

WHY GEORGIA NEEDS TO INVEST IN TEACHERS

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A new Education Law Center analysis of Georgia's public school teacher workforce finds school districts are hiring more teachers without standard certification, with fewer years of experience, who often transfer or leave a district from one year to the next. The analysis also shows that majority Black, low-income districts have nearly twice the teacher turnover, twice as many inexperienced teachers, and more than three times as many new teachers with alternative certification than majority white, wealthier districts.

To advance the goal of attracting and retaining qualified teachers in every classroom across the state, the report recommends that Georgia increase funding to boost teacher salaries and benefits, especially in majority Black, low-income districts; provide support and professional development for new teachers; and improve school climate and working conditions in schools serving high concentrations of low-income students and students of color.

"Our report shows the urgency of building a stable workforce of qualified teachers across the state and making that goal a top priority on the public education agenda in the Georgia Legislature," said Mary McKillip, ELC Senior Researcher and report co-author. "Ensuring adequate funding is the foundational element to achieve this goal."

The ELC report examines changes in the Georgia teacher workforce from 2013 through 2019, and by school district race and poverty. Accompanying this report are online, interactive charts with district-level information demonstrating how state trends vary among school districts.

Advocacy by teachers, parents and other public education stakeholders resulted in a \$3,000 salary increase for teachers in the 2020 (FY20) state budget, a partial fulfillment of Governor Brian Kemp's campaign promise to raise teacher salaries by \$5,000. But Georgia still has the sixth largest teacher pay gap in the nation. Even though qualified and experienced teachers are the most crucial resource for student academic success, Georgia's teachers earn only 73 cents for every dollar earned by similar professionals in non-teaching fields.

The [*Invest in Georgia Teachers: The Need to Attract and Retain a High-Quality Workforce*](#) report and interactive tools are available now on ELC's website.

The Georgia teacher report complements an earlier ELC report, [*Funding Opportunity: Replacing Georgia's Early Intervention and Remedial Programs with Funding for Low-Income Students*](#). In that report ELC recommends that Georgia lawmakers replace the current method of providing funding for low-income students based on test score results with a funding mechanism based on student poverty. A funding formula weighted for student poverty is a more effective way to deliver qualified teachers, support staff, and other critical resources to Georgia's high need school districts.

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