

The **House Study Committee on Professional Learning** was formed to study the state of professional learning in Georgia and its relationship to certificate renewal, and to make recommendations for improvements with the goal of improving schools and teaching, leading to improved student learning. Specifically, the committee was charged with studying and making recommendations on:

1. The roles of state agencies, local school systems, regional educational service agencies, colleges and universities, and other organizations in providing high quality professional learning focused on improving schools and teaching, resulting in improved student learning;
2. The effectiveness of current professional learning renewal requirements on school improvement and student learning; and
3. The adequacy of the current professional learning activities delivery system.

The committee was composed of state and local representatives with expertise in professional learning:

Amy Carter, House of Representatives, Co-Chair  
Kelly Henson, Georgia Professional Standards Commission, Co-Chair  
Sonja Alexander, DeKalb County Schools  
Rhonda Baldwin, Douglas County Schools  
Kathy Carrollton, Georgia Department of Education  
Harold Chambers, Coastal Plains RESA  
Troy Davis, Lowndes County Schools  
Tom Dickson, House of Representatives  
Montreal Gore, Fulton County Schools  
Ellen Greer, Bartow County Schools  
JaBra Harden-Fuller, Valdosta City Schools  
Tom Higgins, Northwest Georgia RESA  
Stephanie Leggett, Jones County Schools  
Melissa Mathis, Walker County Schools  
Mimi McGahee, Educational Technology Center  
Nikki Mouton, Gwinnett County Schools  
Phyllis Payne, Georgia Professional Standards Commission  
Lynn Seay, Forsyth County Schools  
Shelly Smith, First District RESA  
Karen Smits, Marietta City Schools  
Pam Williams, Appling County Schools  
Sally Zepeda, University of Georgia

House Education Committee chairman Brooks Coleman also attended two meetings.

The committee met in Atlanta three times during the late summer and fall of 2010: August 23, September 20, and November 5.

The recommendations resulted from committee discussion of all aspects of professional learning. They reflect the committee's strongly held belief that sustained, job-embedded professional learning is critical to improving both educator and student performance, and that there needs to be a stronger link between evidence of professional learning and both certificate renewal and educator evaluations. The committee also recognizes the critical role played by leaders in ensuring that effective professional learning is an intrinsic part of the school day, and the fact that both administrators and teacher leaders need certain skill sets in order to leverage the talents and skills of their staffs to maximize student performance.

## House Study Committee on Professional Learning Final Recommendations

1. The House Study Committee supports the funding and implementation of House Bill 280. The portion of House Bill 280 that deals with elementary math and science endorsements will provide needed support to elementary educators, especially if science is required to be the second AYP indicator for all elementary schools. Stipends for the endorsements signal the importance placed on this professional learning.
2. The House Study Committee recommends that the Georgia Professional Standards Commission **establish certification renewal rules that require the demonstration of the impact of professional learning on educator performance and/or student performance, effective July 2015.**
3. The House Study committee recommends that the Georgia Department of Education implement **revised professional learning rules that recognize that educators need time to improve their knowledge, skills and dispositions, and that such professional learning best occurs in a job-embedded context, with colleagues, and sustained over time. For professional learning to have the desired impact on student learning, it is essential that time be given for these activities. The committee recommends that these rules recognize that it is the responsibility of principals, district leaders, and state leaders to ensure that teachers have the opportunity for professional learning that meets these criteria. The committee further recommends that the Department of Education rules be aligned with new Georgia Professional Standards Commission certification renewal rules, requiring the demonstration of the impact of professional learning on educator and student performance, when the latter take effect.**
4. The House Study Committee supports the Georgia Professional Standards Commission rule change on certificate upgrades for advanced degrees. The committee recognizes the potential value of advanced degrees and believes that certificate upgrades should only be extended for degrees that come from providers that meet established quality standards and for degrees that are in a field for which the Georgia Professional Standards Commission offers a certificate.
5. The House Study Committee recommends that the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission support the initiative in our state's Race to the Top application regarding the use of data for instructional improvement. Specifically, the committee recommends that the Department of Education, in cooperation with its educational partners, **develop guidelines and provide support for the use of data for instructional improvement for both teachers and leaders.**
6. The House Study Committee recommends that the following definition of professional learning be adopted by the State Board of Education: "Professional learning is the means by which teachers, administrators and other school and system employees acquire, enhance and refine the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to create and support high levels of learning for all students."
7. The House Study Committee recommends that the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission cooperatively **develop a course on educator ethics.** The course will include information on the official Georgia Code of Ethics for educators and will have as one area of emphasis best practices for administering required statewide tests.
8. The House Study Committee supports the on-going work to streamline and refine evaluation instruments for teachers and leaders to be used consistently statewide, and urges the Georgia Department of Education to proceed with this work in cooperation with its state and local educational

partners. The committee **recommends that the revised leader instrument address the proficiency of leaders in developing the organizational culture and the job-embedded professional learning necessary for the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. The committee also recommends that there be a formalized link between the results of educator evaluations and prescribed professional learning.**

9. The House Study Committee recommends that, when state revenues allow, funding be increased for professional learning. Until such time, the committee recommends that professional learning, which has already suffered significant reductions during this time of diminished state revenues, not be targeted for additional cuts.
10. The House Study Committee **supports the development of a tiered certification initiative, including an Induction Certificate** as referenced in the state's Race to the Top application. The committee urges the Georgia Professional Standards Commission to proceed with this work in cooperation with its state and local educational partners. Embedded in this certificate structure are specific criteria in each tier that would provide enhanced support for teachers entering the profession as well as career teachers, master teachers, and teacher leaders. Enhanced support, including effective mentoring and coaching throughout the educator's career, is essential to educator effectiveness and increased student learning. Also embedded in this certificate structure would be the criteria and performance standards that must be met in order to renew a certificate or move to a higher certificate level.
11. The House Study Committee supports the development of **performance-based Coaching Endorsement programs that are designed for principals and district administrators** to impact school-wide improvement by developing the organizational culture and the capacity of staff to improve teaching and learning.