improvement.
6. ***Clear pathways to post-secondary success***, ensuring multiple pathways for youth and working adults to enroll in post-secondary programs and complete credentials of value.
7. ***Adequate and equitable funding***, funding a birth-to-work strategy that closes opportunity and resource gaps and prepares all Georgians for kindergarten, high school, and post-secondary and workforce options.

The Georgia Partnership, in collaboration with the EdQuest Coalition, produced one-page summaries for each of the seven core areas. Each summary includes the following elements:

- Big Bet for 2033: a vision and strategy for how to move the work forward. The big bets outlined in the 2023 EdQuest Georgia Framework require all stakeholders in the ecosystem to work together to reconfigure structures, systems, and investments.
- Power Strategies: high-impact activities that directly contribute to the attainment of the Big Bet
- Concrete and actionable recommendations for how state and community leaders can get involved.



The seven core policy areas of the EdQuest Framework work together to elevate students and promote their academic and social achievement – like interlocking gears moving the system forward. States, nations, and systems with the greatest success view all seven core areas as a coherent system. The framework identifies opportunities to protect great work already underway and recommendations for adapting existing strategies to accelerate momentum toward leading the nation in education opportunity and economic growth. These opportunities are the action steps that should be taken to improve or sustain success in each core area of education policy in Georgia. See **Appendix A** for the full *2023 EdQuest Georgia Framework*.

EdQuest Georgia – 2023 State Policy Plan

Taken together, the full EdQuest Framework includes over 20 power strategies to examine and work through over the next 10 years. Which begs the question: Where do we start?

In support of the 10-year framework, the *EdQuest Georgia State Policy Plan* provides deeper analysis and implementation recommendations around current “to do” priorities to move the overall state framework forward. The plan identifies eight priorities that state and community leaders should consider over the next two years to move closer to 65% post-secondary attainment. As an implementation document, the state plan provides concrete action steps that leaders can take to accelerate progress toward the North Star. Each priority describes the current policy landscape, sets a specific 2033 goal, and suggests a mix of immediate and long-term activities that will contribute to the successful achievement of the given priority.

The State Policy Plan prioritizes immediate action steps for state and community-based efforts that will help Georgia reach the North Star goal. As an action-oriented plan, the state policy plan will serve as a launchpad for mobilizing stakeholders, enabling them to act in common purpose and shared responsibility.

What follows in this report are details of the 2023–2025 State Policy Priorities.

- Comprehensive Birth to Eight Strategy
- Innovative Instruction and Accountability
- Post-Secondary and Workforce Readiness
- Coordinated and Aligned Funding
- Educator Recruitment and Preparation
- Civic and Corporate Engagement
- Afterschool and Summer Learning
- Safe and Supportive Learning Environments

Conclusion

Considering Georgia's changing demographics, shifting workforce demands, and current education achievement levels, the question remains for state leaders: "Will there be enough skilled workers to meet Georgia's workforce needs by 2033?"⁶ Without a coordinated plan and a thorough appraisal of the effectiveness of current investments, the answer is likely "no." However, we are hopeful because the state already has significant policy assets and structural advantages that if better leveraged could jump start education and workforce efforts.

The 2023-2025 EdQuest Georgia State Policy Plan, then, is an implementation plan for how to overcome Georgia's challenges and move this work forward. The priorities and key outcomes outlined in the plan are based on the recommendations provided in the Framework and build on current state strengths, strategies, and investments. Lasting impact for change is forged through a community-centered approach and innovations at the local level to meet local and regional education and workforce needs. EdQuest Georgia 2023 provides a state policy framework and plan that supports effective community approaches and sustained state educational and economic growth.

EdQuest Georgia - 2023 State Policy Plan

As stated above, the *EdQuest Georgia State Policy Plan* identifies eight priorities that state and community leaders should consider over the next two years to make progress toward the North Star of 65% post-secondary attainment.

What follows in this section is a deeper analysis of the concrete action steps that leaders can take to accelerate progress toward the North Star. Each priority describes the current policy landscape, sets a specific 2033 goal, and suggests a mix of immediate and long-term activities that will contribute to the successful achievement of the given priority.

Each priority provides the following information:

1. Priority – The title and brief description of the priority.
2. Policy Context – Brief policy background and relevancy of the priority.
3. Key Outcome – A priority area-specific 2033 goal that supports attainment of the overall North Star goal.
4. EdQuest Framework – Highlights connections between 2023 EdQuest Framework core areas and the 2023-2025 priority.
5. Power Strategies – Strategies selected from the 2023 EdQuest Framework to move the priority forward.
6. Getting Started: Focusing on Quick Wins - Suggested action steps or strategies for the next two years.
7. Sustaining Momentum – A set of progress metrics to evaluate the progress of collective efforts and specific long-term strategies that state leaders should undertake.
8. Building on Strong Foundations - A summary of Georgia's strengths and assets and recommendations for improving state policy.
9. Alignment with the North Star Goal – How the priority aligns with the 65% North Star goal.

⁶ National Skills Coalition. (2016). *Georgia's Forgotten Middle - Middle-Skill Jobs State by State*. Washington, DC: National Skills Coalition

Priority: Birth to Eight Strategy

Improve the learning and health outcomes of young children through a statewide child development plan.

Policy Context	Key Outcome
<p>Ninety percent of brain development occurs before children enter kindergarten. Several factors support healthy brain development – nurturing relationships with adults, exposure to high-quality early learning experiences, and access to preventative health care services.</p> <p>Low parental education, community poverty, and the presence of chronic environmental stressors compromise brain development and contribute to poor physical health, behavioral health, and learning outcomes.</p>	<p>Increase third grade reading proficiency to 50% by 2033, up from the current rate of 39%.</p>
<p>State agency and nonprofit leaders in the child development space should identify shared goals, coordinate investments, and, most importantly, design and execute a statewide plan that provides greater assurances that vulnerable children receive the education, health, and family services and supports necessary to be ready for school and life.</p> <p>The statewide plan should focus on ensuring that young children are ready to read by the end of third grade. The research is clear – students who are proficient readers by the end of third grade are four times more likely to graduate from high school than their peers who are not reading on grade level. Reading proficiency is a significant predictor of future educational achievement, economic status, and lifelong health and well-being.</p> <p>In the Spring of 2023, 39% of children exiting third grade were proficient readers, as measured by the Georgia Milestones English Language Arts assessment. The Georgia General Assembly passed the 2023 Georgia Early Literacy Act, creating a comprehensive framework to improve reading proficiency. However, a K-12-only response will not address the family and community risk factors that contribute to literacy gaps.</p>	<p><u>EdQuest Framework</u></p> <p>Foundations for Learning</p> <p>Advanced Instructional Systems</p> <p>Supportive Learning Environments</p>

Power Strategies	
Early Care and Child Development	Family and Community Supports
Greater access to evidence-based strategies, such as home visiting, comprehensive screenings, quality child care, and early interventions for children with developmental delays, that promote school readiness and parental engagement.	Supporting multi-generation strategies that increase parental engagement and encourage the integration of services across Georgia’s education, health, and economic and workforce development sectors.

Getting Started: Focusing on Quick Wins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ State-agency leaders, in consultation with nonprofit and community partners, should (1) identify high-impact interventions and supports, (2) recommend how, when, and where to deliver services to children and families, and (3) set performance benchmarks to assess the quality and impact of services and supports. ➤ State policymakers should explore how to make early education and child health services more accessible and affordable by supplementing federal and lottery funds with increased state investment. ➤ State leaders should convene a working group that identifies how to measure school readiness using education, health, and environment data. The working group should use the Framework for School Readiness in Georgia, developed by a coalition led by Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS), as a model for developing a measurement tool.

Sustaining Momentum Through 2033

Progress Metrics

Each of the priorities presented in the EdQuest State Policy Plan includes at least one outcome measure and a set of metrics that help state and community leaders know whether they are making progress. This profile includes a non-exhaustive list of progress measures that contribute to healthy child development.

Education

- Enrollment in Georgia Pre-K programs
- Percent of children receiving subsidies to enroll in Quality-Rated child care
- Percent of elementary school students who miss less than six days of school per year

Health and Environment

- Full-term (mature) birth rates
- Percent of infants born weighing more than 5.5 pounds
- Maternal educational attainment
- Percent of children living in poverty

State Leadership

State leaders along with other state and local stakeholders can support child development in several ways including:

- Convening direct-service nonprofits and local providers to recommend a comprehensive process for screening infants and toddlers, providing targeted support to children with developmental and intellectual disabilities.
- Increasing public support for early learning by focusing on how investments impact long-term health and workforce outcomes.

Building on a Strong Foundation

State strengths and assets

Georgia Pre-K Program	Focus on universal screening and targeted reading interventions for K-3 students, as outlined in the Georgia Early Literacy Act (House Bill 538)
Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) 2022-2025 Strategic Plan	GEEARS – Georgia’s Early Childhood Check-Up and School Readiness Framework
Get Georgia Reading’s Four Pillar Framework	Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Commission

Improving on current policy and practice

A coordinated state strategy would serve as a unifying plan for a group of agencies and other stakeholders that all serve young children but may have different missions, funding sources, and governance arrangements.

The plan would put the focus where it should be – on infants, toddlers, young children, and their families. Specifically, the Georgia Partnership recommends the statewide plan include a standardized child development schedule that would publicize the services and supports that improve school readiness and promote childhood health and well-being.

Alignment with the North Star goal of 65% post-secondary attainment

School readiness and third grade reading proficiency are two early developmental milestones that predict future education, health, and economic outcomes.

Opportunity gaps exist before children enter kindergarten, so waiting to address inequality in K-12 environments complicates efforts to reach the North Star.

A more comprehensive, community-based approach would address the risk factors that widen opportunity gaps, while also communicating the benefits of investments in early learning and health interventions. Targeted investments to serve our youngest and most vulnerable children will help prevent more costly interventions as they grow into adolescents and adults.

Thus, a focus on early intervention and support does not only prime young Georgians for success. By closing resource and opportunity gaps earlier, Georgia’s leaders could also dedicate scarce resources to other strategies.

Priority: Innovative Instruction & Accountability

Promote district adoption of innovative instructional approaches by redesigning Georgia’s K-12 accountability system.

Policy Context	Key Outcomes
<p>The pandemic allowed practitioners to push the “reset” button on teaching and learning. School systems used federal pandemic-relief funds to purchase digital assessments and learning software to monitor student performance and pinpoint educational standards that students had not yet mastered. These technologies enable district and school leaders to integrate accelerated and mastery-based instructional approaches into current teaching and learning models. The Georgia Partnership has identified Georgia’s K-12 accountability system as a key lever for promoting district adoption of accelerated and mastery-based approaches and increasing the number of high school graduates who have earned post-secondary credits and credentials.</p>	<p>Increase the percentage of high school graduates who meet all four ACT college readiness benchmarks to 40% by 2033, up from the current rate of 30%.</p> <p>Increase the post-secondary readiness rates for underserved groups, as measured by ACT, by at least 30% by 2033.</p>
<p>The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) started the system redesign process in February 2023 by requesting approval from the United States Department of Education (ED) to revise the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI), the state’s K-12 accountability tool. If approved, the revised model would no longer include a single final school or district score. Also, the new CCRPI would revise the current Closing Gaps formula to reward districts who improve academic achievement for at-risk student populations.</p> <p>Although the proposed changes improve upon the current model, a next-generation accountability system should also accomplish two goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equip school personnel with data to monitor progress, refine strategies, and inform resource allocation decisions. 2. Reward districts and schools that expand access to accelerated, mastery-based, and career-connected learning approaches in alignment with state and community workforce needs. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>EdQuest Framework</u></p> <p>Advanced Instructional Systems</p> <p>Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success</p> <p>Supportive Learning Environments</p>

Power Strategies	
Community-Driven Improvement	Instructional System Redesign
Drafting a K-12 accountability model that includes multiple measures of school quality and structures that support performance feedback and improvement.	Supporting learner-centered instruction – a model in which students are agents of their own learning and can apply skills in real-world and work-based learning environments.

Getting Started: Focusing on Quick Wins
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School systems and communities should prepare for pending changes to the state accountability system by revising existing school/district improvement plans. Practical steps include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identifying district challenges and opportunities with educators, students, parents, and community members ➤ Prioritizing student and community needs to allocate limited funds; and, ➤ Creating a plan to monitor progress and evaluate program effectiveness. 2. State leaders, in consultation with educator and community stakeholder groups, should identify new accountability measures that support instructional transformation while also ensuring that local communities address state-level priorities. 3. State policymakers and advocacy groups should partner to assess how state laws and regulations could support accelerated, mastery, and career-connected learning.

Sustaining Momentum Through 2033

Progress Metrics

Each of the priorities presented in the EdQuest State Policy Plan includes at least one outcome measure and a set of metrics that help state and community leaders know whether they are making progress. This profile includes a non-exhaustive list of measures associated with preparing young adults for post-secondary opportunities.

- Percent of students who have earned post-secondary credit while enrolled in high school
- Percent growth in number of students who have completed a career pathway program
- Percent of high school seniors who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form
- Percent of young adults who enroll in post-secondary programs, enlist in the Armed Forces, or enter the workforce within six months of high school graduation.

State Leadership

State leaders can support increased post-secondary readiness in several ways including:

- Promoting the use of individual and career academic plans (iCAPS) to document student progress toward planning for post-secondary opportunities
- Determining what industry-recognized credentials are in the greatest demand and exploring whether districts and post-secondary systems are meeting these needs. The analysis should support efforts to prioritize which career pathways to expand.

Building a Strong Foundation

State strengths and assets

GaDOE commitment to reforming CCRPI

Georgia Deeper Learning Network, a community-based collaborative with 20+ district members

Strong CTAE (Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education) state priority, structure, investment

Set of leading districts exploring accelerated, mastery-based, career-connected learning

Improving on current policy and practice

State leaders should leverage accountability incentives to support district re-orientation toward new instructional approaches.

The development and execution of accelerated, mastery-based, and career-connected approaches will take time and significant investment in training and technical assistance. However, the 10-year timeline provides ample time for school leaders to integrate innovative approaches into current instructional models.

Alignment with the North Star goal of 65% post-secondary attainment

State and community leaders should use district and school accountability to support the development and implementation of evidence-based instructional strategies. Spreading and scaling effective instructional approaches is crucial to ensuring more students graduate high school ready for enrollment, employment, or enlistment.

However, the current accountability system does not provide a framework for how district and school leaders can use accountability results to conduct school improvement efforts. By adopting performance metrics that align closely with state priorities and by allowing districts to select metrics from a preset menu that reflect their needs and priorities, a retooled accountability system could spur schools and communities to improve post-secondary readiness rates, which, in turn, could contribute to higher post-secondary attainment.

Priority: Post-Secondary and Workforce Readiness

Prepare Georgians for workforce opportunities by ensuring their skills and credentials meet employers' needs.

Policy Context

In 2019, 42.4% of Georgians held a post-secondary degree. Another 10.4% of residents had earned an occupational license, certificate, or certification, bringing the state's post-secondary attainment rate to 52.8%.

For Georgia to remain competitive on the global stage, state leaders will need to set the sights higher, focusing on an attainment goal of 65%. While annual increases in attainment rates have averaged 1 to 1.2% since 2012, a closer look at the data suggests Georgia will encounter headwinds in reaching the North Star.

Three factors will make reaching 65% attainment more difficult: a generation of skilled and credentialed workers reaching retirement age, a growing share of the youth population lacking access to high-quality educational opportunities, and low post-secondary attainment for Black and Latino residents. With the share of the White population expected to dip below 50% by 2030 and enrollments declining at institutions serving students of color and working adults, Georgia will fall behind without a bold strategy to support post-secondary enrollment and completion efforts for underserved groups.

State leaders should use existing system assets to create a statewide post-secondary and workforce strategy that transcends sector-based decisions and governance. This strategy should provide opportunities for all individuals to be successful and support Georgia's overall economic development goals.

Expanding access to all types of credential programs could provide a way for all Georgians, especially nontraditional students, adult learners, disengaged youth, and low-income residents, to fully participate in the state's economic prosperity.

Key Outcomes

Increase the overall attainment to 65% by 2033, up from the current rate of 52.8%.

Accelerate attainment rates for underserved groups by at least 30% by 2033.

EdQuest Framework

Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success

Advanced Instructional Systems

Supportive Learning Environments

Power Strategies		
Build Momentum	Remove Barriers	Market Opportunity
Expanding access to accelerated learning options so that students can earn post-secondary credits or credentials while enrolled in high school	Creating a comprehensive, statewide need-based financial aid program that makes post-secondary options more accessible for youth and working adults.	Expanding and deepening incentives for working adults to earn short-term post-secondary credentials in areas of workforce shortage.

Getting Started: Focusing on Quick Wins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ State policymakers should explore how to use financial aid as a lever to increase affordability, award merit, and encourage people to enter high-demand, high-wage occupations. ➤ State, system, and corporate leaders should develop a more inclusive and data-driven post-secondary narrative to demonstrate that four-year credentials are not the only pathway to family-sustaining employment. ➤ The Georgia General Assembly should expand incentives for private-sector companies to offer “learn and earn” opportunities for Georgians enrolled in post-secondary programs, thereby creating tighter alignment between education and workforce development policy.

Sustaining Momentum Through 2033

Progress Metrics

Each of the priorities presented in the EdQuest State Policy Plan includes at least one outcome measure and a set of metrics that help state and community leaders know whether they are making progress. This profile includes a non-exhaustive list of measures that contribute to post-secondary completion and workforce readiness.

- Percent growth in post-secondary enrollment for adult learners ages 26 to 54
- Percent of students who return to college for their second year
- Percent growth in post-secondary attainment for Georgians with some credit but no credential
- Percent growth in number of Georgians who have earned certificates, certifications, and occupational licenses
- Job placement rates.

State Leadership

State leaders can support increased post-secondary readiness in several ways including:

- Enhancing and aligning existing credit articulation agreements to ensure public institutions award post-secondary credit for alternative credentials and nontraditional experiences earned across the K-12, post-secondary, and workforce sectors.
- Expanding current system efforts to create degree maps and stackable credential programs that enable students to see how they can build their skills and workforce marketability by advancing their education and training.

Building a Strong Foundation

State strengths and assets

Credit and program articulation agreements among and between each of the K-12 and post-secondary education systems: Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), and University System of Georgia (USG)	Quick Start and incumbent working programs executed by TCSG
Nexus Degrees and Degrees that Pay, two USG initiatives	\$1 billion in annual financial aid support through the HOPE Scholarship and Grant programs
Complete College Georgia initiatives, including 15 to Finish, Guided Pathways, and Momentum Year	Economic development strategies that attract creative arts, advanced manufacturing, and electric vehicle corporations to Georgia

Improving on current policy and practice

Since 2011, Complete College Georgia (CCG), a statewide initiative led by the University System of Georgia (USG) and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), has adopted strategies to improve student access to and graduation from post-secondary institutions in Georgia. The initiative has focused on shortening time to degree, improving college readiness, building strong sector partnerships, restructuring instructional delivery, and transforming remediation.

The Georgia Partnership recommends that state and system leaders deepen these efforts to create stacked credential programs that, in turn, create authentic workforce pathways. Reimagining student financial aid, institutional funding, and non-academic support services are three ways to sustain multiple pathways to post-secondary attainment and workforce success.

Alignment with the North Star goal of 65% post-secondary attainment

A post-secondary strategy informed by state and local workforce needs should focus on two objectives: increasing the number of Georgians with degrees in high-need areas and removing barriers that stand in the way of nontraditional students, adult learners, disengaged youth, and low-income residents completing post-secondary credentials with workforce value.

For Georgia to reach the North Star goal by 2033, state leaders should invest in strategies that ensure enough Georgians are available to maintain the state's global competitiveness through a highly skilled and diversified workforce, while also assuring that post-secondary and workforce training programs are of sufficient quality to meet employer needs.

Priority: Coordinated and Aligned Funding

Develop a statewide finance model that assures greater continuity of service and support as Georgians move from one education milestone to another.

Policy Context

State policymakers have developed a strong early-learning infrastructure in Georgia over the last 30 years, anchored by Georgia’s Pre-K Program. The program has provided pre-kindergarten to over 1.87 million of Georgia’s four-year-olds.

Bolstered by state revenue surpluses, the Georgia General Assembly fully funded the K-12 Quality Basic Education (QBE) formula for the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years. Legislators also funded HOPE scholarships and grants at 100% in FY 2024 – the first time in over a decade.

Between 2020 and 2021, Georgia also received significant federal funds – \$2 billion for early learning, \$6 billion for K-12 education, and \$1.4 billion for post-secondary education – to stabilize systems disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With federal pandemic-relief funding ending in September 2024, state and local leaders must focus on how to continue the practices aimed at accelerating student learning, protecting student well-being, and removing non-academic learning barriers.

The state treasury projects a \$5 billion surplus for use in FY 2025 budgeting. The surprise surplus could help protect current investments in early learning, K-12 education, and post-secondary and workforce training, while empowering state leaders to explore how to increase cross-sector coordination of priorities and investment.

Key Outcomes

Revise K-12 and post-secondary education formula funding to reflect state educational, economic and workforce development priorities.

Increase state investments in early care and learning to improve school readiness and close opportunity gaps.

EdQuest Framework

Adequate and Equitable Funding

Foundations for Learning

Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success

Power Strategies		
Early Care and Learning	K-12 Education	Post-Secondary Education
Allocation of additional resources to provide high-quality school readiness programs for infants and toddlers.	Revision of the Quality Basic Education formula to address the effects of poverty on educational outcomes and emerging district needs, such as transportation, counseling, school safety, and physical and mental health supports.	Redesign of financial aid strategies to ensure programs are student-centered, goal-driven, timely and flexible, and available to all students, regardless of the chosen post-secondary pathway.

Getting Started: Focusing on Quick Wins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ State leaders should convene a working group to determine how current early learning investments develop a statewide framework that describes how new state investments align and support a comprehensive education and health strategy for children aged zero to eight, based on a cost assessment and accounting for increasing costs over time. ➤ State policy and advocacy organizations should explore how to fund student support strategies and wraparound services and address the higher costs of teaching students living in poverty, either through the QBE formula or another funding mechanism. ➤ State policymakers should charge post-secondary leaders and advocates with recommending a new framework for funding post-secondary education. Currently, the state funds institutions based on student enrollment and square footage. A model that rewards institutions for persistence and completion efforts, especially among underserved populations, could reinforce efforts to reach the North Star goal.

Sustaining Momentum Through 2033

Progress Metrics

Each of the priorities presented in the EdQuest State Policy Plan includes at least one outcome measure and a set of metrics that help state and community leaders know whether they are making progress. This profile includes a non-exhaustive list of measures that help policymakers track returns on state investments.

- Percent children attending preschool, age 3-4
- Percent enrollment in Georgia Pre-K – total and from low-income families
- Third grade reading proficiency
- High school graduation rates
- Labor force participation rates
- High school diploma and post-secondary credential attainment
- Percentage of children and adults with health insurance
- Percent of food-secure residents
- Percent of residents not living in poverty

State Leadership

State leaders can support coordinated and aligned funding in several ways including:

- Considering how to leverage current education funding to support innovative, community-based strategies that accelerate educational opportunity and economic mobility.
- Investing in multi-generation strategies: joint early learning and workforce development strategies that address barriers to learning and employment at opposite sides of the lifelong continuum.

Building a Strong Foundation

State strengths and assets

Georgia Pre-K program [\$400 million in FY (Fiscal Year) 2024]

Fully funded Quality Basic Education Formula in FY 2023 and FY 2024

HOPE Scholarship and Grant programs [\$1.07 billion in FY 2024]

Improving on current policy and practice

State leaders should protect existing investments by increasing coordination and alignment of funding priorities across the early learning, K-12, and post-secondary and workforce sectors.

A comprehensive funding strategy will bring coherence to a fragmented ecosystem in which goals, priorities, and strategies are often unaligned.

In the same way that a new accountability framework could spark more community-driven conversations about how to improve student and school performance, revising education finance structures could also contribute to reimagining how to use federal, state, and local resources to create more people-centered approaches.

Alignment with the North Star goal of 65% post-secondary attainment

Research supports the idea that increasing education funding for effective strategies and interventions aligned with education priorities improves educational achievement. Meaning, in addition to the amount of money, what state and local governments spend money on also matters.

For instance, based on local needs and priorities, some Georgia districts have used federal pandemic-relief funds for non-direct instructional purposes, such as renovating school facilities and covering school transportation costs. Other districts have hired school interventionists to support student learning gains. Both types of expenditures affect student performance, just in different ways.

Establishing funding amounts and determining effective uses are important strategic considerations. State leaders can accelerate the closing of opportunity and resource gaps by ensuring that current finance strategies more closely align with policies and practices that support educational attainment.

Priority: Educator Recruitment and Preparation

Increase retention of early-career educators by expanding access to high-quality preparation experiences like internships, residencies, and apprenticeships.

Policy Context

District leaders can address recruitment and ultimately retention challenges by redesigning how they deliver internship and residency experiences. In most cases, schools work with educator preparation programs (EPPs) to place teacher interns. A veteran educator coaches the intern, and over a semester or yearlong experience, the intern gradually takes on more teaching responsibilities.

Two emerging approaches – teacher residencies and educator apprenticeships – involve more collaboration and partnership between school systems and EPPs. Residents and apprentices earn their teaching licenses while receiving job-embedded training and coaching. In most cases, residents and apprentices receive a salary or stipend, as well as tuition relief, which increases the affordability of these preparation models.

Districts benefit from tailored programs that work to recruit aspiring teachers to fill positions in hard-to-staff schools or subjects. With a competitive admissions process, the programs recruit well-qualified candidates.

A recent research study found that 75% of educator candidates who graduate from teacher residency programs remained in their initial placement after five years. This compares to the state five-year teacher retention rate average of 65%. The United States Department of Labor approved the first state educator apprenticeship program in January 2022. Since then, the department has provided grants to 35 states to scale up educator apprenticeships.

While most teacher residencies and apprenticeships require a greater upfront investment from school systems, the economic model could make more sense when one considers how much districts spend on replacing teachers and the cost of inducting, coaching, and mentoring teachers who leave the profession. Estimates for training and induction range from \$10,000 to \$20,000 per educator.

Key Outcome

Increase the number of early-career educators who stay in the profession through their fifth year from 65% to 75%.

EdQuest Framework

Quality Teaching

Foundations for Learning

Advanced Instructional Systems

Quality Leadership

Power Strategies		
Recruitment	Preparation and Early-Career Success	Early Care and Development
Development of educator pipeline models that increase candidate diversity, address barriers to entry, and are attentive to shortages in hard-to-staff subjects.	Supporting high-quality, school-based experiences for prospective teachers, such as teacher cadet initiatives, educator apprenticeships, and clinical residencies.	Creation of a statewide early learning workforce strategy focused on improving working conditions, strengthening professional preparation, and achieving compensation parity relative to similar professions.

Getting Started: Focusing on Quick Wins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ State leaders should convene a working group to identify high-impact practices associated with recruiting a more diverse, well-qualified cohort of teacher candidates. Instead of lowering entrance standards, the group should explore how to recruit individuals to the profession by offering paid, job-embedded training while they earn their teaching licenses. ➤ Many district and school leaders are implementing promising practices without a statewide strategy to guide their work. State leaders should work with school and community partners to develop toolkits that help school systems adapt and strengthen their candidate preparation strategies. ➤ The Georgia General Assembly should consider appropriating funds to create a statewide pilot program for districts to develop innovative school-based programming for teacher candidates.

Sustaining Momentum Through 2033

Progress Metrics

Each of the priorities presented in the EdQuest State Policy Plan includes at least one outcome measure and a set of metrics that help state and community leaders know whether they are making progress. This profile includes a non-exhaustive list of measures that help indicate whether recruitment and preparation efforts are contributing to a more stable and effective educator workforce.

- Percent of preparation program completers employed by a school district
- Percent educator retention by preparation type
- One-year teacher retention rates – statewide educator workforce
- Five-year, new hire retention rates
- Education and experience level for educators in high-need schools.

State Leadership

State leaders can support local recruitment and retention efforts in several ways including:

- Creating a resource toolkit for districts interested in developing more seamless preparation and recruitment strategies.
- Developing a roadmap document that provides guidance on how school systems and educator preparation providers could partner to develop innovative programming for teacher candidates and early-career professionals.

Building a Strong Foundation

State strengths and assets

Licensure pathways for paraprofessionals lay the groundwork for Grow-Your-Own recruitment efforts

Commitment from University System of Georgia institutions to partner with districts to create residency options for candidates and professional development opportunities for early-career educators

Statewide focus on educator burnout already contributed to discussion on how to redesign state systems of educator support

Tiered educator licensure structures enable school systems to develop formal teacher leader roles

Teaching as a Profession career pathway and teacher cadet strategies that deliver instruction to prospective educators in high school

Improving on current policy and practice

Generally, current practice relies on passive recruitment and hiring practices. While many district human resources staff attend career fairs or travel to other regions of the United States to recruit teachers, a higher initial investment from state and district leaders in creating programs and forging partnerships with educator preparation providers could result in long-term savings.

Wider adoption of residency programs could provide a solid foundation for the eventual development of formal teacher leadership programs and innovative professional learning strategies that continue the workforce growth strategies contemplated in teachers' early years. Colleges of education and large urban school systems have started residency programs that should help strengthen state and district recruitment efforts.

Alignment with the North Star goal of 65% post-secondary attainment

Teacher quality is the single most important school-based variable associated with student success. Therefore, creating more favorable conditions to recruit well-qualified candidates and retain highly effective educators is essential to the goal of increasing student readiness for post-secondary opportunities.

High teacher and school-leader turnover rates negatively affect student achievement. Further, attrition in schools serving high-poverty communities is significantly higher than in affluent areas. Addressing early-career exit through tailored recruitment and preparation programs is one way to reconfigure investments in teacher talent to create more continuity and stability within the teacher workforce.

Priority: Civic and Corporate Involvement

Encourage greater civic and corporate involvement in forging stronger connections between education and work opportunities.

Policy Context

In recent years, state policymakers and agency leaders have addressed challenges confronting Georgia’s communities by investing in broadband infrastructure, increasing access to physical and behavioral health services, and tackling poverty through education and economic development initiatives.

The pandemic did not diminish these priorities. In fact, local school systems, county commissions, and regional health agencies have received billions in federal COVID funds to scale current development efforts and address barriers to community transformation.

Community assets are present, but they are not always coordinated in ways that allow local leaders to expand access to education and workforce opportunities. Local leaders must focus on immediate challenges while simultaneously creating long-term plans to transform personal well-being and community resilience.

Community transformation requires a strong birth-to-work strategy, drawing on the expertise and shared commitment of leaders across several sectors, such as early learning, K-12 education, post-secondary education, health, housing, and business and industry.

Within each community, there is a role for all stakeholders. Business and industry partners can address immediate community challenges by leveraging their own skills and talents to help prepare the workforce of tomorrow. Civic partners can array services and supports to integrate career preparation and work-based learning practices into K-12 and post-secondary environments.

Together, state, regional, and local education, business, and civic leaders can address the factors that limit economic mobility and post-secondary attainment.

Key Outcome

Increase career pathway completion rates to 60% by 2023. The current completion rate is 43%.

EdQuest Framework

Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success

Supportive Learning Environments

Quality Leadership

Power Strategies

Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success

Encouraging business and industry leaders to co-develop career pathways programming with K-12 and higher education partners and expand access to work-based learning opportunities in high-demand career areas.

Supportive Learning Environments

School and community leaders expand access to early college and real-world learning opportunities, e.g., Advanced Placement, apprenticeships, career pathway participation, dual enrollment, internships, summer jobs.

Getting Started: Focusing on Quick Wins

- State and community leaders should perform a policy and practice scan to determine what strategies are worth scaling and what state structures are most suitable for supporting local innovation.
- Local leaders should review current community strategies to ensure they address barriers to educational success and economic mobility, e.g., lack of access to health care, affordable housing, and transportation to strengthen their talent pipeline.
- State and community leaders should partner with post-secondary institutions and industry representatives to create or expand high-demand career pathways aligned to regional needs.

Sustaining Momentum Through 2033

Progress Metrics

Each of the priorities presented in the EdQuest State Policy Plan includes at least one outcome measure and a set of metrics that help state and community leaders know whether they are making progress. This profile includes a non-exhaustive list of measures that indicate if community-based partnerships are strengthening workforce alignment.

- Percent growth in students enrolled in real-world/applied learning experiences
- Completion rates for career pathways and apprenticeship programs
- Percent of students earning industry-recognized credentials
- Percent growth in number of STEM/STEAM certified schools.

State Leadership

State leaders can support civic and corporate involvement in several ways including:

- Expanding incentives for community and workforce partners to co-develop career-connected content and curricula, as well as expand access to real-world/applied learning opportunities, such as internships, externships, apprenticeships, and other cooperative opportunities.
- Developing local leaders' capacity to create seamless career pathways centered on regional workforce needs through training, technical assistance, and resource toolkits.

Building a Strong Foundation

State strengths and assets

University System of Georgia’s Economic Development Division and Technical College System of Georgia’s Office of Workforce Development

State post-secondary pathways infrastructure – Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE), dual enrollment, and apprenticeships

Georgia Department of Education’s Office of Rural Education and Innovation, prioritizing cross-sector collaboration with post-secondary and workforce partners

Georgia State University’s National Institute for School Success

Improving on current policy and practice

Georgia attracts businesses because of favorable economic and tax policies and its reputation as the Number 1 Place to Do Business for nine years running. However, retaining these businesses will require increasing alignment between education and workforce systems.

Businesses are employing multiple strategies to close skill and talent gaps. To increase the productivity and capability of current employees, businesses are relying on upskilling strategies that support the acquisition of specialized, technical skills. Corporate investment in community-based strategies is crucial because expanding the talent pool in a region ensures that industries can continue to grow and thrive.

Developing joint education and economic development strategies through intentional partnerships is the first step in a long-term agenda to more efficiently and effectively align education policy to support workforce needs.

Alignment with the North Star goal of 65% post-secondary attainment

Education and business partnerships are crucial to reaching the North Star goal. Currently, too many Georgians are underprepared for post-secondary education and workforce opportunities.

Meaningful and enduring cross-sector partnerships is a way to address and increase preparedness and success. The ultimate goal is for Georgia to have an educated and skilled workforce. Education and business sector leaders can and should coordinate and align their activities to promote career connected learning across K-12 and post-secondary success to meet Georgia’s growing workforce needs – today and in the future.

Priority: Afterschool and Summer Learning

Increase the number of school-aged children who have access to high-quality afterschool and summer learning opportunities through a state framework.

Policy Context

The American Rescue Plan, enacted in March 2021, provided \$4.25 billion in funding to support accelerated learning. The law requires that the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) use 20% of the state reserve, about \$85 million, on afterschool and summer activities.

In response, GaDOE partnered with the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) to create the Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) grant program. The department tapped GSAN to manage and evaluate the three-year grant program and deliver training and technical assistance to over 100 grantees: community-based organizations that operate comprehensive, out-of-school time (OST) programming year-round, over the summer months, or after school during the academic year.

The demand for afterschool and summer programs exceeds current capacity. According to a survey by the Afterschool Alliance, for every child enrolled in an afterschool program in Georgia, two of their peers are waiting to enroll.

In the same survey, over half of Georgia parents (53%) reported that they would have enrolled their school-aged children in a summer program if one were available in their community.

OST programs across Georgia vary in purpose, goals, and priorities and are operated by a diverse group of providers, including school systems, community nonprofits, and the faith-based community, to name a few. The investments to build the BOOST grant infrastructure, coupled with the extensive evaluations underway to measure program quality and impact, should enable state leaders to develop a robust afterschool and summer learning policy framework that supports providers and expands access for students who would benefit from extended learning opportunities.

Key Outcome

Increase the number of school and community-based out-of-school time (OST) programs in Georgia by 25% by 2033 (680 programs, up from 545).

EdQuest Framework

Supportive Learning Environments

Advanced Instructional Systems

Power Strategies

Supportive Learning Environments

Creation of a statewide framework that expands access to and assures quality of afterschool and summer learning opportunities.

Committing to increased access to early college and work-based learning opportunities for all students.

Getting Started: Focusing on Quick Wins

1. State policy and advocacy groups should identify the components of a statewide framework that achieve three objectives:
 - Predictable and recurring state investment in programming
 - A system of training and technical assistance for providers, and
 - School system guidance on how to integrate out-of-school services and supports into core K-12 strategies.
2. District and program providers should leverage various federal funding sources to create or expand out-of-school opportunities.
3. State advocacy groups and program providers should conduct a statewide gap analysis to identify the factors that serve as barriers to opening and sustaining publicly funded programs in counties where they do not currently exist, expanding on the work conducted by GSA through the Summer Learning Landscape project.

Sustaining Momentum Through 2033

Progress Metrics

Each of the priorities presented in the EdQuest State Policy Plan includes at least one outcome measure and a set of metrics that help state and community leaders know whether they are making progress. This profile includes a non-exhaustive list of measures that education leaders should use to evaluate the student outcomes for those participating in afterschool and summer learning programs.

- Percent increase in school attendance
- Percent growth in student engagement among OST program participants
- Percent growth in math and reading scores on statewide assessments
- Percent decrease in behavioral referrals and suspension and expulsions.

State Leadership

State leaders along with other state and local stakeholders can support increased access and participation in OST programs in several ways including:

- Prioritizing funding support to OST programs that serve vulnerable youth, such as those who are economically disadvantaged, have a disability, and English language learners.
- Addressing barriers to youth participation and program quality, e.g., availability of transportation; difficulty recruiting highly effective, certified educators; and alignment of program curriculum with school-year standards.

Building a Strong Foundation

State strengths and assets

Expansion of existing infrastructure through the BOOST program	Leadership from the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network, Georgia Alliance of Boys and Girls Clubs, Georgia State Alliance of YMCAs, and Communities in Schools of Georgia
Increase in the number of local education agencies (LEAs) who have created afterschool, summer, and supplemental tutoring programs with Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds	Strong parental support for investments in afterschool (86%) and summer learning (88%) programs

Improving on current policy and practice

The BOOST grant created a state infrastructure to provide technical assistance to OST providers in four targeted areas: fiscal administration, quality measurement, program effectiveness, and provider leadership. State leaders should consider how to maintain these systems of training and technical support after federal funds lapse on September 30, 2024.

State leaders can also leverage the program evaluation and evidence collection strategies embedded within the BOOST grant to determine how to best serve current and prospective afterschool and summer learning providers in the future.

Alignment with the North Star goal of 65% post-secondary attainment

While OST programs have a diverse set of goals based on their missions, research suggests that high-quality programs support positive health, safety, and learning outcomes for participating youth. OST programs address the student and community risk factors that contribute to disparities in education and economic opportunity. Expanding access to afterschool and summer learning programming can contribute to more youth being prepared for post-secondary opportunities.

Across the state, programs operate in schools, community centers, and places of worship. Most funding comes from federal sources and parent tuition. While several federal programs operated by state agencies subsidize part of the tuition cost, primarily for low-income students, the primary threats to the sustainability and expansion of high-quality programming are access and affordability. State leaders should invest state resources to ensure greater student access to afterschool and summer learning programs to close the post-secondary readiness gaps present in Georgia.

Priority: Safe and Supportive Learning Environments

Support school and community efforts that address students' physical, academic, social, and emotional needs.

Policy Context

The pandemic spotlighted the importance of addressing non-academic barriers as a first step to prepare students for success. Federal COVID relief funding distributed to local districts, county governments, and public health agencies has helped foster a community-wide response to the effects of poverty, low health care access, and other areas of instability.

School and district leaders often partner with regional agencies and community organizations to deliver wraparound supports, or student-centered resources that address one or more non-academic learning barriers.

School systems have used Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to expand non-academic student support services. These investments reflect a "whole-child, whole-school, whole-community" approach, an engagement model in which schools are a hub for expanding access to community resources.

Fundamental to the concept of school as community hub is the idea that students, educators, and parents feel safe when they enter the building. While school safety discussions often focus on physical well-being, the Georgia Partnership supports a three-dimensional view of safety that attends to the physical and emotional well-being of students and educators, fosters safer and more supportive learning environments, and enables stronger interpersonal relationships between all individuals participating in the life of the school.

Key Outcome

Increase student achievement and engagement by reducing chronic student absenteeism to 15% (from 24%) and suspension and expulsion rates to 10% (from 14%).

EdQuest Framework

Supportive Learning Environments

Advanced Instructional Systems

Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success

Foundations for Learning

Power Strategies

Supportive Learning Environments

Ensuring expanded access to wraparound supports delivered within schools and by referral to community partners.

Developing and implementing strategies that enable students and educators greater input and agency over the learning process.

Getting Started: Focusing on Quick Wins

- The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and other state-level organizations should provide training and technical assistance to district leaders on how to integrate positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), school climate initiatives, and expanded mental health services efforts into a comprehensive school safety and student support strategy.
- State policymakers and advocacy groups should develop a statewide communications campaign to inform school and district leaders about how the Georgia Mental Health Parity Act supports a unified school and community response to delivering physical and mental health services to students.
- GaDOE should provide guidance to districts on how to expand access to non-academic student support services by leveraging recurring federal funds.

Sustaining Momentum Through 2033

Progress Metrics

Each of the priorities presented in the EdQuest State Policy Plan includes at least one outcome measure and a set of metrics that help state and community leaders know whether they are making progress. This profile includes a non-exhaustive list of measures that contribute to fostering safe and supportive learning environments.

- Percent of students living in poverty
- Percent of uninsured children
- Percent of school-aged children without access to mental health services
- Number of substantiated child abuse or neglect cases per 1,000 residents
- Percent of residents experiencing food insecurity
- Percent of students who miss more than 10 days per academic year
- Percent of teenagers (age 16-19) who are not in school and are not working
- Number of discipline incidents or referrals
- Student, parent, and educator perceptions of school safety and climate, as measured through statewide surveys.

State Leadership

State leaders along with other state and local stakeholders can address barriers to learning in several ways including:

- Ensuring all students, regardless of insurance status, receive regular vision, dental, and behavioral health screenings through a combination of school-based services and referral to community partners.
- Refining current Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) strategies to include a community assets approach to student support services. MTSS is a framework that identifies students' academic, social, and behavioral needs and provides proactive support to address them.

Building a Strong Foundation

State strengths and assets

GaDOE investments in district technical assistance and educator training around PBIS and student engagement

Use of federal ESSER funds to expand the number of school systems with school-based health services

School and district leadership coaching from organizations such as Regional Education Services Agencies (RESAs), Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI), Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL), and the Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA)

Commitment to expanding access to child and adolescent mental health services and supports both at school and in the community

Improving on current policy and practice

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) developed the Whole Child Toolkit for school, district, and community leaders to learn more about the chronic health and environmental conditions that threaten student success and well-being. The toolkit provides resources organized around five whole-child attributes: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

GaDOE has also created an Office of Whole Child Supports charged with providing leadership around student health, school climate and safety, and PBIS. Over the next 10 years, school and community leaders can leverage state policy efforts to tackle the health, environment, and neighborhood risk factors that serve as barriers to student learning and well-being.

Alignment with the North Star goal of 65% post-secondary attainment

Environmental factors like family and community poverty, chronic stress, and lack of access to health care widen achievement gaps. The pandemic compounded the problem, in part because lost instructional time affected all students, not just the most vulnerable youth. State and federal surveys of school leaders suggest that student behavioral issues increased significantly after schools reopened. Also, pandemic-era programs for children and families have ended, which means that families are struggling to meet basic needs.

Addressing non-academic learning barriers is one of the most critical steps in reaching the North Star goal. While state leaders have invested resources in expanding student services and supports, achieving 65% post-secondary attainment will require locally driven efforts in which school and community partners identify and sustain the most impactful strategies after federal funds lapse.

Conclusion & Next Steps

Georgia has a history of dramatic efforts and progress in education reform. Georgia is a national leader when it comes to early learning, career pathways and the Career, Technical, Agricultural and Education (CTAE) program and its results.

However, there is still significant work to be done to make Georgia a top-performing state where all children, despite race, economic background, or community, have the same access to a high-quality education, economic and workforce opportunities. This report presents common factors that account for the success of other countries and states that have the best education outcomes for their citizenry in the 2023 EdQuest Georgia Framework. In one form or another, they all share core policy areas that support:

1. **Foundations for learning**, promoting child development and family well-being through integrated early education, health, and family supports.
2. **Quality teaching**, supporting the educator workforce by prioritizing professional growth and career advancement strategies.
3. **Quality leadership**, identifying, recruiting, and retaining highly effective leaders within schools and those outside the school building, such as district and school board leaders.
4. **Supportive learning environments**, developing positive conditions for learning through the development of comprehensive school plans that address student health, school safety, and school culture and climate.
5. **Advanced instructional systems**, maintaining rigorous instructional standards, accelerated learning for all students, and accountability systems that support school and district improvement.
6. **Clear pathways to post-secondary success**, ensuring multiple pathways for youth and working adults to enroll in post-secondary programs and complete credentials of value.
7. **Adequate and equitable funding**, funding a birth-to-work strategy that closes opportunity and resource gaps and prepares all Georgians for kindergarten, high school, and post-secondary and workforce options.

More importantly, these successful states and nations view these core areas as a coherent system where each area works hand-in-hand with the others. Historically, educational research has examined the effectiveness of individual initiatives. While the evaluation and assessing of 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 in raising student achievement if textbooks and curricula are not aligned to the new standards, teachers are not trained on teaching them, and the school environment is not conducive to learning.

The 2023-2025 EdQuest State Policy Plan provides deeper analysis and implementation recommendations around current "to do" priorities to move the overall state framework forward. The Policy Plan prioritizes immediate action steps for state and community-based efforts that will help Georgia reach the North Star goal.

Georgia has embraced 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 focus allows for greater innovation in the classroom and at the district level to support the needs of its students.

The EdQuest framework and state policy plan demonstrate the importance of all parts of the system fitting together and reinforcing each other, like interlocking gears. If one gear gets stuck, the entire system comes to a halt. State and community leaders have spent considerable time and resources repairing the gears. The EdQuest initiative urges leaders to work together in common purpose and with shared responsibility to take the next step – reassembling the gears to produce a more skilled and credentialed workforce.

EdQuest is a compass for our collective journey to ensure Georgia leads the nation in educational opportunity and economic mobility. We ask all stakeholders who are invested in education and the economy of our state to join us, contribute to the discussion, leverage their work with others, and ensure the state’s education and workforce systems work like a well-oiled machine.










Appendix A - 2023 EdQuest Georgia Framework










EdQuest Georgia Framework

Overview

The Georgia Partnership recommends that state policymakers, education leaders, and the business sector unite around a North Star: ensuring that 65% of Georgians aged 25 to 64 have earned a post-secondary credential by 2033. The big bets outlined below will contribute to reaching this goal.

Big Bets for 2033	
 Foundations for Learning	Creating a statewide Birth-to-Eight Strategy to improve the health and learning outcomes of young children
 Quality Teaching	Developing a statewide educator workforce strategy focused on quality, diversity, and stability
 Quality Leadership	Reforming state systems of support for school and district leaders
 Supportive Learning Environments	Supporting whole-child and whole-community approaches that ensure students, educators, and families feel safe, healthy, engaged, supported, and challenged.
 Advanced Instructional System	Increasing district and community capacity to accelerate student learning and to expand access to post-secondary and work-based learning opportunities.
 Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success	Building a system of coordinated and aligned post-secondary pathways
 Adequate & Equitable Funding	Creating and funding a Birth-to-Work Funding Blueprint that closes opportunity and resource gaps and prepares all Georgians for kindergarten, high school, and post-secondary and workforce options.

Selected Power Strategies	
 <p>Foundations for Learning</p>	<p>Support for multi-generation strategies that increase parental engagement and encourage the integrated delivery of services across Georgia’s education, health, and economic and workforce development sectors.</p>
 <p>Quality Teaching</p>	<p>Development of educator pipeline models that increase candidate diversity, address barriers to entry, and are attentive to shortages in hard-to-staff subjects.</p> <p>Adaptation of existing professional growth systems that enable teachers to access personalized learning based on their needs and career interests.</p>
 <p>Quality Leadership</p>	<p>Creation of a school and district leadership model that emphasizes adaptive competencies in three areas: change management, strategic thinking, and culture building.</p>
 <p>Supportive Learning Environments</p>	<p>Promotion of local school culture and climate initiatives that address the physical, academic, social, and emotional needs of school stakeholders.</p>
 <p>Advanced Instructional System</p>	<p>Creation of simple, transparent, and open-ended instructional systems in which students earn a high school diploma and can demonstrate skills mastery through a variety of performance assessments.</p> <p>Drafting a K-12 accountability model that includes multiple measures of school quality and structures that support performance feedback and improvement.</p>
 <p>Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success</p>	<p>Expanded access to accelerated learning options so that more students can earn post-secondary credits or credentials while enrolled in high school.</p> <p>Encouraging working adults, especially those with little or no exposure to post-secondary training, to earn short-term credentials in areas in areas of workforce shortage.</p>
 <p>Adequate & Equitable Funding</p>	<p>Revision of the Quality Basic Education formula to address the effects of poverty on educational outcomes and emerging district needs related to transportation, counseling, school safety, and physical and mental health.</p>

Foundations for Learning

The Big Bet for 2033

Creating a Statewide Birth-to-Eight Strategy to Improve the Health and Learning Outcomes of Young Children

Why This Big Bet?

To reach the North Star goal of 65% post-secondary attainment Georgia must address the literacy gaps that emerge before young children enter kindergarten and that widen in elementary school. Too many children are unable to read on grade level because of nonacademic factors like low parental education, community poverty, and lack of access to health care. A comprehensive framework would deliver integrated education, health, and family support services to reduce access and opportunity gaps for vulnerable children and families.

Benefits of a Statewide Child Development Framework

- **Coherence and coordination:** state agencies deliver services and supports in more aligned and integrated ways.
- **Investments in evidence-based strategies:** leaders at all levels identify the policies and practices that result in more positive outcomes for children and families.
- **Focus on parent engagement and education:** programs increase the capacity of parents and families to support child development and well-being.

Power Strategies State Leaders Should Prioritize

<i>Early Care and Child Development</i>	<i>Family and Community Supports</i>
<p>Greater access to evidence-based strategies, such as home visiting, comprehensive health screenings, and early interventions for children with developmental delays, that promote school readiness and parental engagement.</p>	<p>Championing policies that support economic mobility and mitigate family poverty, e.g., Medicaid expansion, paid family leave, state earned income tax credit programs, and expanded access to childcare subsidies.</p>
<p>Creation of a statewide early learning workforce strategy focused on improving working conditions, strengthening professional preparation, and achieving compensation parity relative to similar professions.</p>	<p>Supporting multi-generation strategies that increase parental engagement and encourage the integration of services across Georgia’s education, health, and economic and workforce development sectors.</p>

How Can State Leaders Get Involved

The EdQuest Georgia Coalition recommends:

1. State agency leaders draft the statewide framework by (1) identifying high-impact interventions and supports, (2) determining how, when, and where to deliver services, and (3) setting performance metrics and benchmarks to assess the quality and impact of services.
2. State leaders and local leaders jointly evaluate the reach, impact, and effectiveness of early learning and public health strategies funded by federal pandemic-relief funds to incorporate promising practices into existing state-level strategies.
3. Members of the General Assembly make early education and health services more accessible and affordable by exploring ways to supplement federal and lottery funds with increased state investment.

Four Ways Practitioners Can Support the Big Bet

Gather Local Input

The pandemic disrupted the early care industry. The pandemic also contributed to a decline in the number of infants and young children who received preventative healthcare services. With federal pandemic-relief funds set to expire on September 30, 2023, state agencies should use provider, family, and community feedback to guide investments and to inform the delivery of services and supports.

Create a Comprehensive Screening Schedule Using Existing Models

State and local advocates should use existing early learning and pediatric health resources to develop a schedule of education and health screenings that would result in targeting support to children exhibiting developmental delays or identified as having one or more learning disabilities. Frequent and intensive interventions, especially for vulnerable populations, could narrow health and learning gaps over time.

Assemble a Task Force to Develop a Cross-Sector Plan to Integrate Services and Supports

Education, health, and nonprofit leaders should convene a working group to recommend a new program framework for executing a unified child development and family support strategy.

Demonstrate the Social and Economic Value of Expanded Support for Families with Young Children

State leaders, nonprofits, and the private sector should create a statewide communications campaign that demonstrates the value of increased investment in early learning and care for young children and their parents.



Quality Teaching

The Big Bet for 2033

Developing a Statewide Educator Workforce Strategy Focused on Quality, Diversity, and Stability

Why This Big Bet?

The EdQuest Georgia Coalition identified burnout as the primary threat to creating a stronger educator workforce. To ensure a more stable and effective workforce, state and district leaders should address the underlying causes that contribute to burnout: poor working conditions, noncompetitive salaries, inadequate preparation, and lack of professional growth opportunities. A comprehensive state strategy would encourage state policymakers and local leaders to think more boldly and systematically about how to support educators.

Benefits of a Statewide Strategy

- **Dual focus on career advancement and school improvement:** State strategies like tiered licensure enable local school systems to deploy teacher leaders and execute innovative school staffing models. However, local leaders lack a roadmap for implementing these programs. A statewide strategy could build capacity around career advancement strategies.
- **Identifying bright spots:** Many district and school leaders are implementing promising practices without a statewide strategy to guide the work. A robust statewide strategy could help identify, spread, and scale effective local practices.
- **Accelerating opportunity:** when state and education leaders share a common goal – creating educator-centered strategies that prioritize preparation and career advancement – they can reform funding and policy to promote practical change at the school level.

Power Strategies State Leaders Should Prioritize

Recruitment	Preparation and Early-Career Success	Professional Growth and Advancement
Development of educator pipeline models that increase candidate diversity, address barriers to entry, and are attentive to shortages in hard-to-staff subjects.	Supporting high-quality, school-based experiences for prospective teachers, such as teacher cadet initiatives, educator apprenticeships, and clinical residencies.	Adaptation of existing professional growth systems that enable teachers to access personalized learning based on their needs and career interests.
		Equipping district leaders with tools and resources to recruit, deploy, and retain teacher leaders.

How Can State Leaders Get Involved

The EdQuest Georgia Coalition recommends:

- State agency leaders commission or draft a statewide working conditions survey that asks educators to weigh in on the quality of instructional supports and professional learning opportunities in their schools, as well as other factors that affect student achievement, such as school safety, school climate, and resource allocation.
- The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) leverages the existing statewide teacher induction and educator evaluation pilot to create a system of training and technical assistance for districts interested in adopting new early-career supports and professional growth strategies.
- State leaders create a statewide pathway for paraprofessionals to become licensed classroom teachers. This pathway would serve as a state strategy to support local recruitment and Grow Your Own initiatives.

Three Ways Practitioners Can Support the Big Bet

Convene Statewide Working Groups Around Systemic Challenges

Nonprofit leaders and local practitioners should recommend how to reform existing educator recruitment, retention, and professional growth strategies. Advocates and experts should address the following:

1. Recruiting a more diverse, high-quality cohort of educator candidates by removing barriers to entering the profession
2. Exploring the root causes of educator burnout and demoralization to improve working conditions
3. Expanding access to educator learning and leadership opportunities that promote professional growth and career advancement.

Support the Design, Execution, and Evaluation of Local Strategies

State and nonprofit leaders should support district efforts to create comprehensive career development strategies. District strategies should unify preparation, induction, professional learning, and professional growth practices under a set of common goals and progress metrics.

A multi-stakeholder group should create a toolkit and provide recommendations for state guidance so districts can create advanced teacher roles based on needs identified by educators, students, and community leaders.

Increase Opportunities for Cross-District Learning

GaDOE has invested federal pandemic-relief funds in expanding virtual professional learning communities. Local educators should provide feedback on how these spaces do and do not allow teachers to showcase best practices, troubleshoot problems of practice, and request technical assistance.



Quality Leadership

The Big Bet for 2033

Reforming State Systems of Support for School and District Leaders

Why This Big Bet?

Current induction and professional learning programs do not adequately prepare school leaders to serve as instructional leaders, culture builders, community engagers, and fiscal managers. State leaders should support professional learning that emphasize ongoing, practical experiences and that expand access to the collective expertise of veteran leaders

Benefits of a Leader-Centered Strategy

- **Focus on agility and adaptation:** Today’s leaders are learning on the job. To accelerate their learning and to promote their effectiveness, a statewide strategy should emphasize habits and mindsets that enable leaders to adapt to emerging challenges.
- **Co-responsibility/shared accountability:** Adjusting state policies and investments is crucial, but local school systems are responsible for cultivating leadership through ongoing, practical experiences.
- **Innovative practice:** Numerous local school systems have implemented strategies to encourage teacher collaboration, such as co-teaching and professional learning communities. A new statewide approach could accomplish the same for school leaders, including release time for professional learning and job shadowing and mentorship with master principals.

Power Strategies State Leaders Should Prioritize

Leadership Development	School Leader Induction	Ongoing Professional Learning for Local Leaders
Creation of a school and district leadership model that emphasizes adaptive competencies in three areas: change management, strategic thinking, and culture building.	Leveraging existing state efforts to develop a statewide principal induction and mentoring model that prepares school leaders to cultivate positive school culture and engage parents and community leaders in school transformation activities.	Providing opportunities for school and district leaders to undergo professional learning activities together.
		Supporting school and district leadership teams as they model how to improve instruction through greater use of formative assessments and instructional technologies.

How Can State Leaders Get Involved

The EdQuest Georgia Coalition recommends:

- State leaders ask school and district leaders to weigh in on the specific resources and learning supports that, if implemented, would support their efficacy and address the conditions that drive high principal turnover.
- State leaders address the lack of diversity in the leadership pipeline by determining the barriers that discourage candidates from entering administration programs and districts from creating pathway programs.
- The Georgia Department of Education leverage current efforts to create a professional growth system that provides induction supports for new school administrators and provides opportunities for seasoned professionals to lead schools while mentoring and coaching their peers.

Four Ways Practitioners Can Support the Big Bet

Identify Gaps and Barriers

Local leaders should identify state policy barriers, local capacity gaps, and ineffective practices that would stifle the development and execution of a state leadership framework. Practitioners should recommend how to use existing assets to address gaps in leadership preparation in Georgia.

Collect Evidence of Impact

Advocates and experts should identify promising practices related to the following school leadership domains: school culture and climate initiatives, change leadership, instructional delivery and redesign, fiscal management, and parent and community engagement. Developing a research and practice base should support the mastery of adaptive leadership skills.

Real-World Practical Experiences for Aspiring Leaders

School districts should create pathways programs to ensure that aspiring leaders can make informed decisions before becoming school leaders.

Create Professional Learning Communities for School Leaders

School districts should create professional learning strategies for school leaders that provide early-career support and allow seasoned professionals to lead schools while mentoring and coaching their peers. Since principals and assistant professionals cannot address problems of practice during the school day, school systems should provide release time to enable administrators to trouble shoot.



Supportive Learning Environments

The Big Bet for 2033

Supporting whole-child and whole-community approaches that ensure students, educators, and families feel safe, healthy, engaged, supported, and challenged.

Why This Big Bet?

To thrive as learners, students must feel safe in school and empowered in their learning environment, and they must believe that adults in the school building care about their success. While state systems could reinforce effective strategies, the primary challenge is creating a climate that propels student success. A conducive climate requires culture change and a focus on cultivating leadership — in schools, in communities, and among students.

Benefits of Culture Change

- **Reinforcing two norms:** the state’s whole-child strategy emphasizes high instructional expectations for all students and safe and supportive learning environments for students and teachers.
- **Focus on non-academic factors:** the whole-child/whole-school approach raises awareness about the working conditions and non-academic obstacles that stymie student and educator success.
- **Empowerment:** the whole-child strategy also promotes deeper engagement between all school stakeholders to improve culture and climate. However, before meaningful engagement can take place, school leaders need to empower students, educators, parents, and community leaders by redefining their roles in achieving success.

Power Strategies State Leaders Should Prioritize

<i>Safe and Healthy</i>	<i>Engaged</i>	<i>Supported and Challenged</i>
Promotion of local school culture and climate initiatives that address the physical, academic, social, and emotional needs of school stakeholders.	Developing and implementing strategies that enable students and educators greater input and agency over the learning process.	Creation of a state framework that expands access to and assures quality of afterschool and summer learning opportunities.
Ensuring expanded access to wraparound supports delivered within schools and by referral to community partners.		Committing to increased access to early college and work-based learning opportunities for all students.

How Can State Leaders Get Involved

The EdQuest Georgia Coalition recommends:

- The Georgia Department of Education provide guidance on how to blend federal and local funds to create and expand wraparound services.
- GaDOE and the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency revise Georgia's School Safety Plan Template so that district leaders narrate how efforts related to positive behavioral interventions and supports, school climate initiatives, and expanded mental health services serve as preventative school safety strategies.
- The General Assembly study the feasibility of funding wraparound services and afterschool and summer learning opportunities within the existing K-12 finance system.

Three Ways Practitioners Can Support the Big Bet

Learn from Current Initiatives

State and community advocates should use the research findings and lessons learned from the Building Opportunities in Out-of-School Time (BOOST) grant and school-based health center programs to propose a framework of technical assistance and support for local providers, especially after one-time federal funds lapse.

Support the Design, Execution, and Evaluation of Local Strategies

The pandemic illustrated the need for school and communities to provide wraparound services, especially for vulnerable populations – unhoused children, foster youth, and children living in poverty. While state and federal programs support these students, district and community leaders would benefit from technical assistance related to designing, executing, and funding collaborative initiatives. State agencies tasked with delivering education, public health, and social services should offer unified and targeted technical support.

Raise Visibility of Opportunities Resulting from the Georgia Mental Health Parity Act

State and community advocates should develop a statewide communications campaign to inform school and district leaders about how the Georgia Mental Health Parity Act (HB 1013) supports a unified school and community response to delivering physical and mental health services to students.





Advanced Instructional Systems

The Big Bet for 2033

Increasing district and community capacity to accelerate student learning and to expand access to post-secondary and work-based learning opportunities.

Why This Big Bet?

Students of color and youth attending high-poverty schools are more likely to endure cycles of skills remediation. Disrupting these cycles will require school and district leaders to redesign instruction, address outdated school structures, and provide personalized support for students and teachers. Schools can – and should – accelerate student learning, meeting students where they are and ensuring that they perform up to their level of capability. Integrating practical and work-aligned experiences into the curriculum should increase the relevance of accelerated learning opportunities.

Benefits of Accelerated and Career-Connected Learning Systems

- **Move on when ready:** Over time, local districts should enable students that have demonstrated skills mastery on academic benchmarks to access more rigorous academic and career-aligned content.
- **Learning time reform:** The pandemic proved that learning can happen everywhere and at any time. Extending learning beyond the school day could help students who need supplemental academic support.
- **Embedded and authentic assessments:** The hallmark of a mastery-based system of learning is the use of performance assessments to evaluate if students are ready to progress to the next academic milestone. Performance assessments can – and should – coexist with credentials such as high school diplomas and career pathway certificates.

Power Strategies State Leaders Should Prioritize

<i>Instructional System Redesign</i>	<i>Post-Secondary Credit</i>	<i>Community-Driven Improvement</i>
Creation of simpler, more transparent, and open-ended instructional systems in which students earn a high school diploma and can demonstrate skills mastery through a variety of performance assessments.	Ensuring that students who complete career pathways and obtain industry-recognized credentials in high school earn post-secondary credit, regardless of where they enroll.	Drafting a K-12 accountability model that includes multiple measures of school quality and structures that support performance feedback and improvement.
Supporting learner-centered instruction: a model in which students are agents of their own learning and can apply skills in real-world and work-based learning environments.		Providing training and technical assistance to school and district leadership teams as they use student-level assessment data to accelerate and personalize student learning.

How Can State Leaders Get Involved

The EdQuest Georgia Coalition recommends:

- State policymakers convene two statewide working groups – the first to create a new school and district accountability framework that reflects state workforce needs and community priorities; the second to develop recommendations about how to integrate career-connected and work-based learning into the secondary curriculum.
- State agency leaders promote the use of individual and career academic plans (iCAPS) to document student progress toward planning for post-secondary opportunities.
- State agency leaders determine what industry-recognized credentials are in the greatest demand and explore whether districts and post-secondary systems are meeting these needs. This analysis should support efforts to prioritize which career pathways to expand.

Three Ways Practitioners Can Support the Big Bet

Support the Spread of Education and Economic Development Partnerships

Local leaders should partner with business and industry leaders to co-develop career-oriented curricula and sponsor work-based learning placements. Successful models exist across Georgia, and state agencies are well-positioned to identify the factors that promote enduring partnerships.

Build Local Capacity

District leaders should expand educator professional learning in three areas:

1. How to supplement curriculum with digital resources and technologies
2. How to use formative assessment data to personalize learning
3. How to improve educator capacity to use classroom tools through targeted professional learning opportunities.

Identify the Obstacles to Developing a Mastery-Based Instructional System

Advocacy leaders and experts should identify the current policies, structural barriers, and mindsets that stand in the way of creating competency and mastery-based learning for students and educators. Also, nonprofit and community stakeholders should consider how to develop a set of rigorous and aligned performance assessments. Without these tests of mastery, learning in this new model might not look significantly different than the current instructional format.

Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success

The Big Bet for 2033

Building a system of coordinated and aligned post-secondary pathways

Why This Big Bet?

For Georgia to remain competitive on the global stage, state leaders will need to invest in systems reform to motivate all Georgians – not just traditional college-going students – to earn post-secondary credentials. State leaders should use existing system assets to build a statewide post-secondary and workforce strategy that transcends sector-based decisions and governance. Expanding access to all types of credential programs could provide a way for all Georgians, especially nontraditional students, adult learners, disengaged youth, and low-income residents, to fully participate in the state’s economic prosperity.

Benefits of a Multiple Pathways System

- **Pre-mapped pathways:** The state’s two post-secondary systems partner to create a seamless student experience. Students can enter the system at any point and earn credentials without losing momentum through lack of credit transfer.
- **Portability:** Students learn content and master skills, resulting in the earning of course credit and post-secondary credentials. A multiple-pathways approach removes structural obstacles to credential attainment by ensuring that credits and experiences are portable to the next institution and the next credential.
- **Improved workforce alignment:** Developing a robust pathways model creates stability in the labor market by ensuring that working adults can re-enter post-secondary education if and when they need to master new skills demanded by private-sector partners.

Power Strategies State Leaders Should Prioritize

<i>Build Momentum</i>	<i>Remove Barriers</i>	<i>Market Opportunity</i>
Expanding access to accelerated learning options so that students can earn post-secondary credits or credentials while enrolled in high school.	Funding a proactive advising model that enables students to pursue post-secondary options aligning with their career interests.	Expanding and deepening incentives for working adults to earn short-term postsecondary credentials in areas of workforce shortage.
	Creation of a comprehensive statewide need-based financial aid program that makes post-secondary options more accessible for youth and working adults.	Encouraging business and industry leaders to co-develop rigorous pathways curricula and expand access to work-based learning opportunities in high-demand career areas.

How Can State Leaders Get Involved

The EdQuest Georgia Coalition recommends:

- State agency and post-secondary system leaders create a statewide system of seamless transfer across the K-12, post-secondary education, and workforce development sectors that awards post-secondary credit for alternative credentials and non-traditional experiences.
- State post-secondary system leaders provide dedicated funding for post-secondary institutions to deliver career advising and non-academic student support services.
- District leaders expand access to early post-secondary and work-based learning opportunities for high school students and career planning and exploration curricula starting in sixth grade.

Three Ways Practitioners Can Support the Big Bet

Assemble Working Groups to Create New Strategies or Adapt Existing State Structures

The state advocacy community should convene task forces to develop recommendations for the following:

- Designing and funding a comprehensive state need-based aid program.
- Encouraging greater private-sector involvement and investment in post-secondary programming, e.g., curriculum development and expanded work-based learning.
- Creating pathways anchored in career fields important to Georgia's continued economic growth and global competitiveness.

Create Skill Maps

The Technical College and University Systems of Georgia have strong transfer and articulation agreements for general education courses. The two systems should leverage these efforts to create skills and credential maps that show how knowledge, skills, and abilities progress from short-term credentials to doctoral degrees. When created, these skill maps will facilitate credit transfer and more efficient progression along post-secondary pathways.

Strengthen Public Messaging

System leaders and nonprofit and community partners should develop a communications campaign to improve public messaging related to the labor market value of different post-secondary credentials and student incentives that make post-secondary opportunities more accessible and affordable. The plan should debunk the idea that the bachelor's degree is the only pathway to economic prosperity.



Adequate and Equitable Funding

The Big Bet for 2033

Creating and funding a Birth-to-Work Funding Blueprint that closes opportunity and resource gaps and prepares all Georgians for kindergarten, high school, and post-secondary and workforce options.

Why This Big Bet?

The Blueprint would identify the supports, policy changes, and investments needed to increase educational excellence, accelerate opportunity, and secure Georgia’s economic future. The framework would provide greater assurances that students can reach their full potential, regardless of the non-academic factors that stifle their success.

Benefits of a Comprehensive Funding Blueprint

- **Coherence:** The statewide finance model would increase the continuity of services by focusing on student and community needs, rather than the funding source.
- **Alignment:** The blueprint would ensure that leaders are accountable to fostering greater alignment between funding priorities and community and workforce needs. If misalignment exists, then leaders should adjust investments and strategies to meet needs.
- **Outcomes-focused:** The reasoning for implementing a funding blueprint is to increase educational success and economic well-being. To that end, a comprehensive framework promotes systems and structures that support these goals.

Power Strategies State Leaders Should Prioritize

Early Care and Learning	PreK-12 Education	Post-Secondary Education
<p>Allocation of new resources to provide high-quality school readiness programs for infants and toddlers.</p>	<p>Revision of the Quality Basic Education formula to address the effects of poverty on educational outcomes and emerging district needs, such as transportation, counseling, school safety, and physical and mental health supports.</p>	<p>Redesign of financial aid strategies to ensure programs are student-centered, goal-driven, timely and flexible, and available to all students, regardless of the chosen post-secondary pathway.</p> <p>Reform post-secondary institutional finance models to ensure programs and strategies align with student, community, and workforce needs.</p>

How Can State Leaders Get Involved

The EdQuest Georgia Coalition recommends:

- State agency leaders develop a statewide framework that describes the state investments necessary to create a comprehensive early education and health program for children aged zero to five.
- The Georgia General Assembly commission a study to evaluate how much it costs to provide an excellent education to all Georgians. The cost study could contribute to the revision of the K-12 funding formula to address current gaps.
- The Georgia Assembly create a comprehensive statewide need-based financial aid program that builds upon recent efforts to fund grants for students with unmet need close to completing their credentials.

Four Ways Practitioners Can Support the Big Bet

Determine the Fiscal Impact of Current and Prospective Initiatives

State and community advocates should propose formal processes for the General Assembly and state agencies to evaluate the fiscal and programmatic impact of strategies, while also ensuring that funding decisions align with state education and workforce goals.

Conduct Study to Recommend Framework for Funding Post-Secondary Education

Georgia's leaders have funded post-secondary institutions based in part on enrollment and square footage. The input-centered approach worked when the state was expanding access to opportunity, but a new funding strategy should encourage Georgians to enroll in post-secondary programs and complete credentials aligned with community and state workforce needs. Education and community leaders should conduct research on how to fund post-secondary institutions based on a combination of inputs (i.e., enrollment) and outputs (e.g., persistence, overall completion rates, graduation rates for underserved populations).

Maintain Expanded Access to Childcare Subsidies

The Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) used federal pandemic-relief funds to provide tuition relief to families who qualified for the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program. The agency, in collaboration with the General Assembly, should consider how to continue providing subsidies to defray the high cost of childcare for low-income families.

Explore How to Fund K-12 School Counseling and Wraparound Services

State leaders should provide additional funding to lower the school counselor-to-student ratio to 250:1. Increasing state funding could result in more equitable access to proactive career and academic counseling and physical and mental health supports.

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has provided technical assistance to local school leaders as they adopt wraparound services – academic, health, and social supports that address barriers to student success. While many districts use federal funds to deliver wraparound services, dedicated state funding could expand access to these critical services.



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Charting Educational Reform