

**Georgia Association of Teacher  
Educators**

**Position Statement**

## **Georgia Association of Teacher Educators Position Statement**

*Given our commitment to promote improvement in the preparation and continuing professional development and scholarship of all educators in Georgia, the Georgia Association of Teacher Educators (GATE) welcomes the opportunity to share its insights and positions with others concerned with the same issues. Teacher education and the education of all children in Georgia will benefit from this professional organization's statement of beliefs, policies and visions that may provide a platform from which to view educational practices that impact all P-12 students. As a leader organization in Georgia, GATE membership seeks to improve communication, collaboration and coordination with similar associations throughout the state and nation. It must be recognized that this position statement is proactive and fluid in order to address the on-going and ever-changing concerns that face all educators.*

### **1. Rigorous standards for teacher preparation programs must not be relaxed in the face of extreme competition for teacher candidates.**

Private and public teacher preparation institutions (e.g., two and four year colleges and universities) and agencies (e.g., RESAs and school districts) in Georgia are held to rigorous program development and implementation based on standards by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The accreditation and approval requirements include continuous assessment, program improvement and adherence to professional and content standards. We believe that all teacher preparation program providers must be held accountable; therefore, out-of-state, for-profit providers that do not have to meet the same rigorous PSC/NCATE standards poorly serves efforts to improve the quality of teaching and student learning in Georgia.

### **2. Higher education and P-12 partnerships are essential for teacher retention, professional development and school improvements.**

Across Georgia most teacher education programs have instituted professional development partnerships with pre-kindergarten through grade twelve schools. Partnerships have proven effective to prepare and mentor new teachers, provide professional development for veteran teachers and to marshal resources for school improvement and reform. We believe that to continue these efforts, teacher education programs need organizational flexibility and resources, while P-12 colleagues need additional incentives and support for sustaining these partnerships.

**3. All assessments of P-12 students and teachers must be valid, reliable and free from bias.**

Assessments and assessment practices must be supported by sound research to ensure candidates, teachers and students from diverse ethnic, racial, gender, exceptionality, linguistic, religious, sexual orientation, and socio-economic groups are not disadvantaged by current testing programs and admission practices. GATE is also concerned about the current emphasis on testing that characterizes P-12 education. We believe assessments must include opportunities for students to demonstrate a range of problem solving, decision making, critical thinking and inquiry as well as literal knowledge.

**4. All children must be prepared for a successful transition into formal academic education.**

Too many students start school at a disadvantage. Children in the critical development years of birth to age five are entitled to highly qualified teachers who adhere to developmentally appropriate practices and embrace family involvement as defined by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) guidelines for teacher preparation and certification. We believe teachers preparing for positions to teach infants, toddlers and preschool children must have the same levels of preparation and compensation as their P-12 colleagues

**5. Increased admissions standards into teacher education programs should be supported with increased beginning salaries.**

Despite higher admission requirements into teacher education programs, recruiting new students into the profession remains difficult due to the lack of competitive teacher salaries. In order to attract academically strong candidates to teaching, salaries must approach those available to other college graduates. According to the National Assoc. of Colleges and Employers, there is a salary gap between education and other majors. Teachers begin their careers approximately \$8,000 behind other college graduates and this discrepancy continues throughout their careers. We believe effort must be taken to maintain salary increases so that our teachers are among the highest paid in the Southeast.

**6. Georgia should create and refine incentives to attract, reward and retain the best qualified teachers to work throughout the entire State including in the most challenging areas.**

Scholarships and loan-forgiveness programs for perspective educators are effective methods of attracting bright college students and graduates into education; however, few incentives exist for undergraduates to choose teaching in critical need fields or to work in urban or rural impoverished and/or high-needs schools. Additional non-fiscal incentives include, but are not limited to smaller class size, reduction of paperwork, and elimination of non-instructional duties. Furthermore, partnerships need to be established with business and civic organizations to attract more college educated persons into teaching.

**7. Support is needed for efforts to bridge the gap between professional preparation and the first three years of teaching through mentoring and similar professional development programs.**

Novice teachers are often assigned to the most challenging situations with little or no support. Many excellent educators leave the teaching profession within five years due to isolation, adverse working conditions and low pay. We believe it is imperative that teacher education programs and school systems initiate appropriate professional development experiences, supportive learning communities and mentoring programs that pair novice teachers with veteran educators who have reduced responsibilities so that they can effectively observe and assist the new teachers

**8. Greater support for alternative certification is necessary through sufficient funding, student loans, scholarships and employers' support.**

With the shortage of highly qualified teachers reaching a critical level, it is imperative that alternative routes to certification be accessible to recent non-education graduates and career changers. Georgia's colleges and universities have developed several alternative certification models but qualified students are often prevented from matriculating through these programs. Prospective teachers need critical guided practice before assuming responsibility for the educational of P-12 students. Since most field requirements are completed in educational sites during the school day, there are often conflicts with workplace schedules of potential alternative certification candidates. We believe greater support for these candidates by their current employers and/or through sufficient loans and scholarships is needed.

**9. To attract teacher education faculty, credit should be given for years teaching at P-12 levels.**

Colleges and universities in Georgia are having great difficulties attracting and retaining teacher education faculty and clinical instructors. For teachers to make the transition from P-12 schools to higher education, they must often take a reduction in salary. We believe that in order to attract quality faculty and instructors with relevant clinical expertise, institutions of higher education should give credit for P-12 teaching experiences.

**10. Education leaders must have the appropriate training and experience to meet the challenges of P-12 education.**

Individuals appointed to positions of leadership in education must have the appropriate formal preparation as well as depth and breadth of experiences in P-12 schools. Leadership should not be limited to the building or district level. Teacher leaders need to be nurtured, recognized and rewarded to remain in classrooms as role models for teacher candidates and colleagues. Through their positive examples, they can attract their own P-12 students to consider the teaching profession, too. One route to demonstrate teacher leadership is through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

We believe teacher preparation programs should consider candidates' National Board activities in lieu of an admission requirement and/or coursework.

**Additional information may be obtained from the following sources:**

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education  
Association of Teacher Educators  
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards  
National Commission on Teaching and America's Future  
National Network for Educational Renewal

Cochran-Smith, M., & Zeichner, K. M. (Eds.). (2005). *Studying teacher education: The Report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (Eds.). (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

**Please contact the following officers if you have comments and suggestions:**

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