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## Executive Summary

### Voices from Georgia Schools: Georgia Educators on Supporting Public Education During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic harm student learning and negatively impact student mental health according to a new survey from the Professional Association of Georgia Educators. Nearly 6,300 educators from across Georgia participated in the survey. They described the impact the pandemic has on students and flagged other concerns. State and local policymakers have an opportunity to help ensure Georgia students do not suffer lasting harm from the pandemic and to further strengthen public schools in communities across the state.

#### Key Findings:

##### *Pandemic Effects:*

- Eighty-seven percent of respondents say the school shutdown had a negative effect on student learning including learning losses in reading and math.
- More than 75 percent of educators report higher social-emotional needs among students, including increased depression, anxiety and social isolation.
- Forty-seven percent of teachers are currently providing both in-person and virtual instruction.

##### *Student-focused Policies:*

- Less than 18 percent of all educators believe Georgia Milestones provides them information to improve instruction.
- Educators believe it is more important for parents to get information about their schools' class size, teacher qualifications, teacher retention and access to art, music, physical education and foreign languages classes than standardized test scores.
- About 14 percent of educators with 20 or fewer years of experience say they will likely leave the profession in the next five years, and 29 percent report they will likely depart within 10 years. Salary and school leadership are the most often-cited causes of attrition among these educators.

**87%**

of educators say the school shutdown harmed student learning.

*We're seeing HUGE gaps in reading. Kindergarten & 1st grade students missed crucial phonics instruction during school closure. This has placed many students below grade level in reading.*

*Elementary Teacher*

#### Recommendations:

##### 1. Support student mental health

- Fund school counselors for special education and gifted students
- Support the development of school hubs to coordinate community and state resources to meet students' mental health, physical, and developmental needs

##### 2. Invest in state academic success

- Eliminate the \$1 billion austerity cut in state funding for schools
- Do not divert state funds to private schools by expanding Georgia's two private school voucher programs or adding a third
- Add a poverty weight to the state's K-12 funding formula to support the academic success of low-income students

##### 3. Make Georgia the No. 1 state to teach

- Invest in high quality induction and mentoring programs
- Provide student loan repayments prioritizing educators in high-poverty schools or shortage areas
- Attract and retain high quality educators by fulfilling Gov. Brian Kemp's pledge to raise educator salaries

##### 4. Align assessment and accountability policies with student and parent needs

- Reduce state-mandated tests to minimum required under federal law
- Revise accountability metrics to include information more relevant to parents