

EDQUEST GEORGIA

Charting Educational Reform

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FALL, 2017





Executive Summary

The Challenge

Over the past several decades, globalization, advances in technology, and free trade have changed the economy of the United States. While these changes have brought benefits for the economy as a whole, many people have been left behind. Those living in rural communities, communities built around manufacturing plants, and regions with high proportions of citizens with a low level of education who lack access to advanced skills training have been hurt the most.

This uneven growth has created a challenge for the state of Georgia. In 2010, over half of the state's working population worked in sales, office support, or blue-collar jobs – jobs in which the projected growth by 2020 remains below average and sectors that have still not fully rebounded from the economic recession of 2007–2009.

In response to these changes, Georgia has invested in an economic development plan based on a diversified economy that includes trade and transportation, a growing high-tech sector, and natural resources. The state is predicted to add 1.5 million new jobs by 2020, nearly 60% of which will require some sort of education beyond high school.¹ Currently, only about 42% of Georgia's adult population has education beyond the high school level. The current skill level of Georgia's workforce does not meet the growing needs of this ambitious plan for the state's economic development.

Progress to Date

To address the needs of its citizenry, Georgia has embarked on a series of education reforms to transform its public education system so that every student who graduates from high school is successful in college and/or their chosen career, and is competitive with their peers throughout the country and the world.

When Georgia applied for and received the \$400 million Race to the Top (RT3) grant in 2010, it had a clear vision for what it wanted to accomplish as a state. The grant application listed five priority areas that Georgia was already developing and implementing that would transform the educational system for students:²

1. Setting high standards and rigorous assessments for all students, leading to college and career readiness
2. Preparing students for college readiness, transition, and success
3. Providing great teachers and leaders
4. Providing effective support for all schools, including the lowest achieving schools
5. Leading the way in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields

Achieving success across all five goals required a robust state data and information system that would transcend all state education agencies. The state's accountability system – the College and Career Ready Performance Index – laid the foundation for a more effective educator workforce by measuring students' readiness for college. Georgia was working toward the vision of an internationally competitive, educated citizenry.

1 Carnevale, A.P., and Smith, N. (2012). *A Decade Behind: Breaking Out of the Low-Skill Trap in the Southern Economy*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce.

2 US Department of Education. (2012). *Georgia Report, Year 1: School Year 2010–2011*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.

The reforms under RT3 included all seven state education agencies and impacted every public school in the state. These reforms sought to 1) increase the focus on student growth for determining educator effectiveness, instead of solely focusing on student achievement, 2) utilize a standards-based approach to teaching and learning, 3) continue the use of data to drive instruction and policy decisions, and 4) provide support to turnaround efforts for the lowest achieving schools.

Since the official end of the RT3 grant in 2014, Georgia has continued to focus on and undertake new and innovative approaches to improve teaching and learning. Governor Nathan Deal's Education Reform Commission conducted a "top to bottom review of public education" in 2015. The Commission's report made recommendations for revising the funding structure, providing charter and flexibility options for schools and districts, keeping good teachers in the classroom, expanding early learning, and improving dual enrollment/Move On When Ready. Additionally, the Georgia Department of Education under the leadership of State Superintendent Richard Woods has developed a strategic plan for K-12 education with a greater focus on the "whole child."

Concurrently, over the past decade Georgia has moved away from state-mandated centralization toward a decentralized approach that values local input and control in its educational system. The 2007 Charter Systems Act granted school systems considerable autonomy by freeing them from many of the state's education regulations specified in Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia. To help facilitate greater local control of public education, district leaders have been empowered with the flexibility and authority to lead their districts through student performance contracts between local boards of education and the State Board of Education.

Finally, with the passage of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act in December 2015, Georgia has recently completed a new consolidated state plan to address issues such as how to measure the performance of schools, how to support struggling schools, and how to implement the state assessment and accountability systems.

All of these efforts have primarily focused on K-12 public education. However, under the leadership of the Department of Early Care and Learning, Georgia has been working on improving both quality of and access to early learning programs. Examples of achievements in early learning include the following:

- Establishment of the Quality Rated program
- Implementation of the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards
- Provision of resources for statewide family and community engagement grants
- Expansion of center-based home visitation programs for family, friend, and neighbor care for children being cared for in private homes
- Continuing to increase the knowledge and competencies of educators who work in the early care industry
- Development of a comprehensive assessment system for early learning

Reforms in the connections between K-12 and higher education have also been underway. Opportunities for dual enrollment as well as career pathways have been streamlined and expanded. Opportunities for Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and College and Career Academies, which all work to improve college readiness for students and potentially shorten the time to earn a degree or professional certificate once in college, have also been expanded.

In 2011, Governor Deal launched Complete College Georgia, a statewide initiative to improve college completion and produce 250,000 more adult post-secondary credentials by 2025. The Technical College System of Georgia and the University System of Georgia have been central to carrying out the initiative by working on reforms that shorten the time to a degree, restructure education delivery models, and strengthen remedial courses.

Indicators of Progress

Taken together, the education reforms have coincided with improved outcomes for Georgia’s students across all indicators of student success. For more details about Georgia education indicators and national comparisons, see EdQuest Georgia – State of Georgia Data.

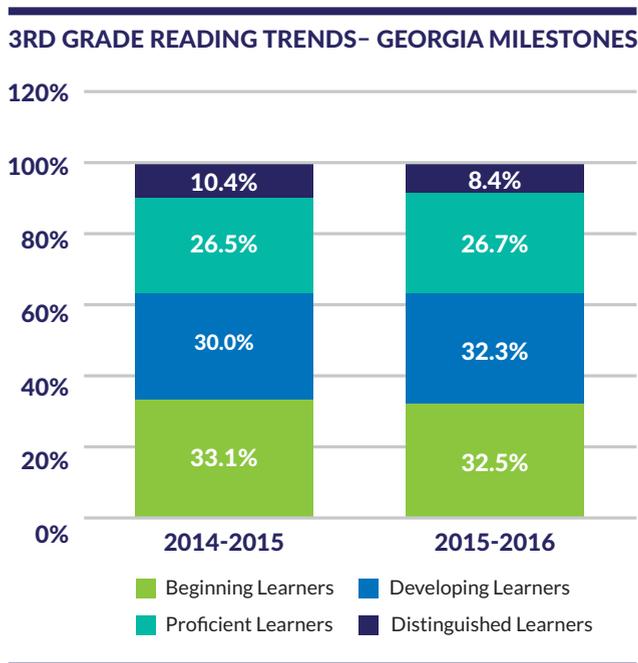
Kindergarten Readiness

Children who have access to quality early education programs or pre-K develop cognitive, social, and behavioral skills necessary for kindergarten readiness.

17% of the birth to age four population are served in “high-quality” centers.³

Third-Grade Reading Proficiency

Students who do not read on grade level by third grade are **four times** more likely than proficient readers to drop out of high school.

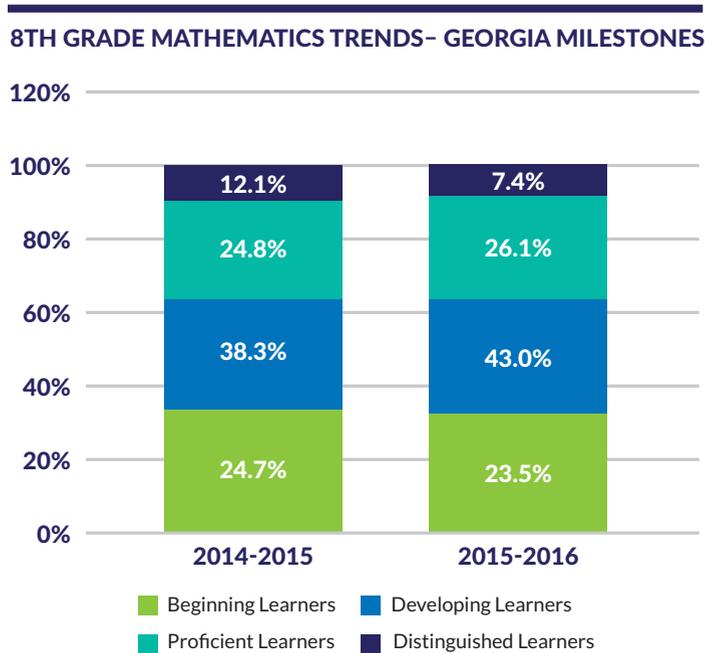


9th – Largest increase in the nation on the average scale score of fourth-grade students in reading from 2005 to 2015 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

³ Calculations based on reported capacity of early learning centers participating in the Quality Rated program using population 2016–2020 forecast data compiled by Georgia State University.

Eighth-Grade Math Proficiency

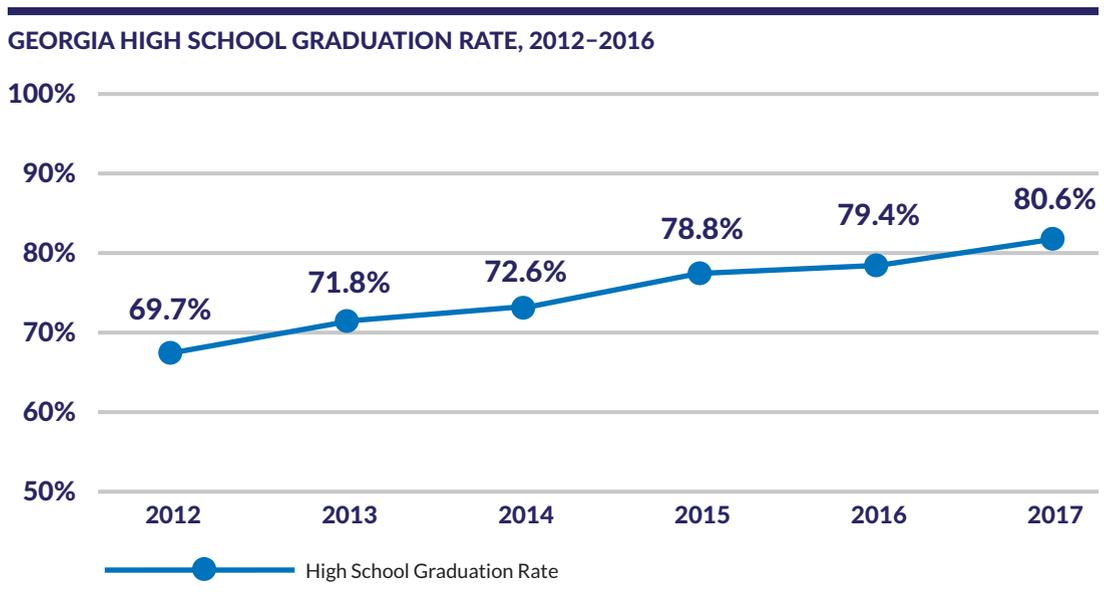
Students must successfully complete algebra for access to higher level high school courses in math and science, which are drivers of high school graduation, college readiness, and college completion.



11th – Largest increase in the nation on average scale score of eighth-grade students in mathematics from 2005 to 2015 on the NAEP.

High School Graduation

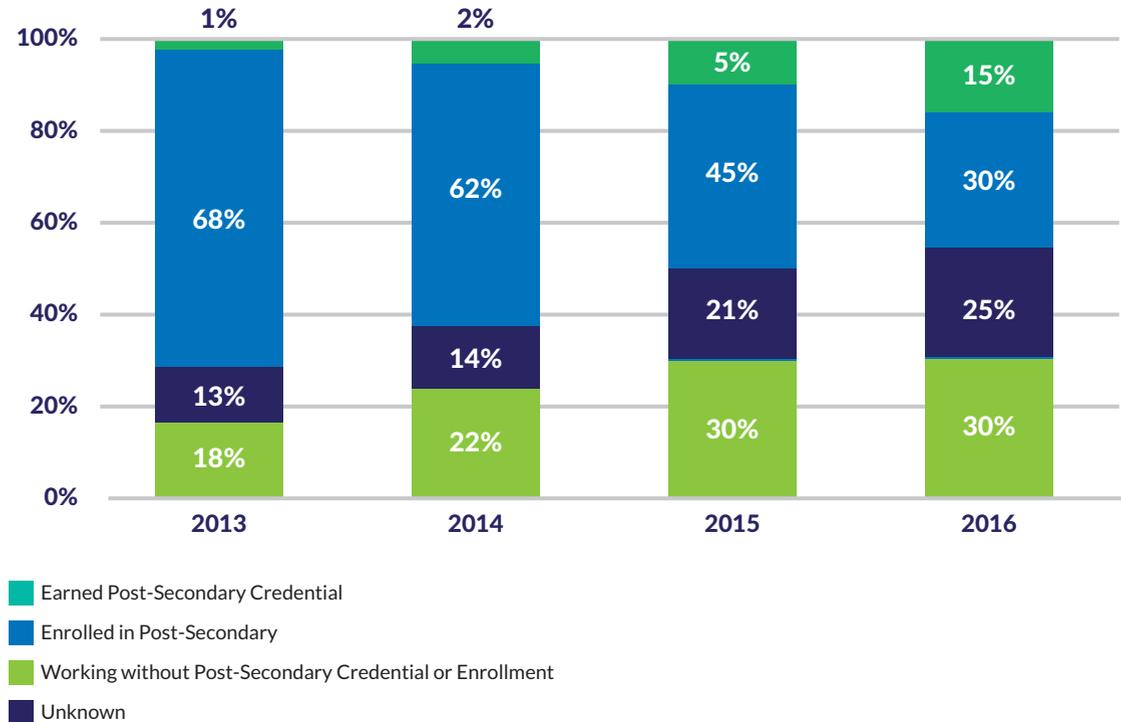
Educational attainment, particularly high school graduation, is a strong predictor of health, mortality, teen childbearing, marital outcomes, and crime.



Post-Secondary Enrollment and Completion

By 2020, a majority of jobs in Georgia (approximately 60%) will require some form of post-secondary completion. Society benefits from a more educated population, which results in lower instances of child abuse, lower rates of criminal behavior, and fewer teen pregnancies among children of college-educated parents.

POST-SECONDARY ENROLLMENT AND PROGRESS TO COMPLETION, GEORGIA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATING CLASS 2012



Recommendations

Georgia is moving in the right direction to ensure an internationally competitive, educated citizenry. Georgia has increased academic expectations of its students and educators. As a result, more students are graduating from high school and going on to post-secondary education. The state now ranks around the national average on the important indicators of grade-level reading and mathematics. To be a global leader, however, Georgia must take its education system to the next level by creating conditions in which schools continuously advance their own performance through teaching and learning.

This baseline report provides a model of education reform to understand where Georgia is and where it can go. High-performing countries, states, and individual school systems share many common foundational policy themes that promote excellence in educational outcomes. This project has reviewed these best practices and combined them in a framework for Georgia. Best practice research has identified seven core policy areas that, when fully implemented and functioning together, produce optimum outcomes for students.

1. **Foundations for learning**, which include supports from birth for families, schools, and communities as well as access to high-quality early learning
2. **Quality teaching** for all students ensured by providing supports for teachers across recruitment, retention, and professional development and learning
3. **Quality leadership** within schools — such as teacher-leaders, counselors, and principals — and those outside the school building, such as district and state leaders
4. **Supportive learning environments** that promote positive conditions for learning within schools through fostering positive school climate and social and emotional learning for students, and outside of school in the home and throughout the community
5. **Advanced instructional systems** that support high standards, personalized learning, innovation, a strong accountability system, and aligned curricula
6. **Clear pathways to post-secondary success** that support the transition from high school into post-secondary education, and ensure post-secondary education access and success
7. **Adequate and equitable funding** for all students

Working as a holistic approach, and not viewed as individual silos, these integrated policy gears can drive education reform. These policy supports create the foundation needed for individual schools and districts to focus on teaching and learning.

What follows is a detailed discussion of each of these core areas. Each chapter contains the following:

1. A research-based summary of best practices in each core area
2. Key indicators comparing Georgia to other states in meeting the best practice standards
3. The Georgia landscape detailing what policies and practices Georgia currently has in each core area
4. Recommendations highlighting Georgia’s strengths and identifying opportunities for reform

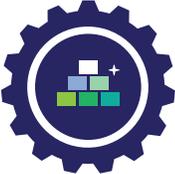
The goal of EdQuest is to offer a new view of education from outside the system. This baseline report is just the beginning of the discussion about opportunities in education for Georgia. Our goal is for this report and the supporting research to provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to understand the education landscape in Georgia, engage in the discussion about next steps and opportunities, and come together to make Georgia a national and global leader.





Opportunities for All Core Areas

EdQuest Georgia is a map for the quest we are on to make Georgia one of the top performing states in the nation with regard to public education. This is a summary of opportunities identified in each core area of the Baseline Report of EdQuest Georgia. These highlight the state's strengths and opportunities for reform.

CORE AREA	ALERT! POLICY MISSING OR NEEDS IMMEDIATE ACTION	YIELD! PROCEED WITH CAUTION, MORE WORK TO BE DONE	GO! KEEP MOVING FORWARD: STRONG POLICIES IN PLACE
 <p>Foundations for Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Georgia must increase access to health supports for young children and their families, including access to insurance and providers as well as mental and oral health support. Increase access to family supporting policies, such as work supports and family leave. Examine the state Earned Income Tax Credit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase access to high-quality early learning programs, especially for low-income children. Fully leverage the opportunities under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act to strengthen and expand connections between early learning programs and elementary schools, improve instruction, and measure progress. Support the Department of Public Health's efforts to increase access to screenings, assessments, referrals, and mental health services for children from birth through age eight. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support statewide coalitions that align the work being done across all policy areas, including health, education, and family well-being. Support and expand Georgia's Pre-K Program. Continue to support the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning's work developed under the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant.
 <p>Quality Teaching</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize teachers as professionals to attract and retain talent. Examine teacher compensation. Address teacher equity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine the performance measure for teacher preparation programs. Strengthen induction programs. Allow time to evaluate the teacher effectiveness system. Implement and fully support the proposed recommendations concerning leader development in Georgia's current Every Student Succeeds Act proposed state plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the rigorous teacher preparation program requirements. Continue the tiered certification ladder. Continue the current leader training, certification, and professional development reforms.
 <p>Quality Leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a comprehensive, statewide plan to support the recruitment, training, and ongoing professional development of leaders. Address leadership turnover. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and fully support the proposed recommendations concerning leader development in the Georgia Department of Education's Every Student Succeeds State Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the current leader training, certification, and professional development reforms.

Opportunities for All Core Areas

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 <p>Supportive Learning Environments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports for homeless and foster youth must be strengthened. • Georgia must take steps to increase the mental health workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor Deal's Commission on Children's Mental Health is a positive step in planning further supports for vulnerable, underserved children. • Health supports should be expanded and made available for all Georgia students in the areas of physical health, mental health, and nutrition, and programs like telemedicine and school-based health centers. • Georgia should increase support for out-of-school time programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GaDOE's School Climate Rating system and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports program provide strong, ongoing supports for students. • Governor Deal's Childhood Obesity Initiative, Georgia Shape, continues to make statewide progress in improving the physical health and nutritional wellness of children from birth to age 18.
 <p>Advanced Instructional System</p>	<p>None noted at this time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Georgia Milestones Assessment System. • Increase the use of formative assessments to inform instruction. • Incorporate benchmarks to measure Georgia's progress. • Ensure the accountability system holds schools and districts responsible for the success of all students. • Support district use of technology. • Support the Innovation Fund, research, and evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the commitment to college- and career-ready standards. • Continue to uphold Georgia's high graduation standards.
 <p>Clear Pathways to Post-Secondary Success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Georgia must develop a statewide needs-based aid program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on nontraditional students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Georgia's Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) programs. • Support Dual Enrollment.
 <p>Adequate and Equitable Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a cost assessment. • Provide district resources to be able to uniformly track expenditures to the school level. • Evaluate district and school expenditures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass funding reform legislation that allows for greater flexibility to target resources to district need. • Consider both equity and adequacy in funding decisions. 	<p>None noted at this time.</p>