

Quick Definition

For years research has shown the quality of the teacher workforce to be the single most influential school-based factor impacting student achievement. Improving our public schools and increasing student success depends upon the ready supply of well-qualified, professional, and effective teachers at all levels of the public education system. Quality teachers are not simply born; they are developed and supported by the schools and communities in which they work. Thus, the working conditions under which teachers practice their profession and the supports they are provided to do their work effectively and grow professionally are essential components of a quality teacher workforce.¹

As a policy issue, teacher workforce encompasses a broad array of critical subtopics: preparation and education; certification and licensure; mentoring and induction; recruitment and retention; compensation and professional growth; and quality and evaluation.

¹Center for Teaching Quality. “Why Teaching Quality Matters: What We Know.” Retrieved from <http://www.teachingquality.org/whytqmatters/whatweknow.htm>.

Relevancy to Georgia

Overview

Ensuring that public schools are staffed with a quality teacher workforce is a central educational policy issue around the world. A recent study of 25 school systems throughout the world—including ten of the top performers—corroborated the resounding conclusion of nearly every educational research and policy organization in the United States. The experiences of top school systems suggests that “three things matter most: 1) getting the right people to become teachers, 2) developing them into effective instructors and, 3) ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child.”²

Despite steps taken in recent years to improve policies impacting the teacher profession, evidence suggests that Georgia’s policymakers must not only renew, but intensify their commitment to bring the necessary level of quality to the teacher workforce in our state. According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, the overall status of Georgia’s statewide policies in the area of teacher quality showed “Moderate Progress”—earning Georgia a “C” grade for our workforce.³ The future actions that Georgia educators and lawmakers take to address teacher quality will impact not only the members of our state’s educator workforce, but the hundreds of thousands of children served in Georgia’s public schools.

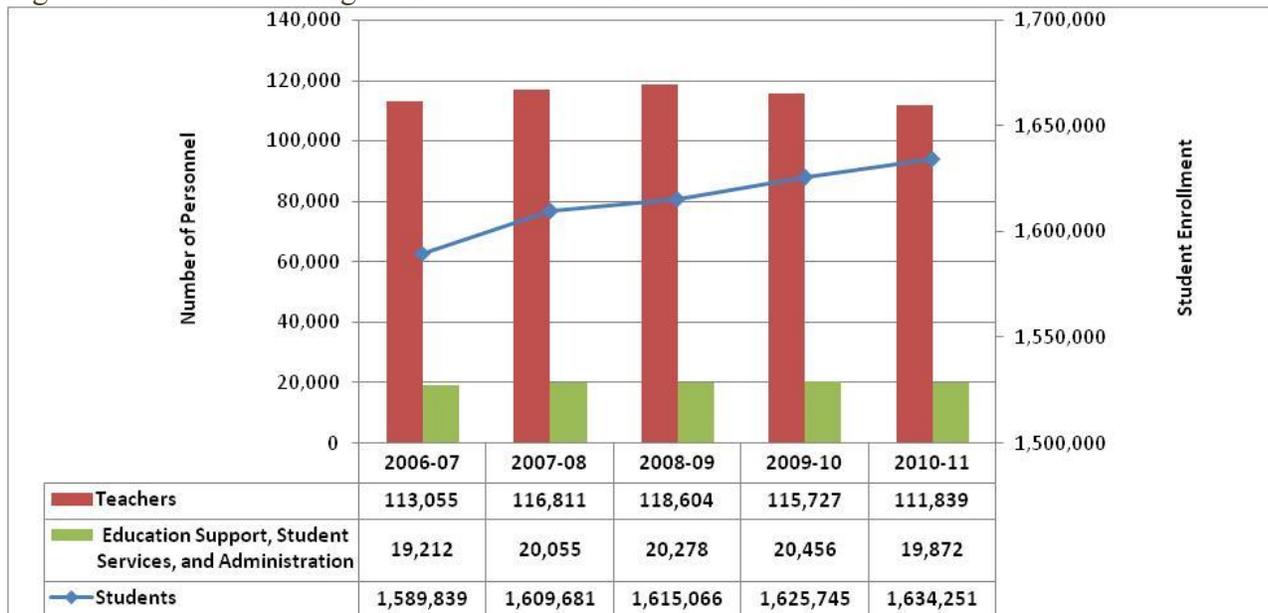
Teacher Demographics in Georgia

In 2011, a total of 131,711 educators were employed in Georgia’s PK-12 public school system. Included in this workforce group were instructional teachers, administrators, education support staff, and student services personnel. Student enrollment is the primary factor influencing the size of the teacher workforce. Although student enrollment in Georgia’s public schools has increased in recent years, the number of teachers in 2009-10 and 2010-2011 actually decreased. As states continue to grapple with cuts to education, these trends may continue through the upcoming school year. Figure 1 shows the change in Georgia’s number of certified personnel alongside the growth in student enrollment.

² McKinsey and Company, *How the World’s Best-performing School Systems Come Out on Top* (September 2007).

³ National Council on Teacher Quality, *State Teacher Policy Yearbook: Progress on Teacher Quality* (Washington, D.C., 2011).

Figure 1. Growth of Georgia’s Educator Workforce and Student Enrollment



The Governor’s Office of Student Achievement. Report Card, Personnel and Fiscal.

Table 1 shows the distribution of Georgia’s public school teachers by grade level. As 50.2 percent of the total teacher workforce, elementary school teachers comprise the largest personnel category.

Table 1. Georgia Teacher Distribution by Grade Level, 2010

Schooling Level	Frequency	Percent
Elementary (including Pre-K)	58,627	50.2%
Middle	25,822	22.1%
High	30,769	26.3%
Other	1,641	1.4%
Total	116,859	

Source: Georgia Professional Standards Commission, October 2010. Count includes all certified individuals who have *any* teaching assignment. “Other” teachers are, for example, itinerant teachers with no building assignment. A small number of teachers will have assignments in multiple schools at more than one schooling level; such teachers are counted at each level.

Teacher Preparation and Education

Teaching is a complex task that requires an extensive body of knowledge and skills. For example, quality teachers must master not only their subject matter, but also know how to organize and deliver lessons, how to assess students’ progress and refine instruction to meet the

needs of diverse learners, and how to work well with parents and colleagues.⁴ Teacher preparation and education refers to the educational program—whether through a four-year university or an alternative setting—through which individuals obtain the skills and knowledge necessary to enter the teacher workforce.

In Georgia, teacher preparation and education may occur in a traditional university setting or through an alternative preparation program. The approval of professional programs for educator preparation is the responsibility of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC).

The most common route to becoming a teacher is the traditional one: an individual enters a baccalaureate degree program at a college or university. Approved programs may be housed at either a private or public educational institution. In Georgia, 19 public colleges and universities offer teacher preparation programs. College of Coastal Georgia, Georgia Gwinnett College, and Middle Georgia College have programs under development.⁵ The state allows for prospective teachers to join the profession even if they didn't get a college degree in education.

Educator preparation programs designed for college graduates or mid-career professionals are known as “non-traditional” or “alternative” programs. In Georgia, alternative programs are offered through the Georgia Teacher Alternative Preparation Program® (Georgia TAPP). Georgia TAPP offers classroom-based teacher preparation for individuals who have the basic qualifications to teach early childhood, middle-grades, secondary, or P-12 education, but have not completed a teacher preparation program. Georgia TAPP program providers include colleges, universities, Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs), or Local Education Agencies (LEAs) approved by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC). Currently, there are twenty-one Georgia TAPP providers and six One Year Supervised Practicum (OYSP) Providers.⁶

Two training programs that are expanding are Teach For America (TFA) and The New Teacher Project (NTP). The main goal of TFA is to ensure that children growing up in poverty obtain the same quality education that their wealthier peers receive. They recruit recent college graduates to teach for two years in low-income urban and rural areas. When choosing between applicants, TFA looks for those who have “strong leadership potential” and who will help bring diversity to the corps—which is needed for the many diverse schools.⁷ They nurture and train these teachers to become leaders who will go on to make a difference in students' lives. TFA has 43 branches across the country including a metro Atlanta site, and had 9,000 participants in 2011-2012.⁸

⁴Center for Teaching Quality, “Teacher Preparation,” Retrieved from <http://www.teachingquality.org/relatedtqissues/preparation.htm>.

⁵University System of Georgia. “Educator Preparation.” Updated July 6, 2009. Retrieved from http://www.usg.edu/educator_prep/preparation.

⁶<http://www.gapsc.com/EducatorPreparation/GaTapp/home.asp>

⁷[Teachforamerica.org/why-teach-for-america/who-we-look-for](http://teachforamerica.org/why-teach-for-america/who-we-look-for)

⁸[Teachforamerica.org/our-organization](http://teachforamerica.org/our-organization)

The New Teacher Project is similar to TFA in that both want to put great teachers in schools that need them most. NTP is arguably stricter about its process, however. In 2011 for instance, only nine percent of applicants were accepted into the Teaching Fellows Program. Those without an education degree are catered to by NTP, with rigorous pre-service and classroom training. After a year of teaching in the program, principal evaluations are taken and an analysis of student growth is completed by NTP. According to NTP: “Only teachers who are at least as effective as the average new teacher in their district will earn certification, and remain in the classroom.”⁹ NTP is active in 17 states including Georgia—where they have programs in Atlanta, Augusta, and Columbus.

The certification and licensing of teachers is a subject of great importance to states as they strive to reach the “Highly Qualified” teacher standards as determined by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This is one aspect of the law that was not included in the waiver Georgia received from the U.S Department of Education in February. In recognizing the effectiveness and long-term student benefits of well-trained teachers, states are moving away from allowing teachers to hold temporary and emergency licenses. Some states offer specialized pathways or alternative licensure for career-changers to expedite the initial certification process. Many states have reviewed how they measure teacher content knowledge, resulting in some states changing or improving their testing requirements.¹⁰

Routes to Educator Certification in Georgia

In Georgia, the Professional Standards Commission (PSC) holds the responsibility for providing a regulatory system for certifying and classifying professional employees in public schools. State certification provides a standardized base-level of professional knowledge and skills for the educators working in public schools. Like many other states, Georgia has adopted a combination of individualized requirements and some commonly used standards developed by the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC).¹¹

Just as educator preparation programs in Georgia are varied to fit the needs of diverse individuals, so are there multiple routes to teacher certification in the state. Table 2 outlines the different routes to educator certification in Georgia.

⁹ tnp.org/what-we-do/training/tnp-academy

¹⁰ Education Commission of the States. “Teacher Quality: Certification and Licensure.” Retrieved from <http://www.ecs.org>.

¹¹ Georgia Professional Standards Commission, “Educator Certification Section.” Retrieved from <http://www.gapsc.com/TeacherCertification.asp>.

Table 2. Routes to Educator Certification in Georgia

Route to Certification	Description
Traditional Route	<p>Obtaining a Georgia certificate by completing a state-approved educator preparation program, usually at a college or university.</p> <p>This process could include earning a college degree along with the state certificate, or completing the requirements for a certificate after finishing a degree program. In addition, educators who move to Georgia with an out-of-state certificate must meet Georgia's certification requirements through reciprocity procedures.</p>
Alternative Route	<p>Obtaining a Georgia certificate while working as an educator.</p> <p>Designed for "career switchers" who already hold degrees and have various life experiences, as well as former educators with expired or invalid certificates who wish to return to the classroom. These routes are not limited to, but are of particular importance when completed in high need, shortage fields such as math, science, foreign language and special education.</p>
International Exchange Teacher Route	<p>Obtaining a Georgia certificate based on one's teacher certification in another country.</p> <p>International exchange certificates may be awarded to teachers certified in their native country who are not U.S. citizens but who wish to come to Georgia and teach for up to three years.</p>
Permit Route	<p>Obtaining a Georgia permit to teach in special restricted circumstances.</p> <p>Permits allow performing artists, retired teachers, and native foreign language speakers to teach in Georgia classrooms and selected business/professional leaders to serve in Superintendent positions based on their rich expertise.</p>

Source: Georgia Professional Standards Commission. "Routes to Certification."
www.gapsc.com/Certification/Documents/routes.asp.

In addition to obtaining the requisite certificate for teaching in a Georgia public school, educators in the state may elect to pursue additional, advanced certificates that represent a higher level of professionalism and skill in the teaching field. One such certificate, the Georgia Master Teacher Certificate, is offered at the state level. Another, the National Board Certificate is offered through a nationally-administered program.

Georgia Master Teacher Certification Program

In 2005, the Georgia General Assembly passed legislation to establish the Georgia Master Teacher Certification Program. This program provides statewide recognition to Georgia public

school teachers with at least three years of experience who demonstrate excellence in the classroom that is linked to gains in student achievement. Teachers who meet the criteria for Master Teacher Certification will create the pool for state-funded Academic Coaches. The program is implemented as a partnership effort of the Professional Standards Commission, the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, and the Georgia Department of Education. In the first six years of the program (2006-2011), 687 teachers throughout the state have achieved the designation of Master Teacher Certification.

National Board Certification of Teachers

In addition to fulfilling state-level requirements for certification and licensure, teachers may voluntarily apply to earn National Board Certification (NBC) from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Like board-certified doctors, accountants, and architects, teachers who achieve NBC have met rigorous criteria through intensive study, self-assessment, evaluation, and peer review. Many NBC teachers report that the process of becoming certified, which includes developing and submitting a portfolio recording their teaching practice, is a substantial professional learning opportunity. Historically, NBC teachers received an annual bonus for their accomplishment.

In 2009, HB 243 amended Georgia Code stating that NBCT salary increases were subject to appropriation by the General Assembly.¹² Therefore, if the legislature determines there is no room in the budget for these funds, these teachers will not receive their raise.

Recruitment and Retention

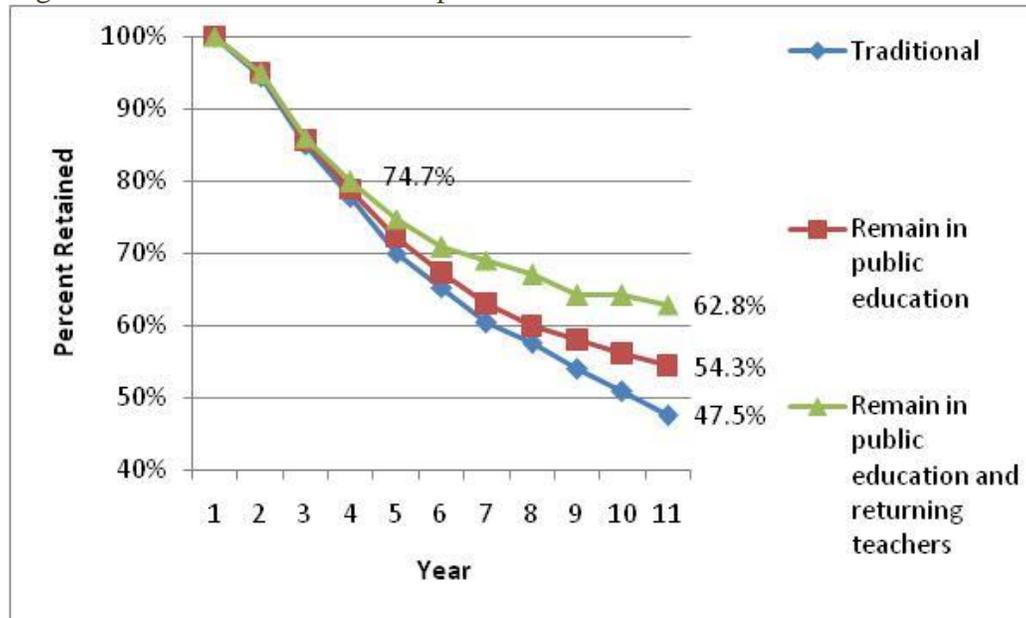
The teacher shortage varies in intensity between states and within districts. Although economic problems have led to a loss of teachers in many districts, the teacher shortage remains a concern for disadvantaged areas, including high minority, high poverty, and high rural areas, and for certain subject areas such as math, science, special education, and foreign languages. To recruit and retain teachers, many systems offer incentives which can be granted in a number of ways including tuition reimbursements, signing bonuses, and salary adjustments. Not all districts, however, can afford to make such offers. Recruitment and retention of educators is of critical importance in order to increase student performance, provide quality education, and help close the achievement gap. In many states, incentives are offered to teachers and teacher candidates who agree to teach in high-need schools in return for multi-year commitments to remain in the school and in the teaching profession.¹³

In Georgia, the retention of teachers from one year to the next continues to be the major contributor of teachers to the classroom. The majority of Georgia’s teachers remain in the classroom each year. Figure 2 illustrates the decline in retention for a cohort over the course of eleven years.

¹² Georgia Professional Standards Commission

¹³ Education Commission of the States. “Teacher Quality: Recruitment and Retention.” Retrieved from <http://www.ecs.org>.

Figure 2. Three Methods to Compute Teacher Attrition



Source: The Governor’s Office of Student Achievement. “An Analysis of the Retention Rates of Georgia Public School Teachers.” September 2010.

There is often much worry regarding the problem of teacher turnover. While it is a concern, the problem isn’t as large as some assume. This misunderstanding occurs because of the way people read and understand statistics, as well as how data is collected. The traditional method of measuring teacher retention is flawed for two reasons: it doesn’t consider career transitions inside public education or teachers returning to the classroom after a brief sabbatical. Figure 2 shows the difference that altering measurements can have on the retention rate. There is a common notion that about half of all new teachers will leave teaching after five years.¹⁴ More recently it has been discovered that the retention rate is slightly better than earlier results showed. In this sample, the retention rate in Georgia was 74.7 percent at year five.

Mentoring and Induction

The terms induction and mentoring have become synonymous in most states and school districts across the country. Although used interchangeably, they actually have different meanings, both of which are equally important in retaining new and beginning teachers. Induction programs offer a wider support system than mentoring alone by providing guidance and introduction to a position as well as help in curriculum planning, evaluation, professional development, and mentoring. Mentoring or coaching includes one-on-one support and feedback by an experienced,

¹⁴National Center for Education Statistics. “Unraveling the “Teacher Shortage” Problem: Teacher Retention is the Key.” 2002.

veteran teacher to a novice teacher resulting in increased skills and confidence necessary for success in the teaching profession.¹⁵

It is within the first few years of actual teaching in the classroom that teachers can become accomplished professionals. A 2004 research study shows that teachers who participate in an induction program are twice as likely to remain in teaching. Participation not only benefits and has a positive effect on the inexperienced, but on the experienced teachers as well.¹⁶

As part of the Race To The Top (RT3) initiative, a statewide Induction Task Force has been in development since June 2011 to develop a high-level draft of induction guidelines for teachers and for principals.¹⁷ One of the main focuses of this program is to “ensure effective teachers stay in the classroom and ineffective teachers are supported to either become effective teachers or are to be counseled out of the classroom,” according to the Georgia Department of Education. There are seven areas for high-quality teacher induction: 1) Roles and Responsibilities; 2) Leadership and Organizational Structures; 3) Orientation; 4) Mentoring; 5) Ongoing Assessment; 6) Professional Learning; and 7) Program Evaluation. These guidelines will be finalized in the summer of 2012.

Compensation and Professional Growth

Crafting the best policies for teacher compensation sits near the top of any education policy agenda year after year. While base salaries remain at the heart of any discussion of teacher pay, an effective policy discussion of teacher compensation goes far beyond just salaries. It involves increasingly diverse avenues of compensation that include one-time or sustained incentives, retirement packages, benefits, and more.¹⁸

Georgia is in the process of transitioning away from the old system where teachers are compensated based on years of service and educational attainment. Georgia is developing a common evaluation system that will allow consistency and comparability across districts, based on a common definition of teacher and leader effectiveness.¹⁹ The evaluation system will create a single Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM) that will be generated by the Teacher Keys Evaluation System.

¹⁵Education Commission of the States. “Teaching Quality: Induction Programs and Mentoring.” Retrieved from <http://www.ecs.org>.

¹⁶Education Commission of the States. “Teaching Quality: Induction Programs and Mentoring.” Retrieved from <http://www.ecs.org>; Center for Teaching Quality. “Why Mentoring and Induction Matters and What Must Be Done for New Teachers.” *Best Practices and Policies: Teaching Quality Around the Nation* (Vol. 5, No. 2, June 2006).

¹⁷Georgia Department of Education. <http://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Teacher-and-Leader-Effectiveness/Pages/Teacher-and-Principal-Induction-Guidelines-.aspx>

¹⁸Education Commission of the States. “Teaching Quality: Compensation and Diversified Pay Systems.” Retrieved from <http://www.ecs.org>.

¹⁹Georgia Department of Education. “Great Teachers and Leaders.” www.doek12.ga.us/RT3.aspx

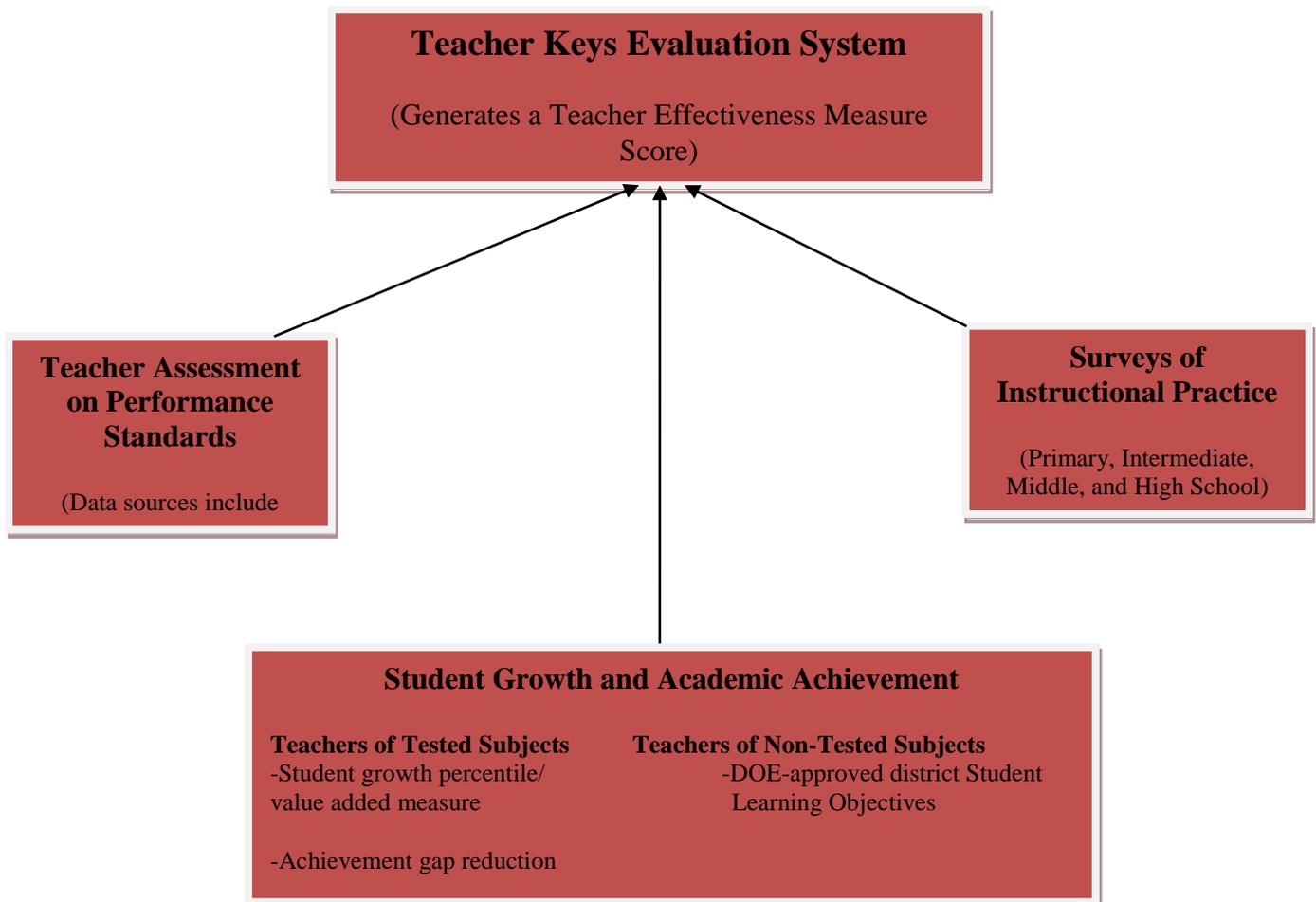
The Teacher Keys Evaluation System combines three primary components (See Figure 3):

- 1) Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS), which combine the use of classroom observations, walkthroughs, and lesson plans and teacher portfolios, to provide teachers constructive feedback across a variety of domains such as planning, instructional delivery, assessment, learning environment, and professionalism and communication;
- 2) The Surveys of Instructional Practice, which will include student surveys that ask questions along the same five domains as the TAPS; and
- 3) Student Growth and Academic Achievement, which will take into account student growth/ value added models.

Georgia will use the TEM system to inform all personnel decisions: professional development, compensation, promotion, retention, recertification, and interventions and dismissals. Higher performing teachers will have higher earning potential. Under RT3, it is proposed that increases in the salary schedule will be tied to performance, and every five years teachers must achieve a required TEM threshold as part of the recertification process.²⁰

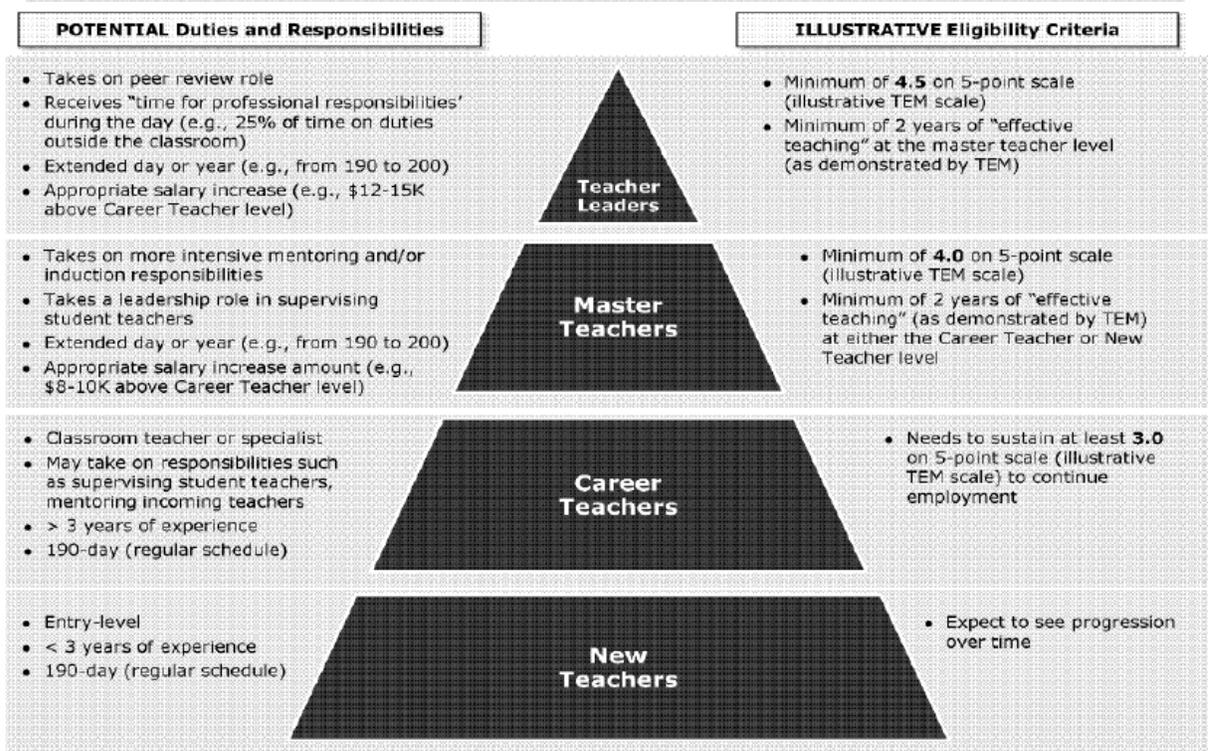
²⁰Georgia Department of Education. “Great Teachers and Leaders.” www.doek12.ga.us/RT3.aspx.

Figure 3. Teacher Keys Evaluation System



To formalize career advancement, under RT3, the state is also developing a new career ladder. Georgia is still in the early stages of developing their career ladder, but its purpose is to develop teacher capacity. Figure 4 illustrates a proposed Career Ladder Guidelines under the new system and articulates how the relationship between TEM scores and career pay and trajectory could be related.

Figure 4. Georgia’s Proposed Career Ladder Guidelines
Career Ladder Guidelines



The RT3 evaluation system began piloting in more than 500 schools within the state’s twenty-six RT3 school districts in January 2012. The system will be rolled out to all schools in the RT3 districts for the 2012-2013 school year, with plans to expand up to sixty new districts a year after that.²¹

School Leadership

Today, school leadership may be more important than at any other time in history. Demographic, social, and technological changes are producing new challenges for states, school districts, and schools working to strengthen educational systems and improve student success. Our schools desperately need leaders who understand the social, economic, and political forces that influence education, who embrace new models of instructional leadership, and who are committed to the challenges of school leadership.²²

Yet recent studies of school leadership policies and preparation suggest that states are not doing enough to ensure that leaders are trained to effectively lead positive educational change. A 2005 research report revealed that only two percent of the course content in university principal

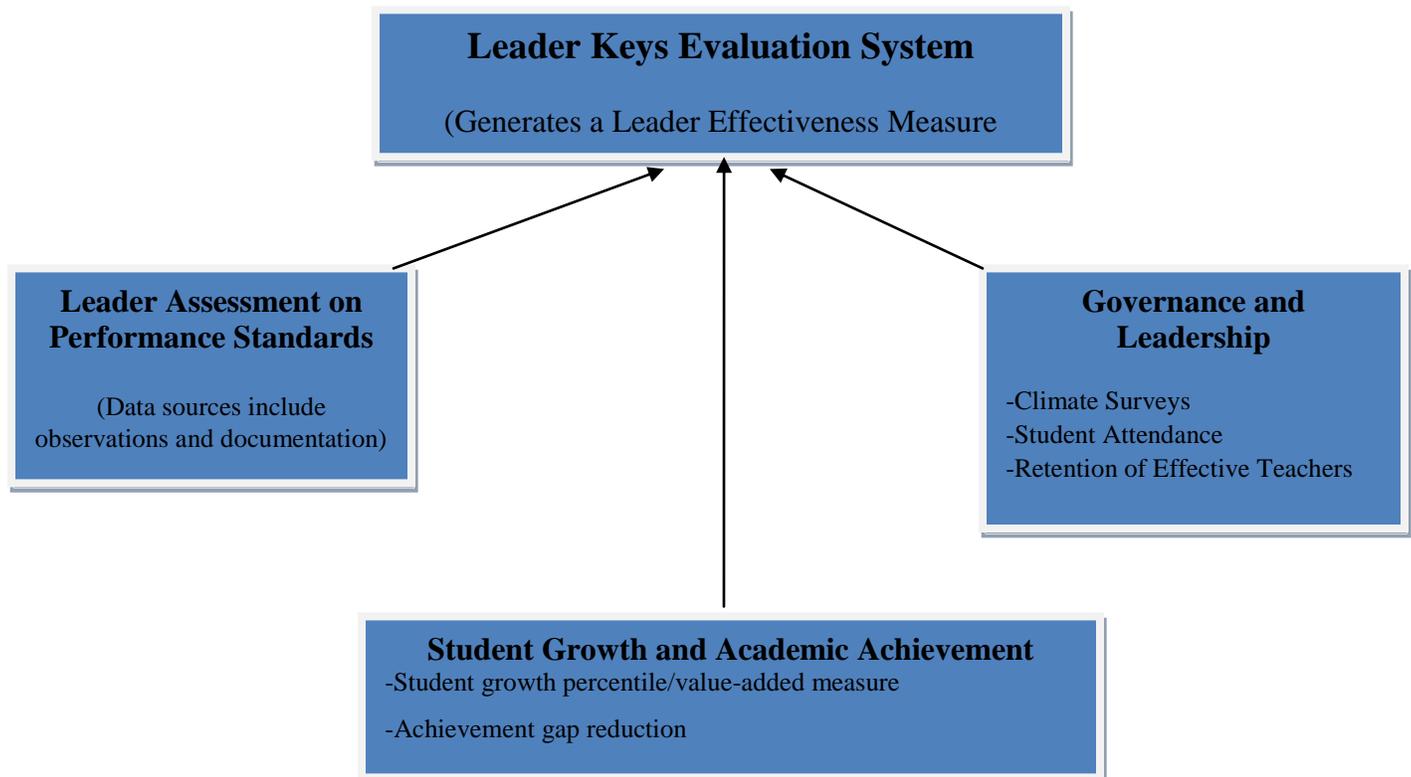
²¹Georgia Department of Education. 2011. “Teacher Keys Evaluation System and Leader Keys Evaluation System.” Presented at Race to the Top Summit, October 24, 2011. Athens, GA.

²²Education Commission of the States. “Leadership.” Retrieved from www.ecs.org

preparation programs addressed accountability in the context of school improvement. Additionally, two-thirds of schools of education were “out of touch” with the skills they need to succeed on the job.²³

In Georgia, policymakers have recognized the importance of strengthening school leadership preparation. The state has taken great strides over recent years to strengthen leadership preparation programs and build the supply of well-qualified school leaders. It is important that new mentoring and induction strategies focus on principals as well, because the average tenure is only 3.5 years.²⁴ Georgia’s population continues to grow, leading to greater student enrollment. New schools continue to open and need bright and able principals to start them on a path to success. As mentioned above, the Induction Task Force will include principals as well. A successful and effective principal “creates a culture of high expectations not only for student learning, but for adult learning.”²⁵ The same way that teacher instability can affect children’s learning environment, principal instability can affect how teachers grow as professionals. School leaders will also be evaluated using a system similar to teachers. A Leadership Effectiveness Measure Score will be generated using observed and data sources that illuminate their leadership ability.

Figure 5. Leader Evaluation Keys



²³National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. “School Leadership.” Retrieved from www.nga.org

²⁴ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)*, “Public School Principal Data File,” 2007-2008

²⁵Georgia Department of Education. “Principal Induction Draft Guidelines Introduction.” September 30, 2011

Georgia has implemented a significant initiative, Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI), which strengthens school leadership preparation, recruitment, retention, and quality. GLISI began operation in 2002 as a partnership devoted to the success of Georgia’s educational leaders in meeting elevated expectations for student achievement and school performance. The partnership is comprised of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (USG), the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPEE), the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC), the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), the office of the Governor, K-12 educators, and business leaders.

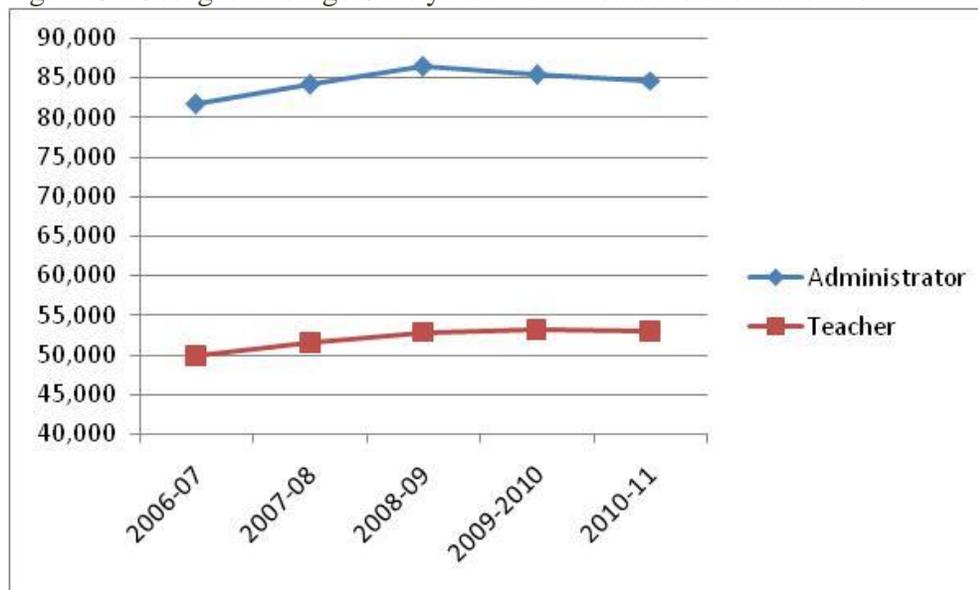
In order to provide school leaders in Georgia with effective, research-based education and support, GLISI also collaborates with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), Georgia’s Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs), school system professional development departments, higher education institutions, the Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA), the Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA), and others who seek to develop and support school leaders.

The goal of this coordinated effort is to provide resources and leverage collaboration to increase the quality and amount of support provided to educational leaders. GLISI provides education and development for educational leaders, and works to research, define, and institutionalize a leadership model based on best practices for the work of leadership of school improvement to drive changes in culture and behavior and sustain school improvement. Additionally, GLISI works to influence policy to establish new processes for leader recruitment, selection, preparation, development, and retention based on best practices that support school improvement.

The National Perspective

In the 2010-2011 school year, the average salary for a classroom teacher in Georgia was \$52,815—the highest of any other southeastern state-- though lower than the national average of \$55,623.²⁶ Figure 6 illustrates the trend in administrator and teacher salary averages for the past five years. Administrator salaries began to decline in the 2009-10 school year and continued to fall the following year. Teacher salaries slightly dropped in 2010-11.

Figure 6. Georgia Average Salary For Administrators and Teachers



Source: Georgia Department of Education State Report Cards.

The national average has consistently risen each year since 1990 and has generally risen along with inflation.²⁷ The nation did not see a decrease in salary the way Georgia has, but there was a leveling off from 2010 to 2011. Including Georgia, 12 states either kept salaries stagnant or decreased salaries from 2010 to 2011.²⁸ In 2008, the national average for administrator salaries was \$83,880.²⁹ In summary, for the past few years Georgia was above the national average for administrator salary, but below the national average for teacher salary.

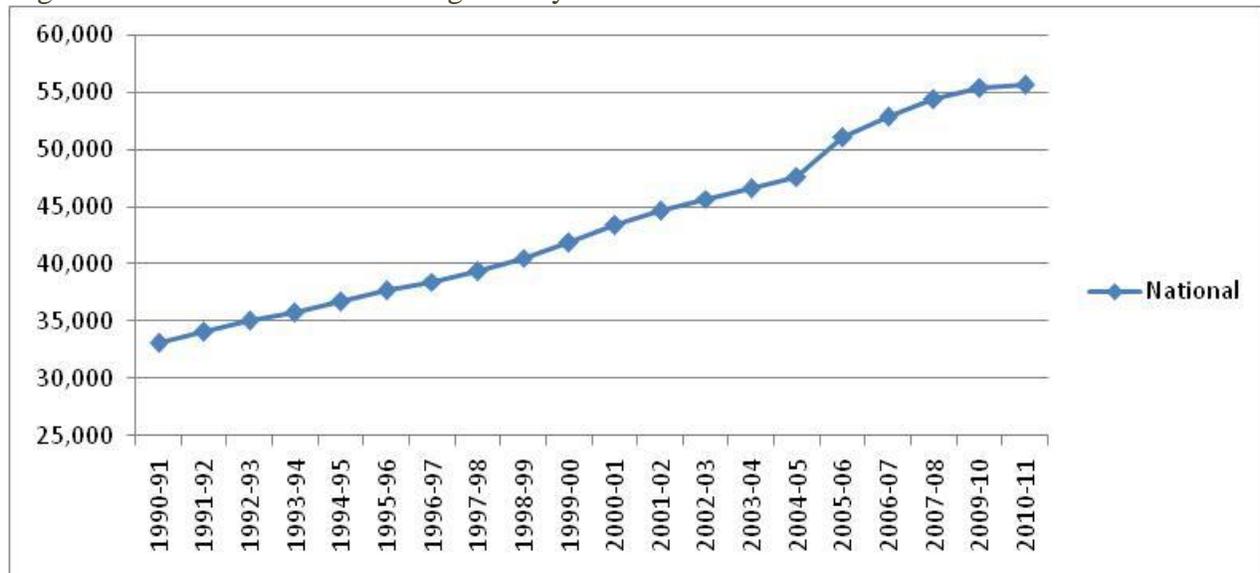
²⁶National Education Association Research. “Rankings of the States 2011 and Estimates of School Statistics 2012.” December 2011.

²⁷National Center for Education Statistic.Fast Facts.

²⁸National Education Association. “Rankings and Estimates: Rankings of the States 2011 and Estimates of School Statistics 2012. December, 2011.

²⁹U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010–11 Edition*, “Education Administrators”.

Figure 7. National Teacher Average Salary

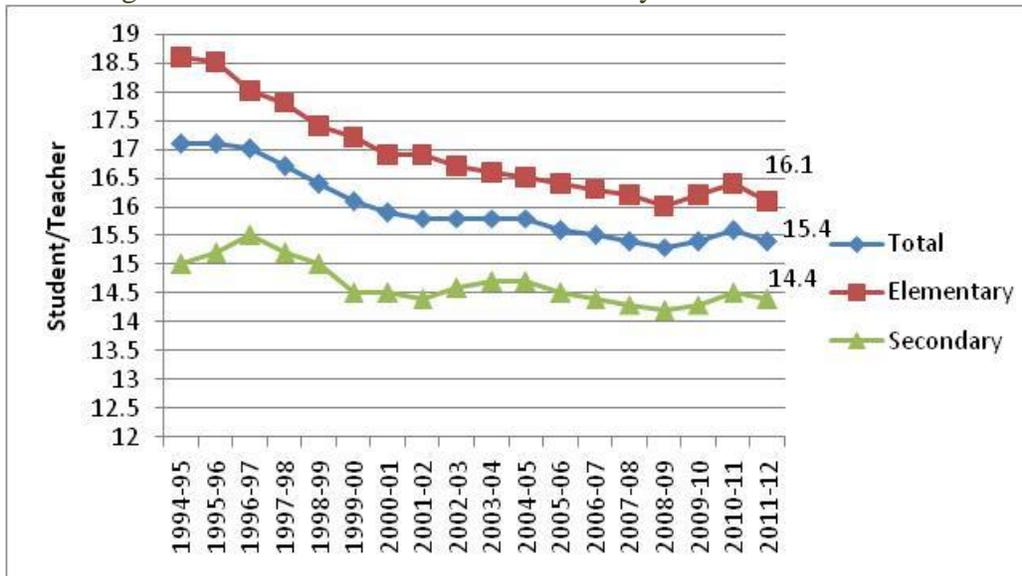


Source: National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of Education Statistics*.

The ratio of students to teachers is often used as an alternative to classroom size. Education analysts keep track of classroom size because intuitively, a smaller class size is better for both the students and the teacher. Fewer students, especially at the elementary level, helps teachers keep control of the classroom. A smaller class also leads to a potential increase in time the teacher can spend helping each individual student. With too many students in a classroom, the effects of a cramped space can have negative effects on student outcome.³⁰ Over the past 15 years, the student/teacher ratio has declined as figure 8 illustrates.

³⁰ Tanner, C. Kenneth. "Minimum Classroom Size and Number of Students Per Classroom." April, 2000.

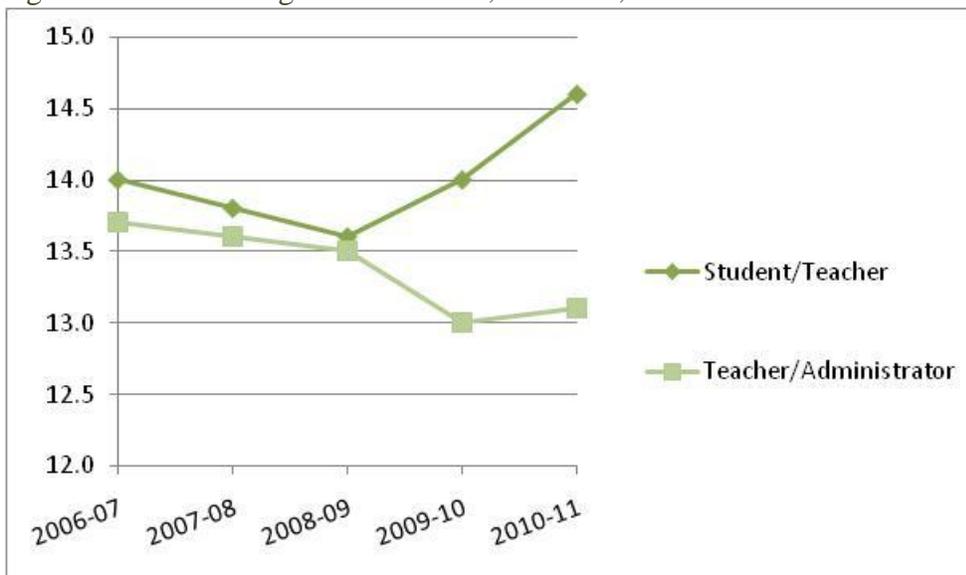
Figure 8. Student/Teacher Ratio Nationally



Source: National Education Association. “Rankings and Estimates: Rankings of the States 2005 and Estimates of School Statistics 2006, Rankings of the States 2011 and Estimates of School Statistics 2012.

Historically, Georgia’s student/teacher ratio has been at the national average or slightly below. Figure 9 captures the trend since 2006. Following the budget cuts of 2009 and 2010, fewer teachers were being hired than before the recession and budget strapped districts began reducing the number of teachers they employed. This led to an increase in the student/teacher ratio and a decrease in the teacher/administrator ratio.

Figure 9. Ratio among Total Students, Teachers, and Administrators in Georgia



Source: Georgia Department of Education State Report Cards.

As enrollment rates continue to climb, policymakers and education leaders try to attract the best and brightest to the teaching field. Alternative routes to certification have played a large role in increasing the number of teachers nationwide. Almost 500,000 teachers have entered the profession via alternative routes since the mid-1980s.³¹ Forty-eight states and the District of Columbia provide at least one alternative route to certification, with only Alaska and Oregon not participating. In the 1998-99 school year, over 12,000 teachers were certified by alternative methods nationwide; in 2008-09, that number was 59,000.³² There are many other programs that are at the local and state level, but most have similar characteristics:

- Routes specifically designed to recruit, prepare and license talented individuals who already had at least a bachelor's degree -- and often other careers -- in fields other than education.
- Rigorous screening processes, such as passing tests, interviews, and demonstrated mastery of content.
- Field-based programs.
- Coursework or equivalent experiences in professional education studies before and while teaching.
- Work with mentor teachers and/or other support personnel.
- High performance standards for completion of the programs.³³

While most alternative routes stick to these characteristics, a different version of these alternative programs has cropped up recently: for-profit programs. This is especially true in Texas, where for-profit and nonprofit programs “produce 40 percent of all new teachers in Texas, according to an analysis of Texas Education Agency data by Ed Fuller, a Penn State University education professor and former University of Texas researcher.”³⁴ These programs are attracting a lot of potential teachers: “Every year since 2007, the two largest companies, A+ Texas Teachers and iteachTEXAS, have produced far more teachers than any other traditional or alternative program.”³⁵ Supporters and critics of these programs alike acknowledge that research into the effectiveness of these for-profit programs is needed. Currently, anecdotal evidence is the only thing available.

³¹National Center for Alternative Certification. “Alternative Teacher Certification: A State by State Analysis.” 2010.

³² Ibid.

³³National Center for Alternative Certification. “Alternative Teacher Certification: A State by State Analysis.” 2010.

³⁴ Smith, Morgan.; Pandolfo, Nick. “For-Profit, Alternative Teaching Programs Are Booming.” *The Texas Tribune*. November 27, 2011. <http://www.texastribune.org/texas-education/public-education/-profit-alternative-teaching-programs-grow-texas/>

³⁵ Ibid.

Research Tells Us

A majority of states, including Georgia, are moving away from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and embracing new forms of accountability. The traditional equation that higher pay results from more experience and advanced degrees may eventually be a thing of the past. In general, research has shown that simply obtaining an advanced degree does not lead to greater student achievement.³⁶ The only caveat to this conclusion was middle school math teachers with advanced subject area degrees, who consistently made a significant impact on student learning.³⁷ Otherwise, other research has found “absolutely no evidence that having a master’s degree improves teacher skills.”³⁸

Research on the impact of experience is more complex. The first few years of teaching are the most dynamic time for a teacher. Important gains are made in the first year of teaching, followed by more modest gains the following two years.³⁹ This observation is intuitive because in most professions, once acclimation occurs, best practices are acquired. Unfortunately, there is scant evidence these improvements continue after three years of teaching.⁴⁰ Harris and Sass made similar remarks, saying: “We find that the first few years of experience substantially increase the productivity of elementary and middle school teachers but have little impact on the effectiveness of teachers at the high school level.”⁴¹ Methods and data can lead to varying results, because other researchers have concluded that experience continues to have an impact after the first three years.⁴²

As was noted in the Relevancy to Georgia section, National Board Certification (NBC) bonuses are no longer guaranteed in Georgia. According to some research, this change is justified. When measuring student test scores, National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) were no more effective than non-certified teachers, and there is no evidence that going through the process boosts teacher productivity.⁴³ Interestingly, this statement also had one exception: middle school math teachers. These are controversial conclusions. Prior research showed that NBC does add human capital to teachers and make them more productive.⁴⁴ Another viewpoint proffers that

³⁶Harris, Douglas N.; Sass, Tim R. “Teacher Training, Teacher Quality, and Student Achievement.” *National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research*. March 2007.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸Rivkin, Steven G.; Hanushek, Eric A.; Kain, John F. “Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement.” *Enonometrica*. Vol. 73, No. 2. March, 2005.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹Harris, Douglas N.; Sass, Tim R. “Teacher Training, Teacher Quality, and Student Achievement.” *National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research*. March 2007.

⁴²Clotfelter, Charles T.; Ladd, Helen F.; Vigdor, Jacob L. “How and Why Do Teacher Credentials Matter For Student Achievement?” *National Bureau of Economic Research*. January, 2007.

⁴³Harris, Douglas N.; Sass, Tim R. “The Effects of NBPTS-Certified Teachers on Student Achievement.” *National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research*. March, 2007.

⁴⁴Goldhaber, Dan; Anthony, Emily. “Can Teacher Quality Be Effectively Assessed?” *Urban Institute*. March, 2004.

NBC is good at identifying great teachers, but doesn't produce great teachers.⁴⁵ Further study is necessary to draw firm conclusions about NBC.

These new accountability measures seek to identify the best teachers and schools, but they do not explain how schools can attract and retain more great teachers. After accountability measures identify the teachers who are succeeding, the first step is to retain these great teachers. Past studies have found that lack of support is one of the main reasons teachers leave the profession within three years.⁴⁶ Smith and Ingersoll identified several steps that could achieve this goal: having a mentor from the same field, having common planning time with other teachers in the same subject, and collaboration with other teachers on instruction.⁴⁷ The collaboration between teachers may be the linchpin for retaining teachers. Becoming part of a group and developing relationships based on a mutual respect and a shared goal of helping students learn is what makes a successful induction program.⁴⁸ The body of research is explicit; induction and mentoring reduce the rate of turnover.

Even if retention is improved, many school systems are still lacking effective teachers. Alternative certification routes can bridge this gap. Except for English education majors who teach middle school reading, teachers with a degree in a non-education discipline are just as effective as traditional route teachers with an education degree.⁴⁹ In fact, Sass found that alternatively certified teachers have stronger pre-service academic skills, as evidenced by higher initial pass rates on certification exams and higher college entrance exam scores than traditionally prepared teachers.⁵⁰ Alternative certification does have its critics—who believe that the process is lax and not as successful as billed.⁵¹

Policymakers can enact sweeping reforms, but it is up to school leadership to make it work. Principals take their cue from superintendents, and must create a school environment that is conducive to excellent teaching. If at any point this structure breaks down, improvement may not occur. School and district leadership are what take the reform ideas and turn them into increased student outcomes.⁵² Second only to classroom instruction, leadership has the greatest impact on the quality and amount that students learn at school. In schools where student

⁴⁵Clotfelter, Charles T.; Ladd, Helen F.; Vigdor, Jacob L. "How and Why Do Teacher Credentials Matter For Student Achievement?" *National Bureau of Economic Research*. January, 2007.

⁴⁶Brighton, C. M. 1999. Keeping good teachers: Learning from novices. In *A better beginning: Supporting and mentoring new teachers*, ed. M. Scherer, 197-301. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

⁴⁷Smith, Thomas M.; Ingersoll, Richard M. "What Are the Effects of Induction and Mentoring on Beginning Teacher Turnover?" *American Educational Research Journal*. Vol. 41, No. 3. Autumn, 2004.

⁴⁸Wong, Harry K. "Induction Programs That Keep New Teachers Teaching and Improving." *NASSP Bulletin* Vol. 88, No. 638. March, 2004.

⁴⁹Harris, Douglas N.; Sass, Tim R. "Teacher Training, Teacher Quality, and Student Achievement." *National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research*. March 2007.

⁵⁰Sass, Tim R. "Certification Requirements and Teacher Quality: A Comparison of Alternative Routes To Teaching." December, 2011.

⁵¹Heilig, Julian Vasquez. "Teacher For America: A Review of the Evidence." June, 2010.

⁵²Leithwood, Kenneth; Louis, Karen Seashore; Anderson, Stephen; Wahlstrom, Kyla. "How Leadership Influences Student Learning." 2004.

achievement is struggling, school leadership can have the greatest impact.⁵³ This isn't to say that administrators are the only people who can "lead." Research shows that student performance increases greatly when principals share the responsibility of leadership with teachers.⁵⁴ Having multiple voices included in the process of running a school is imperative. These stakeholders are not limited to teachers, but students and parents as well.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Louis, Karen Seashore; Leithwood, Kenneth; et al. "Learning from Leadership: Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning." March, 2010.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

For More Information

- **Center for Teaching Quality – <http://teachingquality.org>**
The Center for Teaching Quality seeks to improve student learning and advance the teaching profession by cultivating teacher leadership, conducting research, and crafting policy.
- **Georgia Professional Standards Commission – www.gapsc.com**
The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC) assumes full responsibility for the certification, preparation, and conduct of personnel in Georgia’s public schools.
- **National Board for Professional Teaching Standards – www.nbpts.org**
The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) seeks to advance the quality of teaching and learning by developing professional standards for accomplished teachers, creating a voluntary system to certify teachers who meet those standards, and ultimately utilize the expertise of these teachers to improve education.