

Georgia Landscape - Quality Teaching

Many of the education reforms implemented under Georgia's Race to the Top grant that began in 2010 were focused on improving teaching through creating a more rigorous preparation and induction system and revising how the state evaluates teachers and supports their professional learning and career ladder opportunities. Georgia is addressing many of these reforms through participation in the Network for Transforming Educator Preparation (NTEP).⁶⁹ NTEP was formed to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession convened by the Council of Chief State School Officers.⁷⁰

To implement the NTEP work, a state task force consisting of GaPSC, the University System of Georgia (USG), and the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has been implementing each of the 10 recommendations listed in Table 3. Three areas have seen significant reforms: (1) a multi-tiered licensure system, (2) professional learning for current teachers, and (3) program accountability.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Georgia is now asking more from its teacher preparation programs. "Preparation program" is defined as any program that trains teachers for the classroom. Most of these programs are based in schools of education within colleges and universities. There are also alternative certification programs operated by such entities as area Resource Education Support Agencies (RESAs), Teach for America, local school systems, and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG).⁷¹ Note that the TCSG is phasing out its teacher certification programs. Georgia is one of only a few states in the nation that holds alternative certification programs to the same rigorous standards of program approval as traditional university-based programs.

To raise the standards of teacher preparation programs, the following reforms have either been implemented or are in process.⁷²

- Beginning in 2016, new national standards were adopted (published by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation) that are more rigorous than the previous national standards and require program providers to show evidence that their graduates are having a positive impact on P-12 student learning.⁷³
- Programs are partnering with K-12 school districts through P-20 Collaboratives to ensure teachers are prepared to meet local needs.
- GaPSC is encouraging all institutions to provide a full year of classroom time for teacher candidates instead of the minimum one-semester requirement.

69 NTEP is composed of two cohorts of states. Cohort One began in 2013 with seven states. Cohort Two launched in 2015. As of 2017, 13 states are participating in NTEP: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Washington.

70 The task force was composed of current and former chiefs as well as representatives from the National Association of State Boards of Education and the National Governors Association, and was chaired by Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna.

71 Alternative certification programs serve individuals who wish to enter teaching from another career path, have not completed a teacher education program, and do not hold a professional teaching certificate.

72 Georgia Educators Collaborate to Transform Teacher Preparation. (2017, January). *Georgia Is Strengthening Teacher Preparation and Advancement Opportunities*. Retrieved from CCSSO: www.ccsso.org/Documents/Georgia%20NTEP%20Case%20Story.pdf.

73 GaPSC adapted the Accreditation Standards published August 19, 2013, by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) for use in the Georgia educator preparation provider and preparation program approval process. The adapted standards include all five of the CAEP standards, as well as one additional standard addressing preparation program requirements specific to the state of Georgia. For more information, see www.gapsc.com/EducatorPreparation/Downloads/GeorgiaStandards2016.pdf.

GaPSC is also using data to measure program success in two important ways. First, scores from graduating students' content knowledge and subject-specific performance assessments (both required for an initial teaching license) will be combined with surveys of graduates from their first year of teaching to determine their satisfaction with their preparation. A second system will utilize outcome data, including summative performance data derived from principal observations of classroom teachers and surveys of the principals of the schools where first-year teachers taught.⁷⁴

Between 2012 and 2015, Georgia implemented more rigorous requirements to earn a state teaching license for students entering the profession from a traditional university-based preparation program or alternative certification program. These changes include the following:⁷⁵

- Increased rigor on the content assessment (GACE⁷⁶) and subject-specific performance-based assessment (EdTPA)
- Additional educator ethics assessment

Licensure and Career Ladder

Related to reforms to teacher preparation programs, much of the collaborative work around the NTEP recommendations has to do with changing the licensure requirements of new and current teachers. Georgia's new teacher certification system requires student teachers to demonstrate proficiency before they can obtain a teaching certificate. Teachers are assessed through an assessment system called the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES), which plays a large role in induction and continuing licensure. The teacher certification system is tiered, consisting of four levels of licensures and five different certifications. Thus, the certification system establishes a pathway for teachers to advance within the profession while still remaining in the classroom and provides a process for recognizing excellent teachers.⁷⁷ Most of these rule changes were implemented by the 2016 school year.

Georgia's licensure system now has three primary levels:

- 1. Pre-Service** – This first level is for teaching candidates from a university program. The content knowledge exam and a subject-specific performance assessment are more rigorous, and students must complete an ethics assessment and background check prior to their field experiences in P-12 schools.
- 2. Induction** – For new teachers, the induction certificate lasts for three years, during which time the teacher must be rated "proficient" or "exemplary" on two out of three of their TKES assessments. Professional learning and skills in need of additional support will be identified by the TKES assessments.
- 3. Professional** – The professional certificate is a five-year renewable license. To renew, a teacher must show a "proficient" or "exemplary" TKES rating for four out of five years. Like the induction certificate, professional learning will be identified by the TKES assessment.

For those with a professional certificate who wish to further their career while staying in the classroom, there is an additional certificate level with two options from which teachers can choose.

74 Georgia Educators Collaborate to Transform Teacher Preparation. (2017, January). *Georgia Is Strengthening Teacher Preparation and Advancement Opportunities*. Retrieved from CCSSO: www.ccsso.org/Documents/Georgia%20NTEP%20Case%20Story.pdf.

75 Ibid.

76 Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators

77 For a complete description, see: Georgia Professional Standards Commission. (2014, October 30). *Understanding the 2014 Educator Certification Rule Changes*. Retrieved from www.gapsc.com/Commission/policies_guidelines/Downloads/2014EducatorCertificationRuleChanges.pdf; Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education. (2014). *Top Ten Issues to Watch 2014: Issue 3, Teacher Preparation Programs*. Retrieved from www.gpee.org/fileadmin/files/PDFs/GPEE_Top_Ten_2014_Final.pdf.

4a. Advanced Professional – This certificate is designed to recognize classroom excellence in student achievement and requires five years of experience. During those five years, a teacher must have at least one TKES rating of “exemplary” and no ratings below “proficient.” They must also have an advanced degree in their certification field or in curriculum and instruction or instructional technology, or be National Board Certified.

4b. Lead Professional – This certificate is for teachers who positively impact other teachers and adults. Like the advanced professional, this certificate requires at least five years of experience, at least one TKES rating of “exemplary” and no ratings below “proficient.” The teachers also must either be certified in teacher leadership or have an advanced degree in their certification field, curriculum and instruction, or instructional technology, AND a Teacher Leadership Endorsement, a Coaching Endorsement, or Teacher Support Specialist Endorsement. Teachers must also demonstrate through a rigorous performance assessment the capability to work with their colleagues in ways that improve student learning.

Schools and districts can benefit by encouraging high-performing teachers to apply for and maintain Advanced Professional or Lead Professional Certification, as these teachers serve important roles in improving the teaching and learning in their schools. Advanced Professional certified teachers can provide instructional modeling for their peers, and Lead Professional certified teachers are equipped to coach and mentor new teachers or those who are striving to improve their practice.

The changes in licensure have also changed how Georgia views the role of professional learning. Traditionally in Georgia, teachers needed 10 hours of professional learning units to keep their license current. There were no specific requirements about the focus of those units. Professional learning requirements are now tied to annual assessments. Every five years when teachers are up for certification renewal, they must demonstrate improvement in their areas of weakness identified by the TKES. Guided by targeted professional learning, this requirement shifts the licensure renewal process to a performance-based definition of tenure. Teachers must demonstrate continuous professional learning.

Teacher Effectiveness

To increase the number of high-quality teachers in the classroom, under Georgia’s Race to the Top grant, the state developed new effectiveness systems for teachers and school leaders, primarily principals. One of those systems is the teacher assessment system, known as the TKES. In addition to being able to distinguish between good teachers, great teachers, and ineffective teachers, the primary focus of TKES is to help improve instruction and to better design professional development activities to meet teacher needs. The goal was to develop a rigorous and transparent teacher and leader evaluation instrument that would help ensure an effective teacher in every classroom and an effective leader in every school.

The system underwent a significant revision beginning in the 2016–2017 school year due to the passage of Senate Bill (SB) 364 in 2016. The system now has three standard components:

- **Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS), 50%**
 - This includes at least two classroom observations and a summative assessment for teachers with three or more years teaching experience. Other levels of teachers receive four classroom observations, two formative assessments, and a summative assessment.
- **Professional Growth, 20%**
 - Individual districts may define professional growth as the attainment of professional growth goals or plan additional TAPS measures, or use other district-identified measures.

- **Student Growth, 30%**

- For fourth- through eighth-grade math and English language arts (ELA)/ reading teachers and for teachers of high school courses with an end-of-course assessments, student growth is calculated based on the Georgia Milestones student growth measures.
- For all other teachers, districts may select among the following:
 - The school-level mean growth percentile based on Georgia Milestones ELA/reading and math assessments
 - The district-level mean growth percentile based on Georgia Milestones ELA/reading and math assessments
 - Student learning objectives or other pre- to post-measures
 - Any other district-identified measure

Compensation

In the current salary structure, the state sets a base salary of \$33,424, and teachers receive step increases based on the number of years of experience in the classroom and education level. Compared to other states, starting teacher salaries in Georgia rank 28th and the average Georgia salary ranks 21st.⁷⁸

Some local school systems are currently experimenting with alternative compensation models based on district needs and teacher performance. They have waived the standard state salary model, which is driven only by years of experience and education level. The new tiered certification system allows for a career ladder for classroom teachers, but those differing levels of certification have not been tied to teacher pay. As these are new experiments, results on the success of these programs have yet to be determined.

Pending Reform Proposals

As Georgia continues to strengthen the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers, two policy opportunities are ready to be implemented and supported.

The first is the state plan developed under the Every Student Succeeds Act. That plan calls for the development of broad state strategies that allow district flexibility to address several aspects of teacher effectiveness:

- Formalized recruitment strategy
- Preparation pathways
- Leadership and opportunities for advancement
- Ongoing mentoring and coaching

The second policy opportunity began January 2015, when Governor Nathan Deal appointed the Education Reform Commission (ERC) to develop recommendations to reshape Georgia's education system. The ERC was charged to examine five areas: funding, early education, Move On When Ready/ dual enrollment, expanding educational opportunities and school choice, and teacher recruitment, retention, and compensation.

The Subcommittee on Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Compensation proposed 12 recommendations across those priority areas, listed in Table 3.4.⁷⁹

78 Teacher Portal. (2016). *Georgia Teacher Salary, 2016*. Retrieved from www.teacherportal.com/salary/Georgia-teacher-salary.

79 For details on all 12 recommendations, see gov.georgia.gov/sites/gov.georgia.gov/files/related_files/document/FinalGovERCReport_121415.pdf.

TABLE 3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS OF ERC SUBCOMMITTEE ON TEACHING, RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND COMPENSATION⁸⁰

Compensation	Develop guidance to assist districts in creating strategic compensation models for teachers.
	Increase K-12 funding to allow local districts to recruit, retain, and reward effective teachers and maintain competitive salaries.
	Investigate a sustainable state-level funding program to compensate teachers for supervising teacher interns.
Recruitment and training of new teachers	Provide grants to districts for developing strong teacher induction programs. Charter System and Strategic Waiver System contracts should provide details on how districts will support induction-level teachers.
	Investigate a service-cancellable loan program for students graduating from a USG teacher education program, and designate the teaching profession as a High Demand Workforce Initiative in Georgia.
	Reimburse the costs of the required GACE exams and edTPA of pre-service teachers enrolled in a USG teacher education program who have signed a contract to teach in a Georgia school.
	Study replacing a single-semester student teaching model with a full year of clinical practice for teacher candidates, without adding semesters to the established degree timeline.
	Develop and implement a statewide media campaign to promote the positive aspects of teaching as a profession.
Support for current teachers	Establish and maintain teacher planning time as a top priority of the education community.
	Encourage the General Assembly and the State Board of Education to implement guidelines promoting the best and most respectful use of teacher instructional time.
	Modify the implementation of the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System to allow fewer classroom observations for effective teachers.
	Implement a study of the Teacher Retirement System of Georgia to measure system health and ensure long-term program vitality.

After receiving the final report and recommendations in December 2015, Governor Deal appointed a 90-member teacher advisory committee (TAC) to review the recommendations and provide feedback in two areas: (1) teacher recruitment, retention, and compensation and (2) Move On When Ready/ dual enrollment. The TAC analyzed all recommendations concerning teaching and Move On When Ready/ dual enrollment, and provided additional thoughts on recruitment, retention, and compensation.⁸¹

Recruitment⁸² – The TAC members fully supported the implementation of a positive media campaign with current teachers. They believed that having current teachers be a positive voice for the profession both within schools and across the community is the first step to recruiting the next generation of teachers.

⁸⁰ Education Reform Commission. (2015). Final Recommendations to Governor Nathan Deal. Atlanta: Office of the Governor.

⁸¹ Teacher Advisory Committee Report. (2016). Feedback from Teachers on Education Reform Commission Recommendations: Final Report Submitted to Governor Nathan Deal. Atlanta: Office of the Governor.

⁸² Ibid.

Retention⁸³– The TAC agreed on and supported the following recommendations:

- A yearlong student internship for pre-service teachers
- Intense mentoring for induction-level teachers and support for teacher mentors
- Preservation of teacher planning and instructional time as a means of enhancing teacher effectiveness
- Reinstatement of provisions for service-cancellable loans for use as both a recruitment and retention tool
- Reimbursement of GACE exam fees and Ed/TPA, with limits on the number of exams eligible for reimbursement

Compensation – The TAC also reviewed the ERC’s recommended changes in how districts earn money from the state to pay their teachers. The proposed formula would provide districts with the 2016 statewide average teacher salary (\$50,768) for each teacher, which is reflected in the base amount provided to districts. This is not how much teachers will actually be paid, but the amount districts earn from the state. Districts will develop their own compensation models to be approved by the state. These new models must include at least one measure of teacher performance.

The TAC suggested that teacher participation in the development of a new compensation model was critical. TAC members recommended that the new model should use a measure of effectiveness and additional duties performed but should also continue to include years of experience and degrees. The committee also reasserted that a more reliable growth component of the TKES must be established if effectiveness is to be a serious consideration.⁸⁴

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.