

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR GAE/DOE TELE-TOWN HALL

Revised April 21, 2020, 11:10 p.m.

On the question of the state budget for next year, what is GAE doing to be proactive and allowing school districts to manage their funds? Will the budget include funding for all students to receive technology that they will be able to use at home?

GAE will continue to be aggressive in insisting that public education is fully funded by the state budget, seeking additional funding, if necessary, to open - and keep open - our schools when safe. The legislature has not yet adopted a budget for the 2020-2021. A version of the state's spending blueprint was passed by the Georgia House of Representatives before lawmakers suspended their session on March 13. That budget, however, will almost certainly have to be revised in anticipation of new and critical new priorities brought on by Coronavirus and expected billions lost in tax revenue.

How long do you think this will last?

*Of course, no one knows for sure. However, with Gov. Brian Kemp's announcement today (Monday, April 20) allowing additional businesses to open with restrictions, we are **hopeful** that schools will be able to open on time for their regular fall calendar.*

What guidance would be given by the Georgia Department of Education for transition back to face-to-face instruction?

GAE expects - and will demand - that when schools do open, buildings and buses are thoroughly sanitized, and necessary protective equipment is provided for staff, teachers, and students. This can, in part, be funded by the recent \$2.2 trillion federal COVID-19 relief act and any future COVID relief measures but will require a commitment from the state, local systems and communities.

Has there been any discussion for paraprofessionals that have been offered more money or a different schedule?

There is money that is provided under the CARES Act for "hazard pay" that can be allocated for paraprofessionals.

Does GAE have a seat at the task force? How are teachers invited to join committees?

We are working daily with the Georgia Department of Education on a number of issues and obstacles facing public education in this difficult time. If you would like to be nominated for the Governor and Superintendent's task force, [please let us know](#).

Is it appropriate to look at the old calendar and move the start date back to after September 1?

The establishment of school calendars are the purview of local school boards. They are free to set or modify the start of the 2020-2021 school year, including establishing a September first day of classes, if they so choose.

Will first semester EOC tests results also be covered under waiver?

To date, the only public comment that we know of from DOE is this: "Due to the continuing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the summer administration of the EOC has been cancelled. Districts will be able to utilize the August mid-month administration in lieu of the summer window."

Will teachers be given summative evaluations on TKES? Will evaluations this year count?

The Teachers Effectiveness Keys System (TKES) assessments and final evaluations have been cancelled for this school year as are CCRPI ratings.

What is the progress of the bill in Senate allowing retirees to return to the classroom without penalty to TRS?

The Georgia General Assembly suspended its current session on Friday, March 13. [HB 336](#) allows retired teachers to return to the classroom full-time in schools determined to be in "highest need" after one-year retirement. The bill has passed the Georgia House of Representatives unanimously on March 12. The bill is eligible for consideration in the state Senate once the legislature meets again.

Does the Superintendent intend to modify with the GMS test? Testing waivers? Will Georgia Milestones be administered next school year? EOC testing?

The Georgia Department of Education has [cancelled the Georgia Milestones tests](#) for the 2020-2021 school year and suspended other required tests. The Department has not spoken yet directly to the issue of testing for the next school year.

The Georgia Department of Education addressed this issue in March: <https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Pages/PressReleaseDetails.aspx?PressView=default&pid=752> and in a FAQ <https://gae.org/covid19/Frequently%20Asked%20Questions%20-%20Cancellation%20of%20Assessments%20Updated%20040920.pdf>

Can local boards decide to take personal days from a teacher if they refuse to go into work?

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (“FFCRA”) allows emergency paid sick leave if you are “unable to work” due to COVID. For more details, go to the GAE website, [Coronavirus Clearinghouse](#).

How do we properly address Special Needs with Wi-Fi connection issues for quality ed? With the year being packets and virtual, how do you address the deficiencies that they will have?

We’ve long known that there is a technology divide in Georgia, leaving low-income communities and many rural areas behind. COVID has laid bare that gap. GAE has repeatedly pressed the Department of Education and the Governor’s office to assist with providing technology and reliable broadband to those without.

Some school districts have loaded up school buses as mobile Wi-Fi spots. There’s much more that could be done - and should be done - to help low-income and rural students.

As a paraprofessional who is back to school, I’ve taken all of the GACE tests but one, will I still need to take all tests?

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission has issued guidance and information on edTPA and GACE Content Assessments at https://gae.org/covid19/GAPSC_COVID-19_Update_Memo_3-19-20.pdf, which was updated on April 6: https://www.gapsc.com/Certification/Downloads/COVID-19_Certification_Guidance.pdf.

My teacher certificate expires at the end of the school year in June. Will my certificate automatically be renewed due to the Coronavirus?

The Professional Standards Commission of Georgia has addressed this and is providing a one-year extension from the completion of some tests:

“GaPSC will issue a one-year, Non-Renewable Induction Certificate to candidates scheduled to complete their initial teacher preparation programs in Spring 2020, who are not able to meet all certification assessment requirements, provided their EPPs enter a Spring 2020 date (e.g. 5/10/2020) in the Program Completion Date field in TPMS. Those who are issued the one-year, Non-Renewable Induction Certificate will have until June 30, 2021, to complete all certification requirements.”

How much is expected from teachers during the virtual learning?

One thing we know is very few teachers were taught much about online teaching in college. The Department of Education has pledged to provide professional development concerning distance learning. We will continue to advise GAE member on opportunities in this area.

With the virus going on, how will this impact student loans?

The credit reporting agency Experian has a page addressing student loans and COVID-19. <https://www.experian.com/blogs/ask-experian/what-the-covid-19-stimulus-does-for-your-student-loans/>

Where can I find information on CARES act for teachers?

NEA has put together a good summary of the CARES Act at <http://www.nea.org/home/1019.htm>

How will teacher of the year be handled for the state?

Will ask the Department of Education. We hope that DOE will also initiate a recognition program for Education Support Professionals (ESP) as a result of their extraordinary efforts during this pandemic.

Will there be any reduction to class sizes?

The DOE has issued new waivers pertaining to class size that gives school districts even more say teacher-student ratios. <https://qae.org/covid19/SBOE%20Waivers%20for%20LEAs.pdf>

Can students be detained or must everyone be passed on?

The Department of Education issued new waivers concerning grading. Different school systems are handling matters of grades in different ways. <https://qae.org/covid19/SBOE%20Waivers%20for%20LEAs.pdf>

What are we doing to deal with teacher shortage?

It remains to be seen whether or not the coronavirus will exacerbate an already critical teacher shortage in Georgia. GAE has been working during this legislative session in support of legislation to attract, recruit and retain quality teachers. Legislation GAE is championing includes salary step increases for teachers and ESPs, allowing retired teachers to return to work full-time, protection of the Teachers Retirement System's defined benefit plans, and others.

Where can I go to get more on teachers retirement and the coronavirus?

The Teachers Retirement System of Georgia has issued a FAQ concerning coronavirus that may be accessed at: <https://www.trsga.com/news/frequently-asked-questions-regarding-covid-19-and-teachers-retirement/>

Wanted to clarify, if teachers and ESPs are to report to their building before the shelter in place order is lifted, what should they do?

On the GAE Tele-Town Hall, the Department of Education addressed this issue stating that schools that do so must have a sound reason to ask “only essential personnel” to return to school “if absolutely necessary” and must follow guidelines established by the Governor (limits to gathering of ten or fewer and social distancing) and CDC recommendations. Should you have further questions regarding a directive you’ve received from your employer, please contact your [GAE UniServ Director](#). A map of the counties and districts that our Directors support may be found at: <https://gae.org/membadmin/memberctr/docu/2019-20%20UniServ%20Map.pdf>

When and how will I know if I'm eligible for my employer to file for unemployment on my behalf due to my hours being reduced?

To resolve doubt, you should contact the school district to determine if they have filed or will file a UI claim on your behalf. See, Georgia Department of Labor’s COVID-19 FAQs at <https://dol.georgia.gov/covid-19-individual-faqs>

Will there be summer school enrichment programs?

As with school calendars mentioned above, the decision to permit summer school programs is at the discretion of each local education system.

I’m a bus driver for a local school district, why isn’t my pay based on what I worked? And why can’t I file partial unemployment?

UI benefit is determined by a formula: calculate your gross earnings by multiplying your hourly rate of pay times the number of hours worked. UI claims can be based on partial unemployment through no fault of their own. If you disagree with the amount, you may file an appeal. See, Claimant Handbook at <https://dol.georgia.gov/document/unemployment-benefits/ui-claimant-handbook/download>

When will the mathematics standards revisions committee resume? Will revised mathematics standards be delayed for another school year?

The Department of Education addressed this question on the GAE Tele-Town Hall stating that the mathematics standard committee is temporarily suspended.

What will CCRPI look like next year (SY20-21)?

While CCRPI assessments will not occur this year, the question as to next school year has been referred to the Department of Education for comment.