2020-2024: Georgia On the Move

Georgia Department of Education's Strategic Plan





Updated July 1, 2019

Working Together to Educate Georgia's Future

My goal as State School Superintendent is to improve outcomes and expand opportunities for Georgia's public K-12 students. Through child-focused and classroomcentered policies, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) is working to ensure that all children who graduate from our public schools are ready to learn, ready to live, and ready to lead. Simply said, we are preparing our children for life, not a test.

That will only happen, however, if all stakeholders work together. Partnerships between the GaDOE, Governor's Office, State Board of Education, General Assembly and other state agencies are vital. So are relationships with educators, parents, students, business leaders, and community members. Since taking office, my team has worked to strengthen those relationships.



Internally, I've worked to create a culture of collaboration and

innovation at the Georgia Department of Education. Staff from across the agency are working together more as a team. We actively engage other state agencies/organizations and education stakeholders to work together to improve our efforts. The Department's approach continues to shift from a focus on control and compliance to a culture of service and support.

I believe for Georgia's students to achieve success we must ensure a strong foundation of the fundamentals -- including literacy and numeracy -- in the early grades, and increase relevance and opportunities in the later grades.

Bringing on a literacy and early childhood education expert to head our Teaching and Learning team, as well as forging strong partnerships with the Governor's Office and local communities, we are breaking down silos and focusing our efforts to increase literacy for students.

I applaud and strongly support Governor Kemp's record of prioritizing public education in the state budget. Under Governor Kemp's leadership, our state continued the full funding of QBE and provided additional funding to provide raises for our teachers, double mental health services in schools, and increase safety and security efforts at the school level. I share the Governor's commitment to strengthen the teacher pipeline, increase literacy rates, protect local control, let our teachers teach, put our students first, and produce a strong workforce.

Our Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) program is forming stronger partnerships with business and industry to ensure greater relevance and opportunity for our

students. Students who complete a CTAE career pathway have a 96% graduation rate. Georgia's dual enrollment program is expanding post-secondary access and strengthening the bridge between high school and college. Our state's Advanced Placement (AP) program is a model for the nation. Across subgroups, students who take just one AP course have a 97% graduation rate.

In line with the Georgia Department of Education's mission of offering a holistic education to each and every child in our state, we've continued to focus on fine arts, world language, computer science, STEM/STEAM, physical activity and play, school climate, and developing tools and supports for the whole child. We believe this focus paves the way for a more balanced and personalized education for our children.

Looking ahead, we are spearheading initiatives that will strengthen partnerships between schools and business and industry, enhance the quality and support of school counseling, personalize professional learning for teachers and leaders, organize and deliver instructional tools/resources in a more effective way, implement a department-wide framework for supporting students and schools, and continue to expand high-quality opportunities for all students.

With the approval of Georgia's *Every Student Succeeds Act* state plan, we have an enormous opportunity to reshape Georgia education and get rid of the standardized, one-size-fits-all model that became prevalent under No Child Left Behind. The federal overreach has been dialed back. We can now create a system that offers a holistic, personalized educational pathway for each child, with a strong focus on foundational skills, an expanded and more well-rounded education system, responsible accountability and elevation of the teaching profession. We invited stakeholders from across the state into our ESSA plan development process to ensure all Georgians have a voice in creating our vision for public education.

Our state has a history of pulling together and finding the opportunities within our challenges. No opportunity is greater than the 1.7 million students and 100,000+ teachers in our classrooms. I believe the last 4+ years have demonstrated a strong record of success:

- 81.6% graduation rate,
- outpacing the nation in ACT and SAT,
- strongest-ever gains in state assessments,
- across-the-board increases in school performance,
- rising literacy rates, and the
- largest decrease in high stakes testing in our state's history.

I appreciate your service to our state and look forward to working together as partners in *Educating Georgia's Future*.

Richard Woods

Richard Woods State School Superintendent

Who We Are

We are servant leaders. Innovators. Educators, parents, grandparents, neighbors, and lifelong learners.

We are the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), a state agency firmly committed to working together as one team to educate Georgia's future.

We have the responsibility of playing a leadership role in charting a course for education for our state – not through top-down or unilateral directions but by setting a "true north" vision, focusing on what's best for our children, and walking in stride with our districts and communities.



We believe that a government agency must not only be efficient and effective but must be

innovative, be bold, and be responsive to and representative of who we serve – our educators, parents, students, and communities.

Georgians have a higher expectation of their education system – not only increased outcomes but also expanded opportunities for our children. The Georgia Department of Education is meeting that challenge head-on by focusing on the whole child, breaking down organizational siloes, and cultivating new and strengthening existing relationships with state and local agencies, non-profit organizations, and business leaders.

We believe in the power of service and support over perpetuating fear and failure as a true catalyst for educational change. Not only do we believe that each and every student, educator, school, and district can succeed, but we believe our agency has a shared responsibility in ensuring their success by delivering high-quality, aligned service and support. Their success is our success.

Each child deserves a strong foundation of the fundamentals that form a launchpad to pathways driven and informed by passions, potential, and purpose. We are committed to a readiness for our students that goes beyond just preparing for a test or college and career, but about ensuring our children – our future -- are ready for life.

We will serve as a model to our districts and schools by challenging ourselves to continuously improve, streamline services and supports, grow as leaders, and work as one.

Our focus is on the child over the institution.

Our Mission and Vision

MISSION

Offering a holistic education¹ to each and every child² in our state.

¹ Ensuring a well-balanced education with expanded opportunities for students

² Realizing our students are more than data points, percentages, and percentiles but are individuals with names, dreams, passion, and potential

VISION

Educating Georgia's future¹ by graduating students who are ready to learn, ready to live, and ready to lead².

¹ Origin of the agency's tagline "Educating Georgia's Future"; ensuring our agency stays focused on the future – our children ² Defines a new educational readiness beyond a narrow scope of content areas or coursework and beyond college and career – preparing students for life

Georgia is emerging as a national educational leader in pursuing and implementing childfocused and classroom-centered policies.

For decades, the term *educational readiness* has focused narrowly on academic readiness alone. *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* and the reforms that followed prompted states and schools to focus largely on math and English Language Arts (ELA) academic content. Resistance to this overly restrictive focus, coupled with a state waiver process from NCLB, led to the inclusion of other core content areas like science and social studies as part of the academic focus. With the passage of the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*, Georgia now has the flexibility to make education decisions for the whole child.

Although federal legislation has proven to be a catalyst for education reform throughout the nation, the rights and roles of students and teachers have been overshadowed by rapid implementation of new systems and mandates. In short, the federal role has narrowed Georgia's flexibility and authority in the area of public education, thereby limiting educators' ability to respond to individual student needs. With an increase in collaboration at the state level and an emphasis on greater flexibility at the federal level, the Georgia Department of Education engages educators, school leaders, and other stakeholders to ensure that students in Georgia's public schools graduate *ready to learn, ready to live, and ready to lead.*

5

READY TO LEARN

In contrast with NCLB's one-size-fits-all mantra, which assumed every child would go to a four-year college, Georgia has spearheaded efforts to provide multiple avenues for success via traditional colleges and universities, technical schools, apprenticeship programs, and military service. The passage of ESSA better aligns federal policy with the state's focus on providing multiple pathways for students to achieve success. Greater flexibility and trust allow educational professionals to personalize learning by setting challenging goals as well as providing feedback and supports so each child can reach his or her fullest potential. By leveraging technology, using resources effectively and efficiently, implementing standards that focus on essential knowledge and concepts, promoting deep learning, affording teachers enough time to remediate or enrich instruction, and providing high-quality service and support to Georgia's school leaders and teachers, our state can ensure that every child is *ready to learn*.

READY TO LIVE

Georgia has the opportunity to expand the definition of readiness to reflect a more holistic approach to public education – one that provides fine arts opportunities, ensures safe and healthy learning environments, prioritizes relevant coursework, and allows stakeholders to become fully engaged.

Education is about life. A high-quality education should provide learning opportunities, tools, and knowledge necessary for students to experience a high quality of life as they become adults. A strong foundation of the fundamentals in the early grades, coupled with a system that identifies and cultivates the strengths, passions, and potential of students in the later grades, is key to ensuring that every child graduates *ready to live*.

READY TO LEAD

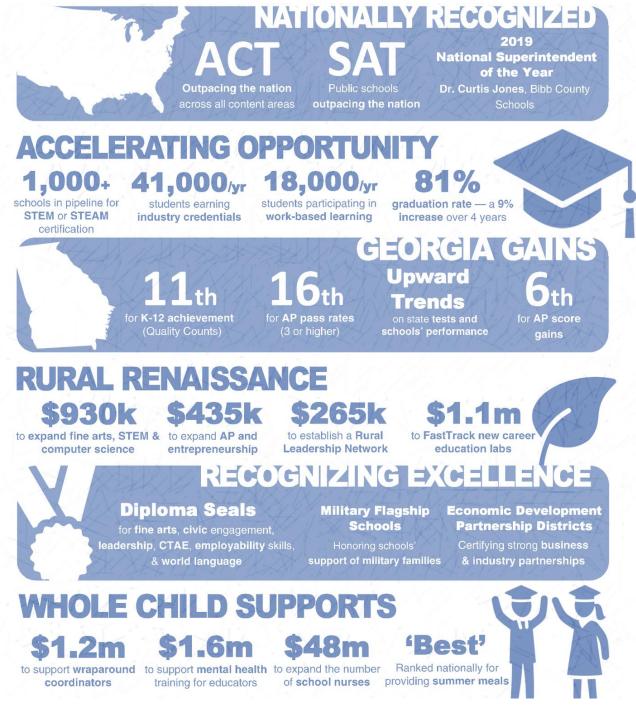
Whether in the business and professional world, the community, or a religious organization, life affords many opportunities to play a leadership role by serving others. Leaders think critically, communicate and collaborate with others, display professionalism, act ethically, hold themselves accountable, and develop and carry out a compelling vision. Creating an education system that fosters soft skills, civic awareness, learning by doing, teamwork, innovative thinking, and real-world relevance will ensure that every child acquires those attributes and is *ready to lead*.

The pursuit of a high-quality public education for every child is a responsibility – and an opportunity – we all share. It requires the collaborative work of state agencies, post-secondary institutions, nonprofit organizations, and civic groups.

Together, this shared vision ensures a high standard of educational quality across the state of Georgia while giving rural, suburban, and urban communities the flexibility to meet their individual local needs.

What We've Accomplished – Together

Georgia education is on the move and heading in the right direction – a testament to the hard work, dedication, and passion of our educators and students across the state.



2020-2024 Strategic Plan



Our agency must **lead through collaboration** and must shift the focus from one that is primarily compliance and control to one that **provides true service and support**.

-- Richard Woods, State School Superintendent

Committed to Continuous Improvement

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has adopted Georgia's Systems for Continuous Improvement, a common framework for improvement to align the internal and external processes, procedures, tools, resources, services, and supports of the agency.



INTERNAL USE ONLY

Georgia's Systems for Continuous Improvement provides a framework to structure, organize, and communicate our efforts without relying on an organizational chart. This approach removes barriers, breaks down siloes, and fosters more cohesion and alignment.

Our "Who"

The center of our common framework is the Whole Child. The Georgia Department of Education's work isn't about impacting institutions – instead we're focused on supporting learning and expanding the opportunities of children. Though we work with districts, schools, and other entities, the child must always remain the focus of our work.

Supporting the Whole Child means expanding educational opportunities beyond the core content areas and coordinating services and supports to remove non-academic barriers to student achievement.

We are committed to ensuring each and every child is safe, healthy, supported, engaged, and challenged in Georgia schools.

Our Foundation

The outermost ring (blue) represents the foundation of our work. Within the Georgia Department of Education, this foundation is made up of:

- Core functions (legal, policy, human resources, finance and business operations, internal audits, communications, and IT) that provide critical logistical resources and supports to sustain ongoing educational improvement and
- Key principles that sustain and strengthen the positive transformation of our agency:

• HIGH QUALITY SERVICE AND SUPPORT

One of the foremost priorities of the Georgia Department of Education is to provide service and support to districts, school leaders, and educators. We place an emphasis on the quality of resources, professional learning opportunities, and service over the quantity. Connecting the dots among policies, aligning programs and initiatives, and streamlining the processes and requirements at the state level empowers districts and schools to truly leverage flexibility and focus on local needs.

• TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

Our students deserve a 21st-century education that equips them with the tools, knowledge, and talents to thrive in modern society. Providing needed technological tools, infrastructure, and resources can increase the effectiveness of educators and school leaders as well as the engagement of parents and students. Expanding the use of technology enables the personalization of our education system and serves as a medium by which Georgia Department of Education resources can be efficiently and seamlessly shared with districts.

• INNOVATION

Innovation drives engagement, improvement, and change. It's our responsibility to create an environment both internally with staff, and externally with districts, schools, and classrooms, in which innovation, creativity, and bold ideas are encouraged, recognized, and valued. The Georgia Department of Education serves as a model for districts by spurring and pursuing innovative approaches to address common challenges. Innovation is fostered locally by providing flexibility and empowering leaders and educators.

• FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

The Georgia Department of Education works to balance flexibility for school districts with accountability to taxpayers who support those districts. State-level requirements for local school districts must be streamlined, and mechanisms must be in place to ensure greater transparency for stakeholders. At the Department level, greater collaboration and cooperation across the agency as well as partnerships with other state agencies, nonprofit organizations, civic groups, and business and industry must be adopted in order to grow capacity, maximize fiscal effectiveness, and ensure sustainability.

• COLLABORATION, COOPERATION, AND COMMUNICATION

The Georgia Department of Education is committed to championing childfocused, classroom-centered policies – and that's impossible to do without maintaining close, collaborative contact with the people who feel the impact of those policies. Our focus is on developing strong relationships with state agencies, post-secondary institutions, nonprofit organizations, civic groups, business and industry representatives, and policymakers. Georgia's students and teachers are served best when we are responsive to their educational needs. Internally, structures and processes will continue to be developed and implemented to encourage greater collaboration and coordination across our agency.

Our "How"

The next ring (green) represents our cycle of continuous improvement, a process of continuing to push ourselves out of compliance and complacency -- to grow as leaders, solve problems, and be responsive to the needs of those we serve. Our process for continuous improvement includes the following steps:

- Identify Needs
- Select Interventions
- Plan Implementation
- Implement Plan
- Examine Progress

Our "What"

The inner ring (orange/pink) represents areas we are working collectively to impact. These areas will increase the outcomes and expand the opportunities of Georgia's students. They are not exclusively tied to one area of the agency or the other, nor do these areas function in isolation but must work as one – just like our agency – to ensure improvement takes place. These key areas of impact are:

- Effective Leadership
- Coherent Instruction
- Professional Capacity
- Supportive Learning Environment
- Family and Community Engagement

Our Shared Values

At the Georgia Department of Education, we value an organizational culture which expects, fosters, and recognizes:

- Classroom-centered and child-focused mindset
- Continuous improvement
- High-quality service and support
- Innovation and creativity
- Professionalism and integrity
- Solutions-driven, collaborative leadership

Goals

The Georgia Department of Education has a talented and dedicated staff who are committed to ensuring each and every child in our state is afforded a high-quality and holistic public education.

In our renewed efforts, we turn our focus to several strategic goals:

COHERENT INSTRUCTION

- **1** Revise/develop and implement viable academic standards that engage learners with essential knowledge, skills, and enduring concepts.
- 2 Increase the percentage of K-5 students with a strong knowledge of foundational skills and concepts.
- **3** Increase the percentage of high school students who graduate ready for enrollment, employment, or enlistment.

WHOLE CHILD FOCUS

4 Expand educational opportunities and non-academic supports in order to maximize student engagement, meet student needs/interests, and ensure the relevance of learning.

PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY & EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

5 Elevate districts, schools, leaders, and educators through high-quality, tiered and tailored service and support.

SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

6 Foster a safe, healthy, and positive learning climate in every school.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

7 Engage in effective communication and meaningful stakeholder input/feedback to strengthen the perception of public education and to inform decision-making.

OVERARCHING PRIORITIES

Together, our top priorities provide an overarching mission and direction for our work. We are focused both on providing the best possible resources to support student learning, and on continuing to improve our organization and processes so we can more effectively and efficiently deliver those resources.

- 1. Streamline and align processes, procedures, services, and supports.
- 2. Leverage the experience and expertise of teams across the agency (*Continuous Improvement Teams*) to provide tiered and tailored support.
- 3. Provide high-quality tools, resources, and professional development that are responsive to needs and support continuous improvement.
- 4. Provide assessible and actionable data and information.
- 5. Strengthen collective impact through relationships and alignment with agencies, non-profits, businesses, etc.
- 6. Identify and share best practices/evidence-based innovations and interventions.
- 7. Foster change and improvement through proactive coaching and supports, rather than reactive consequences.
- 8. Personalize learning for both students and educators.
- 9. Stay current or ahead of educational trends and be an educational leader on the state and national levels.
- 10. Provide coordinated academic and non-academic supports to increase student achievement.

COHERENT INSTRUCTION

We are working to prepare Georgia students for successful futures through a focus on the foundation (including early literacy and numeracy), the expansion of relevant and challenging educational opportunities, and the development of a coherent instructional system in grades K-12.

1 Revise/develop and implement viable academic standards that engage learners with essential knowledge, skills, and enduring concepts.

2 Increase the percentage of K-5 students with a strong knowledge of foundational skills and concepts.

Measurable Objective	Strategies
 Primary Indicators Percentage of 3rd grade students achieving a <i>Lexile</i> measure equal to or greater than 650. Percentage of students earning Proficient Learner or above on 3rd grade English Language Arts (ELA)/Math Milestones. 	 Enhance the <i>Coherent Instructional</i> system by: Identifying the key building blocks that support the foundations for literacy and numeracy; Developing a K-5 instructional framework to organize instructional resources and tools; Designing and developing an interactive application to curate resources/tools that are coherent and logically sequenced for classroom use; and
 Secondary Indicators A. State average Lexile measure for 3rd graders. B. State average College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) for elementary schools. C. Percentage of students earning Developing Learner or above on 3rd grade English Language Arts (ELA)/Math Milestones. 	 Leveraging strategic partnerships and providing high-quality professional learning to ensure scalability and sustainability.

D. Percentage of students earning Proficient Learner or above on 5th grade English Language Arts (ELA)/Math Milestones.

3 Increase the percentage of high school students who graduate ready for enrollment, employment, or enlistment.

Measurable Objective	Strategies
 Primary Indicators Four-year graduation rate. Percentage of students who graduate college and/or career ready (<i>AP</i>, <i>IB</i>, dual enrollment credit; completed a <i>CTAE</i>, advanced academic, fine arts, or world language pathway). Secondary Indicators Five-year graduation rate. Graduation rate for students with disabilities. Number of courses that count as a core credit for graduation. Number of students enrolled in Advanced Placement (<i>AP</i>), International Baccalaureate (<i>IB</i>), and Dual Enrollment. Performance on the state's <i>Perkins V</i> performance indicators. State average College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) for middle schools. 	 Enhance the <i>Coherent Instructional</i> system by: Providing students with multiple pathways to be successful; Aligning offerings to the expectations of post-secondary and business and industry needs; Expanding access to quality counseling, advisement, and post-secondary planning; Integrating employability skills; and Ensuring relevant educational offerings that challenge students while nurturing their passion and potential.

WHOLE CHILD FOCUS

Preparing students for their futures cannot be accomplished by a focus on academics alone. Educating the whole child means we address students' well-being in the learning process and explore new ways to provide an excellent, relevant, meaningful education to every child.

4 Expand educational opportunities and non-academic supports in order to maximize student engagement, meet student needs/interests, and ensure the relevance of learning.

Measurable Objective	Strategies
 Primary Indicators Access to fine arts, world language, computer science, <i>AP/IB</i>, gifted and physical/health education. Students earning diploma seals (Civic Engagement, Career Ready, Fine Arts, Biliteracy, International Skills). Number of students participating in Work-based Learning. Number of STEM/STEAM schools. Number of identified schools coordinating wraparound services and supports. Virtual school (GaVS) enrollment. 	 Focus on the Whole Child by: Strengthening support for opportunities beyond the core content areas; Partnering with agencies, organizations, and non-profits to coordinate and align wraparound services and support; Building regional capacity to assist school leaders in addressing non-academic barriers; and Connecting schools, communities, and organizations to serve the needs of all children.
 Secondary Indicators A. Number of strategic partnerships. B. Number of resources, trainings, and schools reached. C. Access to tools, resources, programs. D. Annual sports participation rates per gender. E. Participation and academic performance of the before/afterschool programs. 	

PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY & EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

No educational improvement or attainment is possible without strong leadership at the school and district levels. At the Department, we work to develop strong leaders and expand the capacity of school districts as they pursue continuous improvement.

5 Elevate districts, schools, leaders, and educators through high-quality, tiered and tailored service and support.

Measurable Objective	Strategies
 Primary Indicators Number of schools exiting the CSI (Lowest 5% and Promise) and TSI designations. Graduation rate for identified schools. College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) scores for identified schools. Number of financially at-risk districts. Number of certified educators key teacher shortage areas (e computer science, world language, special education, math, and science). Secondary Indicators CCRPI components. Average CCRPI score of identified schools. Progress on action plans. Trained district/school effectiveness specialists. Number of resources, training and schools reached. Number of districts participati in the consolidated funds initiative. 	 s,

SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

A safe, healthy, and positive school climate fosters students' development and learning and puts them on the right path toward academic success and overall quality of life. At the state level, we are working to provide the supports and resources schools need to develop a positive learning climate.

Measurable Objective	Strategies
 Primary Indicators Increase the percentage of schools receiving a School Climate Star Rating of 4 or 5 stars. Increase student attendance. Number of schools offering 30 minutes or more of physical activity for students per day. Districts recognized for bus safety. Number of schools participating in the state's <i>Farm to School</i> program. Number of districts with school meals comprised of 20% or more of <i>Georgia Grown</i> products. 	 Enhance the Supportive Learning Environment system by: Providing district, school, and classroom-level support that promotes the evaluation and improvement of climate, culture, and wellness; Expanding access to behavioral health services in schools; and Promoting physical and nutritional wellbeing; and Ensuring statewide effectiveness, capacity, and sustainability of school safety, climate, and wellness efforts through partnerships with agencies, organizations, and non-profits.
 Secondary Indicators A. Percentage of schools implementing PBIS with fidelity. B. Number of educators, school leaders, and support staff receiving non-mandatory mental health and safety training. C. School safety site assessments. D. Professional learning provided for school nutrition directors, managers, and staff. E. Professional learning provided for transportation directors and bus drivers. 	

Foster a safe, healthy, and positive learning climate in every school.

6

2020-2024 Strategic Plan

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Transparent, responsive, and genuine communication with stakeholders elevates our work and helps us better meet students' needs. We are building systems that will allow us to connect more effectively with educators, students, parents, community members and all those with a vested interest in Georgia's public education system.

7 Engage in effective communication and meaningful stakeholder input/feedback to strengthen the perception of public education and to inform decision-making.

Measurable Objective	Strategies
 Primary Indicators Expand reach on social media. Traffic to GaDOE.org and key supported websites. Number of schools being recognized (Military Flagship, Family Friendly Partnership, and Economic Development Partnership). Secondary Indicators Number of and participation in advisory councils. Participation in the Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT) project 	 Enhance the Family and Community Engagement system by: Including educators, parents, students, and school leaders in advisory roles; Promoting positive facts and stories about public education in Georgia; Coordinating with communication liaisons across the agency; Providing tools/resources to support the brand and message of the agency; and Lifting up the work of our agency and education stakeholders.

To view an online version of the strategic plan, go to: GaDOE.org/strategicplan



205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive SE Atlanta, GA 30334 www.gadoe.org



Richard Woods, State School Superintendent *Educating Georgia's Future*