



GEORGIA GOVERNOR'S RACE: Responses to PAGE from Gov. Brian P. Kemp

1. What policies do you propose to help students recover from lost learning time due to COVID-19?

I am proud to lead a state where most of our schools remained open during the pandemic. That said, many students still face challenges in making up for lost learning, and my administration is taking action to address that. This is why we fought to ensure the funding formula for public schools in Georgia was fully funded, and all cuts were restored this year to ensure local school districts had the necessary resources to address learning loss throughout the summer. Additionally, through the Governors Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund, we have awarded millions of dollars to organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club and the Georgia Alliance of YMCAs, which are doing tremendous work to address learning loss. Through our investment in the Boys & Girls Club alone, more than 21,000 students have received intensive academic enrichment and tutoring to get back on track, but there is more to be done as we continue fighting to put Georgia's students first. As we head into the fall and the next legislative session, I will continue working alongside state leaders and local educators to develop new plans to ensure all of Georgia's students can thrive.

2. What school security and safety enhancements should be made in Georgia schools and how would you fund these?

This year, my administration allocated \$2.6 million from the State Law Enforcement Training Grant Program to the Georgia Public Safety Training Center to enhance training for School Resource Officers. These funds will increase instructor capacity and further grow the number of courses available for School Resource Officers. Additionally, in 2019, I set aside \$69 million for school security grants, ensuring every public school in Georgia received \$30,000 to implement school security measures. Under my leadership, the Georgia Public Safety Training Center will train more than 300 school resource officers this year and will offer six additional Active Shooter classes for School Resource Officers. We have also allocated historic funding dedicated to promoting mental health in our schools. Keeping our children safe is a top priority for me as governor, state and I will continue working diligently to ensure our schools are safe.

Specifically on learning loss and school security, I will be putting forward policy proposals in the coming months to address these important issues in my second term.

3. Teacher Burnout in Georgia, a recent report from the Georgia Department of Education, highlighted challenges making it more difficult to recruit and retain teachers, issues PAGE members have repeatedly raised. How can the state attract more individuals to the teaching profession and encourage those educators to stay?

When I took office in 2019, I promised to put students and teachers first, and my administration has done just that. During my time in office, we have raised teacher salaries by \$5,000 – the largest teacher pay raise in state history, cut certification costs by over 67 percent, strengthened professional development opportunities for educators, and reduced the number of high-stakes assessments that were creating undue burdens on students and teachers. My administration also championed a Teacher Pipeline Legislative Package, which enhances mentorship, classroom resources, and creates a pathway for new and retired teachers to enter the classroom. As a result of these efforts, this year, we are projected to have 10,000 teachers entering the workforce. Marty and I have heard firsthand about teacher burnout from our daughter, who just finished her first year of teaching, along with countless educators across the state. Our family stands squarely behind Georgia’s educators, and our team will continue working to bolster our pipeline, support our educators, and ensure Georgia’s students receive the highest quality education.

4. Principals have a significant effect on teacher retention and, in turn, on student outcomes. How should the state recruit and support principals and assistant principals to improve their retention?

School leaders play a critical role in school climate and the retention of our teachers. I am committed to getting more strong leaders in Georgia’s schools through state programs like the Governor’s School Leadership Academy, which – through strategic partnerships with state agencies – provides high-quality, selective, statewide leadership preparation and support to develop quality leaders in schools across Georgia. I will also continue to work alongside local leaders and solicit feedback from educators and administrators throughout Georgia to determine the best ways to ensure Georgia’s schools run effectively and efficiently.

5. How can the state attract and retain school staff who provide critical support to schools including paraprofessionals, bus drivers, and school nutrition workers?

Our paraprofessionals, bus drivers, school nutrition workers, and other faculty are often the unsung heroes of education in Georgia, and many go above and beyond without ever having to be asked. In 2021, my administration gave these individuals \$1,000 bonuses to support retention and express the state’s gratitude for their hard work and sacrifice in very challenging times. We also allocated funds for an additional \$2,000 supplement in this year’s amended budget. From getting kids to school safely to keeping them fed and healthy, school faculty throughout the state do necessary work to make sure our children succeed, and I will continue working with leaders in my administration and in the General Assembly to support them.

6. Students have greater mental health needs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Do you support funding school counselors for all students, including special education and gifted students?

Throughout my first term, we allocated historic funding to increase mental health services in Georgia schools. As governor, I have consistently dedicated funds to the APEX program to support mental health in Georgia schools, and in January of this year, I allotted \$6 million in GEER funding for student mental health initiatives. In the coming weeks, I will be rolling out more initiatives to ensure that Georgia's students and their mental health needs are met and cared for.

7. What changes do you believe should be made to the state's formula for funding public schools?

I am proud to say that we have fully funded the state's public education funding formula for three out of the four years of my first term – even in the middle of a global pandemic – and as of this year, all cuts made during the pandemic have been restored. In Georgia, we are now allocating more dollars per student than ever before! As governor, I will continue to work alongside education leaders and members of the General Assembly on avenues for modernizing the formula to ensure that it serves and sustains the needs of students and teachers throughout our state.

8. How would you use the FY23 budget state budget surplus, currently estimated between \$5-\$6 billion?

Supporting education in our state and putting parents, students, and teachers first will continue to be a priority for me if I am honored to serve a second term as your governor. Thanks to strong, conservative leadership in our state, we find ourselves with the lowest unemployment rate in history, record job creation and investment, and a historic surplus at our disposal. We have been able to use some of those funds to take action that provides economic relief to all Georgians – including educators and school faculty – like refunding \$1 billion to taxpayers and suspending the gas tax to fight 40-year-high inflation. As our country faces an economic crisis thanks to failed policies in Washington, I will continue working alongside state and legislative leaders to determine how we can best use the surplus to empower all Georgians to keep more of their hard-earned money while also making key investments in our state's future.

9. Are there particular issues for which the state should set policy for local school districts? If so, what are they?

Since day one, my administration has been working directly with teachers, superintendents, and other school leaders to build a brighter future for education in our state. I have held over 25 roundtables and listening sessions. During these meetings, we discuss the importance of maintaining local control as well as addressing burdensome state regulations. When forming a legislative policy idea, I gather feedback from PAGE, GSBA (Georgia School Boards Association), GSSA (Georgia School Superintendents Association), GAEL (Georgia Association of Educational Leaders) and my superintendent advisory group. These meetings provide meaningful feedback and will continue to be an integral part of my education initiatives throughout a second term.

I have also been clear that Georgia’s classrooms should be free of divisive ideology and a place where students can learn how to think, not what to think. In the last year, we have taken steps to ensure that is the case in Georgia, and I will continue to do so as the governor of our state.

Leadership at the state level – in partnership with the General Assembly – has also led to reducing costs for certification and the reduction of high-stakes testing to limit burdens on Georgia educators. As governor, I am committed to working alongside administrators, teachers, parents, and students to strike the right balance and ensure a brighter future for schools in the Peach State.

10. How should Georgia measure academic outcomes for students in state-supported private school choice programs, including the SSO/tax-credit private school scholarship program? Do you support collecting comprehensive demographic information on students who participate in state-supported private school choice programs?

I believe collecting accurate data helps drive good policy. My record as governor shows that I have been an advocate for public school and private schools, and I will continue to be if I am honored to serve a second term.

11. Do you have additional education priorities that were not addressed in the preceding questions?

As I travel the state, I continue to hear concerns from educators regarding burnout, teacher recruitment and retention, and ensuring resources for classrooms across the state. Throughout my first term, my team has been laser-focused on addressing these issues alongside parents, students, and educators. If I am blessed to be elected to a second term, I will continue that work to ensure the best days for education in Georgia are ahead.