

The Georgia Association of Education Leaders (GAEL), Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA), Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA), and the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) request the following three items be included in the budget next session. Our top priority is listed first.

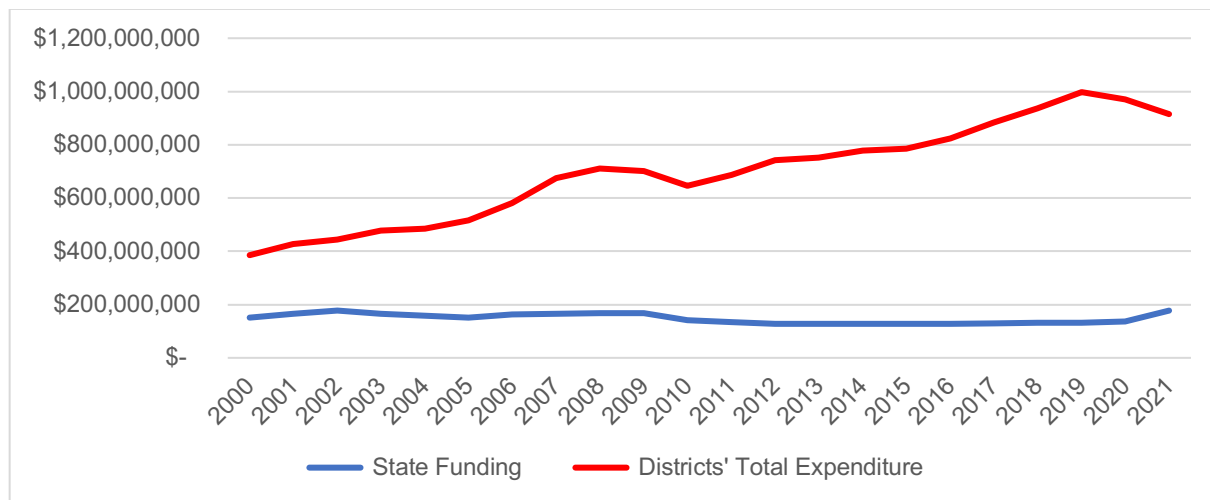
Enhancing Student & Staff Safety

Safety measures in our schools are an ongoing concern for us all. While the state has made periodic investments to help make the schools safer, there is no line item in the budget to make this a stable, ongoing priority. Since the safety of our students and staff is a sacred trust for the state, we ask that the budget reflect that with a categorical grant for school safety.

A 2018 statute added certain requirements be part of school safety plans such as training for school administrators, teachers, and support staff including school resource officers, security officers, secretaries, custodians, and bus drivers on school violence prevention, school security, school threat assessment, mental health awareness, and school emergency planning best practices; enhanced crisis communications plans and social media strategies; and practicing these plans so everyone knows what to do if an emergency occurs. (See O.C.G.A. 20-2-1185) Our partners at GEMA have been helpful in meeting some of these requirements, but there are costs to maintain security systems, update them as needed, provide continuous training, and meet new challenges as they occur.

Student Transportation

State funding to transport students to and from school safely has not kept pace with districts' transportation costs, adding significant operational costs to local budgets.



Source: Georgia Department of Education Mid-term State Allotment Sheet, FY2000-2021, School System Expenditure Report, FY 2000-FY2021

Lawmakers examined student transportation funding in 2000 and 2012 and laid out recommendations to increase the state's contribution. [Recommendations from a senate study committee in 2000](#) included changing the 1.5 mile requirement to include all students in the transportation surveys. Lawmakers' [recommendations in 2012](#) included the state funding half of the transportation formula. We ask that funding be added to pupil transportation in the next budget and a plan made to bring the funding back to a partnership level.

School Counselors

School counselors have a wide variety of duties. At a time when we are working to help students plan effectively for college and career readiness, create graduation plans in the 8th grade, and assist students with increasing mental health needs, we request additional funding for counselors.

In 2013, the General Assembly passed HB 283, which aimed to boost funding for school counselors. This effort reflected the work of the State Education Finance Study Commission. The legislation laid out a timeline to provide funding for school counselors for special education, gifted, remedial and ESOL¹ 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 as outlined in HB 283, but we have not yet invested in school counselors for special education or gifted students. We ask that all students be counted in this funding ratio.

¹ ESOL refers to English to Speakers of Other Languages