

2025 Legislative Priorities

PAGE Legislative Priorities are created and approved by members every year. They reflect areas of PAGE advocacy focus during the legislative session for which they are generated. PAGE also strongly supports and continuously advocates for policies that benefit educators, students, and public education, including raising educator salaries and promoting strong retirement and healthcare benefits for Georgia educators.

Take a Holistic Approach to Protecting Students and Teachers

PAGE advocated for and appreciates annual state school safety funding approved by Gov. Brian Kemp and legislators in 2024. The following school safety recommendations build on this valued addition.

Increase State Funding for School Counselors, Social Workers, and Psychologists

As educators indicated in the PAGE 2024 Legislative Survey, increasing the number of mental health professionals in schools is the top action step educators want state and district leaders to take to improve school safety. Georgia funds one school counselor for every 450 students, well above the recommended best practice of one for every 250 students.¹ Similarly, the state funds one social worker and one psychologist for every 2,475 students. The recommended ratio for social workers is one per 250 students² and, for psychologists, it is one per 500 students.³ Legislators should work to improve the school counselor funding ratio and fund at least one social worker per district. They should also appropriate funds to implement the psychologist funding ratio the legislature approved in 2013. In addition to improving these funding ratios, policymakers should more clearly define the role of these professionals in schools to reflect their job duties. While requested funding ratios would leave Georgia short of best practices, incremental improvements will make schools safer.

School Mental Health Professional Funding Ratios

	Georgia's Funding Ratios	Recommended Best Practice Funding Ratios	PAGE Requested Funding Ratios
School Counselors	1:450	1:250	1:400
School Social Workers	1: 2,475	1:250	1:2,475⁴
School Psychologists	1: 2,475	1:500	1:2,420⁵

Provide Additional Funding to Ensure Every School is Protected by a School Resource Officer

School resource officers serve an integral role in protecting students. Almost 30% of PAGE educators report their school does not have an SRO or shares an SRO with other schools in their district.⁶ Legislators should ensure every Georgia school is protected by an SRO.

Increase Access to and Awareness of School Safety and Anti-Gang Endorsement

Only 7% of classroom teachers and 8% of all educators participating in the PAGE survey are aware of the School Safety & Anti-Gang Endorsement. However, more than 37% of classroom teachers and 38% of all participating educators expressed interest in earning the endorsement.⁷ State leaders should raise awareness of the endorsement and expand training access to increase the number of educators who earn the endorsement. Educators also want additional training to identify students at risk of harming themselves or others as indicated by the PAGE survey ranking such training as a top action step state local leaders can take to enhance school safety.

Improve Educator Working Conditions by Allowing them to Prepare for and Focus on Classroom Time

- Protect educator planning time and duty-free lunch
- Lower class size so educators may provide more personalized instruction and effective student support
- Provide mental health supports for educators, including counseling
- Evaluate Georgia's strategic waiver and charter district flexibility programs to ensure flexibility waivers contribute to student and educator success

Protect Educator Well-Being Through Mental Health Supports and Improved Working Conditions

Educators report that information about at-risk students does not consistently reach classroom teachers. Lack of access to student information exacerbates school safety issues. Lawmakers should seek ways to improve communication between schools and local, state, and federal agencies regarding at-risk students and increase resources for monitoring and following up. Policy considerations should reflect existing laws protecting student privacy and civil rights.

◆ Boost Funding for Teacher and Leader Professional Development

Teachers and school leaders need more support to implement the Georgia Early Literacy Act, including on-site coaching and other assistance to master and embed structured literacy, new curricula, and new assessments into daily instructional practice. State funding for professional development is limited. Under the Quality Basic Education (QBE) formula, professional development funding is calculated as a percentage – currently 0.9% of the state base teacher salary. The percentage was 1.5% until FY 2003, when the General Assembly reduced it to 1%. Lawmakers lowered it to existing levels in FY 2014. Funding should be restored to the 1.5% level to ensure the state's QBE formula reflects the cost of high-quality training for all educators.

◆ Provide Incentives to Attract and Retain Educators and School Staff

Georgia's educator workforce continues to face significant turnover and shortages in a growing number of subject areas as well as hard-to-staff schools. Many contributing factors, including rising financial pressures, deter teacher candidates from entering or staying in the profession.⁸ Georgia's leaders can take critical steps to resolve these factors by:

- Restoring HOPE financial aid programs for teachers
- Reauthorizing the return-to-work program for retired teachers
- Increasing salaries for paraprofessionals
- Extending state teacher salary schedule steps past 20 years of experience
- Providing workforce housing incentives for educators
- Increasing funding for substitute teachers

1) American School Counselor Association. (nd). *School Counselor Roles & Ratios*.

Retrieved from <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios>

2) School Social Work Association of America. (nd). *School Social Workers Helping Students Succeed: Recommended School Social Worker to Student Ratios*. Retrieved from

https://www.sswaa.org/_files/ugd/426a18_4050422b3c41478f9ee0db83d1bc1f75.pdf.

3) National Association of School Psychologists. (nd). *Federal Public Policy and Legislative Platform*. Retrieved from <https://www.nasponline.org/research-and-policy/policy-priorities/nasp-pa>

4) Under the recommendation, districts with fewer than 2,475 FTEs would receive funding for one full-time social worker. The ratio for school social workers would remain 1:2,475 for all districts with more than 2,475 students.

5) This recommended funding ratio is based on the language of [HB 283 \(2013\)](#), which reduced the school psychologist state funding ratio to 1: 2,420. The new ratio was to be implemented in Fiscal Year 2016, but no action has yet been taken.

6) Professional Association of Georgia Educators. (2024). *Views from the Schoolhouse: Georgia Educator Policy Insights 2024*. Retrieved from

https://www.pagelegislative.org/_files/ugd/bd220f_c7038737dee7487f9bfd182b52fe36c1.pdf.

7) Professional Association of Georgia Educators. (2024). *Views from the Schoolhouse: Georgia Educator Policy Insights 2024*. Retrieved from [Views from the Schoolhouse: Georgia Educator Policy Insights 2024](#).

Retrieved from https://www.pagelegislative.org/_files/ugd/bd220f_c7038737dee7487f9bfd182b52fe36c1.pdf.

8) Professional Association of Georgia Educators. (2024). *Views from the Schoolhouse: Georgia Educator Workforce Insights*. Retrieved from

https://www.pagelegislative.org/_files/ugd/bd220f_4075e72b3b824ef9a10b6b90e2ee8225.pdf.