



TO: Georgia ESSA Communications Committee

FROM: Center for Pan-Asian Community Services, Georgia Coalition for the Peoples' Agenda and Urban League of Greater Atlanta

SUBJECT: Policy Recommendations for the ESSA Advisory and Working Committees in Georgia

The Georgia Education Equity Coalition is a group of civil and human rights and community-based organizations working together to ensure every Georgia public school is equipped to help our children become full, self-determining, critical-thinking adults who have the ability to make their way in the world. If the state of Georgia intends to make meaningful progress with historically underserved students, the committees should seriously consider the coalition's recommendations for their *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) state plan.

The following document includes a short snapshot of the state of education in Georgia and how well (and not well) the state is serving students who are African American, Latino, Asian American, Native American, low-income, English learners and students with disabilities. The document also includes a list of policy recommendations to assist the seven working committees as they draft the new ESSA state plan. Incorporating these recommendations into their plan will ensure that the needs of historically underserved students are addressed.

The State of Education in Georgia

In Georgia, **Black** students:

- represent **37%** of enrollment¹
- **75.2%** graduate from high school²
- **25.9 %** leave high school having taken an AP exam³
- **5%** are enrolled in Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Programs⁴

In Georgia, **Latino** students:

- represent **14%** of enrollment⁵

¹ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey Membership Data", 2014-15, v.1a.

² See <http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/state-report.cfm/state/GA/>

³ See <http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/ap/rtn/10th-annual/10th-annual-ap-report-state-supplement-georgia.pdf>

⁴ U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights 12 Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot (College and Career Readiness) March 21, 2014

⁵ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Public Elementary/Secondary Education Survey Membership Data", 2014-15, v.1a.

- **72%** graduate from high school⁶
- **8.3%** leave high school having taken an AP exam⁷
- **5%** are enrolled in GATE Programs⁸

In Georgia, **American Indian/Alaskan students**:

- **87.9%** graduate from high school⁹
- **13%** are enrolled in GATE Programs¹⁰
- **0.3%** leave high school having taken an AP exam¹¹

In Georgia, **Asian American or Pacific Islander** students:

- Represent **3.5%** of enrollment¹²
- **25%** are enrolled in GATE Programs¹³
- **8.6%** leave high school having taken an AP exam¹⁴

In addition, traditionally marginalized students such as:

- **Students with disabilities** make-up **11.1%** of enrollment¹⁵
- **1.6%** of **students with disabilities** are enrolled in GATE Programs¹⁶,
- **5.3%** of students are participating in English language programs for **English learners**¹⁷
- and **0.8%** of **English learners** are enrolled in GATE Programs¹⁸

Of the **schools** in Georgia:

- **66%** of high schools offer Algebra 1 courses¹⁹
- **56%** of high schools offer Algebra II courses²⁰
- **53%** of high schools offer Geometry courses²¹
- **49%** of high schools offer Calculus²²

⁶ See <http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/state-report.cfm/state/GA/>

⁷ See <http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/ap/rtn/10th-annual/10th-annual-ap-report-state-supplement-georgia.pdf>

⁸ U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights 12 Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot (College and Career Readiness) March 21, 2014

⁹ See <http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/state-report.cfm/state/GA/>

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights 12 Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot (College and Career Readiness) March 21, 2014

¹¹ U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights 12 Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot (College and Career Readiness) March 21, 2014

¹² See <http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/state-report.cfm/state/GA/>

¹³ U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights 12 Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot (College and Career Readiness) March 21, 2014

¹⁴ See <http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/ap/rtn/10th-annual/10th-annual-ap-report-state-supplement-georgia.pdf>

¹⁵ Common Core of Data, Tabulated from Elementary/Secondary Information System, 1/13/2015: <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/>

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights 12 Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot (College and Career Readiness) March 21, 2014

¹⁷ Number and Percentage of Public School Students Participating in Programs for English Language Learners, by State: Selected Years, 2003-04 through 2013-14." Number and Percentage of Public School Students Participating in Programs for English Language Learners, by State: Selected Years, 2003-04 through 2013-14. NCES, n.d. Web. 02 Dec. 2016.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights 12 Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot (College and Career Readiness) March 21, 2014

¹⁹ See <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-college-and-career-readiness-snapshot.pdf>

²⁰ See <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-college-and-career-readiness-snapshot.pdf>

²¹ See <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-college-and-career-readiness-snapshot.pdf>

²² See <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-college-and-career-readiness-snapshot.pdf>

- **64%** of high schools offer Physics²³
- **60.1%** are eligible for free/reduced lunch²⁴

Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations are built on partial information, agendas and meeting notes published by the committees. Our recommendations closely align to the “*Georgia Standards of Excellence: Principles for Equity in Implementation*,”²⁵ and reflect opportunities to make progress on educational equity as Georgia implements the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Communications Committee

Policy Recommendations:

- **The state plan must include strategies to increase language assistance for non-English speaking families.**
 - The state should ensure all ESSA information and communication is available²⁶ for non-English speaking parents and families.
 - The state should require districts provide translation services to parents and families during school events, parent meetings, and teacher conferences.
 - The state should require districts to clarify who the point of contact in the school is for non-English speaking families and the information should be readily available to parents and translated in multiple languages.
- **The state plan must include civil rights organizations in the decision-making process of increasing parent and family engagement.**
 - The state must effectively engage and solicit feedback from community-based organizations and civil rights groups that have experience in creating meaningful opportunities for parents to become advocates.
- **The state plan must include strategies to increase the distribution of user-friendly data to parents of English learners, students with disabilities and low-income families.**
 - The state should make all school data easy to access and require districts to translate all information and make it readily available to parents of English learners and students with disabilities and civil rights groups.
 - The state should ensure that GADOE is disseminating ESSA information in ways that is understandable for parents, that it clearly explains what the federal requirements are and that it includes a proposed timeline that requests feedback from parents.
 - The state should ensure that all ESSA-related documents including agendas, memos, PowerPoints and meeting information is readily available on the website and has been delivered via-mail to parents.

²³ See <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-college-and-career-readiness-snapshot.pdf>

²⁴ Information can be found in: <https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Documents/Quick%20Facts%20About%20Georgia%20Public%20Education%202015%20-%20UPDATED.pdf>

²⁵ See <http://www.gastandardsequity.com/principles-for-equitable-standards/>

²⁶ See <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-lep-parents-201501.pdf>

For your record, our organizations have also submitted the following policy recommendations to the committees included below.

Accountability Committee

Policy Recommendations:

- **Increase widely accessible data that is clear and available to all parents.**
 - The state should clearly communicate to parents and advocates what the state school rating system is and what are the statewide goals for student performance and indicators for success.
 - The state should ensure that schools and districts make their own performance data easy to access, easy to understand, and is translated into multiple languages. This should include both raw data and user-friendly tables, charts and graphs.
- **Include school discipline as an additional indicator for school success.**
 - The state should require schools to report school climate data, such as chronic absenteeism, expulsion and suspension rates that are broken down by student subgroup to help identify disparities in traditionally marginalized communities.
 - The state should use interventions that have proved to be successful to help schools support struggling students such as children who are chronically absent.
 - The state should put in place additional support systems so that children who are chronically absent receive additional services and are not penalized.
- **Create an independent commission that includes representation from parents and the civil rights community.**
 - The state should appoint a commission made-up of parents, community based organizations and students that will monitor the progress of underperforming schools and provide ongoing guidance for improvement.
 - The state should require the special commission to make necessary accommodations for non-English speaking parents, translate materials into multiple languages and provide disability access to parents and students.

Assessment Committee

Policy Recommendations:

- **Accommodating English learners.**
 - The state should provide explicit guidance to districts and schools about how to provide assessment accommodations for English learners and how parents or students can seek information (in their native language) about their eligibility for accommodations and to resolve concerns about the assessment of English learners.
 - The state should make readily available to English learners the option to take the state ELA, math and science assessments in their native language for up to five years.

- **Accommodating students with disabilities.**
 - The state should provide guidance and training for teachers, IEP teams and families so that they understand how to assist and accommodate students with disabilities to maximize their inclusion in the general curriculum and general assessment.
 - The state should provide guidance and training for teachers, IEP teams and families so that they appropriately identify students for inclusion in the general or (in the case of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities) alternate assessment.

- **Clarification on coordination of “1% cap.”**
 - The state should clarify under what situations a district will be allowed a waiver of the “1% cap,” how communities will know if their district has requested a waiver, and what will be done if a district has inappropriately identified students (especially disproportionately students of color) for the alternate assessment.²⁷

Education & Leader Development Committee

Policy Recommendations:

- **The state should publish professional development opportunities available for teachers on the state website.**
 - The state should provide increased opportunities for professional development to teachers who specifically work with students with disabilities and English learners.
 - The state should require districts to clarify what types of training opportunities are available and should include reporting information such as the total number of hours offered and the types of accommodations made for teachers that reduces the disruption of student learning.
 - The state should require districts to engage parents and civil rights groups in the process of designing professional development sessions for educators that address cultural competence.

- **The state must distribute experienced teachers to ensure that high-poverty schools have equal access to highly qualified educators.**
 - The state should conduct an analysis using data about student ethnicity, race and the number of experienced teachers in a specific school to identify teacher disparities.
 - The state should require districts to publish a map that shows the distribution of experienced teachers²⁸ throughout their schools and establish a process and timeline to address any disparities.

²⁷ Section § 1111(2)(D)(i)(I)(ii) of ESSA requires states to not exceed 1 percent of the total number of all students in the state who receive an alternate assessment in a subject and if the state exceeds the 1 percent cap, LEA’s must submit a waiver.

²⁸ Rice, King Jennifer “The Impact of Teacher Experience: Examining the Evidence and Policy Implications.” August 2010. <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/1001455-The-Impact-of-Teacher-Experience.PDF>

- The state should define the term “experienced teacher” and include stakeholders who represent the civil rights community, low-income students, English learners and students with disabilities in the conversation.
- **Increase teacher quality**
 - The state should require districts to recruit and retain administrators and teachers (especially teachers of color) and work with teacher academic programs to identify practices for success.

Education of the Whole Child Committee

Policy Recommendations:

- **The state plan should include strategies to increase participation of rigorous coursework for students in underperforming schools.**
 - The state should clarify how it will present school report data, such as the number of Advanced Placement courses that are available in each school to parents and advocates in a way that is clear and makes sense.
 - The state should require districts, especially underperforming schools, to partner with STEM and technology based companies to increase the participation rates in science and math courses.
- **The state plan should include increased support for school safety.**
 - The state should require districts to publish information on how Title I and Title IV funds will be used and what evidence-based strategies will be included that foster a safe, healthy and violence free environment for students.
 - The state should provide districts with clarity on acceptable research and resources to use while implementing school safety measures.
- **The state plan should include strong parent and family engagement strategies that include parents from low-income backgrounds, parents of students with disabilities and English learners.**
 - The state should include funding for parent-led after-school programs to enhance and align to the academic state standards.
 - The state must clarify how Title I funds set-aside for parent and family engagement will be distributed to districts with the highest needs and ensure that the information is presented in a way that is understandable to parents from low-income backgrounds.
 - The state must include parents and advocates from civil rights organizations in the decision-making process of Title IV funding for parent engagement centers.
- **The state plan should include information on the types of support available to districts in applying for funding opportunities.**
 - The state should provide technical assistance to districts in applying and acquiring Title I and Title IV funding.
 - The state should require districts to solicit additional technical support from civil rights organizations that work with underserved students, such as students who

are low-income, students with disabilities and English learners, to assist in the development of funding applications.

- The state should publish information on what the criteria are for approving funding applications and who is part of the decision-making process.

Federal Programs to Support School Improvement Committee

Policy Recommendations:

- **The state must define the term “consistently underperforming” in a way that is meaningful and that sets the same expectation of success for all students.**
 - The state should require districts to provide information to parents and community members about what it means for schools to be labeled as “consistently underperforming” and what steps the school will take to diagnose what the causes are for underperformance.
 - The state should require districts to solicit feedback from stakeholders and civil rights groups during the improvement plan conversations to include successful strategies for struggling students.

- **The state must ensure that high-poverty schools receive equal funding as low-poverty schools.**
 - The state should require schools to publish information on the website in a way that is easy that includes information on the school funding formula and that shows how money is being spent.
 - The state must supplement funds to Title I schools so the amount is at least as much per-pupil funding as the average of non-Title I schools in the district.
 - The state should clarify what actions will be taken against those districts that are not distributing funding fairly²⁹ to high-poverty schools.

- **The state must publish information regarding funding opportunities for programs that support migratory children, at-risk youth, English learners and neglected children.**
 - The state should inform civil rights groups and advocates what the criteria are for submitting applications for funding of school district programs that support migratory children, at-risk youth, English learners and neglected children [Sec. 1301 (b)(1)].

- **The state must publish information regarding additional funding opportunities of educational technology programs with parents and advocates, to ensure that students such as English learners have access to technology.**
 - The state should clarify how funds in the Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) Grant will be distributed to high need schools.
 - The state should require districts to publish accessible information for parents and advocates on exactly how funds will be used to increase student learning and

²⁹ Districts with a disparity in funding between schools with high concentration of students of color and schools with high concentration of White students, are not in compliance with Title VI of The Civil Rights Act of 1964.

increase the use of technology for low-income students, students with disabilities and English learners.

State Advisory Committee

Policy Recommendations:

- **The ESSA plan should be ambitious, focused on equity and include support for districts to effectively implement strategies.**
 - The state should draft an ambitious plan that encompasses evidence-based strategies that actually work for the most vulnerable populations and underperforming schools.
 - The state should include support for districts such as increased technical assistance, guidance for administrators and educators on proven research that supports struggling students.

- **The state plans should include feedback from civil rights organizations.**
 - The state should identify educational groups and organizations that represent historically marginalized students such as students with disabilities, English learners, students who are low-income and students of color, to participate in the development of the state plan.
 - The state should require districts to have at least two representatives from each community, such as representatives for students who are African American, Latino, Asian American, Native American, English learners, students with disabilities, and low-income, included in regular planning meetings.

- **States must include members of the community in assessing what the underlying barriers for struggling students are.**
 - Before the districts implement the state plans, they should conduct a full analysis of the major issues facing the districts lowest-performing students.
 - The state should require district's analysis to include feedback from parents of English learners, students with disabilities, low-income families and advocates