

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The combined popularity of metropolitan Atlanta as a major center in the Southeast and of Georgia as a good employment and life-style location has led families to relocate from other states and nations, swelling the Pre-K student enrollment in Georgia public schools to levels far above the natural growth in previous years. The teacher demand generated from this student enrollment growth will likely sustain throughout and beyond the current slow economy.

Economic and current world political conditions may cause current high levels of teacher attrition and shortage to abate somewhat in the next year or two. Based on previous patterns of teacher preparation and employment seekers, an upturn in the national and state economies will result in higher overall teacher attrition, more retirements, and fewer teacher candidates than in this current economic downturn. A high demand for teachers will continue in Georgia public schools to fill the classrooms created by increasing student enrollments and evolving policy initiatives that are designed to improve student achievement.

The current slow economy will likely exacerbate the student enrollment decline already present in a few rural South Georgia regions as families move to city areas to find jobs. Slowly this will affect teacher counts in those regions, and teachers themselves may occasionally move to city areas to find jobs. These shifts would have implications about school funding which are beyond the scope of this report, but such relocations would certainly rearrange the demographics of Georgia's teaching force.

Statewide Hispanic student enrollment is growing at a rate that will create a demand for many more ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and Spanish-speaking educators than are in the current teaching, administrative, and certified workforce. This demand will redefine staffing and professional development directions for all categories of Pre-K-12 teachers and will adjust hiring strategies for most Georgia school systems

Teacher preparation programs in Georgia's public and private institutions of higher education are currently producing teachers at levels far too low to meet the current and growing demand for professional teachers. In addition to overall low quantities, the production trends indicate mismatches of supply and demand. For example, among middle grades student teachers, far too few mathematics and science concentrations have been sought by preparing teachers or issued by preparing institutions to adequately approach demand and supply the state's needs in those critical and shortage fields. The importance and impact of alternative preparation programs are already evidenced in teacher supply data, and will continue to serve an essential role in balancing Georgia's teacher supply and demand.

The retention of qualified teachers in Georgia schools is of ongoing concern. Attrition from and turnover in any workforce is expected, but the rising loss of qualified teachers in Georgia can have a dramatically negative impact on student achievement and efforts to improve school quality. Local and state costs were incurred in FY01 to recruit, employ, and place new hires in positions vacated by the 8,595 teachers who left Georgia CPI

employment roles in FY00. In addition, human resource officers and principals spent nearly 73% of all recruitment and hiring time replacing teachers who were not retained from the FY00 to FY01 school years. In a recently published study of retention in the teaching force, teachers across Georgia reported primary reasons for attrition not caused by family or retirement reasons. Young, older, experienced, and less experienced teachers noted their teaching and learning goals and preferences to continue as career classroom professionals. They also wrote and spoke of unsupported and non-supportive workplace conditions that cause teachers to seek other employment or professional options, including:

- Student behavior and discipline
- Board-level, administrative, and parent support as well as involvement
- Mentoring and professional development needs
- Adequate flexibility and funding for staff, supplies, and materials to meet the needs of all learners
- Fair and equitable evaluation systems and processes
- Instructional autonomy and involvement in curricular decision-making processes
- Intrinsic and extrinsic compensation and professional rewards throughout a teaching career
- Advancement and training opportunities to professionally grow and prosper, while remaining in the classroom as a career teacher
- A general lack of respect and support for their chosen profession and the requirements for good teachers who strive for sound practice and achievement in a diverse student and community population (Phase 1 Teacher Retention Study, Division for Educator Workforce Research and Development [EWRAD], Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2001)

Recommendations

The volume of new teachers hired annually will require Georgia to continue importing teachers from other states with as little bureaucratic hindrance as possible, and to increase the numbers of new teachers prepared in alternative routes. The quantity of alternatively prepared teachers was approximately 1,200 in FY01. Policies and programs should be institutionalized to increase the number by 500 annually to a stable level of at least 2,500 teachers annually by FY05. The Georgia Teacher Alternative Preparation Program (Georgia TAPP) should be enhanced to reach that level and to increasingly provide teachers across Georgia schools and content areas.

The high numbers of new hires will place added burdens on school system hiring offices and the state certification division. Procedures should be automated to the highest possible degree, employing electronic applications, electronic submission of transcripts, and college recommendations to convert from paper processes to direct electronic certification. Alternatively prepared teachers whose records are examined by college personnel and school system personnel should be directly certified in the provisional status by the college, that supervises candidates' training, and without paper submission to slow the process.

Colleges should begin immediately to increase teacher education enrollments and put procedures in place to assure full graduating classes of teacher candidates. Student teacher output quantities should reach 5,200 teachers by FY06 and 6,600 by FY11. Middle grades education departments should be given guidance and financial assistance to boost the numbers of mathematics and science concentrations among teacher preparation.

Similar efforts should be made by secondary education departments in virtually all fields, with special attention given to English, science, mathematics and foreign languages. Federal and private grants should be vigorously sought to fund these efforts and to help support students who choose these majors.

Staff development funds should be directed to teachers in RESAs where out-of-field teaching is highest. State goals should be established for the use of such funds, which will guarantee that teachers who are teaching courses out of field will become professionally certified in those fields. School districts should plan for multiple-field certifications for as many teachers as possible, with financial inducements for teachers to become professionally certified in more than one subject by FY06.

The current 20% loss rate of new high school teachers must be reduced to no more than 10% by FY06. Many alternatively prepared teachers work in high schools, and more structured mentoring programs will be needed for these teachers. First year, traditionally prepared teachers are exiting, too, and could benefit from the same formal induction programs. Staff development funds should be redirected to support a much more comprehensive mentoring program in Georgia high schools. The current system is clearly not working adequately to curb the loss of new high school teachers.

All Georgia teacher education programs should accept the supervision and instructional activities, that occur during a formal induction program for an alternatively prepared teacher as a valid substitute for student teaching; and reduce the program requirement course count accordingly. Present practices too often require a provisional teacher, even with one or two years of teaching experience, to resign his or her teaching position with a school system in order to enroll in a traditional student teaching class. This practice poses a substantial financial and psychological hindrance to young teachers, many of who are married with families and who are transitioning into teaching from a lifestyle, which mandates continuous economic sustenance.