

Helping students draws Georgia educators to the schoolhouse, and it is the top reason they want to stay in the profession according to a new survey of the state's education workforce conducted by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE). Over 5,600 educators participated in the survey and provided feedback on strategies intended to facilitate effective instruction and help educators thrive in their careers. Some of these strategies offer useful support, but there are elements of them that could be strengthened. Survey respondents also identified gaps in services to students and described mounting pressures on the educator pipeline. These issues can undermine student learning and erode the educator profession: Over half of teachers—55%—are unlikely to recommend a career in education. There are steps policymakers can take to begin addressing them. Key findings from the survey include:

Supporting Effective Instruction: Instruction is shaped by multiple factors including the preparation and initial mentoring teachers receive, the usefulness of educator evaluations and student assessment data, and the daily practices of their schools or districts.

- More than 58% of all responding teachers felt very prepared or prepared for the classroom when they completed their certification program. Nearly 36% report being somewhat prepared, and about 6% felt unprepared.
- Nearly 83% of new teachers—those in their first through third year—have mentors, but about 17% do not.
- More than 64% of teachers find supervisor feedback helpful, and 13% do not. The remaining 24% are neutral on the helpfulness of supervisor feedback.
- About 62% of teachers report that the state's standardized test, Georgia Milestones, provides useful information sometimes, and nearly 12% say Milestones data is helpful very often or always. However, more than a quarter of teachers—26%—say Milestones data is never helpful.
- For nearly 62% of teachers, protecting planning time is the top strategy to help them prepare for and maximize instructional time.

Meeting Student Needs: Student academic success and well-being is influenced by their learning conditions including school safety, access to school counselors, and reliable transportation to and from school.

- Approximately 72% of teachers believe their school or district has implemented a strong plan to ensure student and staff safety. However, more than 19% say their school or district has not, and 9% are unsure.
- About 56% of teachers and more than 69% of school counselors, social workers, and psychologists report their schools do not have enough counselors to meet students' needs.
- More than 82% of teachers say there is a shortage of bus drivers in their districts, which can disrupt student learning and lead to behavioral problems.

Mounting Pressures on the Educator Pipeline: Educators' workload, ability to cover living expenses, and student loan debt can worsen existing workforce challenges.

- About 31% of teachers report their workload is manageable all or most of the time, but 25% say it is never manageable. Nearly 44% indicate their workload is sometimes manageable.
- Nearly one in five teachers report working 20 or more hours per week on job-related activities outside of normal work hours. Among school-level administrators, including principals and assistant principals, that number rises to more than one in four.
- Approximately 39% of teachers and 61% of paraprofessionals have difficulty covering living expenses all or most of the time.
- About 23% of teachers who completed their bachelor's degrees in 2005 or later owe \$40,000 or more in student loan debt. An additional 12% carry loan debt between \$30,000 and \$40,000.

Impacts on the Education Profession: Helping students attracts educators to the education field, but there are signs the appeal of working in education is fraying.

- The top reason educators stay in the profession is professional satisfaction from helping students.
- Approximately 59% of all educators say they are likely to remain in education for another five years, 28% say they are unlikely to do so, and 13% are neutral.
- While 29% of all teachers indicate they are unlikely to remain in the field for another five years, a smaller portion of teachers with 20 or fewer years of experience report they are unlikely to remain: 23%.
- The top three reasons teachers with fewer than 20 years of experience consider leaving the profession are burnout, student behavior, and salary.
- Over half of teachers—55%—are unlikely to recommend a career in education.

Summary of Recommendations

Policymakers can take important steps to resolve the issues cited by educators including targeted investments in identified student needs. State and local policymakers can also enhance existing educator support strategies to increase the appeal of the education sector and reduce barriers to entering the field. Action steps to address both include:

1. Fund school counselors for special education and gifted students as statutorily required.
2. Enhance school safety by incorporating funding as an annual supplemental grant to the state K-12 school funding formula.
3. Boost state funding for student transportation to bus students to and from school safely and on time, and enable districts to shift local funds to teaching and learning.
4. Ensure all teachers have adequate planning time to prepare and deliver high quality instruction to students.
5. Reduce financial barriers to entering the teaching profession by restoring educator scholarship programs eliminated in 2007 and 2011 by the General Assembly.