



EdQuest Georgia
2026 State Policy Plan
March 2026



Georgia Partnership
FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

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The 2026 EdQuest Georgia State Policy Plan

Five Priorities to Move Georgia Closer to the North Star

Since 2022, the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (Georgia Partnership) has called on state policymakers, education leaders, and the business sector to unite around a “**North Star**” – ensuring 65% of Georgians aged 25 to 64 have earned a post-secondary credential of value by 2033.

To accelerate progress toward the North Star, the Georgia Partnership released the first of five, two-year state plans in August 2023. Throughout 2025, [EdQuest Coalition members](#) reviewed the current landscape and selected priorities that would support the development of a second state plan and guide the group’s advocacy efforts through December 2027.

The 2026 EdQuest Georgia State Policy Plan (2026 Plan) spotlights five priorities. Each priority profile answers three questions:

- How does the priority create a foundation for pursuing Big Bets, generational initiatives that secure Georgia’s future?
- What state and community actions accelerate momentum toward Big Bets and the North Star?
- What key outcomes helps Georgia’s leaders understand whether they are making progress?

The [EdQuest Georgia website](#) complements the 2026 Plan by providing data, research, and policy resources that help state and community leaders implement the five priorities.

2026-2027 Priorities

Priority
Birth to Age 8: Expand access to high-quality early care and learning options that leverage new state and corporate investments.
K-12 Education: Champion research-based strategies that improve student achievement and post-graduate outcomes, including often-overlooked factors such as student attendance, engagement, and wellness.
Post-Secondary and Workforce Readiness: Leverage the “Top State for Talent” initiative to ensure more Georgians can achieve quality of life by earning credentials of value.
Educator Recruitment and Retention: Improve student achievement by focusing on the constellation of factors that support teacher growth and engagement, including professional autonomy, personal well-being, and strong school and district leadership.
Barriers to Learning and Well-Being: Address learning and wellness barriers by investing in shared infrastructure – community health hubs and networks, coordinated data and referral systems, and cross-sector partnerships.

EdQuest Principles

The 2026 Plan embodies four principles strongly correlated with factors that promote individual well-being, community resilience, and state economic security.

Opportunity for All State and community leaders invest in strategies that ensure more Georgians enjoy economic stability and security.	Responsiveness Strategies meet Georgians where they are, accelerating opportunity and providing smoother transitions to the next education or career milestone.
Focusing on Outcomes Georgia’s leaders set clear outcomes that guide the implementation and evaluation of programs and strategies.	Authentic Partnerships State leaders support local cross-sector partnerships by delivering resources, training, and technical assistance.

Our Commitment to Advocacy & Action

The 2026 Plan brings coherence to a fragmented ecosystem — one in which goals, priorities, and strategies are often unaligned.

The Georgia Partnership and EdQuest Coalition members will help state and community leaders advance priorities and investments based on what residents need to achieve economic stability and high quality of life. The EdQuest Coalition has identified three ways this alignment and prioritization can accelerate momentum toward the North Star.

1. Investing in Talent

Promote educational and economic opportunity by ensuring more Georgians have access to quality child care and high-value career pathways.

2. Optimizing Local Strategies

Spotlight programs and practices that address perennial challenges. Use data and research to increase the quality, effectiveness, and impact of local strategies.

3. Aligning Priorities and Investments

Reconfigure state systems and strategies to ensure investments align with new priorities and yield the outcomes defined by policymakers.

Our Call to Action: An Invitation to Pursue Cross-Sector Solutions

While the 2026 Plan recommends specific actions that state and local leaders should implement over the next two years, the document does not prescribe a new path for Georgia. Instead, the 2026 Plan encourages leaders to leverage current assets and reform existing strategies to align with these goals and priorities. The plan also emphasizes the importance of working across silos to ensure that communities develop talent strategies that ensure long-term economic stability – for families, communities, and the state-at-large.

FOCUS AREA: Birth to Eight Strategy

PRIORITY: Expand access to high-quality early care and learning options that leverage new state and corporate investments.

Framework 2033 Big Bet

Investing in a statewide child development plan that addresses the conditions stifling success and well-being.

How the 2026 Priority Sets the Stage for a Statewide Child Development Plan

In 2023, the EdQuest Coalition called on state leaders to create a child development plan that ensures more children receive the education, health, and family supports that promote success and well-being.

To set the stage for a unified plan, the Georgia Partnership recommends that state and community leaders explore ways to increase state and corporate investment in the early care sector.

Increasing access to high-quality early childhood education is a crucial first step in closing opportunity gaps. While Georgia's leaders promote child care access, education and community health experts should collaborate and draft a child development plan that identifies strategies that support the achievement of academic and developmental milestones.

The draft plan will also spotlight local programs and strategies that inspire state policymakers to enact a statewide strategy.

Recommended Actions

Create a new early care economic model focused on attracting state and corporate investment

Center directors operate on slim margins. Dependence on parent tuition means that providers cannot raise rates to pay early childhood educators more. New state and private sector investments can grow provider networks, creating more sustainable and predictable access to child care for families.

Provide incentives for education, civic, and corporate leaders to develop regional early care strategies

In 2025, the Georgia General Assembly enacted [House Bill 136](#), which created a corporate income tax credit for businesses who subsidize child care costs for their employees. Building on this foundation, the state leaders should explore additional incentives that encourage public-private partnerships in communities.

Key Outcome

Increase third grade reading proficiency to 50% by 2033, up from the current rate of 35%.

Third grade reading proficiency is a key predictor of future academic achievement and quality of life. Investments in integrated education and health strategies will increase the odds that our youngest children have opportunities to succeed.

EdQuest Resources

[Foundations for Learning](#)

[Leading Indicators](#)



FOCUS AREA: K-12 Education

PRIORITY: Champion research-based strategies that improve student achievement and post-graduate outcomes, including often overlooked factors such as student attendance, engagement, and wellness.

Framework 2033 Big Bet

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

How the 2026 Priority Ensures More Graduates Are Ready to Succeed	Recommended Actions
<p>School systems have revamped instructional strategies and student support services since the onset of the pandemic. For example, districts have partnered with nonprofits and community health providers to improve student wellness.</p> <p>Many districts have created new initiatives to address chronic absenteeism and student disengagement, two factors that threaten student success and long-term well-being.</p> <p>When healthy students attend school regularly, educators can model the social, emotional, and academic mindsets that contribute to high student engagement.</p> <p>Georgia’s leaders should pursue deeper learning approaches that prepare today’s graduates for tomorrow’s careers.</p>	<p><i>Develop attendance strategies focused on early identification and intervention</i></p> <p>The pandemic underscored the need for school and community leaders to develop comprehensive strategies that match the depth and severity of the challenges arising from chronic absenteeism.</p> <p><i>Increase student curiosity and engagement by implementing deeper learning approaches</i></p> <p>Districts should reimagine learning in Grade six to 12 classrooms, encouraging students to take ownership of their learning.</p> <p><i>Support post-secondary readiness by expanding access to work-based learning</i></p> <p>Career pathways should prepare graduates for what they need: mastery of in-demand skills, access to high-wage employment, and the opportunity to continue their training.</p>
Key Outcome	
<p><i>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 31%.</i></p> <p>84% of ACT test takers who met all four college readiness benchmarks earned post-secondary credentials within six years, compared to 38% that met none. Investments in career-themed learning should close the post-secondary readiness gap.</p>	
EdQuest Resources	
Advanced Instructional System	Leading Indicators

FOCUS AREA: Post-Secondary and Workforce Readiness

PRIORITY: Leverage the “Top State for Talent” initiative to ensure more Georgians can achieve quality of life by earning credentials of value.

Framework 2033 Big Bet

Building a system of coordinated and aligned post-secondary pathways that ensure Georgians acquire skills and earn credentials that meet employers’ needs.

How the 2026 Priority Ensures More Georgians Earn Credentials of Value	Recommended Actions
<p>In 2023, 42.2% of Georgians had earned credentials of value – degrees, certificates, or certifications that produce a 15% income premium above what residents with high school diplomas earn.</p> <p>To reach the North Star goal of 65% credential attainment, Georgia’s leaders should address affordability challenges by drawing on new investments from corporate and community partners.</p> <p>By leveraging the Top State for Talent initiative, communities can develop regional talent strategies that forge greater alignment between post-secondary programs and regional workforce needs, while also accelerating opportunity for the 13% of residents with some college but no credential.</p> <p>State leaders take pride in Georgia being the Number One State for Business. Georgia will retain this important distinction if we also strive to be the Top State for Post-Secondary Opportunity.</p>	<p>The EdQuest Coalition champions a three-part strategy to expand educational opportunity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Affordability</i> <p>State leaders should redesign student aid and institutional funding strategies to ensure investments expand educational opportunity and align with the state’s talent needs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <i>Alignment</i> <p>Building on existing incentives, the General Assembly should fund initiatives that encourage the private sector to hire students as apprentices and interns.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. <i>Acceleration</i> <p>State leaders should create an adult learner initiative that encourages residents with some college experience to earn credentials of value.</p>

Key Outcome

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

Georgia’s leaders should invest in strategies that ensure nontraditional students, adult learners, disengaged youth, and low-income residents can access post-secondary education.

EdQuest Resources

[Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success](#)

[Leading Indicators](#)

FOCUS AREA: Educator Recruitment and Retention

PRIORITY: Improve student achievement by focusing on the constellation of factors that support teacher growth and engagement, including professional autonomy, personal well-being, and strong school and district leadership.

Framework 2033 Big Bet

Developing a statewide educator workforce strategy that prepares early-career educators for excellence and provides veteran teachers with career advancement opportunities.

How the 2026 Priority Ensures Excellent Educators Remain in the Profession	Recommended Actions
<p>Teacher quality is the most important school-based variable associated with student success. Therefore, creating more favorable conditions to recruit well-qualified candidates and retain highly effective educators should prepare more students for post-secondary opportunities.</p> <p>High teacher and school-leader turnover rates negatively affect student success. Addressing early-career exit through tailored recruitment and retention programs is one way to create more continuity and stability within the teacher workforce.</p> <p>In 2025, the Professional Standards Commission (PSC), state agencies, and educational associations developed a statewide strategic plan to support teacher recruitment and retention. The EdQuest Coalition will support the development and execution of the plan by collecting feedback from the field on what practitioners need.</p>	<p><i>Deliver early-career experiences that prepare educators for excellence</i></p> <p>The PSC Plan requests that the legislature fund the expansion of the state teacher apprenticeship program and create a stipend for candidates completing their student teaching or clinical residency requirement.</p> <p><i>Leverage current professional growth strategies to help educators execute quality practices</i></p> <p>Districts should implement induction and mentorship strategies modeled on Georgia Department of Education guidance.</p> <p><i>Create formal teacher leadership roles to support instructional excellence</i></p> <p>The PSC Plan also endorses the revision of tiered certification rules, which could streamline entry into teacher and school leadership roles.</p>

Key Outcome

Increase five-year retention rates for new teachers from 65% to 75% by 2033.

High teacher turnover has a negative effect on school culture and student success. Georgia’s leaders should adopt strategies that improve working conditions, strengthen preparation and induction, and create more opportunities for career advancement.

EdQuest Resources

[Quality Teaching](#)

[Leading Indicators](#)

FOCUS AREA: Barriers to Learning and Well-Being

PRIORITY: Address learning and wellness barriers by investing in shared infrastructure, e.g., community health hubs and networks, coordinated data and referral systems, and cross-sector partnerships.

Framework 2033 Big Bet

Supporting local efforts that address residents' physical, academic, social, and emotional needs.

How the Priority Promotes Personal Success and Well-Being	Recommended Actions
<p>Over the last five years, schools have increased healthcare access by providing services on campus or via referral to community health providers.</p> <p>Communities should build upon this strong foundation by creating community health strategies that support well-being for all residents.</p> <p>Community health hubs are a one-stop-shop for health and social services. Hubs facilitate the delivery of health services to residents who lack transportation or who struggle to afford healthcare. Providing multiple services at a single location increases the likelihood that residents receive services that help them maintain health and wellness.</p> <p>By addressing residents' unmet health needs, communities can focus on strategies that expand access to educational and economic opportunity.</p>	<p><i>Tailor services to community needs</i></p> <p>Community leaders should assess local health needs and locate assets. Accurate data and needs assessments can help guide community decisions, partnerships, and investments.</p> <p><i>Expand access through cost-share model</i></p> <p>State leaders should establish a set of priorities that allow communities to improve and modernize their health infrastructure. For instance, creating tax incentives could encourage health providers and employers to invest in community hubs.</p> <p><i>Jump start efforts by providing core services to children and adolescents</i></p> <p>Local leaders can roll out comprehensive health and wellness strategies for all residents by first delivering core health services in schools.</p>

Key Outcome

Increase the percentage of Georgians with a healthcare provider to 90% by 2033.

Expanding access to health care is a key driver of educational attainment and economic stability. Georgia's leaders should invest in community health initiatives that improve access to care.

EdQuest Resources

[Supportive Learning Environments](#)

[Leading Indicators](#)

A Call for Urgency and Shared Responsibility

The 2026 EdQuest Georgia State Policy Plan provides an affirmative vision for public education and workforce development that allows state leaders to recast priorities, evaluate investments, and adopt high-impact strategies.

A future-forward vision would ensure more Georgians receive the resources and opportunities they need to succeed.

With a public agenda to guide and focus decision-making, Georgia's leaders can rise above divisive and polarizing rhetoric to move the state's public education and workforce systems forward. The 2026 Plan creates a framework for how leaders can pursue cross-sector action. Developing consensus on high-level, education and workforce development priorities will allow leaders to develop and implement high-impact strategies.

The five priorities outlined in the 2026 Plan form the basis for policy reform. The 2026 Plan was developed by the Georgia Partnership and a coalition of state policymakers, advocates, and education leaders focusing on Georgia's greatest needs and opportunities. The timeline that we set for building a strong foundation for advocacy and action guides our work and, hopefully, inspires yours.



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Charting Educational Reform