

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Implementing Education Reform

In 1999, when Governor Barnes took office he promised to make education his number one priority. In delivering on that promise the Governor's Education Reform Study Commission (GERSC) was identified and began its work conducting an overall assessment of the state of affairs in Georgia's public schools comparing the reality of our state's public schools with research-proven strategies of effective schooling. Equipped with some of Georgia's brightest and most respected professionals, GERSC I (1999) and GERSC II (2000) presented Governor Barnes with recommendations and alternatives to current practice. The Georgia General Assembly passed two pieces of Governor Barnes' education reform legislation into law: HB 1187 and HB 656.

As 2003 approaches and our nation and state experience an economic slowdown, Governor Barnes recognizes that it is important, now more than ever, to sustain the momentum of education reform as we move forward with the implementation of HB 1187 and HB 656. Accordingly, at this critical juncture funds must be directed in a strategic and targeted to effort to maximize the impact of state dollars toward improving student achievement. Appropriately, the Governor's efforts in FY 2003 focus on several key elements of the state's education reform: accountability, teacher quality, teacher supply, K-12 construction and ensuring seamless educational policy and programming.

OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The 2002 – 2003 school year will be the first benchmarking period for Georgia's public school. The Office of Educational Accountability (OEA) will issue its first "accountable" report card for schools in the fall of FY 2005. The grades issued will be based on school performance on tests only during the 2002 – 2003 school year. Among the indicators that will be reported but not graded are school completion and student attendance. Georgia's school accountability system comes complete with financial rewards for those schools that exceed state standards and assistance for schools that are below state standards.

A significant shift in state policy, OEA's work ensures that public schools are not allowed to continually fail our students. Each year, schools will receive disaggregated data on academic performance. In this way, they will have the information necessary to drive their school resources in the areas where they are most needed. Schools that remain below standard for two years can have sanctions on them placed by the State Board of Education. Additionally, OEA will analyze data on differences in student achievement by

sub-group and the achievement gap that exists between disaggregated student groups, including socioeconomic and racial groups. As part of an effort to explore this complex state and national issue, in the fall of 2001 Governor Barnes named a "Closing the Gap Commission" that will be responsible for identifying the nature of the achievement gap in Georgia and providing recommendations for addressing it.

TESTING

A centerpiece to Georgia's accountability plan is determining what our children know and can do as measured in part by their performance on standardized tests. In order to ensure that our children are equipped to compete on a national level, Georgia now administers national norm referenced tests in addition to criterion referenced tests.

The Stanford 9 norm referenced test, first administered to Georgia students in grades 3, 5, and 8 in spring 2001, replaced the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). Results of the Stanford 9 compare the performance of Georgia's students with their national counterparts. Overall, Georgia's 3rd, 5th and 8th graders ranked in the 46th, 50th and 47th percentiles, respectively, when compared to their national counterparts.

The Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) measures students' level of achievement on the Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum (QCC). The results of the CRCT are provided in a detailed disaggregated report that includes information on students' strengths and weaknesses by subject. As a result of HB1187 all students in grades 1 – 8 are required to take the reading, English/language arts, and mathematics portions of the CRCT effective spring 2002. This requirement ensures that regular and consistent information is collected on student achievement and that those students needing additional instruction receive it in the area in which it is most needed.

Appropriately, Governor Barnes recommends \$4,385,810 in the FY 2002 Amended budget to expand the CRCT in science and social studies for grades 3 through 8, and expand the English/language arts, math and reading portion for grades 1- 8th. These funds will also be used to pilot a web-enabled CRCT. This pilot will help Georgia identify and address the various issues related to web-based testing. This method has the added advantage of immediate scoring and may serve as an ideal method for re-taking the exam for those students who failed the CRCT during the first sitting. Governor Barnes also recommends \$6,226,000

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for additional CRCT tests development and continuance of the web-enabled pilot in FY 2003.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAMS

As the rollout to school report cards and accountability draws near the Governor has made a focused effort to assist our neediest schools, providing \$11,000,000 in FY 2002 to high priority schools for school improvement teams as part of a targeted assistance strategy. This strategy provides those high priority schools that desire state assistance with the necessary resources and support to impact student achievement, immediately, and 163 schools requested to participate employing the America's Choice school reform model.

The America's Choice model combines the key variables that research has proven are critical to effective schools: 1) a rigorous curriculum and high standards for all students; 2) collaboration among staff in working toward clear goals; 3) high quality staff development that also ties directly to the school's goals; 4) instructional leadership; and 5) meaningful and sustained parental involvement. The model intends to engage the entire school community in the efforts towards reform.

A technical assistance infrastructure comprised of 32 Team Leaders, 8 Regional Managers, and 25 Business Advisors provides on-going training and monitoring. In the FY 2002 Amended Budget, Governor Barnes recommended an additional \$9,055,969 to continue school improvement for the first group. These 163 schools are receiving intensive training and support that will help them direct all of their school's resources in a comprehensive manner toward improving student achievement. Ultimately, these schools will have the tools to sustain the reform.

The America's Choice model is being adapted to align specifically with Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum and the tenets of HB 1187. In FY 2003 and beyond all schools that opt to participate in this initiative will receive training in the *Georgia's Choice School Reform Program*. Accordingly, from their inception in the program these schools will be required to use their many sources of staff development funds, particularly federal Title I funds, as the first step in a comprehensive strategy to re-direct their schools resources into an integrated program of school improvement. The state will continue to provide the technical assistance infrastructure and training. In FY 2003 Governor Barnes recommends \$12,752,803 to continue full funding for the 163 schools participating in their second year of the state funded America's Choice reform and the technical assistance infrastructure that will provide additional training and support to a new group of schools participating in *Georgia's Choice*.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Georgia's efforts to ensure that all children achieve at high levels are driven by a multi-faceted approach that includes improving teacher quality and developing effective school leadership. While staff development is a critical component of achieving both of these goals, teachers and school leaders require different skills and support from staff development. Appropriately, Governor Barnes has developed two strategies to ensure that staff development is aligned with the distinct needs of teachers and school leaders.

Teachers face a new and dynamic challenge to educate a diverse group of learners and ensure that all are able to successfully meet our state's high stakes standards. While teachers are eager to rise to the challenge of high standards they must receive professional development that is well integrated into the larger organizational goals of their schools and systems.

On the other hand, school leaders must be able to lead in a dynamic environment to craft their schools' mission working closely with parents and faculty. Improving student achievement must drive that mission. Ultimately, the leadership must be able to identify the unique needs of the student body and develop a school-wide strategy that encompasses what happens both inside and outside of the classroom. Fundamentally, today's school leaders must also be instructional leaders. Accordingly, they require staff development that helps them to develop and hone the skills necessary to ensure the success of everyone in their school, students and teachers alike.

Appropriately, in the FY 2002 Amended Budget Governor Barnes recommends \$250,000 for a statewide evaluation of staff development. This evaluation will identify the various types of staff development currently provided and determine their respective impact on student achievement. The findings of the evaluation will be used to set new standards that tie teachers' staff development directly with the larger mission of their schools and also ties re-certification requirements for all educators with staff development that improves student achievement.

Specific to developing effective school leadership, in FY 2002 the Governor provided \$150,000 to the Professional Standards Commission for the development of a statewide Leadership Institute for educational leaders. Since that time, a Coordinating Board for Georgia's Action Plan in Educational Leadership has been identified, and funding from the Gates Foundation for \$2,970,000 over 3 years for the development of the Institute has been secured along with an additional \$5,137,489 from other private sources. The first class is expected to receive training in March 2002 The Governor is also recommending that the Leadership Academy, currently operating at GDOE, be folded into the new Leadership Institute. Funds have been

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provided to allow the three groups currently receiving training to complete their respective programs. In the FY 2002 Amended and the FY 2003 budgets, Governor Barnes recommends funds to match the Gates Foundation grant in the amounts of \$499,000 and \$1,039,348, respectively.

NATIONAL BOARD

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) provides a clearly articulated set of standards for what teachers should know and be able to do in their respective fields. Its credential, National Board Certification (NBC), is hailed as the most rigorous and respected credential of the profession. Teachers, administrators, and elected officials alike suggest that the application process alone improves classroom performance. The NBC process emphasizes those components that research has consistently identified as central to improving teacher quality: reflective practice, collaboration with peers, and performance-based assessment.

Acknowledging NBC as a corollary to improved teacher quality and a prestigious signature of professional accomplishment, Governor Barnes initiated a sustained commitment to recognizing and increasing Georgia's pool of National Board Certified teachers. Governor Barnes minimized the practical and financial barriers to applying for NBC by providing technical assistance for Georgia's NBC candidates via the Georgia Teacher Center housed at Kennesaw State University (FY 2001), and providing a \$1,000 stipend for all teachers who successfully pass the PSC screening process (FY 2002) to help offset the \$2,300 application fee. Candidates that do not pass the screening process are provided technical assistance via a pre-candidacy institute to ensure that they are ready to enter next year's application process. Governor Barnes also worked closely with the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPEE) and PSC to raise additional private funds that assist these teachers in paying a portion of the remaining \$1,300.

Governor Barnes provided the support and issued the challenge that by 2004 Georgia would have 1,000 NBC teachers. Georgia's teachers have responded in-kind indicating that they are equipped to rise to the challenge. In November of 2001, with the announcement of the most recent set of teachers to achieve National Board Certification, Georgia scored high marks increasing its pass rate from 41% to almost 50% and tripling its pool of NBC teachers from 116 to 426. With a total of 310 new NBC teachers, Georgia had the seventh highest number of successful candidates of all the states in the 2001 certification results.

In FY 2003, Governor Barnes recommends \$1,838,490 to provide a 10% salary supplement for 426 teachers based on their annual salary. This 10% salary supplement is a policy shift that increases the financial

incentive for teachers who achieve National Board Certification. In 1999, Governor Barnes increased the state salary supplement from 5% to 10%. Since 1994, it has been the state's policy to provide a salary supplement the school year after the teacher achieved certification. In following years, that amount of the supplement would be held constant. Governor Barnes' new policy will effectively provide an additional 10% of a teacher's salary every year. As the salary increases over time, so will the supplement. The Governor is also recommending an additional \$234,000 to provide an application stipend for a new group of teachers to participate in the NBC application process.

ALTERNATIVE PREPARATION

In FY 2002, Georgia implemented its first statewide alternative teacher certification program joining the ranks of states like Texas, North Carolina, California and New Jersey that have successfully utilized alternative certification programs as one element in a larger strategy toward reducing the teacher shortage. Georgia Teacher Alternative Preparation Program (TAPP) provides an alternative option of entry into teaching for professionals who already hold a baccalaureate degree. Individuals who participate in this intensive preparation program must begin with a concentrated four to six week summer session, then teach in a classroom for a two year period with careful guidance from a teacher-mentor and receive follow-up instructions from the TAPP training providers. Georgia TAPP combines research-proven elements of teacher preparation to ensure that its teacher-candidates increase the pool of qualified teachers and also remain in the profession.

In the spring of 2001 with the announcement of the program, Georgians demonstrated their overwhelming concern for our children and their education as more than 6000 individuals attended information sessions for TAPP around the state. While initial plans for the program anticipated identifying a pool of 200 qualified teacher-candidates, PSC was inundated with inquiries about the program and received more than 1500 applicants. The final cohort consisted of a distinguished and diverse group of 753 candidates.

TAPP is an important component of Georgia's efforts to address teacher supply issues: 1) It provides a rigorous field-based preparation component; and 2) it supports candidates at the most critical phase of their professional teaching experience by providing a mentor during their first year in the classroom.

Governor Barnes has expressed a commitment to ensuring that TAPP delivers on its promise. \$65,000 has been recommended in the FY 2002 Amended Budget to develop a candidate-tracking database and to initiate a program evaluation. In FY 2003, Governor Barnes recommends \$1,000,000 for a new group of 750 teacher-

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candidates and to continue an evaluation of TAPP and the impact of its candidates on student achievement. As part of an on-going strategy to address teacher retention Governor Barnes has provided second year funding of \$333,000 to be matched by federal funds to ensure that new teachers graduating from three of our state's teacher preparation programs (University of Georgia, Valdosta State and Albany State University) receive intensive mentoring.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT SERVICES

In anticipation of the significant impact that the class-size reduction requirements of HB 1187 would have on K-12 construction, GERSC's Facilities Subcommittee made several key recommendations: 1) Make more technical assistance available to local systems in planning, pre-design, design and construction; 2) Adjust the state's cost per square foot for construction; and 3) Develop a prototypical design school program.

In implementing these recommendations Governor Barnes asked the Georgia State Finance and Investment Commission (GSFIC) to be responsible for moving these efforts forward in a timely manner. In FY 2002, GSFIC retained a Program Management (PM) team to assist local school systems with all phases of HB 1187-related facilities development. This PM firm now provides every system with 40 hours of technical assistance annually. Systems are allowed to access the technical assistance in the areas in which they are most in need of additional direction. Additionally, the state's neediest systems receive top priority for PM services.

The State Board of Education has responded to Governor Barnes' recommendation to increase the state's reimbursement per square foot. In FY 2003 the new per square footage reimbursement rate will increase from \$49 to \$54 for new elementary schools, \$51 to \$56 for new middle schools, and \$53 to \$58 for new high schools. These

increases will bring the state's share in line with the average minimum cost of school construction in Georgia.

Finally, Governor Barnes has instituted a prototypical school design program and library, which provides a 2% reduction in local systems match to state funds for schools that employ a prototype school model for school construction. A design is considered a prototype if it has been built two or more times in Georgia, has a similar layout and the gross square footage and number of classrooms do not vary by more than 10%. In total, from the FY 1999 Amended through the FY 2003 budget, Governor Barnes has put over \$1,180,000,000 in bonds, lottery funds, and cash toward K12 school construction which has helped build over 11,650 classrooms.

EDUCATION COORDINATING COUNCIL

There is no variable in the education paradigm that functions and is sustained in isolation. Education from pre-kindergarten to college completion is a continuum. As toddlers receive or fail to receive the fundamentals of education during those critical years (ages 3 and 4 years) they bring those skills or deficits into the classroom when they enter kindergarten. If schools consistently produce varying results among students from different socioeconomic and racial backgrounds on standardized tests, then those disparities are exacerbated at the college level. Furthermore, we are likely to observe similar trends among our teachers in test performance.

This understanding is at the core of the Education Coordinating Council (ECC). Governor Barnes chairs the ECC which includes the CEO's and board chairs of all state education agencies from pre-school through college. Meeting quarterly, the ECC provides a forum for interagency communication of educational policy and program, insuring and promoting seamless education in the state of Georgia.