

Educators throughout Georgia describe current practices that provide effective support to the profession as well as areas where these supports could be strengthened in the 2022 educator workforce survey conducted by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE). More than 5,600 educators participated in the survey, and they shared their core reason for being in the field: helping students. Respondents also flag gaps in student services and identify mounting pressures on the educator pipeline. These issues can impose challenges to student learning and erode the educator profession. Key survey findings include:

### Supporting Effective Instruction

- 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, but nearly 13% do not. The remaining 24% are neutral on its helpfulness.
- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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 address student needs with targeted investments. They can also build an integrated system of supports to increase the appeal of the education sector and reduce barriers to entering the field. Strategies to resolve both include:

1. Fund school counselors for special education and gifted students as statutorily required.<sup>1</sup>
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.

## Methodology

PAGE conducts an online survey of all members annually. The 2022 survey, designed by PAGE, was distributed to members in fall 2022. In total, 5,641 educators from 172 of Georgia's 180 school districts as well as educators working in state schools and state commission charter schools participated in the survey. Approximately 67% of respondents are classroom teachers, and the remainder serve students in a variety of school and district roles.

## Supporting Effective Instruction

Teachers are the most critical in-school factor in student learning. Supporting teachers' professional growth at each stage of their careers is an investment in student learning. Many teachers receive valuable support, which expand their knowledge and skills. There are gaps in these supports, however; some teachers do not have access, or the available support strategies need improvement.

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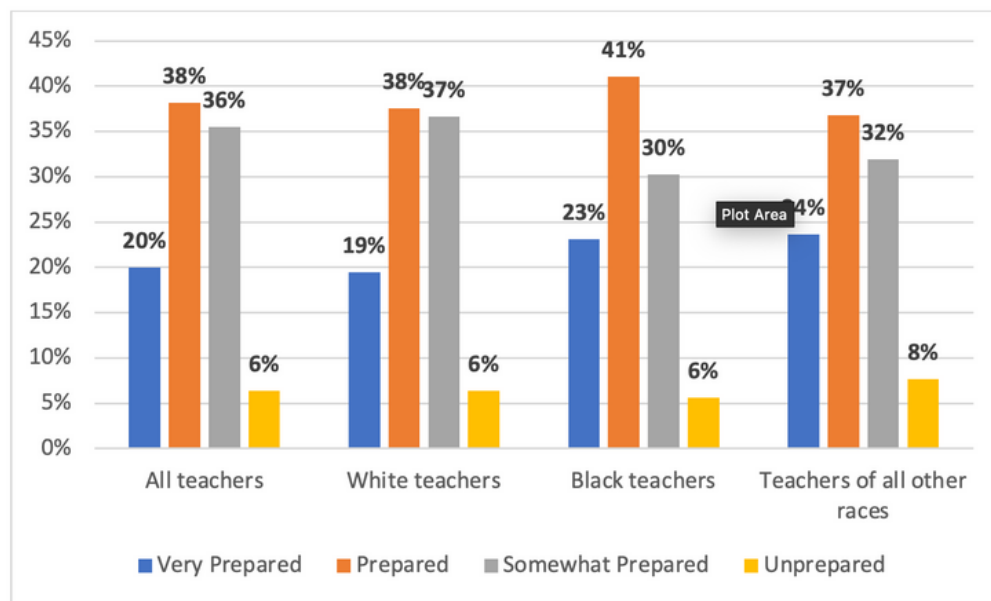
<sup>1</sup> Visit <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/38588> to read the legislation.

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### Teacher Preparation

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**Figure 1: Teachers' Self-Reported Level of Preparation at Completion of Certification Program**



Nearly 94% of educators say having a stable paraprofessional workforce is very important or important for student academic success and well-being. Recruiting and retaining paraprofessionals is one of the top staffing challenges districts currently face.<sup>2</sup> Providing support for paraprofessionals to earn certification, including financial resources, is one of the top two strategies paraprofessionals identified to improve their retention.

### Mentors for New Teachers

Mentors can provide critical support for new teachers, helping them adjust to managing their own classrooms and boosting the likelihood that new teachers will stay. Though 83 percent of teachers in their first three years said they have or had a mentor, 17 percent report not having one.

Support provided by mentors was very helpful or somewhat helpful for 92% of new teachers. Approximately 9 percent indicated the support was not helpful.

Nearly 71% of new teachers indicated their schools or districts provided other types of support to them:

- Professional learning specifically for new teachers: 41%
- Regular meetings with other new teachers: 29%
- Easy access to principals or other instructional leaders who provide support: 18%

<sup>2</sup> Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education. (2022). CARES Impact Study: Baseline Report.

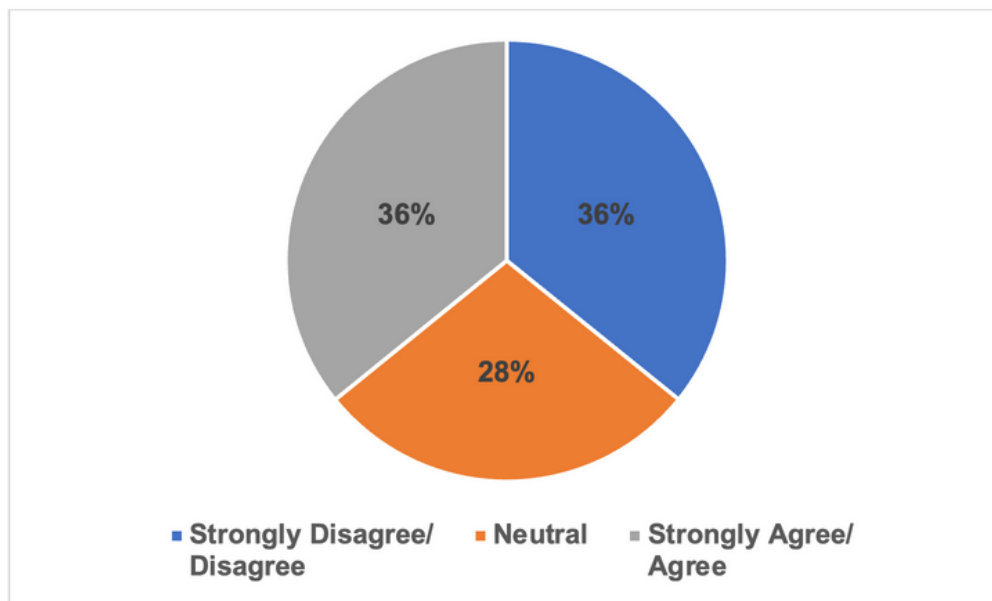
### Teacher Evaluations

An objective of teacher evaluation systems is to increase student learning by providing meaningful information to guide teacher professional growth. Components of Georgia’s teacher evaluation system include observations by supervisors with performance feedback and student standardized test scores. Teachers’ perspectives on both components vary considerably, suggesting limitations in the usefulness of performance feedback and test scores for many teachers.

Nearly 35% of teachers say feedback from supervisors on their most recent performance observations is very helpful, and an additional 29% find it somewhat helpful. About 23% are neutral on the helpfulness of supervisor feedback, and 13% say it is not helpful. Larger portions of two groups of teachers find supervisor feedback very helpful: 43% of teachers with five or fewer years of experience and 50% of Black teachers.

Teachers are divided on whether results on student assessments are used fairly and appropriately to analyze their performance with equal portions believing they are or are not. (See Figure 2.)

**Figure 2: Teacher Agreement that Assessments are Used Appropriately to Analyze Teacher Performance**



### Student Assessment Data

Assessments can help educators determine whether students have mastered content and adjust their instructional strategies to meet student needs. Georgia Milestones, the state’s assessment system, which uses standardized tests, and districts’ locally selected assessments provide useful information to most teachers. For many teachers, however, the usefulness of both assessments is inconsistent, and some never find them useful.

**Figure 3: Percent of Teachers Who Find Assessment Data Useful**

Georgia Milestones Assessments Provide Useful Information		Local Assessments Provide Useful Information	
Always	2%	Always	7%
Very Often	10%	Very Often	30%
Sometimes	62%	Sometimes	52%
Never	26%	Never	11%

### Strategies to Maximize Instructional Time

Teachers have many competing demands on their time and attention, which can interfere with their ability to prepare and deliver high-quality instruction. These demands can also contribute to teacher burnout. The top three strategies ranked by teachers to minimize demands and maximize instructional time are:

- Protecting planning time
- Reducing meetings
- Reducing paperwork and data collection

Protecting planning time garnered the most support by a significant margin: it was ranked first by more than 61% of teachers and second or third by an additional 29%.

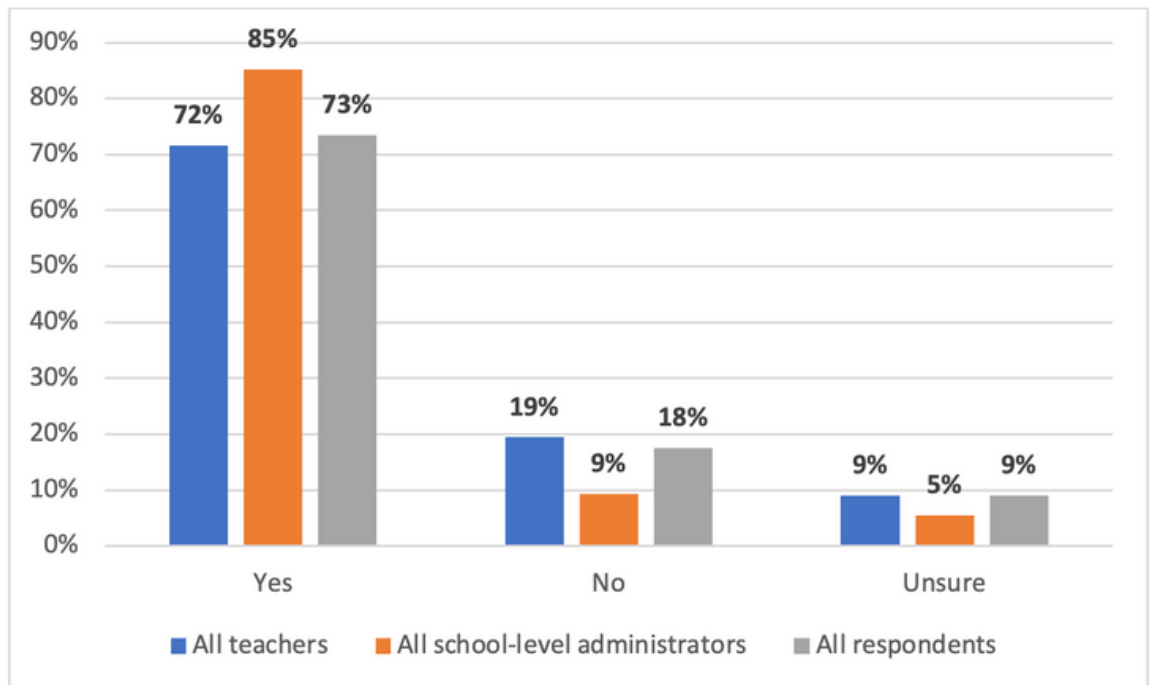
### Meeting Student Needs

Students' school experiences and academic success are shaped by multiple factors including school safety, school counselors, and student transportation. Educators describe concerns in each of these areas that can interfere with student learning and well-being.

#### School Safety

Ensuring students are safe at school is a priority for educators. The majority of educators believe their school or district has implemented a strong safety plan. However, a portion report that the safety plans can be strengthened. Educator perceptions of their school or district's plan varies by position as shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Percent of Educators Who Believe Their School/District Has a Strong Safety Plan**



Nearly one-quarter—23%—of teachers with 10 or fewer years of experience report their school or district has not implemented a strong safety plan compared to 18% of teachers with more than 10 years of experience. Black teachers are also less confident in their school or districts' safety plans: 61% say the plans are strong, 25% say they are not, and 13% are unsure. A higher portion of white teachers—73%—indicate their school or district has a strong safety plan.

Respondents ranked the importance of six possible strategies to enhance school safety as follows:

1. Comprehensive threat assessment of each school and follow-up improvement plan
2. Training for staff to consistently implement safety measures
3. Training to identify students at risk for self-harm or harming others
4. Training to de-escalate student conflicts
5. Additional school resource officers
6. Allowing educators to carry firearms

Other steps educators identified include increasing mental health staff and services, removing students who display threatening or disruptive behavior, increasing efforts to reduce bullying, implementing/expanding use of cameras, and metal detectors.

The state does not provide an annual allotment of funding for school safety to schools or districts though it has periodically provided funds to offset safety costs. School districts cover safety costs, including compliance with state requirements, with local funds.

**“On-site mental health services and wraparound community support for families in crisis.”**

Special Education Teacher  
Urban District on strategies to improve school safety

### School Counselors

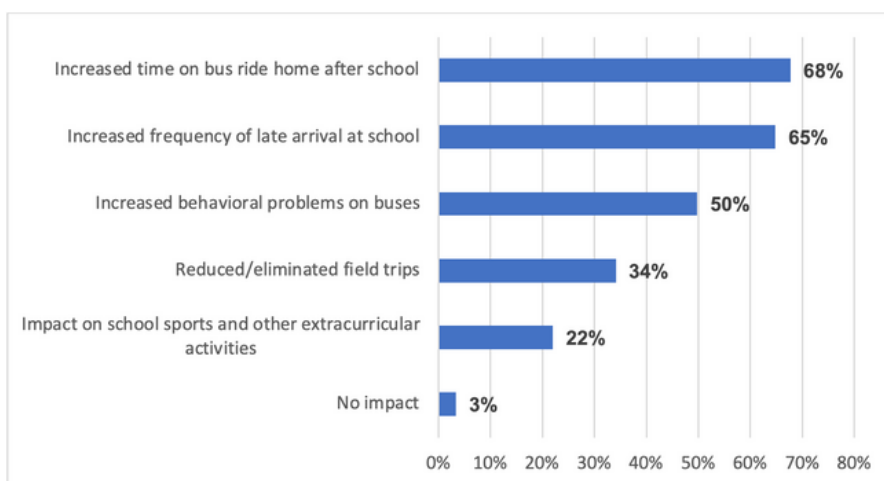
Prior to the pandemic, PAGE members called attention to the need to provide additional school counselors for students to effectively address their mental health concerns. This need has grown in the pandemic’s wake. PAGE members have described increased student mental health needs and behavioral problems. The majority of educators report an inadequate number of school counselors in their schools including 69% of school counselors, social workers and psychologists as well as 56% of teachers and school-level administrators.

A central factor in this staffing gap is current state funding for school counselors. In 2013, the General Assembly passed HB 283, which aimed to boost funding for school counselors. The legislation laid out a timeline to provide funding for school counselors for special education, gifted, remedial, and ESOL students—none of whom were provided funds for counselors at that time. Funds have not yet been allocated for special education and gifted students.

### Student Transportation

More than eight in 10 educators report their districts have a bus driver shortage. Teachers indicated the different ways this shortage affects students’ school experiences as shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Percent of Teachers Reporting Impact of Bus Driver Shortage on Students**



Teachers described how the effects of the bus driver shortage ripple out in other harmful ways:

- “Parents are getting called to get off work to pick their child up. Their employment is at stake. We have staggered times calling with multiple buses not running, which interrupts our classroom instructional days.”
- “Teachers are leaving classes to drive bus routes, which requires teachers to cover other classes.”
- “Astonishing amount of missed class time in first block, which happens to the same students (routes) on a daily basis, compounding the problem. Only one-third of my freshmen have arrived each day when class begins. It’s hard to believe until you see it.”

A core reason for the driver shortage is state funding for student transportation, which slipped and then remained mostly flat over the last two decades even as districts’ costs to bus students climbed. In the 1990s, state funding covered half of student transportation costs. It now covers less than 15% of districts’ transportation expenditures, leaving districts to pay the rest, including \$782 million in Fiscal Year 2021.

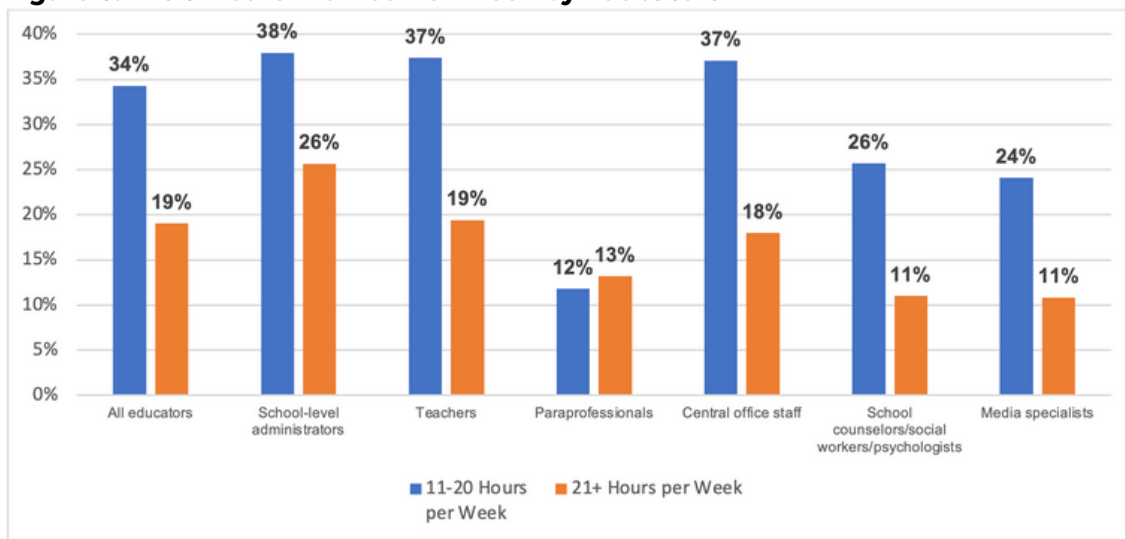
## Mounting Pressures on the Educator Pipeline

Strains on the educator workforce are growing, which affect educators’ daily work experiences and reflect structural challenges in the educator profession. These pressures can make it harder for current educators to stay in the field and reduce its attractiveness to those interested in entering the profession.

### *Educator Workload*

Educator workdays begin before the first bell of the school day and stretch beyond the last. The extra time adds up to significant additional hours of work. More than one-third of educators—34%—report spending on average 11 to 20 hours a week working on job-related activities outside of normal school hours. An additional 19% said they spend more than 20 hours per week on job-related activities outside the school day. The extra hours of work vary across positions. School-level administrators, including principals and assistant principals, have the highest portion working an extra 20 or more hours per week: 26%. (See Figure 6.)

**Figure 6: Extra Hours Worked Per Week by Educators**



### *Living Expenses*

Many educators say they have difficulty covering their living expenses, though they differ in the duration of difficulty. About 38% of all educators have difficulty covering expenses all or most of the time, 45% have difficulty sometimes, and 17% never have difficulty. Similar percentages of teachers experience difficulty covering their expenses. There are variations among teachers, however. Teachers of color report having difficulty covering expenses more often than white teachers. (See Figure 7.)



**Figure 7: Percent of Teachers Reporting Difficulty Covering Living Expenses**

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
All teachers	19%	20%	45%	16%
White	17%	20%	47%	16%
Black	30%	20%	37%	12%
All other races	28%	24%	38%	10%

Teachers with less experience are more likely to indicate difficulty covering expenses than veteran teachers. Nearly 48% of teachers with five or fewer years of experience and 50% of those with six to 10 years of experience report having difficulty covering expenses always or most of the time.

Covering expenses is more difficult for paraprofessionals: 42% indicate they always have difficulty and an additional 20% have difficulty most of the time.

A significant portion of educators supplement their income with additional work inside or outside their districts.

- Second job outside of district: 45%
- Paid extracurricular assignments or paid additional duties: 43%
- Extended day assignments: 23%
- Other: 14%

**“Paraprofessionals are not paid nearly half of the work they put in. I have an associate’s degree, which cost me \$20,000 out of pocket, and I still only bring home \$1,000 each month.”**

Paraprofessional  
Rural District

About 21% of educators said they have not undertaken additional work inside or outside their districts to supplement their incomes.

*Student Loan Debt*

A contributing factor to the financial pressures many educators face is student loan debt. Sixty-nine percent of all teachers incurred student loan debt while earning their bachelor’s degree or teaching certificate. More teachers who completed their bachelor’s degree or certification program in 2005 or later—78%—took on student loan debt than teachers who finished in 2004 or earlier—63%.

Covering the cost of their bachelor’s degree or certification program is difficult for many teachers who graduated in 2005 or later, but it is often particularly challenging for Black teachers. Half of participating Black teachers carry \$40,000 or more in student loan debt. (See Figure 8.)

Covering high levels of student loan debt like these can be challenging on an educator’s salary.

**Figure 8: Student Loan Debt for Teachers Completing Bachelor’s Degrees/Certification 2005 or Later**

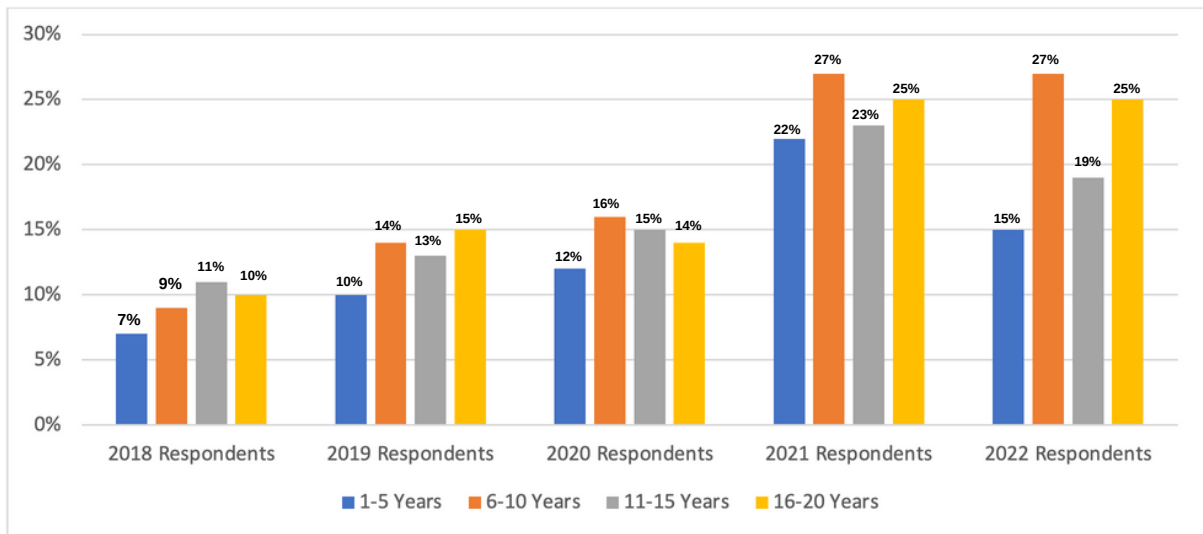
	No debt	Less than \$10,000	\$10-\$20,000	\$20-\$30,000	\$30-\$40,000	More than \$40,000
All teachers	22%	7%	17%	19%	12%	23%
White	25%	8%	18%	18%	12%	19%
Black	4%	0%	12%	20%	14%	50%
All other races	21%	8%	11%	28%	8%	23%



## Impact on the Educator Profession

Gaps in effective supports for educators and mounting work-related pressures can fray educators' commitment to the profession and risk increasing the likelihood that they will leave. Approximately 28% of all educators indicated they are unlikely or very unlikely to remain in education for another five years. After climbing between 2018 and 2021, the percent of educators reporting they are unlikely to stay plateaued for two groups of educators in the past year and declined for two groups of educators. (See Figure 9.)

**Figure 9: Percent of Educators Very Unlikely/Unlikely to Remain in Education for Five Years by Years of Experience**



A comparable portion of teachers—29%—indicate they are unlikely to remain in the field for another five years. However, a smaller portion of teachers with 20 or fewer years of experience report they are unlikely to remain: 23%. There is variation in the teachers' reported likelihood of leaving the profession in five years. A higher portion of Black teachers with 20 or fewer years of experience say they are unlikely to remain in the field for five more years compared to white teachers: 34% versus 21%.

Teachers with 20 or more years of experience cite retirement and burnout as the top two reasons they would leave the profession. Burnout is the top reason for leaving across all educators, but other reasons vary by position.

**Figure 10: Issues Ranked 1st or 2nd as Reasons to Leave by Educators with 20 or Fewer Years**

	All Educators	Teachers	School-Level Administrators	Paraprofessionals	School Counselors/ Social Workers/ Psychologists
Burnout	60%	62%	72%	37%	78%
Salary	41%	37%	37%	67%	47%
Student behavior	39%	41%	40%	27%	26%
School leadership	22%	22%	24%	20%	30%
Retirement	14%	12%	12%	23%	10%

The portion of educators identifying burnout as reason to leave has risen among several groups including school-level administrators. In 2022, 72% of school administrators flagged burnout as a top two reason to leave, a jump from 60% in 2021. More educators are also citing student behavior as a top reason to leave.

A likely consequence of the challenges educators face in the field is their unwillingness to recommend it to potential educators. About 55% of teachers would not recommend a career in education, 24% are neither likely or unlikely to recommend it, and 21% would recommend a career in the field. Among all educators, 53% would not do recommend working in education.

**“I love my students! Teaching can be so rewarding, but right now, it is becoming impossible to manage so many additional tasks, responsibilities, and duties. The expectation does not match our salary or appreciation.”**

Elementary Teacher  
Rural District

Despite these challenges, there are multiple reasons educators are attracted to the field and stay. The top five reasons teachers want to stay in the field are:

- Professional satisfaction from helping students
- Retirement benefits
- Other employment benefits (e.g., health insurance)
- Supportive colleagues and positive work environment
- Salary

Teachers with 20 or more years of experience cite retirement and burnout as the top two reasons they would leave the profession. Burnout is the top reason for leaving across all educators, but other reasons vary by position.

## Recommendations

Georgia educators identified challenges policymakers should address to better meet student needs and support a strong education workforce. Drawing on survey findings from PAGE members, PAGE recommends leaders take the following action steps:

### **1 Fund school counselors for special education and gifted students as statutorily required.**

In 2013, the General Assembly passed HB 283, which aimed to boost funding for school counselors. The legislation laid out a timeline to provide funding for school counselors for special education, gifted, remedial and ESOL<sup>3</sup> students—none of whom were provided funds for counselors at that time—and set a ratio of one counselor per 450 students for all student categories under the Quality Basic Education formula.

In FY 2018, legislators allocated funds for school counselors for ESOL and remedial students, but they have not yet invested in school counselors for special education or gifted students. Lawmakers should ensure funds for school counselors are allocated to these students in the FY 2024 budget.

### **2 Enhance school safety by incorporating funding as an annual supplemental grant to the Quality Basic Education (QBE) formula.**

Safety measures in public schools are an ongoing and increasing concern. While the state has made periodic investments to help make schools safer, there is no line item in the budget to make this a consistent priority. Legislators should incorporate an annual allocation in the state budget beginning in FY 2024.

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<sup>3</sup>ESOL refers to English to Speakers of Other Languages

**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.**

State funding to transport students to and from school safely has not kept pace with district transportation costs. State dollars currently cover only about 15 percent of these costs, down from approximately 50 percent in the 1990s. This shift adds significant costs to local budgets and limits the amount of local dollars that can be directed to the classroom. Legislators should develop and enact a plan to bring funding back to a partnership level, beginning with an increase in the FY 2024 budget.

**4****Ensure all teachers have adequate planning time to prepare and deliver high quality instruction to students.**

Educators need time to design engaging and effective instructional plans for students. PAGE members across Georgia consistently identify lack of planning time as a significant barrier to providing high quality instruction. Lack of planning time is also a reason teachers leave the profession,<sup>4</sup> and it undermines the successful implementation of interventions to improve student learning.<sup>5</sup>

**5****Reduce financial barriers to entering the teaching profession by restoring the Promise Scholarship, Teacher Scholarship, and Promise II Scholarship programs.**

Georgia faces persistent teacher shortages in special education, math, and science. School districts in many rural communities also struggle to attract and keep educators. To reduce the financial burden of earning a degree and initial certification to teach, the General Assembly should restore service cancellable loan programs it eliminated:

- Promise Scholarship for college juniors and seniors going into teaching, eliminated in FY 2011
- Promise II Scholarship for paraprofessionals seeking to complete their degrees and earn certification, eliminated in FY 2007
- Teacher Scholarship for individuals pursuing advanced degrees in critical shortage areas such as math and science, eliminated in FY 2011

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<sup>4</sup> Provasnik, S. & Dorfman, S. (2005) Mobility in the teacher workforce (NCES 2005-114). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.  
<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005114.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> McGoey, K.E., Rispoli, K.M., Venesky, L. G., Schaffner, K.F., McGuirk, L., & Marshall, S. (2014) A preliminary investigation into teacher perceptions of the barriers to behavior intervention implementation, *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, (30)4, 375-390