



Georgia Professional Standards Commission

Protecting Georgia's Higher Standard of Learning

Strategic Plan

July 2019 - June 2023

FY20 Edition

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Mission:

To build the best prepared, most qualified, and most ethical education workforce in the nation

Vision:

Protecting Georgia's higher standard of learning

Introduction

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) is proud to present its FY20-23 strategic plan, grounded in prior work with an eye toward future needs, and informed by the current educational and political landscape. This introduction sets the context, serves as the environmental scan, and lays out the structure of the plan.

P-12 students today are expected to have a deep understanding of the content, think critically, and work collaboratively with their peers to solve problems, as well as demonstrate a strong work ethic. In addition, media and technological advances have changed the way children learn and view the world. Teachers, in turn, must be prepared to navigate this changing environment and at the same time elicit higher performance from their students. Educators are held accountable for the performance of their students, not only by test scores and school performance, but also by how their students perform in college and in the workforce. Consequently, educator preparation program providers are held accountable for those they prepare to go into the field of education.

Georgia Professional Standards Commission is charged with establishing and enforcing the standards for preparation, certification, and ethical conduct of individuals who are responsible for educating our children. The agency, with the guidance of stakeholders from the field, has implemented initiatives to ensure educators are ready to perform effectively on their first day of school and committed to professional growth throughout their careers. These transformative efforts include, but are not limited to:

- GaPSC is working with the Georgia Department of Education and the University System of Georgia to support and sustain dynamic and mutually beneficial partnerships between educator preparation providers and school districts through P-20 Collaboratives. These partnerships result in better-prepared educators and improved professional learning for in-service teachers.
- Educational leadership training, particularly with regard to enhancing school climate and retention of educators, has become a focus through the tiered

certification structure for educational leaders.

- In order to be approved, educator preparation providers must closely examine how their program completers are performing once in the field of education and make changes based on their findings.
- GaPSC has developed and implemented Preparation Program Effectiveness Measures (PPEMs) that provide a basis for continuous program improvement, demonstrate how candidates perform while they are in a preparation program, as well as measure how new teachers perform on the job.
- Ethics training has been enhanced to include learning modules and an assessment required for entrance into initial educator preparation programs and for obtaining certification. [Strategy 1 under Goal 1](#) in the strategic plan focuses on expanding this training.
- GaPSC no longer requires seat time for certification renewal, but instead focuses on job-embedded learning that demonstrates improved student performance. Because of this individualized structure, graduates from preparation programs now have the ability to use customized data (e.g., edTPA data, GACE scores) to drive their own professional learning during the induction phase of teaching.

These and other reform efforts have set a high bar, and our children have already started to reap the benefits. According to the most recent Quality Counts report, Georgia ranks 13th in the nation for K-12 achievement. The report also shows Georgia students rank third in the nation for increased NAEP math scores from 2003 to 2017, and fourth for increased NAEP reading scores during the same period. Georgia students have also been outpacing their peers on the ACT, and SAT scores have been rising. These are just some examples of

the results of improved teacher preparation and its impact on student performance. In addition, employer surveys show principals are more satisfied with the preparation of newly minted teachers from state-approved providers. This higher bar helps keep Georgia competitive, spur innovation, and promote economic growth.

The challenge is going to be to resist the pressure to lower the bar in response to the concern expressed by familiar headlines such as “Schools Face Teacher Shortage” (Rome News-Tribune, December 27, 2018). Shortages are real, particularly in places where economic development has not been strong and where the need is even greater for well-prepared teachers. However, the issue is more one of distribution and retention than of production. The state produces an abundance of elementary education teachers, for instance, but there are still school systems that are unable to staff their elementary classrooms because of issues such as geography, lack of amenities that draw young people, or cultural differences.

The distribution issue is largely out of the control of GaPSC; however, there are recruitment efforts in place to target the needs of hard-to-staff school districts across the state. These recruitment efforts include expanding participation in Troops to Teachers ([Goal 3, Strategy 3](#)) and encouraging the development of grow-your-own programs for school districts. In addition, expedited preparation allows teachers to enter the classroom while they are being prepared (e.g., GaTAPP, approved Master of Arts in Teaching programs). The strong educator preparation standards that have been established and enforced in recent years enable well-prepared educators to teach effectively anywhere in the state. Completion of a state-approved program and passing scores on certification assessments ensure a level of educator competency and effectiveness across the state.

Usually not discussed in media outlets is that more often than not, the real culprit regarding

teacher shortages is the inability of the profession to retain effective educators. [Goal 2](#) in the strategic plan specifically addresses retention through the preparation of educational leaders, because school leaders strongly impact school climate and teacher retention. The collaborative work of GaPSC, the Georgia Department of Education, and the Georgia Office of Student Achievement to identify, prepare, and utilize teacher leaders in schools has the potential to ultimately affect morale and, thus, retention.

Another common perception in the field is that obtaining certification is a complex and arduous process, with certification being a barrier. However, GaPSC's certification database and certification business processes are considered national models that support rapid case processing. The average certification processing time of eight days is the fastest in the nation. Even so, the agency continues to work toward further automation, streamlining, and simplification ([Goal 3, Strategy 1](#)). The fact that systems can now elect to waive certification but continue to require it for the majority of their workforce is evidence of its value. The desire to make the process more user friendly and less complex—without sacrificing high expectations—as well as required budget cuts, have motivated our efforts to revisit the current certification structure.

We are also continuing to streamline the educator preparation program approval process ([Goal 3, Strategy 1](#)), including such approaches as virtual reviews and the use of PPEMs. Since educators obtain certification by completing approved preparation programs, it is critical that these programs demonstrate evidence of meeting high quality standards ([Goal 3, Strategy 2](#)).

Part of being an effective educator is being an ethical educator. In the past five years, ethics complaints requiring GaPSC investigations have increased by about 62%, and GaPSC is focused on expanding Georgia educators' knowledge and understanding of not only the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators, but also ethical principles to guide professional decision making using the Model Code of Ethics for Educators. This is the focus of [Goal 1](#).

As in past work, we are committed to approaching this strategic plan in a collaborative manner, involving stakeholders as appropriate. In addition, GaPSC staff look forward to working with Governor Kemp and his team, new legislative leadership, a new executive secretary, and new Commission leadership.

The goals and supporting strategies in this plan are, in many cases, intertwined and dependent upon each other. Some of the strategies will require rule changes to be approved by the Commission.

Each goal is followed by an overall goal statement, providing context for the strategies that follow. Each strategy has a description, timeline, and, whenever possible, measures and targets. To make the measures and targets more meaningful, GaPSC has elected to chart them at the strategy level, instead of at the goal level.

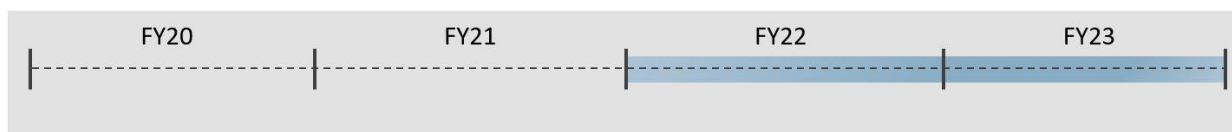
The plan is designed to be a living document to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness. This is year one of four of the strategic planning cycle, and plans for years two through four will include strategy updates as well as necessary changes.

Goal 1: Foster an ethical workforce

Education is a complex profession with educators having to make sometimes thousands of decisions in their daily work. Competing tensions and highly nuanced variables can add to the vulnerabilities and risks educators must navigate, especially when it comes to professional decision-making. Educators may choose to leave the profession or in some cases must leave the profession due to these complexities and a lack of understanding of how to mitigate these risks and to avoid missteps. Not only can many, if not most, of these missteps be avoided, but also professional relationships with students, colleagues, and other members of the school community can be enhanced by authentic dialogue about these risks, using a common language as a guide. To further protect schools, educators, and the students in their care, GaPSC will increase the number of educators who have not only the dispositions, as well as content and pedagogical knowledge, but also the demonstrated knowledge of professional conduct and decision-making.

Strategy 1

Expand the types of certificate holders who have demonstrated knowledge of the Georgia code of ethics/professional conduct and ethical decision-making.



Of the 119,070 educators working as a teacher for some portion of the 2018-19 academic year, 1,425 of them held only a clearance certificate; for most (1,082) that is the only Georgia certification they have ever held. This means that they most likely have had little or no training in the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators or ethical principles to guide decision-making, leaving them, their students, and their schools vulnerable to their potential conduct and/or ethical missteps. Similarly, paraprofessionals also currently receive little or no training regarding ethics, leaving them, too, vulnerable to missteps. As a group, paraprofessionals have one of the highest number of ethics violations. A way to ensure training is to require the ethics assessment for those who only hold a clearance certificate and for new paraprofessionals. The ethics assessment includes instructional modules that address the Georgia Code of Ethics and ethical principles to guide professional decision-making. Other groups that have taken it have found it tremendously helpful in the myriad and complex decisions they must make on a daily basis.

Measures:

1. Increase in the percentage of clearance-only certificate holders who have passed the appropriate state-approved ethics assessment; 95% of such individuals working as teachers in 2019 have not attempted this assessment.

Target: To be determined

2. Increase in the percentage of paraprofessionals who have passed the appropriate state-approved ethics assessment

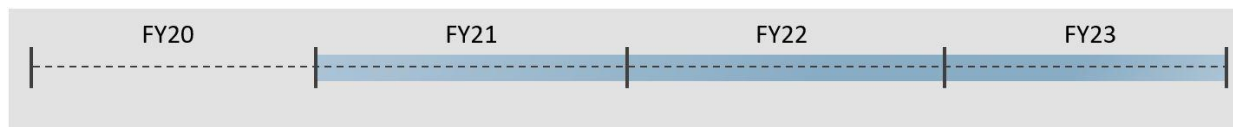
Target: To be determined when the assessment is developed and approved in policy.

Goal 2: Improve the preparation of educational leaders

School leaders are second only to teachers in terms of influencing student growth and learning. In addition, school leaders play a significant role in teacher retention. Recognizing the impact of school leaders, GaPSC will continue working with educator preparation providers and P-12 school and district personnel, as well as other state agencies, to improve the preparation of educational leaders and to enhance the pool of qualified leaders.

Strategy 1

Facilitate opportunities for providers of Educational Leadership preparation programs to learn from the experiences of participating institutions following the completion of the University Principal Preparation Initiative (UPPI), sponsored by The Wallace Foundation.



In Georgia, there are 21 state-approved providers of educational leadership preparation programs. Of those, one—Albany State University—was selected by The Wallace Foundation in 2015 for participation in the University Principal Preparation Initiative (UPPI), a four-year grant focused on improving the preparation of school and district leaders. Along with six other universities from California, Connecticut, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Virginia, faculty and staff from Albany State University were charged with collaborating with their P-12 school partners and state agency contributors to re-design their principal preparation program according to evidence-based principles and practices. To extend the lessons learned by Albany State University faculty to the other 20 providers of educational leadership preparation programs in Georgia, GaPSC staff will provide opportunities for providers of Educational Leadership preparation programs to learn from the experiences of participating institutions following the completion of the grant. This will promote the use of effective preparation program practices across all Georgia program providers of Educational Leadership programs. In addition, grant funds are being used to develop, pilot, and implement an online assessment of leadership dispositions. Upon completion of the pilot and validation process, the instrument will be hosted by GaPSC and made available to all GaPSC-approved providers of Educational Leadership programs. Assuring appropriate leader dispositions is a critical step toward supplying Georgia schools with principals capable of implementing cultures that support student growth and teacher retention.

GaPSC will perform the following:

- Invite Albany State University (ASU) representatives to present at statewide conferences and/or regional meetings;
- Coordinate opportunities for ASU representatives to share the results of the UPPI with other program providers at regular meetings of the Georgia Educational Leadership Faculty Association (GELFA) and the GELFA/GaPSC Virtual Professional Learning Community; and
- Disseminate to program providers relevant resources (e.g., reports, research findings, tools).

Measures:

1. Number of trainings and presentations facilitated by GaPSC about leadership preparation program changes and innovations

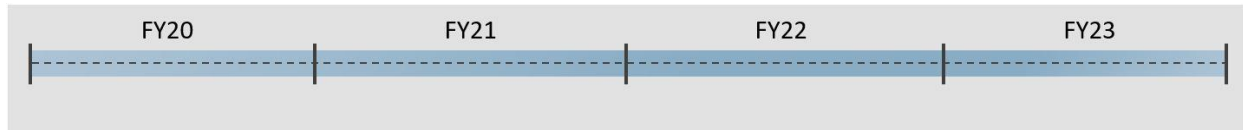
Targets: Two presentations in FY21, three presentations in FY22, and four presentations in FY23

2. Number of EPPs that adopt the dispositions instrument

Targets: 30% of Educational Leadership programs adopt the dispositions instrument by FY22 and 75% by FY23

Strategy 2

Build capacity for successful implementation of performance-based teacher leadership and educational leadership assessments.



Performance-based assessments help ensure the quality and effectiveness of teacher leaders and educational leaders such as principals and superintendents. Since the performance tasks are directly aligned with the work of schools, the assessments measure candidates' ability to apply their knowledge to real-world contexts. With the FY19 change to the teacher leadership performance-based assessment and the launch of the performance assessment for school leaders (PASL), it is imperative to build capacity for successful implementation to ensure leaders are effective in their roles. This will also help with retention of not only the leaders themselves, but also the teachers they support. Success in this strategy depends on collaboration with educator preparation providers, P-12 schools and districts, and other organizations. GaPSC will use a professional learning community formed with GELFA as a vehicle to examine data, identify needs, and develop resources to assist educator preparation programs (EPPs) and their candidates. Similar work will occur with the Georgia Teacher Leadership Virtual Professional Learning Community, a collaborative endeavor between GaPSC and EPPs.

Measures:

1. Best-attempt pass rate on Teacher Leadership performance-based assessment. The best-attempt pass rate for academic year 2018-19 was 81%. Because only one year of baseline data is available, the target is set conservatively.

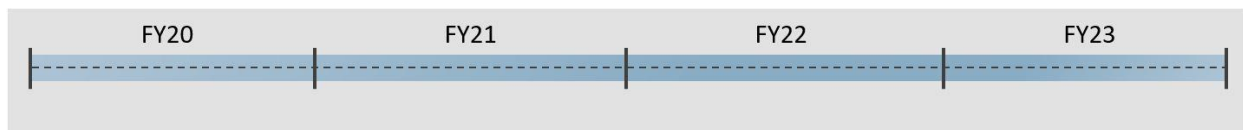
Target: Pass rate of 80% or higher

2. Best-attempt pass rate on Performance Assessment for School Leaders (PASL). The pass rate for academic year 2018-19 is 83%. Because only one year of baseline data is available for a group of fewer than 10 candidates, the target is set conservatively.

Target: Pass rate of 80% or higher

Strategy 3

Support the work of program providers and their P-12 partners to develop and sustain pipelines for educational leader preparation through Tier I and Tier II preparation programs.



GaPSC maintains data on the preparation, certification, and employment of educators. Along with associated demographics, these data provide insights on the status of the state's educator workforce. GaPSC will analyze and share data on potential workforce needs (e.g., projected

retirements) and educational leadership program enrollment and completion, as well as the subsequent employment of those completers. Having access to these data on a regular basis will allow program providers to plan strategically by targeting recruitment efforts to districts with the greatest anticipated staffing needs, and it will inform their work with P-12 districts to identify prospective leaders and support their progression through preparation programs.

Measures:

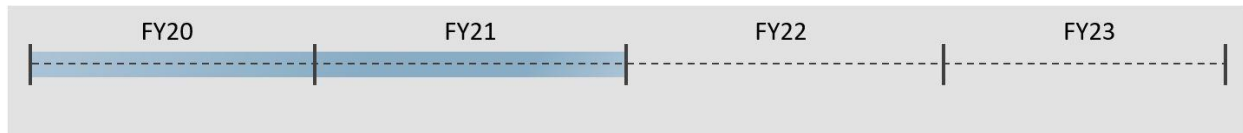
1. To be determined

Goal 3: Support the recruitment, preparation, and retention of a well-qualified Georgia educator workforce

While GaPSC does not have primary responsibility for the recruitment, preparation, or retention of educators, the work of the agency to implement and enforce high standards for programs that prepare educators for Georgia certification provides the foundation for all these functions to ensure well-qualified and effective educators. In this strategy, GaPSC will focus on simplification and streamlining of processes, educator preparation provider accountability, and targeted recruitment of military and their spouses. These multi-layered, continuous improvement and recruitment efforts will contribute to educator effectiveness, educators' decisions to remain in the profession, and ultimately, to P-12 student growth and learning.

Strategy 1

Simplify and streamline educator preparation and certification processes.



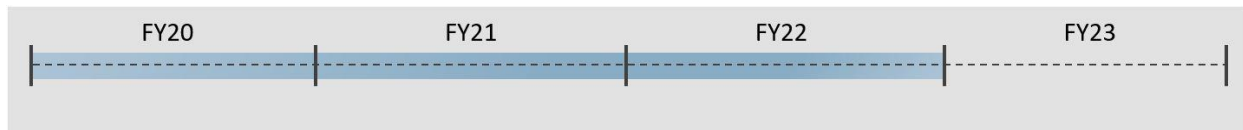
Although this strategy was prompted by budget cuts, we, working with our stakeholders, are always looking for ways to do things better, faster, and more innovatively, while not sacrificing quality. Through this strategy, we will be revisiting current policy and practice with the goals of simplification and streamlining to maximize both internal and external capacity. To guide our work, we will use the rich data we collect. Most of the actions that might result from this strategy will require Commission approval. They include, but are not limited to, simplifying and automating the endorsement approval and certification process, streamlining the traditional preparation program approval process, eliminating the approval of out-of-state educational leadership programs, redesigning the certification application process, potentially extending certificate validity dates, and exploring revisions to tiered certification.

Measures:

1. To be determined

Strategy 2

Begin consequential implementation of Preparation Program Effectiveness Measures.



Preparation Program Effectiveness Measures, PPEMs, became effective (consequential) in the 2018-2019 academic year. PPEMs are based on candidate content and performance-based assessments, program completer surveys, employer surveys, and TAPS or LAPS observations. The ultimate purpose of the PPEMs is to improve student learning in Georgia by raising the quality of teachers and leaders. PPEMs provide a vehicle for GaPSC to hold preparation programs accountable for the quality of the educators they produce, provide data to inform program improvement, and to provide transparency to the public.

This strategy involves designing and publishing a public dashboard that will display educator preparation program providers' PPEM ratings and other statistics, in addition to the pre-existing internal dashboard for advanced PPEM data. Together, these dashboards will give EPPs the data they need to guide improvement, and the public information necessary to make informed decisions about program choices. In addition, explanatory materials, a media kit, and webinars have been shared and are being continually refined to ensure that all EPPs fully understand and are prepared to use PPEM data in the continuous improvement cycle. Finally, GaPSC will monitor its own fidelity of implementing supports and consequences, both positive and negative, attendant on various EPP PPEM ratings over the first three consequential years.

Measures:

1. Number and trend of hits on the PPEM dashboards

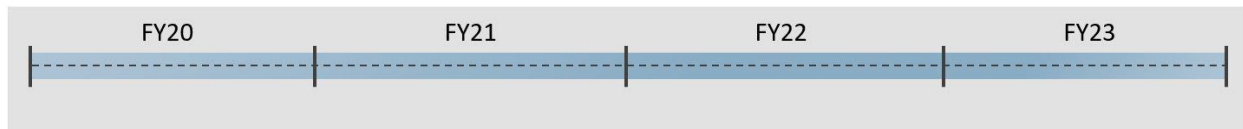
Target: To be determined

2. Percent of EPPs that increase their PPEM index score from year to year

Target: To be determined

Strategy 3

Raise awareness, improve understanding, and increase participation in the Troops to Teachers program to decrease vacancies for hard-to-fill positions.



Increasing the pool of veterans eligible for the Military Support Certificate and promoting this certificate option to school districts should reduce teacher vacancies and the number of waiver certificates requested by districts. The Georgia Troops to Teachers program (GaTTT), housed at GaPSC, provides guidance and counseling through outreach initiatives aimed at recruiting veterans for vacancies in targeted school systems and teaching positions throughout the state. GaPSC has engaged in a concerted effort to facilitate access to certification information for transitioning service members and districts. Base briefings are held monthly at six Georgia military installations to promote program awareness and participation of service members. GaTTT staff present at state conferences, outreach sessions, P-20 Collaboratives, and at various meetings with district staff, including HR officials, principals, and superintendents in an effort to inform these stakeholders about the modified certification requirements afforded by the Military Support Certificate and the benefits of hiring GaTTT participants. GaTTT helps to address teacher shortages, focusing on hard-to-staff positions.

Measures:

1. Number of TTT participants hired. Six were hired in 2019.
2. Number of school systems employing MI4 TTT certificate holders. Four school systems hired participants in 2019.

Targets:

Measure	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
TTT educators hired	6	14	51	60	75
Hiring school systems	4	10	15	20	25

Conclusion

We recognize that the educational landscape is constantly changing, and the goals and strategies that are relevant today may very well need to be adjusted as we move forward. We also recognize that significant change takes time and requires thoughtful implementation. Therefore, we will examine our strategic plan annually for relevance and effectiveness, making data-informed revisions as needed. Our commitment is to remain responsive to the needs of the education community to build the best prepared, best qualified, and most ethical education workforce in the nation.