

PAGE is Georgia's largest professional organization, representing more than 97,000 educators throughout the state. Our members drafted and approved our 2020 Legislative Priorities, which will guide PAGE's advocacy during the legislative session. This document supplements the 2020 PAGE Legislative Priorities Overview.

Assessment & Accountability

Legislative Priority: Support efforts to design accountability systems that foster increased student learning and enhance instruction.

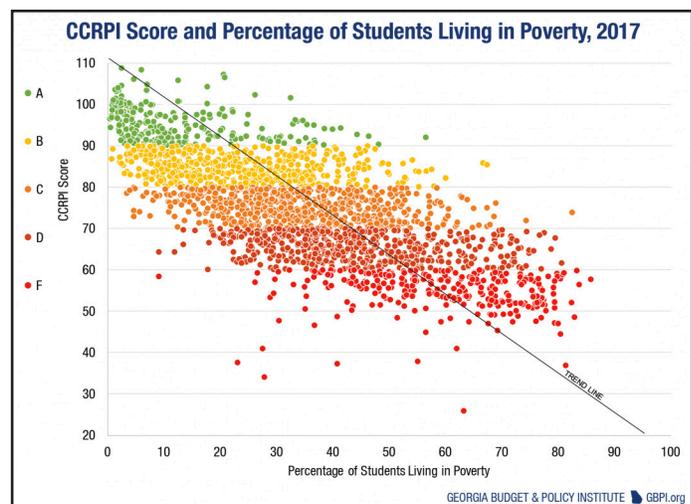
- Reduce overreliance on standardized tests by limiting assessments to the minimum number required by federal law.
- Eliminate A-F grading of schools.
- Review Teacher Keys Effectiveness System and Leader Keys Effectiveness System to ensure these educator evaluation systems continue to provide constructive support for instructional improvement.

Background: Georgia's standardized testing program and its accountability system are not effective tools to improve teaching and learning. The state's standardized tests (Georgia Milestones) and its accountability system (College and Career Readiness Performance Index) do not appropriately take into account students' needs and circumstances, nor do they reflect the complexity of teaching and learning occurring in classrooms across the state every day.

Standardized test scores more strongly reflect student poverty rather than student learning. The metrics capture students' hunger, exhaustion, worry about money or a parent's job, and lack of out-of-school learning experiences more than what students have learned.¹ Assessment metrics do not measure all that schools do to engage and support students, including expanding non-tested subjects such as art, music, and computer science, mentoring programs and community partnerships, weekend and summer food programs, and more.

The ongoing and exclusive focus on test scores may undermine student learning. In many places it has led to a diminished and disjointed curriculum.²

Despite their limitations, test scores are the primary determinant in schools and districts' effectiveness ratings under the state's accountability system.³ They make up 82.5 percent of the state's ratings for elementary and middle schools and 70 percent for high schools. Test scores are also used to assign A-F grades to schools and districts. The grades do not explain to parents and other community stakeholders why a high-poverty school may have a low rating, nor do they offer any insight into effective strategies to enable students to attain higher scores.



Continued on reverse side

Continued from front side

Teachers and school leaders are also rated under the state's evaluation system, the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System and the Leader Keys Effectiveness System. While the use of standardized test scores has been reduced in the educator evaluation system, it still falls short of providing educators with meaningful guidance to strengthening their knowledge and skills.

Need: Georgia's educators recognize the value of reliable assessments that provide them with meaningful and actionable data for strengthening curriculum and instructional strategies. The state's current assessment program does not serve this purpose. Nearly 60 percent of educators responding to PAGE's 2019 legislative survey strongly disagreed or disagreed that Georgia's current standardized testing program provides educators with information to improve student learning.⁴

Nearly half of survey respondents also do not support using A-F grades.⁵ PAGE members, who work in districts of all types and sizes across the state, believe that a more complete picture of student progress – one that includes a demonstration of student critical thinking and problem-solving skills – is essential. These educators also believe that parents should know the class sizes, teacher qualifications, and teacher retention rates of their childrens' schools. Parents would have a more thorough understanding of their schools' needs and circumstances.

State leaders can look to a new PAGE initiative for a more comprehensive approach to accountability. True Accountability for Georgia Schools (TAGS) is a grassroots effort and partnership to build a new school accountability system that tells a thorough and accurate story about school and district effectiveness in a way that parents and community members can easily understand.⁶ The seven pillars of effectiveness are: student achievement; student readiness; engaged well-rounded students; community partnerships; professional learning/quality staff; systems and operations; and safety and well-being. In 2018, nine Georgia districts began their True Accountability work. A second cohort of two districts joined the group in the fall of 2019. The effort was initiated and is supported by PAGE with facilitation by TestSense and the Schlechty Center.

1. Suggs, C. (2017). Tackle poverty's effects to improve school performance. Atlanta, GA: Georgia Budget and Policy Institute. <https://cdn.gbpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Tackle-Poverty-in-Schools.pdf>

2. Berliner, D. (2011). Rational responses to high stakes testing: The case of curriculum narrowing and the harm that follows. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 41(3) 287-302.

3. Owens, S. (2018) Take Georgia's school rating system with a grain of salt. Atlanta, GA: Georgia Budget and Policy Institute. Retrieved from: <https://gbpi.org/2018/take-georgias-school-rating-system-with-a-grain-of-salt/>

4. Professional Association of Georgia Educators. 2019 PAGE Legislative Survey. Retrieved from <https://www.pageinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/202020Legislative20Survey.pdf>

5. Professional Association of Georgia Educators. 2019 Legislative Survey. Retrieved from <https://www.pageinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/202020Legislative20Survey.pdf>

6. Professional Association of Georgia Educators (n.d.) True Accountability. Retrieved from <https://www.pageinc.org/true-accountability/>