

Opportunity Weight

The Problem:



In the Education Week “2020 Quality Counts” state education report, Georgia was given an “F” grade. This grade was based on the amount Georgia spends on public education as a part of the state GDP, adjusted for regional cost differences.



When comparing how students from families with low incomes do on state tests compared to their higher-income peers, Georgia ranked No. 49 out of all states and the District of Columbia in the same Quality Counts Report.



Georgia’s education funding lacks a key ingredient: additional funding for students living in poverty. Forty-two other states in the U.S. have this provision.

Georgia’s schools are being held back by the lack of investment in students from low-income families

The Solution:

Evidence proves that there is a link between a student’s family income and their education outcomes. Currently, Georgia offers relatively small amounts of funding for students that fall behind their grade level. This money is often insufficient and restricted by regulations and/or caps. It also does not address disparities until after they appear rather than preventing them. Additional money in the funding formula specifically for students living in poverty would help improve outcomes for these children, and would enhance the entire state’s education system. If the state of Georgia committed to funding an adequate “Opportunity Weight,” student achievement would increase measurably.

Create a categorical grant to provide additional funding for each child directly certified for free lunch

The Cost:

There has not been a true analysis of the cost to educate a child to the Georgia Standards of Excellence that every child is expected to meet. Using the number of students directly certified for free lunch (those receiving SNAP or TANF, as well as children experiencing homelessness, unaccompanied youth, foster or migrant children) there are more than 500,000 children that meet this designation. At a weight of 0.25 (25 percent of the base amount of funding) in the Quality Basic Education formula, an Opportunity Weight would provide approximately an additional \$360.8 million for Georgia’s children living in poverty.