

★ **Local Control**

Our Board supports local control and flexibility, not state mandates. Please stand for local governance — ensure legislation is aligned with constitutional authority of school boards. Local board members and administrators know their educational needs, communities and families best.



**HOUSTON COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION**
HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS

Support of these important issues would be greatly appreciated.

By working together, we can achieve a common goal of making Georgia's public schools the best possible.



Houston County Legislative Delegation

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Senator David Lucas
Senator Larry Walker, III
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Representative Heath Clark
Representative Robert Dickey
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2020 Legislative Priorities

- ★ Teacher Shortage Crisis
- ★ Teachers Retirement System of Georgia
- ★ Safety
- ★ Support for Public Education, Not Tax-Funded Vouchers
- ★ Local Control



Our *mission* is to produce high-achieving students.

Our *vision* is that our system will be world class.



2020 HCBOE Legislative Priorities

★ Teacher Shortage Crisis

The teacher shortage is at an all time crisis level across our state and entire country, as shown by study after study. Research by the [Economic Policy Institute](#) found the teacher shortage in the U.S. could reach 200,000 by 2025, up from 110,000 in 2018. Roughly 1 million public education workers walked away from the profession in 2018, and experts predict those numbers will only get worse. The result is [shortages of teachers](#) in multiple states and a [dropping number of education majors](#) nationwide.

For Georgia, the [Center for American Progress](#) reported a 40% decline in enrollment in state teacher prep programs between 2010 and 2018. This is exacerbated by teachers leaving the profession early in their career. Richard Ingersoll of the University of Pennsylvania says, "The problem is not that we don't produce enough teachers. We lose too many." Nationally, 44% of new teachers leave their jobs within five years. In Georgia, 32% leave within five years, based on Ingersoll's research. According to the [Wall Street Journal](#), the [U.S. Department of Labor](#) reported that teachers quit the profession in 2018 at the highest rate of any year on record.

Fewer applicants and difficulty in retention make it extremely challenging to hire highly-qualified teachers. All school districts struggle to find sufficient qualified classroom teachers, and high-poverty schools suffer the most.

We constantly seek new ways to recruit teachers. One way to help is to pass Georgia House Bill 336, which was introduced in 2019 and is similar to Senate Bill 327 passed in 2008. HB 336 permits Teachers Retirement System (TRS) beneficiaries to return to the classroom full-time without affecting their benefits. For any retirees hired, the district could pay the full TRS contribution, to include the employee contribution. Having this option would give school districts another source of qualified teachers. TRS would also benefit by receiving additional funds without incurring any future liabilities. Most importantly, our students would benefit from fully-staffed classes containing professionally qualified, experienced and well-trained teachers. Please support GA HB 336.

★ Teachers Retirement System (TRS) of Georgia

TRS has been providing educators with retirement security for 76 years, since 1943. TRS is funded through employer and employee contributions and investment income. The fund continues to grow, with employers currently contributing 21.14% of salaries and employees contributing 6% of their salary. As of July 1, 2020, the employer portion will decrease to 19.06%.

More than one-third of the employer contribution is used to pay off unfunded liability accumulated over previous years. TRS is solvent and expected to continue to improve as it recovers from the 2008 economic downturn. By 2024, the employer contribution is estimated to drop to 16.93%.

Currently there are 240,000 active contributing members and 132,900 retirees. In 2018, only 2.2% of retirees made more than \$96,000 a year - 85% made \$60,000 or less. The average benefit for new retirees is \$2,542/month or \$30,504/year; the average for all retirees is \$3,339/month or \$40,068/year. Inflation can quickly erode this income, so retirees count on cost-of-living adjustments to ensure that their retirement pay keeps pace with rising costs.

TRS is especially important to school employees because the state does not pay Social Security on their behalf. In fact, educators are the *only* state employees who do not benefit from the state paying 6.2% of their salary into Social Security. Districts that elect to pay into Social Security must do so with local funds. Our Houston County School District pays approximately \$12 million a year into Social Security.

Georgia's TRS is an excellent teacher recruitment and retention tool. Ranked in the top one-third of all pension systems in the nation, TRS has a total annual economic impact of \$7.368 billion. TRS works well, so there is no need for reform, overhaul or change. Help us encourage teachers to stay in Georgia and the profession by supporting and strengthening TRS and the state salary schedule.

★ Safety

The safety of our students and staff is our number one priority. In order to learn, students must feel safe. Our faculty and staff must also be trained so they feel prepared to handle a crisis. The school security grants given schools by the legislature was greatly appreciated, and continuation of these grants would be appreciated. The allocation for each school, though, needs to be a local decision to be more equitable. Older facilities need more funds to upgrade and improve safety than newer schools. Preventative efforts, to include school-based mental health services and sufficient School Resource Officers, would be greatly enhanced if the state legislature would include School Safety as a line item in the budget. Please help us provide safe learning climates by funding expanded services for school safety, school nursing, counselors, behavioral support, and mental health needs.

★ Support for Public Education, Not Tax-Funded Vouchers

We oppose vouchers, scholarships, or tuition tax credits which divert K-12 public school funding to private schools or home study. Reallocating tax dollars into private schools weakens public education. Please stand with us by opposing attempts to expand Georgia's two existing private school voucher programs. To be fair, any private schools funded by vouchers should be held to the same accountability and transparency as public schools. Please also say no to Tim Tebow bills - public schools should not be required to allow home schooled students to participate in extracurricular activities.