



2023 GAE Policy Agenda

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→ Recruit, Retain, and Value Educators

GAE applauds Gov. Brian Kemp's proposed pay raises. Yet, even with the adoption of his latest proposed pay increase for classroom teachers, starting salaries for teachers in Georgia will rank below states like Alabama and Mississippi.

Pay and benefits, however, for school bus drivers, food service workers, custodians, and school maintenance personnel, however, remains abysmal. The establishment of a state salary schedule for these education professionals is an important step in retaining and attracting these essential contributors to a child's education. The retirement benefits for these workers are shameful, with the average monthly retirement benefit at \$290 a month.

→ Fully Fund Public Schools

Georgia has cut more than \$11 billion from K-12 education funding since 2003. In fact, only four times in the last 20 years has the state fully funded public education through its Quality Basic Education formula. Georgia ranks 38th in per-student funding nationally. The formula itself needs to be updated - it hasn't changed since 1985!

Money should be appropriated to improve the student/school counselor ratio, which stands at about one counselor for every 425 students. Money should also be allocated to school districts in which a high number of students live in poverty. Georgia is one of four state's in the country that doesn't do this.

Legislators also must oppose taxpayer-paid private school tuition vouchers, which divert dollars away from public education to private schools.

→ Eliminate Waivers

Under current law, school districts have the power to ignore most any public education law passed by the General Assembly and signed into law by the governor. This bizarre situation, in which a local school system can "veto" laws they wish to ignore, is fueling higher class sizes and adding to the stress and burnout our educators are facing. All but two of the 181 school districts in Georgia have "waivers" to ignore class size law.

There are also exemptions to waive health and P.E. requirements, teacher certification qualifications, the state teacher salary schedule, teacher planning time, fair dismissal rights, standards for gifted student programs, nepotism laws, and special education, and many more.