



EdQuest Georgia Leading Indicators Report

April 2025



Georgia Partnership
FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Leading Indicators – Securing Georgia’s Future by Measuring What Matters

Georgia’s fastest growing industries need individuals who have earned post-secondary credentials. According to the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce, 66% of jobs in Georgia will require post-secondary education or training by 2031.¹ While only one third of 2031 jobs will require a high school diploma or less, Georgians in these roles are less likely to earn wages that promote economic stability or career advancement.²

Many Georgians lack access to quality education and workforce opportunities. While state leaders have invested in high-wage, in-demand career pathways and partnered with business and industry representatives to address existing skills and talent gaps, Georgia’s education and workforce systems still do not adequately prepare residents for the jobs of tomorrow. Therefore, significant adjustments to state strategies and investments are needed to ensure more Georgians are work ready.

To ensure Georgia remains competitive in the global economy, the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (Georgia Partnership) in 2023 recommended that state policymakers, education and civic leaders, and the corporate sector unite around a **North Star goal** – ensuring 65% of Georgians aged 25 to 64 have earned a post-secondary credential of value by 2033.

The North Star guides the work of **EdQuest Georgia**, a 10-year initiative founded on the premise that expanding access to education and economic opportunity promotes personal well-being, community resilience, and state economic security. Working with the EdQuest Georgia Coalition, a group of state agency and nonprofit, business, and civic leaders, the Georgia Partnership has championed a model in which communities drive innovation and state leaders support the spread and scale of effective local strategies. At both the local and state levels, stakeholders should identify common interests, develop shared priorities, and execute new initiatives to achieve results.

Three Ways to Evaluate State and Community Investments

Quality: Did the program, strategy, or intervention meet the needs and expectations of school and community stakeholders?

Effectiveness: Did the program, strategy, or intervention achieve the intended outcomes?

Impact: Did the comprehensive plan pursued by community stakeholders contribute to positive learning and wellness outcomes for residents?

A key component of this model’s success is access to reliable data that guides state and community investments. However, most available metrics report outcomes without showing how various factors contributed to the result. These metrics are called lagging indicators. Leading indicators, on the other hand, are measures that allow state and community leaders to assess the quality, effectiveness, and impact of their investments in real time and help forecast the likelihood of future success. In this report, the Georgia

1 Carnevale, A. P., Smith, N., Van Der Werf, M., and M. C. Quinn. 2023, November 16. After Everything: Projections of Jobs, Education, and Training Requirements through 2031. Center on Education and the Workforce. Retrieved from <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Projections2031-National-Report.pdf>

2 Bauer, L., East, C., and O. Howard. 2025, January 9. Low-income workers experience – by far – the most earnings and work hours instability. Brookings. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/low-income-workers-experience-by-far-the-most-earnings-and-work-hours-instability/>

Partnership and EdQuest Georgia Coalition identify a series of leading indicators we believe can support the state's pursuit of the North Star.

This report presents leading indicators across five profiles. The first three profiles focus on sectors along the education and workforce continuum: early learning, K-12 education, and post-secondary education and workforce development. The other two profiles emphasize the importance of educators in supporting student achievement and spotlight how health and environmental factors shape lifelong success and personal well-being.

With a data-driven understanding of how and where to invest, state and community leaders can develop cross-sector solutions. The Georgia Partnership and the EdQuest Georgia Coalition aim to inform, engage, and mobilize stakeholders around the leading indicators outlined in this report. The coalition stands ready to:

- help leaders set priorities,
- identify high-impact strategies, and
- evaluate whether their priorities and investments are yielding the outcomes that move Georgia closer to the North Star.

The report's Appendix provides references to where individuals can access data on current leading indicators. Working with the EdQuest Georgia Coalition, the Georgia Partnership will add new leading indicators to the EdQuest Georgia website when state and community leaders develop them.

Early Learning and Care

Factors that Support School Readiness

Positive birth outcomes: Young children born after 37 weeks and who weigh more than 5.5 pounds at birth are less at risk of learning and developmental challenges than their preterm and low-birthweight peers.

Developmental monitoring and screening: Parental monitoring of developmental milestones and formal screening by education and health professionals promote early detection and intervention of developmental conditions.

Parental engagement: Early and frequent interactions with caring adults help young children acquire social, emotional, and cognitive skills that prepare them for school.

Quality early learning: Children who complete two or more years of high-quality early childhood education are more likely to graduate from college than their peers who did not attend preschool or Pre-K.³

Leading Indicators: What Data Does Georgia Collect? *

Health and Environment

- Percent of infants born before 37 weeks: **14.0%**
- Percent of infants who weigh under 5.5 pounds at birth: **10.2%**
- Percent of children living in poverty: **18.8%**

Learning

- Number of children enrolled in Georgia Pre-K: **73,465**
- Percentage of four-year-olds enrolled in Georgia Pre-K: **56.2% (All children); 47.1% (Children from low-income backgrounds)**

*The figures provided above are summary data from 2023. The Partnership will publish detailed subgroup and trend data on the [EdQuest Georgia website](https://www.edquest.org/georgia).

3 Bustamante, A. S. et al. 2021, November 4. High-quality early child care and education: The gift that last a lifetime. Brookings. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/high-quality-early-child-care-and-education-the-gift-that-lasts-a-lifetime/>

Looking Ahead to 2033: What Data Do We Need?

The KIDS COUNT Data Center presents child and family statistics related to economic well-being, educational opportunity, and healthcare access. Georgia's child-serving agencies report enrollment and participation data via the Cross Agency Child Data System.

State and community leaders should use these existing databases to develop new leading indicators. These indicators can help determine how stakeholders evaluate current investments. State agency and nonprofit leaders will need to develop surveys and other measurement tools to collect data on proposed indicators.

Key Outcomes		Proposed Indicators
<i>Quality</i>	Current services meet the needs and expectations of children and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Georgia parents report they can access quality early care that meets their needs. Georgians have access to pediatricians, dentists, mental health clinicians, maternity care professionals, and home visiting practitioners.
<i>Effectiveness</i>	Early health and learning interventions prepare children for school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of young children considered school ready as measured by an evidence-based tool Percentage of children aged zero to five who receive follow up testing or services after undergoing initial developmental screenings
<i>Impact</i>	A higher percentage of Georgia's young children read on grade level.	<p>2033 Impact Indicator</p> <p>At least 50% of Georgia's third graders are proficient readers by 2033.</p>

Two Recommendations to Accelerate Progress Toward the North Star

- Child-serving state agencies create a public report about student needs and evidence-based solutions. The report pinpoints service gaps for children who would benefit from early intervention and support.
- Researchers evaluate the quality and effectiveness of home visiting, early intervention, and parent education strategies. Community leaders use the findings to coach other communities on how to design and execute similar strategies.

K-12 Education	
Factors that Support Deeper Learning	
Student attendance: Students who attend more than 90% of instructional days during the school year are more likely to reach academic milestones on time.	Student agency: To capitalize on what they have learned and to feel motivated, students must believe they can master new content using techniques they learned in the past.
Student voice: Educators can increase student engagement by demonstrating how student input informed instructional and student support strategies.	Quality teaching: By modeling self-belief and ensuring students master core content, educators prepare youth for post-secondary opportunities.
Leading Indicators: What Data Does Georgia Collect? *	
<p><i>Attendance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Percentage of students who attend more than 90% of instructional days during the school year: 78.7% <p><i>Readiness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Percentage of students scoring proficient or above on the Georgia Grade 3 English Language Arts Milestones Assessment: 39.0%Percentage of students scoring proficient or above on the Georgia Grade 8 Mathematics Milestones Assessment: 44.0% <p><i>Progress</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Percentage of high school students who complete three-course career pathways or at least one Technical Certificate of Credit: 44.0%Percentage of CTAE concentrators who complete a career pathway or Technical Certificate of Credit AND earn at least one industry-recognized credential: 55.0%Percent of high school graduates who enroll in post-secondary education and/or training programs within 16 months: 57.8% (Class of 2021-22) <p>*The figures provided above are state summary data from the 2023-24 school year unless otherwise indicated. The Partnership will publish detailed subgroup and trend data on the EdQuest Georgia website</p>	

Looking Ahead to 2033: What Data Do We Need?

Most current indicators focus on academic progress and performance. Creating indicators to assess student motivation and engagement can complement existing measures. Also, behavioral indicators can help education leaders identify opportunities to adapt existing strategies to increase student engagement. To collect data on proposed indicators, experts will need to develop surveys and other measurement tools.

Key Outcomes		Proposed Indicators
<i>Quality</i>	Current strategies meet the needs and expectations of all community stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students, parents, and educators report feeling satisfied with their schools and learning environments. Students report that their learning experiences were challenging, rigorous, and relevant.
<i>Effectiveness</i>	Instructional and student support strategies prepare youth for life and work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students report that they had the knowledge and skills to plan their post-secondary options. Percentage of students that meet academic benchmarks on time Percentage of students who have earned post-secondary credit while enrolled in high school
<i>Impact</i>	A higher percentage of high school graduates are ready for college and careers.	<p>2033 Impact Indicator</p> <p>Increase the percentage of high school graduates who meet the ACT college-readiness benchmarks.⁴</p>

Two Recommendations to Accelerate Progress Toward the North Star

- State leaders set readiness benchmarks in math, English, science, and writing in the eighth, 10th, and 11th grades. The benchmarks allow educators to individualize instruction for struggling students and expand access to early post-secondary programming for high performers.
- Districts invest in professional learning to build educators' capacity to promote positive school culture and climate.

⁴ The Georgia Partnership will use the ACT Benchmarks until state measures are available to assess student readiness.

Post-Secondary and Workforce Readiness

Factors that Support Completion of Post-Secondary Credentials

Academic Readiness: 74% of ACT test-takers who met ACT benchmarks in English, math, reading, and science and enrolled in a four-year institution earned a bachelor's degree within six years.⁵

College Planning: Students are more likely to earn credentials when they select post-secondary options that align with their interests and aptitudes.

Financial Support: 92% of seniors who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) had enrolled in a post-secondary program the fall after graduation, compared to 51% who do not complete the FAFSA.⁶

Institutional Support: Post-secondary institutions can improve completion rates by providing academic and career counseling and supporting basic needs, e.g., access to childcare, housing, and health and wellness services.

Leading Indicators: What Data Does Georgia Collect? *

Enrollment

- Percentage of high school graduates who enroll in post-secondary education and/or training programs within 16 months: **57.8% (Class of 2022)**
- Members of the Class of 2025 who completed the FAFSA: **76,315 or 61.1%**

Affordability

- Number and percentage of first-time freshmen at University System of Georgia institutions who receive the HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarships: **33,806 recipients; 72.3% (Fall 2023)**
- Percentage of college graduates who took out loans to fund their education and the average debt amount: **56.0% and \$27,759 (2019-2020)**

*The figures provided above are state summary data. The Partnership will publish detailed subgroup and trend data on the [EdQuest Georgia website](#).

⁵ Allen, J. and J. Radunzel. 2017, October. What are the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. ACT. Retrieved from <https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/pdfs/R1670-college-readiness-benchmarks-2017-11.pdf>

⁶ DeBaun, B. 2019, April 4. Survey Data Strengthen Association Between FAFSA Completion and Enrollment. NCAN. Retrieved from <https://www.ncan.org/news/456025/Survey-Data-Strengthen-Association-Between-FAFSA-Completion-and-Enrollment.htm>

Looking Ahead to 2033: What Data Do We Need?

Most current indicators focus on student readiness and performance. The state should create indicators that identify what motivates residents to enroll in post-secondary programs and what interventions support increased credential completion. Answering these questions could help state and institutional leaders reconfigure their strategies. A group of interested stakeholders should develop tools to collect data on new indicators.

Key Outcomes		Proposed Indicators
<i>Quality</i>	Current services meet the needs and expectations of students, communities, and employers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students report that they feel confident in their post-secondary plan and have considered the costs and benefits of various post-secondary options.
<i>Effectiveness</i>	Education and training programs prepare Georgians for the jobs of the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth in percent of Georgians who have earned short-term credentials Employers report that their new hires are ready for entry-level work. Graduates report feeling satisfied with their choice of career.
<i>Impact</i>	More Georgians pursue and earn post-secondary credentials of value.	<p>2033 Impact Indicator</p> <p>Increase the overall attainment rate to 65% by 2033, while accelerating credential completion rates for underserved groups by 30% above 2023 rates.</p>

Two Recommendations to Accelerate Progress Toward the North Star

- Develop state data infrastructure to determine the true post-secondary attainment rate, i.e., how many Georgians have earned any post-secondary credential, including degrees, certificates, certifications, occupational licenses, and technical diplomas.
- Collect data on student awareness, motivations, and behaviors that allows institutions to provide targeted outreach and support, focusing specifically on first-generation students, veterans, and residents with some post-secondary experience but no credential.

Teachers and Leaders	
Factors that Support Job Satisfaction	
<p>Preparation and support: Teachers feel better prepared and supported when they receive personalized learning and career guidance based on their needs, interests, and aptitudes.</p>	<p>Collegiality: Teachers report higher job satisfaction and personal well-being when they have positive relationships with school leaders and peers.</p>
<p>Resetting job expectations: Educators grow as professionals when given more autonomy to design, execute, and evaluate their instructional strategies.</p>	<p>Career advancement: Districts create formal job roles that allow outstanding educators to coach new teachers, deliver professional learning, and provide supplemental instruction to struggling students.</p>
Leading Indicators: What Data Does Georgia Collect? *	
<p><i>Preparation and Recruitment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and percentage of high schoolers enrolled in the Teaching as a Profession pathway: 8,140 and 1.4% (2022-2023) Number of candidates enrolled in certification pathways: 7,088 (2021-22) Number of candidates who completed certification programs: 4,468 (2011-22) <p><i>Workforce</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of educators teaching outside their certification area: 83.8% (2022-23) Annual retention rate for licensed educators: 90.1% (2023-24) <p>*The figures provided above are state summary data. The Partnership will publish detailed trend data on the EdQuest Georgia website.</p>	

Looking Ahead to 2033: What Data Do We Need?

While research can pinpoint the reasons why teachers ultimately leave the classroom, we lack statewide data on how teacher perceptions shape job satisfaction and the decision to stay in the profession. Research suggests that new teachers grow when they receive feedback from coaches and mentors. However, the state lacks data on how many teachers have access to quality resources that promote professional growth. To collect data on proposed indicators, experts will need to develop surveys and other measurement tools.

Key Outcomes		Proposed Indicators
<i>Quality</i>	Current services meet the needs and expectations of teachers and leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher perceptions of school leadership, learning resources, working conditions, and school culture. Number of educators who report that they had access to quality induction and professional learning supports.
<i>Effectiveness</i>	Professional learning and growth strategies increase teacher effectiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth in number of teachers entering formal teacher leadership roles, e.g., acting as mentors, academic interventionists, or professional learning facilitators
<i>Impact</i>	Efforts to improve teacher readiness and resilience contribute to higher retention rates.	<p>2033 Impact Indicator</p> <p>At least 75% of early-career educators stay in the profession through their fifth year by 2033.</p>

Two Recommendations to Accelerate Progress Toward the North Star

- Create or adopt a teacher engagement tool that allows state, district, and school leaders to obtain a comprehensive view of teacher perceptions and attitudes. Tools like Upbeat help leaders gauge teacher perspectives on school leadership, climate, professional feedback and support, and student learning environments.
- Develop a statewide survey that enables state and community leaders to learn more about the experiences, preferences, and expectations of (1) teachers and leaders, (2) students, and (3) parents, community leaders, and employers.

Community, Health, and Environment	
Factors that Support Personal Success and Well-Being	
<p>Physical and psychological safety: Students who report feeling safe at school are more likely to experience academic success than students who feel unsafe.</p>	<p>Student wellness: Students are more likely to attend school and engage in learning, when their physical, social, and behavioral needs are met.</p>
<p>Relationship and belonging: Teachers and school leaders promote learning and wellness when they prioritize strong relationships with students.</p>	<p>School culture: Deeper learning approaches, integrated student supports, and family and community engagement strategies promote positive school climate.</p>
Leading Indicators: What Data Does Georgia Collect? *	
<p><i>Community and Economic Context</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children experiencing poverty: 461,000, 18% (2023) Children experiencing food insecurity: 555,000, 22% (2021-23) Children who live in households that spend more than 30% of monthly income on housing: 708,000, 28% (2022) <p><i>Health and Well-Being</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student and educator perceptions of their health and well-being, as measured by the Georgia School Climate Surveys Access to primary care physicians, dentists, and mental health clinicians, defined as the ratio of residents to practitioners in a given county or region Prevalence of chronic conditions, e.g., asthma, depression, diabetes, obesity <p><i>School Culture and Climate</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student and educator perceptions related to academics, relationships, safety, and physical environment, as measured by the Georgia School Climate Surveys Number of discipline incidents and referrals reported by district and subgroup <p>*The Partnership will publish detailed data on healthcare access, school culture, and child and adolescent well-being on the EdQuest Georgia website</p>	

Looking Ahead to 2033: What Data Do We Need?

Districts have partnered with education, health, and civic leaders to identify non-academic factors that affect student success. A vision of public education that considers how family, community, and neighborhood factors affect student outcomes should result in strategies that are more responsive to student, community, and workforce needs. While the evidence of need exists, new leading indicators can help school and community leaders retool their strategies to support student success and well-being. To collect data on proposed indicators, experts will need to develop surveys and other measurement tools.

Key Outcomes		Proposed Indicators
<i>Quality</i>	Current services meet the needs and expectations of students, parents, educators, and the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student, parent, and educator perceptions of school culture and environment. Access, availability, and affordability of school and community resources.
<i>Effectiveness</i>	School and community interventions prime children and youth for future success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth in the number of English Learners, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and foster youth who meet academic milestones
<i>Impact</i>	Family and community supports address factors that limit education and economic opportunity.	<p>2033 Impact Indicator</p> <p>Reduce the statewide rate of chronic absenteeism – the percentage of students who miss more than 10% of days in a school year – by 50% by 2033.</p>

Two Recommendations to Accelerate Progress Toward the North Star

- Reconfigure student support strategies to (1) ensure they are sufficiently tailored to stakeholder needs and preferences and (2) founded in trauma-informed practice.
- Develop or adopt a self-assessment tool that allows district and school leaders to identify opportunities to partner with community resource providers.

Appendix A

Early Learning Indicators

Definition	Data Source	Web Source
Number and percentage of babies born under 5.5 pounds	Georgia Department of Health, Office of Health Indicators	Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Center
Number and percent of babies born before 37 weeks of gestation	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics	KIDS COUNT
Number and percent of children under age 18 who live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level	United States Census Bureau, Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates	KIDS COUNT
Number and percent of eligible four-year-olds enrolled in Georgia Pre-K	Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	KIDS COUNT
Number and percent of eligible four-year-olds enrolled in Georgia Pre-K	Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)	KIDS COUNT

K-12 Education Indicators

Definition	Data Source	Web Source
Percent of students who miss less than 10% of school days during the year	Georgia Department of Education	GaDOE Attendance Dashboard
Percent of students scoring proficient or above on the Georgia Grade 3 English Language Arts Milestones Assessment	Georgia Department of Education	GaDOE Georgia Milestones Dashboard
Percent of students scoring proficient or above on the Georgia Grade 8 Mathematics Milestones Assessment	Georgia Department of Education	GaDOE Georgia Milestones Dashboard
Percent of high school students who complete a CTAE pathway or earned a Technical Certificate of Credit	Georgia Department of Education	Georgia's CTAE Annual Report
Percent of CTAE concentrators who completed a career pathway or Technical Certificate of Credit and obtained a Credential of Value	Georgia Department of Education	Georgia's CTAE Annual Report
Percent of young adults who enroll in post-secondary programs within 16 months of high school graduation	Governor's Office of Student Achievement	High School Graduate Outcomes Dashboard

Post-Secondary Education and Workforce Indicators

Definition	Data Source	Web Source
Percent of young adults who enroll in post-secondary programs within 16 months of high school graduation	Governor's Office of Student Achievement	High School Graduate Outcomes Dashboard
Percent of high school seniors who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)	FAFSA Counts: United States Department of Education, Office of Federal Student Aid Grade 12 Counts: Georgia Department of Education	Class of 2025 HS Senior FAFSA Data
Percent of individuals who have earned post-secondary credentials	Lumina Foundation	2025 Stronger Nation Report
Number and percentage of first-time freshmen enrolled at USG institutions who receive the HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarships	University System of Georgia	Student Report 701a
Percent of individuals who graduate with student debt and the average debt amount	Institute for College Access & Success	Student Debt and the Class of 2020

Teacher and Leader Indicators

Definition	Data Source	Web Source
Number and percentage of high school students who are enrolled in the Teaching as a Pathway cluster	Georgia Department of Education	Educator Pipeline Dashboard
Number of candidates enrolled in certification pathways		
Number of candidates who completed certification programs		
Percentage of educators licensed to teach in their subject or grade level		
Percentage of licensed educators who continue to teach in Georgia public schools		
Percent of young adults who enroll in post-secondary programs within 16 months of high school graduation		

Community, Health, and Environmental Indicators

Definition	Data Source	Web Source
Number and percentage of Georgians under age 18 who live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level	United States Census Bureau, Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates	KIDS COUNT
Number and percentage of Georgians under age 18 who live in families that experienced food insecurity in the last 24 months	U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Food Security Supplement	KIDS COUNT
Number and percentage of Georgians under age 18 who live in households that spend more than 30% of monthly income on housing	U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey	KIDS COUNT
Student and educator perceptions of their health and well-being, safety, and school climate	Georgia Department of Education	Georgia School Climate Surveys
Access to primary care physicians, dentists, and mental health clinicians	University of Wisconsin, County Health Rankings and Roadmaps	Georgia Profile
Prevalence of chronic health conditions, e.g., asthma, depression, diabetes, and obesity	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	Chronic Disease Indicators Tool
Number of discipline incidents and referrals reported by district and by student subgroup	Governor's Office of Student Achievement	K-12 Discipline Dashboard



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Charting Educational Reform