

Georgia Landscape - Quality Leadership

Georgia has been moving away from state-mandated centralization toward a decentralized approach that values local input and control. To help facilitate this move to local control, district leaders have been empowered with the flexibility and authority to head their districts. In 2007, the Georgia General Assembly passed the Charter Systems Act. This act granted school systems considerable autonomy by freeing them from many of the state's education regulations, which are specified in Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia.¹⁰⁶

Given the state's growing diversity, this trend will allow for greater innovation in the classroom and at the district level to support the needs of students. For example, districts with a high percentage of refugees or English-language learners will need to prioritize resources differently from districts with a significantly smaller number. Some urban districts and those near military bases have a highly transient student population whose needs are different from those whose enrollments are more stable.

As new policies are implemented across the state that prioritize local control and increased student outcomes amid growing diversity and increasing poverty, the question of leadership becomes paramount. Much like the conversation around how to recruit and retain highly effective teachers, Georgia is working to recruit and retain highly effective leaders at both the state and local levels who embrace these challenges and responsibilities.

State Level

Georgia is actively implementing or developing several of the six state policy levers identified by the Wallace Foundation as best practices to ensure leaders are well-trained and supported.¹⁰⁷ Many of these strategies are supported and coordinated by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC), especially in the areas of leadership training programs, standards, and licensing.

GaPSC is instituting a Preparation Program Effectiveness Measure (PPEM) to evaluate educator preparation programs (both university-based and alternative certification programs). The new evaluation program has the following goals:

- To hold educator preparation programs accountable to high program standards
- To apply a consistent set of state-determined effectiveness measures across all teacher and leader preparation programs
- To improve the effectiveness of teacher and leader preparation programs
- To inform the citizens of Georgia about preparation program quality
- To ultimately improve teaching and learning in P-12 schools¹⁰⁸

The effectiveness measures for each program provider will be made up of two elements: outcomes from those who completed the program and are working in education leadership roles (50%) and programmatic measures (50%). The outcome measures will encompass employer perceptions of a program completer's preparation and the completer's performance on the Georgia leader evaluation system. The programmatic measures are related to completion rates and completers' perceptions of how well prepared they were for their leadership role.

106 Title 20 specifies broad areas of education such as the required qualifications for teachers, the number of school days, and where and how state money must be spent. Other specific issues governed in this section of the official state code range from protective eyewear for students to directions for traffic crossing guards.

107 The six policy levers are principal leadership standards, recruiting professionals, approving and overseeing principal preparation programs, licensing, leader professional development, and leader evaluation. See Manna, P. (2015). *Developing Excellent School Principals to Advance Teaching and Learning*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.

108 Georgia Professional Standards Commission. (2016). Preparation Program Effectiveness Measures (PPEMs). *Georgia Education Reform*. Retrieved from <http://www.gapsc.com/GaEducationReform/PPEMs/PPEMs.aspx>.

Georgia is finalizing the components of the PPEM and nonconsequential implementation is expected to take place during the 2017–2018 school year. Consequential implementation is expected in the 2018–2019 school year. Programs will be rated based on their PPEM score as exemplary, effective, at-risk, or low-performing. Low-performing programs will have two years of support from GaPSC and/or exemplary peers to improve their rating. Three years of a low-performing rating may cause a program to be closed. As the demands on leaders change, these types of evaluation tools are expected to spur changes in how leaders are educated and prepared for their positions.

Not only have the certification and monitoring of leader preparation programs changed, the preparation and licensure/certifications for education leaders have also changed. Beginning in January 2016, the Georgia Educational Leadership Certificate offered by GaPSC was made available in two tiers:

- Tier 1 programs, which focus on instructional leadership, are for future leaders who are still in the classroom but looking to make the transition to school-level leadership.
 - Not performance-based
 - Master’s-level programs focused on instructional leadership and culture building
- Tier 2 programs are for current leaders in a school or within a district.
 - Performance-based preparation
 - Specialist or doctoral-level programs focused on job-embedded learning

Georgia leader preparation programs are based upon the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders published by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration. They are student-centered standards and reflect the recognition that effective school leadership can be performed by many within a school, particularly teachers. To that end, Georgia educational leadership programs stress the importance of shared leadership and the vital role teacher leaders, if used effectively, can play in improving teaching and learning in a school. Upon completion of the tiered leadership programs, leaders will earn a “leadership level” corresponding to a designated compensation level if that person is in a leadership role in their school or system.¹⁰⁹

To further improve leader preparation and training, Georgia is one of seven states participating in a \$47 million initiative funded by the Wallace Foundation to develop models over the next four years to improve principal preparation programs at universities. The seven states will be reviewing their policies concerning university-based principal training and investigate whether changes, such as program accreditation and principal licensure requirements, would result in more effective preparation programs statewide.¹¹⁰ The grant will focus on long-term changes centered on evidence-based policies and practices in three areas:

1. Developing and implementing a high-quality course of study with practical, on-the-job experiences
2. Establishing strong university–district partnerships
3. Developing and/or implementing state policies around program accreditation, principal licensure/certification, and other opportunities—such as funded internships—to promote more effective training statewide

Other state entities are also focused on improving education leadership. For example, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), with support and collaboration from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, convened a statewide Induction Task Force beginning in June 2011. GaDOE

109 Georgia Professional Standards Commission. (2016, January 15). Educational Leadership Tiered Transition Guidance. Atlanta, Georgia. Retrieved from http://www.gapsc.com/Commission/policies_guidelines/Downloads/LeadershipTieredTransitionGuidance_20160825.pdf.

110 Selected university participants and their states include Albany State University (Georgia), Florida Atlantic University, North Carolina State University, San Diego State University (California), the University of Connecticut, Virginia State University, and Western Kentucky University.

worked with districts, institutions of higher education, and regional education support agencies (RESAs) to guide the development and implementation of effective teacher and leader district induction programs. The GaDOE Teacher and Leader Induction Guidance focuses on recruiting, retaining, and supporting induction-phase teachers and leaders.

In the draft proposal for a new state education plan under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), GaDOE highlighted effective leadership as a key area for school success. The plan focuses on building leadership capacity within the school improvement framework through expanded collaboration with institutions of higher education and local districts, personalized professional learning, and coaching and ongoing support, and focusing on effective leadership within the school improvement framework.

Georgia lawmakers have also recognized the need to enhance leadership capacity across the state. In 2017, the Georgia General Assembly passed House Bill 338, the First Priority Act. While the majority of the bill addressed turning around chronically struggling schools, the legislation also created a Joint Study Committee on the Establishment of a Leadership Academy. The committee is charged to

study the possibility of establishing a leadership academy to provide opportunities for principals and other school leaders to update and expand their leadership knowledge and skills. The committee shall study and recommend the scope of a potential leadership academy...focusing on leadership in schools that have unacceptable ratings, criteria for participants and faculty, and any other matters deemed appropriate by the committee. The committee shall identify a process for establishing such leadership academy, which may be known as the Georgia Academic Leadership Academy, with a proposed beginning date of July 1, 2018.¹¹¹

District Examples

Work is also being done at the district level to improve leadership and the leadership pipeline. The Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI) is an independent, nonprofit organization committed to developing world-class education leaders for all of Georgia's students. GLISI's support is about more than building the capacity of a single leader. The nonprofit aims to reduce or eliminate vacancies by making the job and working environment one that attracts and retains teachers and leaders who collegially push and encourage each other to get better every day — and do. Leadership training at GLISI focuses on the root causes of leader turnover: toxic cultures among adults that keep teachers in isolation, discourage experimentation, and undercut decision-making authority at every level.

THE UNIVERSITY PRINCIPAL PREPARATION INITIATIVE (UPPI) IN GEORGIA

Funded by the Wallace Foundation, the UPPI is exploring how university programs can improve training so that they reflect the evidence on how best to prepare effective principals. Seven universities and their state and district partners were selected to participate, including Albany State University in Georgia.

Participating universities, along with their district partners and states, will receive a total of \$15.5 million in the first year, an average of \$2.2 million per university and its partners.

Albany State University is a public college in Southwest Georgia serving a diverse student body. As of 2017, it offered master's and specialist degrees in education leadership. Led by four full-time faculty members, the program enrolled 34 candidates in 2016. The university will work with the **Pelham City School System**, **Calhoun County School System**, and **Dougherty County School System**, most of whose leaders graduated from the university's program. Partners are the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, the Gwinnett County Public School's Quality-Plus Leader Academy, and the NYC Leadership Academy.

111 See: <http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20172018/170167.pdf>

In 2016, GLISI partnered with 34 school districts and supported the development of 1,383 educators leading in classrooms, schools, and central offices across the state. Thirty-seven percent of graduates from GLISI's aspiring leaders programs have already been promoted to leadership positions within their districts. Teams who have participated in GLISI's flagship training program, Base Camp and Leadership Summit, report being better equipped to analyze data, communicate with their colleagues about student performance, and make targeted improvements to teaching and instruction that drive student success. As teachers and leaders take risks in their learning, challenge one another, and have repeated opportunities to practice new skills and receive feedback from experts in their craft, they grow as individuals and as a team and begin to build a thriving school culture that attracts and retains talent. Ultimately, it is students who reap the benefits of these shifts.

The Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA) offers a

Superintendent Professional Development Program (SPDP). This program is designed to develop new leaders in the pipeline and is open to aspiring superintendents. The SPDP is a two-year program of study emphasizing executive knowledge around strategic leadership, school governance, community relations, and organizational leadership. GSSA also offers a full-year executive coaching program for all superintendents who are either new to the role or new to the state.¹¹²

Other efforts in Georgia to develop leaders are more local. One of the best examples is the Gwinnett County Public Schools Quality-Plus Leader Academy (QPLA). This program's goal is to increase student achievement by identifying, recruiting, and preparing introspective school leaders. The program also selects, develops, trains, and supports them to become highly effective instructional leaders in today's schools. Participants can choose from a variety of leadership development tracks, each of which corresponds to a different professional development need and level of leadership. The programs that comprise the QPLA are the Aspiring Leader Program, the Aspiring Principal Program, the Certified Quality Leader Training Program, an array of leadership seminars, and ongoing leadership support. This training model boasts a balance between pedagogy and curriculum, and classroom or knowledge-based instruction and experiential learning. The model also strongly emphasizes an appropriate, reliable, and valid selection of aspiring assistant principals and principals.¹¹³ Mentoring is available through the program to first- and second-year principals and assistant principals. The QPLA directly supports the Gwinnett County School District's vision of building internal capacity.

GLISI LEADERSHIP TRAINING, CARROLL COUNTY

Carroll County, now in its fourth year of a partnership with GLISI targeting high school transformation, has seen double-digit gains in College and Career Ready Performance Index scores and an 11.8% increase in its cohort graduation rate. This translates to over 580 students enrolled in high schools across the county in the 2017–2018 school year who would have dropped out. A precursor to these gains was learning and growing as teams in each of the five high schools, combined with a paradigm shift in the district's approach to its role in creating supportive conditions for schools and school leaders. In Carroll County, teachers and leaders expanded their leadership skills and practiced together as authentic teams, working on problems of practice in their schools with guidance from coaches to push dialog deeper and reinforce new work. As a by-product of that work, district and school leaders had a chance to see emerging leaders in action, contributing to the improvement work of the school. Since the inception of the partnership, 14 emerging leaders who participated in the leadership development teams have been promoted to school and central office leadership positions.

112 For more information on the SPDP, see <http://gssaweb.org/superintendent-pof-dev/>.

113 Gwinnett County Public Schools. (2016). The Leadership Development Programs. Retrieved from <https://publish.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcps/home/public/about/content/key-initiatives/the+leadership+development+programs>.