

What GAE is doing about the ERC.

Dear Colleagues,

I hope everyone is having a productive school year. Currently, I am traveling across the state on a media tour to bring attention to core issues facing us like TKES, the OSD referendum, and the Governor's Education Reform Commission (ERC). Over the summer, we focused a great deal of attention on the ERC. GAE has provided a number of reports summarizing the issues coming from this commission. The ERC, the Opportunity School District, and the conversion to IE2 and charter schools systems are attempts by Governor Deal and the charter school/voucher coalition to dismantle public education as we know it. We are concerned about a number of proposals coming from the ERC that include:

- Providing local schools systems with a path to waive state protections for educators and students
- Elimination of pay supplements for higher education degrees in the future
- Potential elimination of state salary schedule and due process protections for educators
- Increase funding for charter schools and vouchers

Many people have asked me, "What is GAE going to do about the ERC?" I want to take this opportunity to explain GAE's strategy, which is to respond to the final plan that the ERC will unveil by December. While it is important to make our voice heard now, we have to prepare for the long battle ahead over the future of public education. The ERC's plan will be submitted to the Governor, but the General Assembly will have the ultimate power to implement the recommendations and strategies. We need to present an alternative path for Georgia. One of my goals as President is to prepare GAE and our profession to be more proactive in order to create a new vision for public education in Georgia. This process will not happen overnight but every journey begins with a step. In June, the GAE board met to plan our response to the ERC and other key issues facing public education. We have to shape our own vision for public education to counter their attacks.

Our key to success involves you! We need each and every GAE member to take ownership of GAE and this campaign in order to turn our vision into reality. If we step up together for our students and profession, we will succeed.



[Click to read this week's
ERC Meeting Updates](#)

Here is our plan of action for success:

1. Create an alternate Vision for Public Education – We need a concrete plan that counters the agenda of the ERC with input from GAE members and the community. Sadly, the public was offered extremely limited opportunities to provide input into the ERC plan. To develop a plan that is in the best interest of public education and the students it serves, we need open dialogue and debate on our alternate vision of success. We want to stimulate a broad conversation for the people of Georgia. We will not be an organization that opposes proposed legislation without an alternate plan that puts the students in the public education system first. We will be part of the solution.

2. Train and empower our members and community allies to shape education policy at the local, state, and national levels – GAE is investing time and energy to train our members to be effective in advocating for our profession at the local, state, and national levels. Please connect with your local association to join this effort. Here is an outline of our training process:

- Over 1,000 members attended TRS forums which prepared us to build a strong campaign to defeat SB152. We delivered 8,000 petition signatures at the hearing where the bill was ultimately defeated.
- We conducted seven leadership development academies for over 150 of our local leaders across the state.
- We hosted the NEA Education Summer training in Savannah that was attended by educators from across the south. We conducted 1,062 house visits to our GAE members and the community in four days.
- Our goal is to have hundreds of leaders go through local trainings this fall to learn these skills to advocate for public education.
- GAE is hosting a Leadership Summit this weekend with workshops and strategy sessions for our local officers and leaders to prepare for our work ahead.
- In late January, we are holding a professional development conference in Savannah to give us a space to improve ourselves in the profession.

3. Build strong and effective local professional associations - The clear focus of the ERC and Georgia government is to move most key decisions around pay, classroom sizes, due process rights, and other issues from the state to the local level. Almost all the local school systems became either IE2 or charter which give them the right to ask for waivers from Title 20 state protections. This could be good or bad depending on how your local school board wants to use its new power. Educators, parents, and students need to have the skills to research and monitor these issues at the local level and to organize professional issue action campaigns to impact these decisions around our vision; not the other side's vision. We believe a well-organized local association led by our members is the best way to be effective with school boards. Please become active in your local association!

4. Build relationships and accountability framework with state legislators at the local level – Nothing is more important to an elected official than what the voters in his/her district believe. Public education has allies on both sides of the aisle at the Capitol. Our members will reach out to their state legislators to build important relationships at the local level. No one is better to share the story about what is happening in the classroom than our members and community allies. As part of our leadership training, we are working with our members on how

to have effective conversations with their elected officials. Besides sharing our vision for public education, we want to talk to our legislators about the need to reform TKES/LKES.

5. We believe it is time that we received a statewide pay raise - We have carried the economic burden on our backs since the recession and now that the budget is better, we believe that all educators should receive a cost of living raise.

After the conversations, we will ask the state legislators to stand with us on our issues. If every GAE member and ally join us in these conversations, we will be unstoppable.

[Please let me know what you think of our plan of action and share your ideas with me.](#) We have a lot of work ahead but by working together we can truly create a world class public education system of which we can be proud.

-- Dr. Sid Chapman