



Views from the Schoolhouse: Insights from Georgia Educators on the Education Profession and Supporting Students

Executive Summary

Educators across Georgia describe mounting pressure points on the educator pipeline in a new survey conducted by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE). Many of these pressures existed before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and have worsened since its onset. These pressures heighten strains on the educator workforce and negatively affect students' experiences. The nearly 4,600 educators who participated in the survey also signal the value of, and need for, educator input in critical educational decisions at state and local levels. Highlights from the 2022 PAGE legislative survey include:

Educator Pipeline Pressure Points

- Substitute and bus driver shortages described by educators across the state undermine student learning and heighten demands on educators.
 - Reported effects of substitute shortage on students: missed and delayed instruction (67.4 percent); increased behavioral problems (65.5 percent); loss of student engagement (64.7 percent); and, instruction from substitutes without content or pedagogical knowledge (62.5 percent).
 - Reported effects of bus driver shortage on students: increased frequency of late arrival at school (61.5 percent); increased time on bus rides home (63.1 percent); increased behavioral problems on buses (49.9 percent); and, reduced/eliminated field trips (41.2 percent).
- Nearly three-quarters of educators who earned bachelor's degrees since 2005 took on student loan debt. Almost 42 percent of these educators carry more than \$40,000 in student loan debt. Paying off this level of debt is challenging on a teacher's salary.
- Twenty-two percent of new teachers report they do not have a mentor, increasing the risk they may leave the profession.
- Approximately 55 percent of teachers report that feedback from supervisors on their instructional practices is helpful or very helpful. This leaves 45 percent with feedback that does not aid them in enhancing their instructional practices.

Valuing Educator Voices

- About 75 percent of educators contend that curriculum decisions should be made at the local level, not by state or federal governments.
- Over 90 percent of educators believe school-level educators should participate in curriculum decisions.
- Few educators know how much federal pandemic relief funding their districts received, and most report they have not had opportunities to provide input on how those funds are spent.

Sustaining the Profession

- Between 22 and 28 percent of educators with one to 25 years of experience indicate they are likely to leave education within five years. More than half of those with more experience and closer to retirement anticipate leaving the field.
- The proportion of educators across experience levels who expect to leave education has steadily climbed in recent years. If attrition rates increase in coming years as indicated, existing teacher shortages will worsen.
- The most frequently cited reasons educators with 20 or fewer years may leave the profession are:

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| Burnout | 56.5 percent |
| Salary | 37.5 percent |
| Student behavior | 31.4 percent |
| School leadership | 27.2 percent |
| Retirement | 14.2 percent |
- More than 51 percent of educators would not recommend a career in education to others, a sign that recruiting strong candidates to the field could be difficult in coming years.

These findings point to difficult challenges, but policymakers can pursue solutions in collaboration with educational leaders and the educators who serve students in public schools throughout Georgia. PAGE recommends:

1. Minimize learning disruptions for students.
 - Address the substitute shortage by increasing allotments for substitutes to \$400 per teacher under the Quality Basic Education formula, and adjust for inflation annually.
 - Resolve the school bus driver shortage and provide fiscal relief to school districts by updating the pupil transportation formula to reflect districts' expenditures, varied needs, and changes in cost.
 - Eliminate the \$383 million austerity cut in state funding for public schools in Fiscal Year 2021 to ensure districts can fund needed positions.
2. Fortify the educator pipeline.
 - Renew the state's investment in forgivable student loans for educator candidates who serve in subject or geographic shortage areas.
 - Attract and retain high quality educators by fulfilling Gov. Brian Kemp's campaign pledge to raise educator salaries.
 - Encourage teachers to continue serving students in the classroom by maintaining robust legislative support for the Georgia Teachers Retirement System (TRS) and recognize its potential to retain mid-career and late-career educators.
3. Collaborate with educators to design strategic solutions to common concerns.
 - Maintain current policy of curriculum decisions being set at the local level.
 - Convene a task force to undertake a careful review of the educator pipeline, identify critical gaps in policy and practice, and develop a statewide plan to address them. The task force should learn from and build on the work of Georgia's P-20 Collaboratives, which bring together district, traditional and non-traditional teacher preparation programs, Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs), and other stakeholders to address educator pipeline challenges.

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