



Georgia Professional Standards Commission

Protecting Georgia's Higher Standard of Learning

Strategic Plan

July 2015 - June 2019

FY16 Edition

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MISSION

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

VISION

Protecting Georgia's higher standard of learning

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the education profession has experienced extensive pressures to raise the bar for educator preparation and P-12 student learning. Students are expected to have a deep understanding of the content, think critically, and work collaboratively with their peers to solve problems. In addition, media and technology 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; consequently, educator preparation program providers must radically alter the way they do their work.

Calls for accountability of educator preparation providers and those they prepare have also exponentially increased. For educators, a focus on testing has not only led to pressure to perform, but also, for a few, resulted in ethics violations. The tenor of the debates about increased accountability has also impacted teacher morale.

Accountability for school systems has undergone change. In Georgia, increased flexibility means that many school systems can now request to waive many state requirements, including certification, by opting to become a charter system or a "strategic waivers" school system. What was once considered essential for becoming an educator, certification in a specified subject area, is now seen by some as an unnecessary burden. The challenge is to ensure teacher certification remains relevant and is valued by those in the field.

Georgia, like so many other states, has long grappled with how to raise the bar and address the changing education landscape in a meaningful way. The Race to the Top grant provided both the impetus and the funding to move forward. Throughout the process of implementation, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) listened and responded to stakeholder needs and made improvements accordingly.

Below are some of the reform efforts that have been implemented over the past five years by GaPSC, most still in their infancy:

- For the approval of preparation programs, there has been a shift in focus from inputs (e.g., syllabi, faculty qualifications, course objectives) to outcomes (e.g., performance of program completers' students, employers' perceptions of completers). We are in the process of developing and implementing Preparation Program Effectiveness Measures (PPEMs) and have adopted program approval standards developed by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation.
- Candidates in educator preparation programs are expected to demonstrate a readiness to teach on day one of their careers through the successful completion of the edTPA (content pedagogy) and the GACE (content) assessments.
- Ethics training has been enhanced to include learning modules and an assessment required for entrance into initial educator preparation programs and for obtaining certification.

- There has been a greater emphasis placed on the work educator preparation providers are doing with their partner school districts (e.g., P-20 Collaboratives, year-long residencies for student teachers, and co-teaching during field experiences).
- Recognizing the importance of the principal and assistant principal in improving student performance (as well as school climate), educational leadership training has been moved to the forefront. A tiered preparation structure for leaders provides candidates with foundational knowledge of school administration, as well as the critical skills necessary to become effective instructional leaders in their schools.
- Georgia has moved from a flat, one-tiered certification system to a four-tiered system, providing structures for both aspiring and beginning teachers, as well as providing career advancement opportunities for teachers that allow them to remain in the classroom. In addition, the implementation of this career ladder will help retain educators by recognizing and utilizing their expertise, and also positively impact teacher morale.
- Professional learning, and its connection to certificate renewal, has undergone a paradigm shift, eliminating counting professional learning units and instead focusing 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.

There are at least two other major reform initiatives that impact GaPSC work. The statewide educator evaluation system, implemented by the Georgia Department of Education, addresses the call for increased accountability of the individual teacher and leader, and supports continuous growth and development of each educator. This evaluation

system is a critical component of the PPEMs. The statewide longitudinal data system, GA AWARDS, in which GaPSC is a participant along with other state education agencies, will provide data to inform decision making.

We value the collaborative relationships that have been established throughout the implementation and analysis of these reforms.

We have strong, effective leadership. In addition, our staff is knowledgeable and competent, dedicated to customer service, and places an importance on communication with external stakeholders and each other. We are committed to moving forward in a deliberate and thoughtful fashion—listening and responding to stakeholders, reviewing data, and examining the effectiveness of the reforms—and making adjustments when and as needed.

For the next four years and beyond, our focus will be on the successful implementation of effective and relevant educator preparation, certification, and ethics frameworks, continuing and refining the Race to the Top reform efforts. These efforts have immense capacity to significantly strengthen effectiveness throughout the educator career continuum including recruitment, preparation, licensure, retention, and renewal. However, because of the magnitude and extensiveness of the changes, we will need to create and nurture a collaborative culture of learning both externally and internally to ensure these initiatives are communicated and understood deeply and widely. And we will need the data to support our work, thereby developing and maintaining a data-sensitive agency. It is only through this dual focus on external and internal needs that we will be successful in enhancing the profession and ultimately making a positive impact on P-12 learning.

The goals and supporting strategies in this plan are intertwined and dependent upon each other. The plan is designed to be a living document to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness.

GOAL 1: IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE AND RELEVANT EDUCATOR PREPARATION, CERTIFICATION, AND ETHICS FRAMEWORKS

In the last several years, GaPSC has initiated a number of significant reforms (see above). We must consider how these reforms fit into Georgia's changing education environment. For example, the increasing number of school systems that may decide to waive GaPSC educator certification requirements underscores the need to develop and maintain certification requirements that help local schools meet their needs for qualified educators. The rapid expansion of online options for educator preparation providers brings new challenges for ensuring preparation program effectiveness. The growing prevalence of social media illustrates the need for ethics standards that adapt to the changing nature of educators' interactions with their students. These and other trends have made it particularly important that we focus on the relevance of our work in today's education environment. We have a professional responsibility to ensure not only the relevance, but also the effectiveness of the reform efforts, with a continuous focus on improvement. The following strategies are aimed at ensuring relevant and effective implementation of educator preparation, certification, and ethics frameworks.

Goal 1 Strategies

1. Involve Georgia school personnel in regular discussions about certification issues by disseminating updates to local units of administration (LUAs – school districts) and expanding avenues for feedback and questions.
2. Encourage LUAs to make the most of tiered certification by providing information and support, such as strategies for using available data to support Induction teachers and for capitalizing on Advanced and Lead Professionals' expertise.
3. Facilitate the creation of meaningful and mutually beneficial partnerships between LUAs and Georgia educator preparation providers, such as encouraging participation in P-20 Collaboratives, in order to inform educator preparation and meet LUA staffing needs.
4. Work with LUAs and educators to create guidelines for the full implementation of new professional learning requirements, ensuring that the professional learning required for certificate renewal will enhance the value of educator certification and effectiveness.
5. Solidify the PPEM measures for full implementation.
6. Work closely with Georgia educator preparation providers to share and analyze the results of new initiatives, such as PPEMs and educator certification assessments, in order to identify strengths and areas for growth for educator preparation providers and their candidates.
7. Determine the edTPA standard for "Passing with Distinction," to include recognition strategies.
8. Determine the criteria by which a TKES score can be used to exempt the requirement to pass the GACE content assessment at the professional level.
9. Strengthen Georgia educator preparation providers, LUAs, and educators' knowledge of the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators as well as ethical principles to guide decisions by holding discussions about key ethics issues, disseminating updates, creating avenues for feedback and questions, and encouraging an intentional focus on ethics.
10. Expand the ethics assessment requirement and the training it provides to leaders and paraprofessionals, affording these groups a structured learning opportunity regarding the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators and ethical principles to guide decision making.

11. In collaboration with ETS, conduct research on the implementation and impact of the Georgia ethics assessment.
12. In collaboration with SCALE, conduct research on the implementation and impact of the edTPA.

Several strategies under Goals 2 and 3 also contribute to the implementation of effective and relevant educator preparation, certification, and ethics frameworks, most specifically strategies #1, 2, and 3 under Goal 2 and strategies #5 and 6 under Goal 3.

How will we know if we successfully implemented Goal 1?

An effective and relevant certification framework would meet the needs of Georgia schools by providing meaningful and transparent certifications that reflect the relevant qualifications of each educator. We will seek to measure this by analyzing the following:

- The percentage of Georgia’s public school teachers who lack appropriate certification who are teaching in schools that can waive certification;
- Survey responses from Georgia LUA human resources personnel regarding the usefulness of GaPSC certification status in evaluating the qualifications of applicants; and
- The number and type of Waiver certificates issued at the request of Georgia schools.

An effective and relevant educator preparation framework would produce educators who are prepared and appropriately certified to meet the instructional needs of Georgia schools. We will seek to measure this by analyzing the following:

- The percentage of completers of Georgia-approved teacher preparation programs who are employed as teachers by a Georgia public school in the academic year following program completion;
- The aggregate performance evaluation data of Georgia-approved program completers employed as teachers of record as compared to educators prepared out of state;
- The GACE content assessment and edTPA scores of Georgia-approved program completers;
- PPEM data for Georgia preparation programs; and
- The percentage of teachers prepared by Georgia-approved preparation programs teaching in the field in which they were prepared.

An effective and relevant ethics framework would ensure that educators understand their ethical responsibilities and sanction those educators who do not fulfill those responsibilities. We will seek to measure this by analyzing the following:

- The number and type of ethics cases opened each year, based on the year of the educator’s initial certification and the type of certificate; and
- Performance on the educator ethics assessments.

GOAL 2: CREATE A COLLABORATIVE CULTURE OF LEARNING AND SERVICE

Because of the substantive reform efforts underway, the constantly changing educator pool, and the turnover within LUAs and educator preparation providers, there is an ongoing need to ensure there is a common understanding of policies, processes, and procedures both within the agency and across the education community. External clients need access to current and archival information along with better and deeper understanding of agency rules and processes, including why these are in place. Within the agency, it is important to build institutional knowledge and ensure effective

communication within and across agency divisions. Placing an intentional focus on collaborative, thoughtful, and transparent development and implementation of policies and practices to build knowledge and enhance communication and outreach both internally and externally will strengthen the ultimate outcome, which is to make a positive impact on P-12 learning. Toward this aim, we must ensure a collaborative culture of learning and service.

Goal 2 Strategies

1. Develop and implement a communication plan for internal and external clients to include regular and ad hoc communications sent to target audiences, including educator preparation providers, LUAs, state agencies, and other education partners, as well as to the general public where appropriate.
2. Produce instructional materials, including guidance documents and informational webinars, and make these readily available on our website and through other delivery modes.
3. Refine the agency website to include access to appropriate archival information, as well as communication tools appropriate for the website as established in the communications plan.
4. Develop and disseminate data dashboards/performance reports for PPEM data.
5. Develop or enhance rule-based management systems, processes, and procedures that assist internal and external clients, including refining the Certification/Curriculum Assignment Policies System management system and systematic procedures for integrating out-of-state programs into agency data systems.
6. Focus existing advisory groups on ways to foster a strong collaborative culture of learning while achieving the core work of the respective groups.
7. Build on existing internal strategies and collaboratively develop new strategies that support a collaborative culture of learning.

Several strategies under Goals 1 and 3 also contribute to the development of a collaborative culture of learning, most specifically strategies #1, 2, and 9 under Goal 1 and strategies #1, 4, 5, and 6 under Goal 3.

How will we know if we successfully implemented Goal 2?

Recognizing that measuring a culture of learning and assessing long-term impact on educator effectiveness toward enhancing P-12 learning are complex and not easily quantifiable, we will assess the success of this goal by determining 1) if the goal's strategies were fully implemented; and 2) if knowledge and communication of agency policies and practices were enhanced within and across agency divisions and with external stakeholders through the implementation of this goal's strategies. Related to the latter "measure," we will examine data from needs assessments, surveys, and evaluations, as well as track the percentage of educator preparation providers entering complete and accurate information in the TPMS, and the number of calls and emails received by the certification help desk.

GOAL 3: DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A DATA-SENSITIVE AGENCY CULTURE

We have built many systems that collect and produce volumes of data, and the agency has access to data from other educational agencies and entities. Deriving information from the data requires reporting and analysis tools that can be used by staff who have appropriate knowledge, skills, and availability. High-quality, timely information will assist the agency in improving the effectiveness of

its operations, rules, and policies, and provide stakeholders with actionable information to inform their work.

Across the agency, the use of data is critical to:

- Improve operations
- Monitor the effect of rules
- Monitor compliance with rules
- Evaluate programs for which the agency has regulatory responsibility
- Assist in decision-making at all levels (Commission, agency, divisions, individuals)
- Support special projects
- Support task force work
- Respond to legislative/media/open records requests

We can foster an agency-wide understanding of the value, appropriate use, and array of available data through training and by incorporating data collection and reporting into planning.

Goal 3 Strategies

1. Provide additional self-accessible systems for agency staff to generate routine reports and explore data.
2. Continuously strengthen controls and safeguards against misuse of data and breaches of data systems.
3. Establish a data governance team to meet quarterly to make decisions regarding data definitions, data policies, and management of the agency's data collection and reporting systems.
4. Provide appropriate internal training to selected staff members who need to use data in their jobs.
5. Consistently and extensively incorporate data collection and reporting into planning and use data to justify decisions (rules, policies, etc.).
6. Ensure our various stakeholders have access to appropriate data to carry out their functions and understand how to use those systems and how to interpret the data they contain.

Several strategies under Goals 1 and 2 also contribute to the development and maintenance of a data-sensitive agency, most specifically strategies #5 and 6 under Goal 1 and strategy #4 under Goal 2.

How will we know if we successfully implemented Goal 3?

Like Goal 2, measuring the accomplishment of Goal 3 is complex, and will be measured primarily through the successful implementation of its strategies.

IN CONCLUSION...

We have a unique opportunity with the reform efforts underway to achieve the ultimate objective of this plan, which is to positively impact P-12 student learning in Georgia. We recognize that education 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.