



GaPSC Quarterly Highlights

1st Quarter, 2024

The mission of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) is to build the best prepared, most qualified, and most ethical education workforce in the nation. This document highlights progress and actions of this state agency during first quarter 2024.

A Message from Matt Arthur

Many thanks to those of you who attended GaPSC's Ethics Symposium, held March 26-27, 2024, in Macon, as part of our continuing focus on *Prevention and Correction: Fostering Professional Practice* – the symposium's theme. Our work in ethics is about helping educators protect themselves, their colleagues, their schools, their communities, the profession, and, most importantly, protecting each and every student. Like all our work at GaPSC, we cannot do this work alone, and we need your help.

Why is this focus so important? Great damage can be done to children, colleagues, schools, and the profession by unethical acts of educators. In Georgia, we sanction, suspend, or revoke the certificates of talented educators each month due to violations of the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators. We believe most of these cases are preventable through an intentional focus not only on the state's Code of Ethics, but also on professional decision-making in choosing an appropriate course of action to avoid missteps.

Please consider the following as you work with your educators and candidates toward preventing missteps:

- Use our website as an important ethics resource. We work to keep the materials updated with relevant information.
- Report violations, handling as much as you can locally.
- Recognize you are the ethical leader with the opportunity and responsibility to shape the culture and mission of the district. Lead by example.
- Talk about ethics more than just at the beginning of the academic year. Make sure district, school, and EPP leaders and faculty are having this conversation with educators and educator candidates throughout the year.
- Encourage educators to stop, think, and consider what could possibly go wrong when facing an ethical dilemma.
- Give specific examples of missteps to educators.
- Ensure educators know they have a responsibility to report what they see/suspect. Build a culture in which an educator is encouraged to speak with another educator about a potential misstep. In short, trust your gut – say something – protect kids.
- Carefully vet your prospective educators and seek any prior disciplinary information before hiring.
- Even in these times of shortages, keep the focus on hiring quality.
- Take care of your beginning educators especially when it comes to understanding how to avoid missteps. After you hire or admit candidates, make sure they understand the Code of Ethics and what constitutes professional practice, including making ethical decisions.
- Be nosy and pay attention. Know what is going on in your district, schools, and candidate field experiences.

In closing, each of us has a professional opportunity, responsibility and accountability to place an intentional focus on conduct and ethics prevention and keeping children safe. Consult with GaPSC where needed, keep advocating for an effective and ethical profession, and, most importantly, keep focusing on what is best for kids.

We look forward to your continued input and involvement in our collaborative work. Let us know how we can support you.

Matt

Reminders

Certification

- Beginning July 1, 2024, Waiver certificates will be issued for one year only and will not be extended.
- Charter/Strategic Waiver districts are advised to use their flexibility to waive certification when possible until educators meet requirements to qualify for a Provisional or other type certificate.
- Waiving certification using a charter/strategic waiver requires the educator to hold a Clearance certificate, which requires a passing score on the GACE Educator Ethics Assessment (Test Code 360). Requesting a Paraprofessional License for these educators and placing them in a teaching position to avoid the ethics assessment is out of compliance and unethical. We will be contacting districts using this practice and closely monitoring their submissions to our office.
- Candidates completing clinical practice in a Georgia school must hold a Pre-Service certificate before beginning field and clinical experiences, unless they hold a valid Professional, Induction, Provisional, Permit, or Waiver certificate. A candidate who is employed as a teacher of record while holding only a Clearance certificate must also hold a Pre-Service certificate, or their clinical practice may not be accepted for certification. Updated guidance is in development.

Educator Preparation

- EPPs are reminded of the following implementation dates for the new Foundations of Reading, Literacy, and Language standards in [Educator Preparation Rule 505-3-.03](#):
 - By August 2024, the new standards must be fully implemented in all teacher certification programs.
 - By October 23, 2024, EPPs will submit evidence of full implementation.
 - Beginning in the fall of 2025, GaPSC approval reviews will require evidence of full implementation, to include candidate assessment data.
 GaPSC staff are providing support to EPPs via webinars and guidance. Contact your GaPSC Education Specialist for more information.
- EPPs offering Curriculum and Instruction should consider adding a certification-only option. As the Conversion Mechanism is no longer available, educators who complete out-of-state programs that do not result in certification will be required to complete a certification-only program to add the field and earn an upgrade. Contact your GaPSC Education Specialist for more information.

Ethics

- If an applicant checks 'Yes' on a Personal Affirmation Question (PAQ), the applicant has 45 days to provide the required documentation to the Ethics Division; otherwise the applicant will need to reapply. Any subsequent application will trigger an investigation into the original issue, as well as any new issues. Please be aware of and in contact with applicants in your district who are not responsive to inquiries from the Ethics Division.
- For the 2024-2025 school year, an educator who wishes to terminate a contract for the upcoming school year must submit a letter of resignation or request to be released from the contract by June 1, 2024. A *Guidelines for Breach of Contract* document regarding Standard 9: Professional Conduct of the Code of Ethics for Educators is available on GaPSC's website, under Ethics Resources. Note that if a system releases an educator from a contract, the educator does not need to be reported.
- Educators who have had their certificates revoked, denied, or suspended are not allowed to work in the school in any capacity (sub, volunteer, para, aide). It is the responsibility of the superintendent/designee to ensure such individuals are not employed or serving in any capacity in their district.
- Schools can request consent orders and case summaries on educators who have had a disciplinary action with the GaPSC.

Assessment

- The testing supplier for the GACE program is changing from Educational Testing Service (ETS) to Evaluation Systems of Pearson (ES). Until July 1, 2025, there will be no changes to the GACE program. Because scores from tests offered by different testing suppliers are not comparable, examinees must pass all parts of an assessment with the same testing supplier for that assessment to count toward certification. For example, an examinee cannot pass the Elementary Education Test 1 with ETS and expect to take Elementary Education Test 2 with ES to get credit for completing the Elementary Education GACE assessment.

- Additional details about the transition dates for specific assessments will be forthcoming. To stay updated on the GACE program, please visit the [Latest on GACE](#) page on our website.

Policy Changes

At the March 14, 2024, Commission meeting, proposed Certification and Educator Preparation rule changes were adopted. In addition, Educator Preparation rules were initiated. Below is a summary of these rules actions:

Rules **adopted** at the March 14, 2024, Commission meeting became effective April 15, 2024:

Certification

- The following rules were adopted to update certification field terminology from *Foreign Language* to *World Language* to align with Educator Preparation Program Rules:
 - 505-2-.02 CLASSIFICATION
 - 505-2-.10 PERMIT
 - 505-2-.14 ENDORSEMENTS
 - 505-2-.22 CERTIFICATION BY STATE-APPROVED PROGRAM
 - 505-2-.26 CERTIFICATION AND LICENSURE ASSESSMENTS
 - 505-2-.57 TEACHING FIELDS

Educator Preparation

- 505-3-.77 EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM was adopted to clarify Tier II program admission requirements and determination of leadership positions, and to remove references to an outdated set of guidelines.

Rules **initiated** at the March 14, 2024, Commission meeting will come before the Commission for their adoption consideration at the May 9, 2024, Commission meeting. If adopted, these rules will become effective June 15, 2024:

Educator Preparation

- 505-3-.01 REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS FOR APPROVING EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROVIDERS AND EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS was proposed to be amended to clarify candidates are responsible for applying for the Pre-Service certificate; to add dates by which EPPs must enter in TPMS the beginning of clinical practice and supervising teacher Cert ID; to revise the definition of LUA to make it consistent with the definition used in Certification Rules; and to make non-substantive updates in terminology.
- 505-3-.76 ALTERNATIVE PREPARATION FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM was proposed to be amended to clarify determination of leadership positions, to remove references to guidelines, and to make capitalization and other non-substantive adjustments.

GaPSC current and proposed rules are available at <https://www.gapsc.com/Commission/Rules/home.aspx>. All Commission meeting minutes are available at <https://www.gapsc.com/Commission/CommissionInfo/Minutes.aspx>.

Enhancements

The following are examples of first-quarter GaPSC actions aimed at enhancing the quality of our services:

- The GaPSC Ethics Symposium was held March 26-27, 2024, at Middle Georgia State University's Robert F. Hatcher, Sr. Conference Center in Macon, GA. This statewide meeting featured a keynote and plenary presentation, along with three additional general sessions and 18 concurrent sessions covering a range of topics specific to the symposium's theme of *Prevention and Correction: Fostering Professional Practice*. The audience included school administrators, school district personnel (e.g., superintendents, HR directors, certification officials, PL directors, principals), and educator preparation provider (EPP) deans/chairs, program directors, and faculty. This symposium is only one of many initiatives of ours to work collaboratively with districts, schools, EPPs, and others toward the goal of fostering an intentional focus on ethics and ethical decision-making to help educators avoid missteps.

- Work continued on a ten-part video series covering each of the [Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators](#) standards, which will be available as part of the GaPSC Video Series at <https://www.gapsc.com/VideoSeries/home.aspx>.
- In addition to conducting sessions at the GaPSC Ethics Symposium and at statewide conferences, GaPSC staff provided multiple professional learning and technical assistance events to assist school districts, schools, and EPPs as they work with their in-service educators, and EPP faculty as they work with their pre-service educator candidates. In total, GaPSC presented to over 1,560 individuals during first quarter.

**Examples of GaPSC Support and Professional Learning Events
1st Quarter, 2024**

Certification

3 Presentations (Teacher Pipeline, Teacher Leadership, JROTC)
1 Cultural Exchange/International Certification Training
1 EPP Presentation
1 School District Presentation

Educator Preparation

1 HBCU Collaborative
2 GaTAPP Provider Meetings
4 Literacy Information Sessions
4 Orientation Sessions
10 Individual EPP Meetings
3 Presentations (Teacher Pipeline, Teacher Leadership)

Ethics

1 Aspiring Leaders Training

Assessment

2 Title II/HEOA Webinars

Support by the Numbers

During the first quarter of calendar year 2024, GaPSC:

- Answered 7,091 certification calls
- Responded to 11,418 certification emails
- Opened 33,482 certification cases
- Completed 33,109 certification cases
- Completed 534 ethics cases

Between January 1 and March 31, 2024, GaPSC approved six new initial preparation programs and two new endorsement programs. During this quarter, work was conducted on new or continuing approval reviews for a total of five program providers.

Need Assistance?

The [GaPSC website](#) provides helpful, detailed information. If you don't find the answers you need on the website, the following contact information may be helpful:

- **Certification**: Please use the online contact form [here](#).
- **Educator Preparation**: EPPs are asked to contact their education specialist.
- **Ethics**: Contact information is provided [here](#).
- **Assessment**: Contact information is provided [here](#).