

Georgia's ESSA Plan Development Process

BACKGROUND

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has been committed to a plan development process that is truly stakeholder driven. Over one-hundred and forty Georgians representing students, parents, educators, policymakers, and community members from across the state were actively involved in the development of Georgia's State Plan with thousands of Georgians expressing their feedback throughout the process. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) afforded Georgia the opportunity to reflect, reevaluate, and refine educational policies and programs ensuring they are classroom-centered and child-focused.

STATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The State Advisory Committee consists of over forty stakeholders representing state agencies, non-profit and civic organizations, education advocacy groups, policymakers, superintendents, parents, and students.

- Students
- *Parents:* Georgia Parent Teacher Association (GaPTA) and other parent representation
- *Educators:* Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE), Georgia Association of Educators (GAE), and EducatorsFirst
- Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL) and Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs)
- *Superintendents:* Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA) and other superintendent representation
- Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA)
- *Higher Education:* Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and University System of Georgia (USG)
- Non-profit: Southern Education Foundation and 100 Black Men of Atlanta
- *State agencies:* Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), Student Finance Commission (GSFC), Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC), Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Department of Early Learning (DECAL), and Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS)
- *Charters:* Georgia Charter Schools Association and Georgia Charter Systems Foundation
- *Economic Development:* Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPEE), Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and Georgia Association for Career Technical Education
- *Recognized Leaders:* 2017 Teacher of the Year and 2015 National Superintendent of the Year
- *Policymakers:* Governor's Office, Lt. Governor's Office, and lawmakers
- State School Superintendent and State Board of Education

Meetings were facilitated by the Carl Vinson Institute with members of the Advisory Committee developing focus areas and guiding principles for each of the sections of ESSA as well as reviewing stakeholder feedback and providing feedback themselves on the proposed plan.

WHAT IS ESSA?

The *Every Student Succeeds Act*, commonly referred to as ESSA, earned bi-partisan approval in 2015.

States were freed from their *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) waiver agreements and given the responsibility to develop state plans to support education.

ESSA significantly scaled back the authority of the Secretary of Education and U.S. Department of Education. Though ESSA gave states additional authority and flexibility over their education system, wholesale flexibility was not granted and statutory requirements vary in specificity from issue-to-issue.

Georgia has sought out maximum flexibility while creating a cohesive and aligned plan that is responsive to stakeholder feedback and supports our vision of *offering a holistic education to each and every child in the state*.

To learn more about Georgia's plan development process visit:

GaDOE.org/ESSA



WORKING GROUPS

Each of Georgia's ESSA workgroups are made up of a cross-section of twenty individuals with five members representing different areas of GaDOE and fifteen members representing stakeholders. Each workgroup was chaired by a GaDOE leader and key stakeholder. There were six working groups organized in total:

1. **Accountability** — GaDOE.org/ESSA-Accountability
2. **Assessment** — GaDOE.org/ESSA-Assessment
3. **Federal Programs to Support School Improvement** — GaDOE.org/ESSA-Improvement
4. **Education of the Whole Child** — GaDOE.org/ESSA-WholeChild
5. **Educator and Leader Development** — GaDOE.org/ESSA-Development
6. **Communications** — Made up of communications staff from major groups and organizations, this working group was charged with soliciting feedback as well as communicating aspects of Georgia's Plan.

Note: Visit the links in order to view a 2-page overview for each of the groups.

GaDOE will keep these workgroups intact in order to provide on-going feedback on the implementation of Georgia's Plan.

HOW WAS INITIAL FEEDBACK FROM GEORGIANS GATHERED?

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) held eight feedback sessions across the state. These were opportunities for parents, students, educators, business and industry, and community members to share their thoughts and concerns. Feedback was compiled, analyzed, and summarized by a third party so participants could engage in candid conversations.

Feedback sessions were also held with each of the State School Superintendent's advisory councils, representing middle and high school students, parents, teachers, and district superintendents. Business and industry, as well as civil rights organizations, were also engaged.

GaDOE utilized social media, a dedicated ESSA email address for comments, as well as public survey to gather feedback.

WHAT DID GEORGIANS SAY?

Common themes that emerged can be found in the feedback summary report at: GaDOE.org/ESSAFeedback. This report was compiled through a third party evaluator.

Feedback themes, along with the response to each of those themes, are embedded within Georgia's State ESSA Plan.

TIMELINE

- **May 2016 — April 2017** — State Advisory Committee and working groups convene. GaDOE provides multiple opportunities for stakeholder feedback and to communicate ESSA developments
- **April 2017** — All decisions and items completed by working groups to finalize draft.
- **June 15** — 30 day public review period of Georgia's State ESSA Plan. Visit: GaDOE.org/ESSA
- **June 15-July 14** — Co-chairs host public webinars to gain feedback during 30-day period.
- **July 14-July 24** — Feedback is compiled and presented to the working groups and advisory committee
- **July 24-Aug 4** — Working groups reconvene to discuss feedback and make revisions based on feedback.
- **Aug 4-Aug 11** — Finalize all aspects of plan to submit to the Governor.
- **Aug 11-Sept 10** — Governor's review period of final plan.
- **Sept 11-Sept 18** — Georgia's plan is finalized for revision.
- **Sept 18, 2017** — Georgia's State Plan is submitted.

