



# VIEWS FROM THE SCHOOLHOUSE

## GEORGIA EDUCATOR POLICY INSIGHTS

**FALL 2025**

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# Executive Summary

## Georgia educators want policymakers to seek and take action on educator opinions about school policy issues.

This is a top finding from a recent survey conducted by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE). In preparation for each legislative session, PAGE conducts an annual survey of its members regarding issues on which policymakers are focused or challenges educators flag as needing attention. The new PAGE survey explores student absenteeism and cell phone usage, mentors for new teachers, teachers' out-of-pocket classroom supply expenses, and educator perspective on elected officials' policy positions. Survey findings include:



### Chronic Absenteeism

Nearly **69%** of teachers report spending class time on **remediation for chronically absent students**.



### Mentor Teachers

Less than **40%** of mentor teachers report **receiving a stipend** for the additional work they do as mentors.



### Cell Phones in Schools

About **71%** of teachers indicate a ban on personal electronic devices is **needed in 9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade**.



### Paying Out-of-Pocket for School Supplies

**92%** of teachers **dipped into their own pockets** to buy classroom supplies for the current school year.



### Encouraging Education Careers

More than **73%** of educators report they are **less likely now to recommend careers in education** than they were when they first entered the profession.



### Perspectives on Politicians' Education Policy Positions

**77%** of educators say they are **less likely to vote for candidates who criticize public schools**, and **94%** want candidates to **ask educators for their advice** on education issues.

# Summary of Recommendations

Based on Georgia educator survey findings, PAGE recommends policymakers implement the following strategies to address challenges facing students and schools:

- 1 Fund school social workers at a ratio of one social worker per 1,856 students and fund a school nurse at every school to reduce chronic absenteeism.**
- 2 Expand Georgia's existing K-8 student cell phone and personal electronic device ban to grades 9-12.**
- 3 Provide stipends of \$250 per semester to mentor teachers who support new teachers.**
- 4 Provide annual teacher school supply grants of \$250 through the School Supplies for Educators Act (SB 464), which passed the General Assembly in 2024.**

## Methodology

PAGE designs and conducts an online legislative policy survey of all members annually. The survey was distributed to members in November 2025. In total, 2,981 educators from 176 of Georgia's 180 school districts, as well as state commission charter schools, state schools, and private schools, participated in the survey. Approximately 66% of respondents are classroom teachers. The remaining respondents serve students in a variety of school and district roles and are collectively referred to as "educators." The phrase "all educators" refers to all respondents to the survey, including teachers and all other roles.



**2,981 Educators**



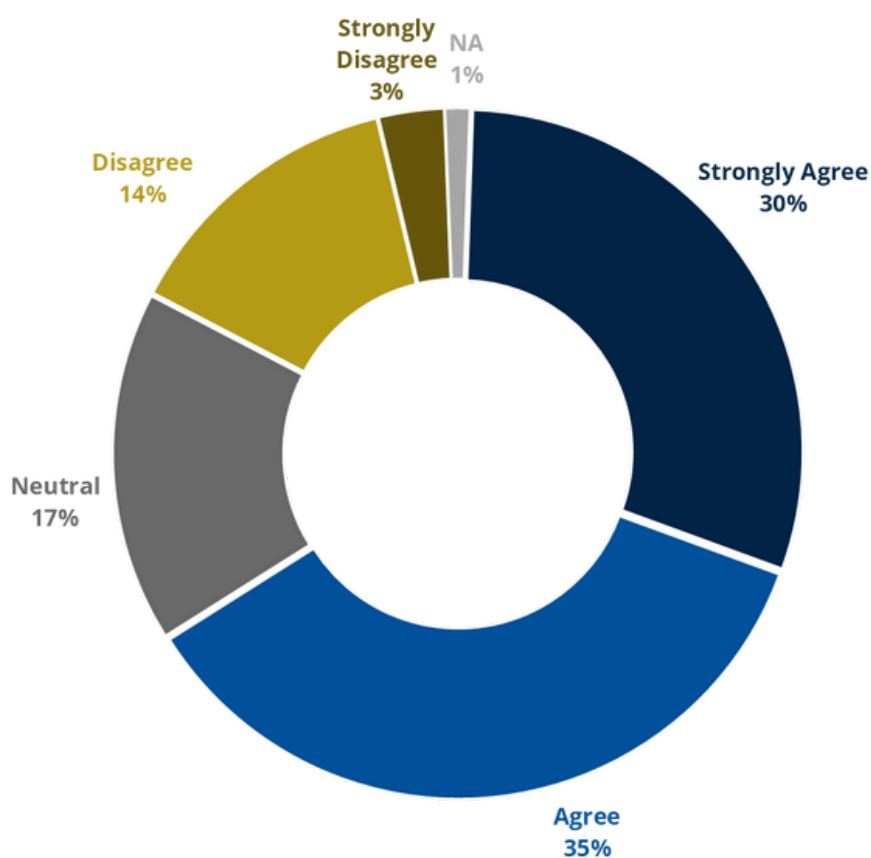
**176 Districts**

# Chronic Absenteeism

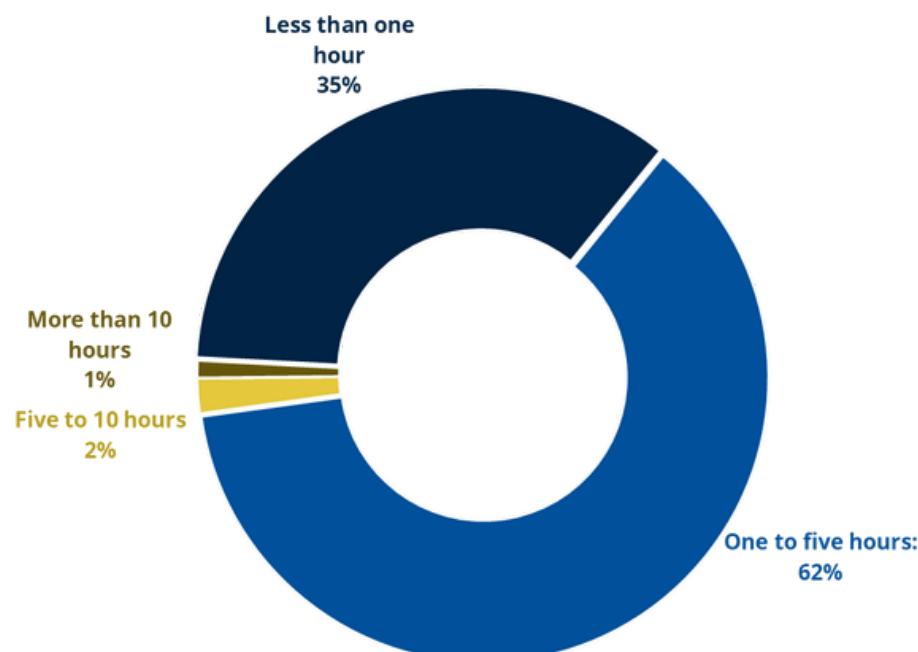
Chronic absenteeism is a widespread challenge in schools throughout Georgia. Nearly 87% of teachers report chronic absenteeism has a negative impact on student learning outcomes in their schools. Chronic absenteeism—defined as missing 10% or more days of school—is linked to lower academic achievement, social disengagement, increased risk of dropping out, and higher poverty rates in adulthood.<sup>1</sup>

Students who do not miss class are also affected when their peers are chronically absent. Nearly two-thirds of teachers say chronic absenteeism has a negative effect on their ability to teach students who are present.

**Figure 1: Percent of Teachers Who Agree that Chronic Absenteeism Negatively Affects Instruction**



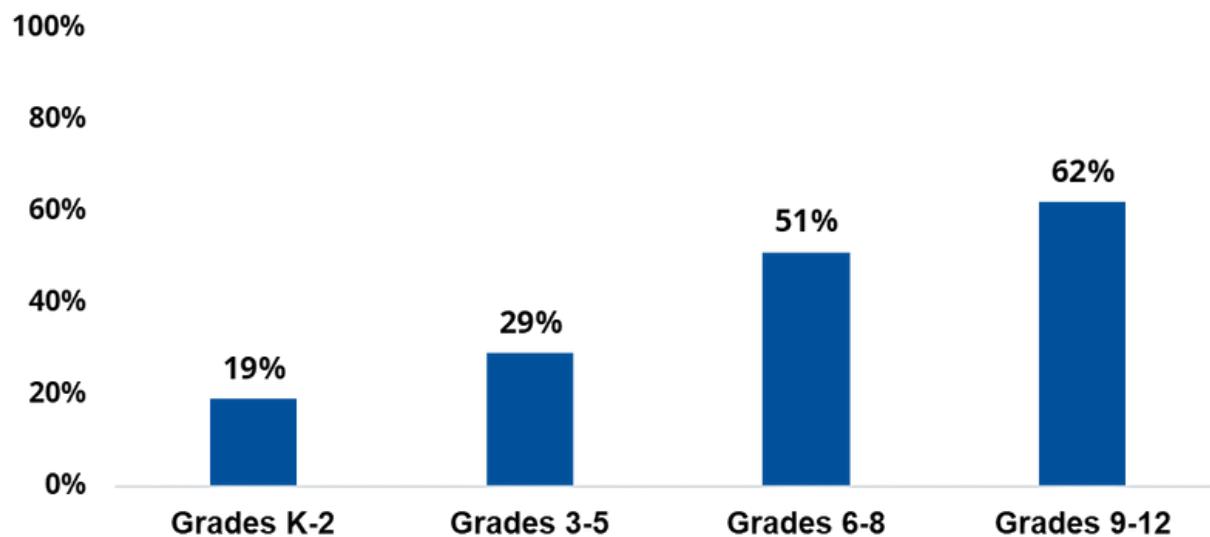
**Figure 2: Teacher Hours Spent on In-Class Remediation**



When students are frequently absent, teachers spend class time re-teaching material or providing remedial help. This can slow progress for students who do not miss school. Nearly 69% of teachers report spending class time on remediation for chronically absent students. The amount of time teachers spend per week on in-class remediation varies.

More than 42% of teachers also invest time outside of class to help students who are chronically absent, though this varies by grade level. Middle and high school teachers are more likely to provide remediation outside of class than are elementary teachers.

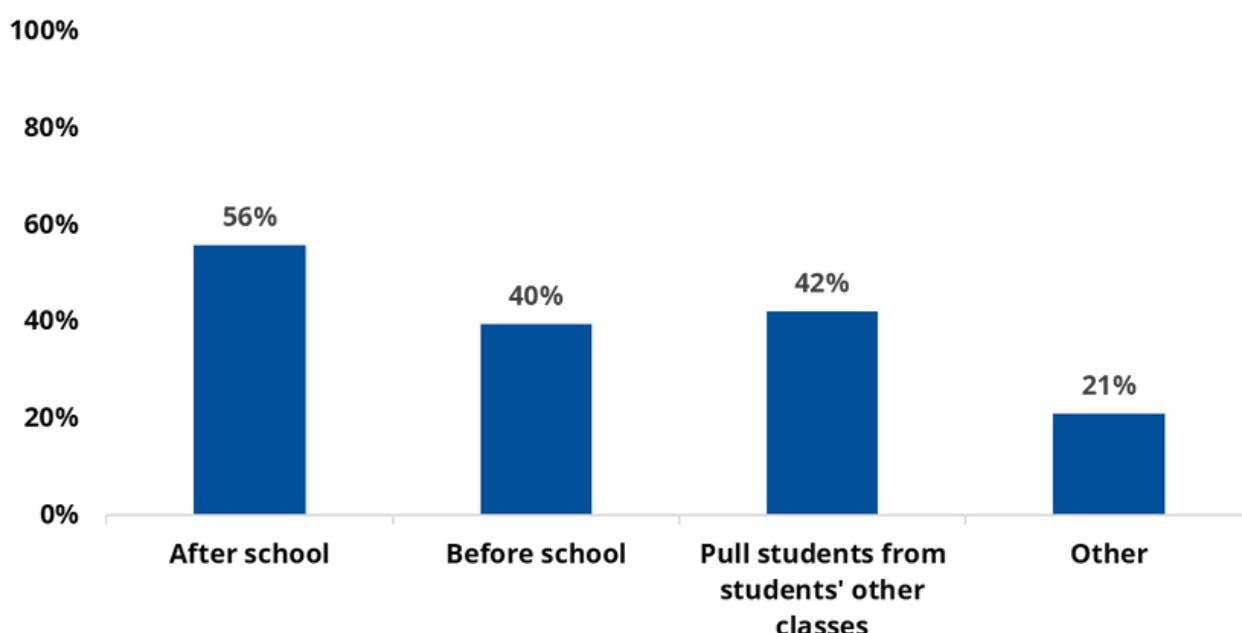
**Figure 3: Percent of Teachers Who Provide Remediation Outside of Class**



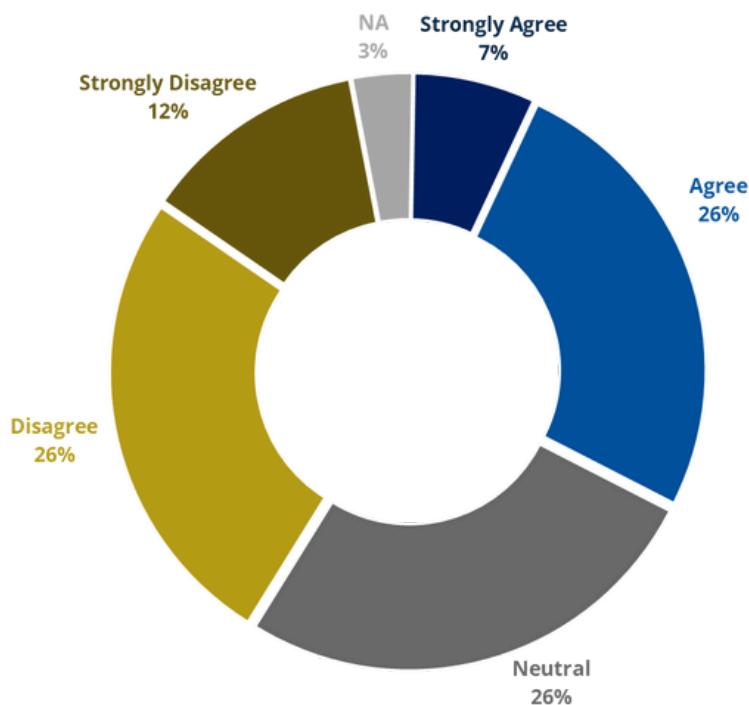
The amount of time teachers invest in remediation outside of class is comparable to the time they spend providing remediation during class, with most spending one to five hours on it per week.

Teachers provide help to chronically absent students at multiple times throughout the day. More than half of teachers (56%) report they deliver extra instruction after school, a number that rises to nearly 80% for high school teachers.

**Figure 4: When Teachers Provide Extra Instruction to Absent Students**



**Figure 5: Percent of Educators Who Agree Their Schools Have Adequate Staff & Tools to Address Chronic Absenteeism**



In written comments, teachers described providing instruction during their lunch and planning periods to students who had missed class. Teachers develop additional learning activities that students can do online or pull older students out of advisement or homeroom periods to provide instructional help. Some schools have added dedicated time for interventions or remediation to their schedules, and teachers deliver instruction to chronically absent students during those periods.

Teachers are committed to supporting chronically absent students, but doing so requires additional time and adds to their workload.

Approximately 32% of educators report their schools have staff who are adequately trained to address chronic absenteeism and have effective tools to do so. However, 38% do not believe their schools have the necessary staff and tools.

Chronic absenteeism is a complex challenge that requires multiple interventions. It is not a problem educators can resolve on their own. Neither is there a single solution. The top three strategies educators believe would be most helpful in reducing chronic absenteeism are:

1. Increased truancy enforcement in partnership with the legal system
2. Improved parental engagement (e.g. targeted messages on attendance, home visits)
3. Wraparound services to address underlying issues (e.g., health care, food assistance, mental health services)

In written comments, teachers repeatedly flag the need for help and accountability from parents to improve student attendance. Teachers also want more consequences for high school students who consistently miss school. Some teachers propose requiring students to meet a minimum number of "seat time" hours to pass a class. Students consistently missing class to participate in athletic events is mentioned by several teachers as a factor contributing to absenteeism.

**"Hold parents accountable for students in grades K - 8. In grades 9 - 12 hold both students and parents accountable for attendance issues."**

**Middle School Teacher, Rural District**

# Mentor Teachers

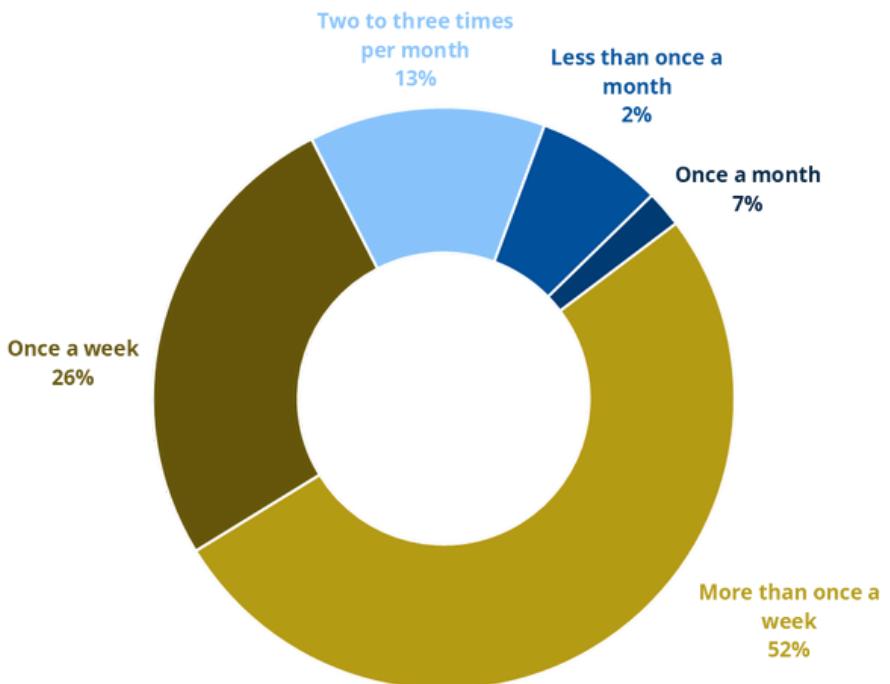
About 47% of teachers currently mentor new teachers or did so within the past three years. Their work as mentors is vital. New teachers need effective mentoring from experienced teachers to help them master instructional strategies and classroom management. Supportive mentor teachers also provide valuable encouragement and a safe space for new teachers to discuss and resolve challenges they may experience. High-quality mentoring can improve retention of new teachers and improve their instructional practices.<sup>2</sup>

For mentoring to be most effective, mentor teachers should meet frequently with their mentees, and most mentor teachers report they do.<sup>3</sup> Approximately 77% of mentor teachers meet with their mentees at least once a week.

## Mentor Teacher Stipend Statistics

**61% of mentor teachers said they did not receive a stipend for their mentor work. Of those who did receive a stipend, 84% were paid less than \$500.**

**Figure 6: How Frequently Mentor Teachers Meet with New Teachers**



Most mentor teachers—78%—are also in the same grade level or content area as their mentee teacher. Sharing grade levels or content areas helps ensure mentors and mentees have common planning time and are working on the same or aligned curricula, standards, and assessments.

Nearly 56% of mentor teachers indicate not receiving training in effective mentoring, which is another benchmark of high-quality mentoring programs. Half of mentor teachers received a handbook or other resources to guide their work with their mentee new teachers. And 69% report there was a designated staff person in their school or district to support their work.

Approximately 61% of mentor teachers do not receive an annual stipend for serving as a mentor despite the additional time and work it requires. The amount of the stipend varies for the teachers who receive them. More than 40% of mentor teachers received \$250 or less for their work.

# Cell Phones In Schools



## Percent of High School Teachers Who Support Expanded Cell Phone Ban

Nearly 72% of educators believe the [Distraction-Free Education Act](#) (HB 340) will improve student learning. Beginning July 1, 2026, the act bans students in kindergarten through eighth grade from using cell phones or other personal electronic devices during the school day. The ban is “bell-to-bell,” meaning students cannot access phones or other devices from the first bell of the day to the last, including lunch or other non-instructional periods.

About 71% of teachers indicate a similar ban on personal electronic devices is needed in ninth through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. This number climbs to 83% among high school teachers. These findings align with results from a survey on personal electronic device bans, which Georgia Southern University, with assistance from PAGE, conducted in early fall 2025.

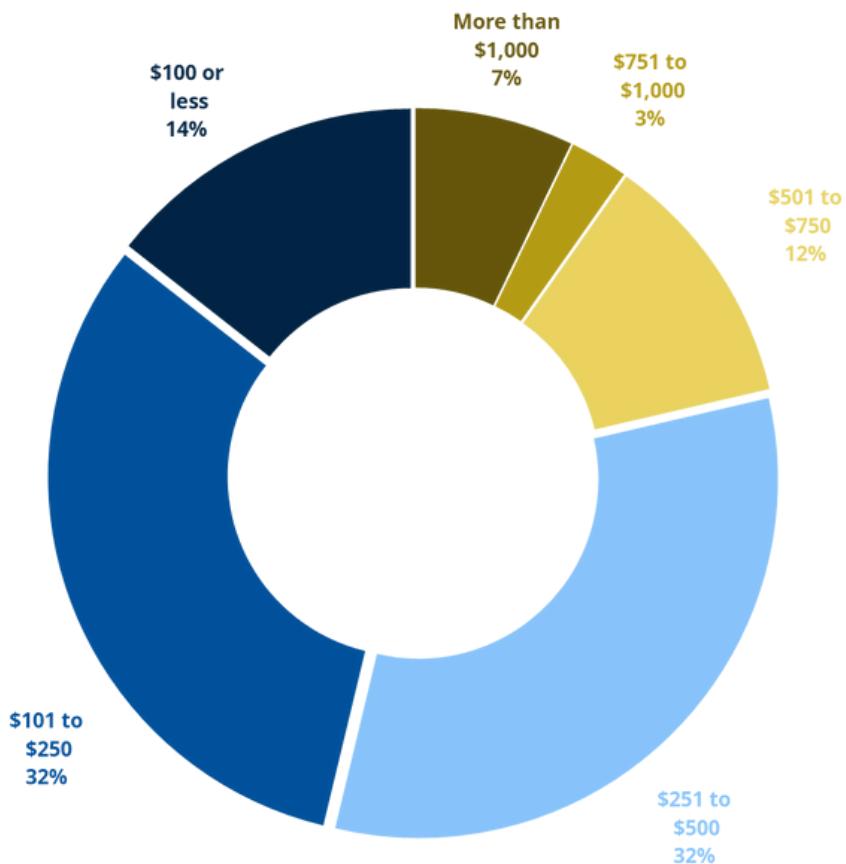
# Paying Out-of-Pocket for School Supplies

The overwhelming majority of teachers, 92%, report spending their own money to purchase classroom supplies without reimbursement in fall 2025. The amount teachers spent by November when the survey was administered varies with over 20% of teachers spending \$500 or more.

Spending their own money to purchase classroom supplies is a persistent practice among teachers. Approximately 94% report using personal funds to buy supplies during the past five years. The average annual amount teachers report spending over that period varied:

- \$250 or less: 32%
- \$251 to \$500: 33%
- More than \$500: 35%

**Figure 8: Amount Teachers Spent on Classroom Supplies, Fall 2025**



# Encouraging Education Careers

Nearly 34% of teachers and 39% of all educators recommended education as a career to someone within the past two years. Their highest-ranked reasons for recommending education careers are:

1. Opportunity to positively impact students
2. Work schedule
3. Opportunity to positively impact the broader community & retirement benefits (tie)

This aligns with previous surveys of PAGE members who describe feeling professional fulfillment by helping students learn new concepts and skills. Educators frequently characterize their work as a calling.

**"The ability to influence and help the children of our community out of poverty and see that there is more to life than our small town (is why I would recommend teaching)."**

**High School Teacher, Rural District**

However, many educators are reluctant to recommend careers in education. The top issues that deter educators from recommending education careers are:

1. Student behavior
2. Workload
3. Low salary

**"It is not just one thing—low salary, student behavior, lack of ability to effectively get parent engagement for bad behaviors, lack of respect from the wider community, etc."**

**High School Teacher, Rural District**

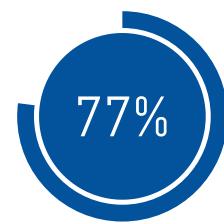
In written responses, many educators reiterate the strain of poor student behavior and an unmanageable workload. Many also indicate it is the combined impact of these and other factors, such as unsupportive school administrators and lack of respect from the broader community, that stops them from recommending education careers. Many educators also highlight the lack of support they feel from parents in fostering their children's academic success and well-being.

These issues are not new. Educators have repeatedly identified these challenges in previous PAGE surveys as top factors that diminish the appeal of teaching.

More than 73% of educators said they are less likely now to recommend careers in education than they were when they first entered the profession. Veteran teachers are less likely to recommend education careers than those educators with fewer years of experience. A contributing factor is likely the high levels of burnout teachers experience. In a PAGE survey conducted in spring 2025, 66% of teachers reported feeling burned out at work.<sup>4</sup>

# Perspectives on Politicians' Education Policy Positions

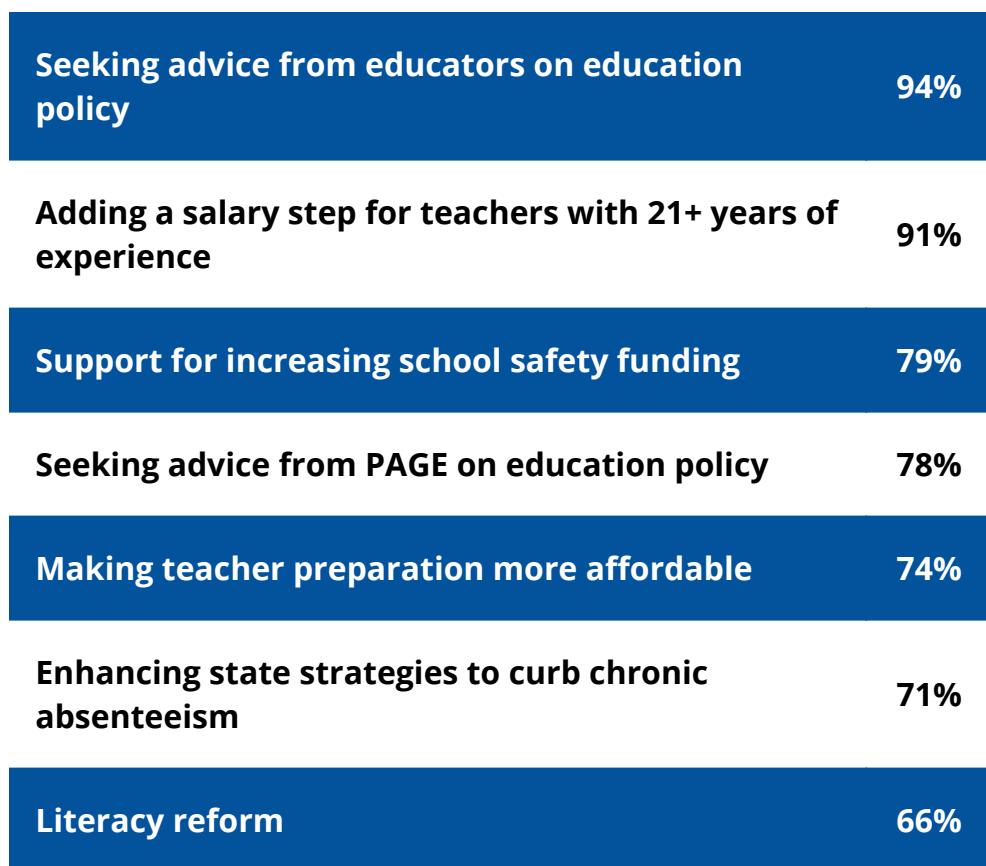
Candidates' positions on issues connected to public education matter to educators. Ninety-one percent of educators say candidates' positions on education policies influence their decisions to vote for the candidates, and 77% of educators report they are less likely to vote for candidates who criticize public education.



**Percent of Educators Less Likely to Vote for Candidates Who Criticize Public Education**

Most educators say they are more likely to vote for candidates whose positions on specific policies are supportive of public schools and their students and staff. However, the influence that individual policy issues have on educators' voting choices varies.

**Figure 9: Policy Positions Educators Indicate Make them More Likely To Support A Candidate**



The overwhelming majority of educators (94%) want candidates to ask their advice on education policy issues. Educators' instructional expertise and daily experiences working with students and implementing decisions made by lawmakers should be incorporated into the legislative process.

# PAGE Recommendations

The findings of this survey demonstrate that PAGE members hold strong views on our state's pressing educational challenges. Educators provide invaluable insight into policy solutions. The following recommendations, built upon their opinions, are ripe for policymaker action during the 2026 legislative session and will strengthen schools and student outcomes.

## 1 Fund school social workers at a ratio of one social worker per 1,856 students and fund a school nurse at every school to reduce chronic absenteeism.

Educators want more parental engagement and increased wraparound services to reduce chronic absenteeism. Additional outreach to parents through home visits, personalized communication through phone calls, text messages, and other communication forms, and more support for parents requires staff. Expanding wraparound services, such as access to food, transportation, mental health services, safe housing, and other challenges that students and families experience, also requires staffing. Yet, only 32% of teachers report their schools have adequate staffing and tools to effectively address chronic absenteeism.

Often, school social workers are the staff who reach out to parents and provide access to wraparound services. The state currently funds one school social worker for every 2,475 students, more than nine times the recommended ratio of one social worker for every 250 students.

Lawmakers should lower the school social worker funding ratio to one social worker per 1,856 students to expand the staff in schools who can effectively address the barriers that students and families face that contribute to chronic absenteeism. The recommended ratio is a 25% reduction to the current ratio.

Lawmakers should also strengthen student attendance by addressing health causes for absenteeism with dedicated coverage by a full-time licensed school nurse at every Georgia school. Priority should be given to districts with high chronic absenteeism or high health-need populations.

## 2 Institute a ban on cell phones and other personal electronic devices in Grades 9-12.

More than eight of every 10 high school teachers who responded to the survey say a ban on cell phones and other personal electronic devices is needed for Grades 9-12. Their reason is clear: 96% of educators agree that students' off-task use of personal electronic devices during school interrupts student focus and learning during school.<sup>5</sup>

Educators' belief that using personal electronic devices is harmful to student learning aligns with research on the impact of cell phone usage and social media on students. Cell phone use among youth is linked to lower academic achievement, increased anxiety and depression, diminished and poor sleep, and less physical activity.<sup>6,7</sup>

Lawmakers should enact a ban on personal electronic devices in Grades 9-12, expanding the ban they established under HB 340, the Distraction-Free Education Act, in 2025.

### **3 Provide stipends of \$250 per semester to mentor teachers who support new teachers.**

Georgia does not have enough teachers. Twenty-seven percent of teachers said teacher shortages were a major problem at their schools in a survey PAGE conducted in spring 2025, and about 6,700 teaching positions were filled by individuals on a waiver or provisional certificate in fall 2024. Georgia needs to attract more people into education and improve retention among those who enter the field.

New teachers are more likely to stay in the field when they have high-quality mentoring and induction support. Mentoring a new teacher is an additional responsibility experienced teachers undertake, which requires extra time and work. Lawmakers should compensate mentor teachers for this additional work by providing a \$250 stipend per semester to mentor teachers who support new teachers.

### **4 Provide annual teacher school supply grants of \$250 through the School Supplies for Educators Act (SB 464), which passed the General Assembly in 2024.**

Nearly all teachers buy school supplies for their classrooms with their own money and are not reimbursed for these purchases. This adds to the financial strain many educators experience. Nineteen percent of teachers indicate they always have difficulty covering their living expenses, and an additional 19% indicated they often have difficulty doing so in a spring 2025 survey of PAGE members.

State funding for student instructional supplies has not increased or been adjusted for inflation since Fiscal Year (FY) 2014. In FY 2014 high school students were allocated \$113.60 for instructional materials under the state's K-12 funding formula, the same amount they are allocated in FY 2026.

In 2024, lawmakers pass SB 464, the School Supplies for Educators Act, which aimed to provide teachers with funding for classroom supplies through a debit card. However, lawmakers have not funded it.

To reduce the need for teachers to spend their own funds on classroom supplies, lawmakers should provide grants of \$250 per teacher to implement SB 464.

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