



Opportunity School District

Governor Nathan Deal is proposing that Georgia establish an Opportunity School District to provide a safety net for Georgia's children who are assigned to attend persistently failing schools. The parents of these students have very limited or no options for their students' education, and the economic health of the communities in which these schools are located suffers. Schools that are successful in preparing students for postsecondary opportunities and the work force are critical to the future of Georgia's children and the communities in which they live.

In the Governor's proposal, persistently failing schools are defined as those scoring below 60 on the Georgia Department of Education's accountability measure, the College and Career Performance Index (CCRPI), for three consecutive years. (The CCRPI includes measures of achievement, growth, and gap reduction.) Based on an analysis of the 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2013-2014 CCRPI scores, slightly more than 6%, or 141 - excluding alternative, non-traditional, and special purpose schools - of Georgia's 2184 schools would be eligible for the Opportunity School District (OSD). These schools, except for the two state charter schools, are located in 22 local school districts. In the future, the first year a school receives a CCRPI score below 60 it would be considered on a warning track, and the second consecutive year the school receives a score below 60 would be considered a probationary year.

The Governor will appoint the OSD superintendent, and he or she will report directly to the Governor. The OSD will be an operational unit of the Office of Student Achievement. The OSD would have the same power and authority of a Georgia Local Education Agency (LEA).

The state proposes to intervene in no more than 20 schools per year and in no more than 100 schools at any given time. The determination of in which schools the state would intervene in any year would include a number of additional considerations such as the schools' performance on growth measures and any recent changes of leadership in the schools and/or districts. Schools operated under the authority of the OSD would remain in the state-wide district for a minimum of five years and a maximum of ten years before returning to the authority of the local school district or continuing to operate as an independent charter.

The state interventions would be determined on a school by school basis and would include options for closure, MOUs or contracts with local Boards of Education to require specific actions, direct management of schools, and chartering. The appropriate intervention for each school would be determined on a case by case basis, and would involve soliciting feedback from the school community, as well as analysis of past improvement efforts and growth data. The schools currently eligible for the OSD will likely change prior to any possible implementation.

School year 2017-2018 would be the earliest year in which the state could implement any of these options.

Schools in the OSD would receive a per student share of all local, state, and federal funds coming into the school districts in which the schools are located. Currently 96% of the districts that have OSD-eligible schools spend at or above the state average of \$8,400 per student each year. 26% of these schools are located in districts that spend significantly greater amounts than the state average, more than one standard deviation more. While all of the schools currently identified as potentially eligible for the OSD have high rates of poverty among the student bodies, this level of per pupil funding actually directed to the school is anticipated to provide adequate funds for effective operation. In addition, the OSD superintendent would have available a defined fund to be utilized as appropriate for innovative and wrap-around service programs in the OSD schools.

In preparing for the launch of this initiative, Georgia has studied similar efforts in several other states, most notably Louisiana and Tennessee. In Louisiana, the Recovery School District (RSD) was implemented first in New Orleans in 2005, based on legislation passed in 2003. The percentage of students performing at or above grade level increased by 34 percentage points between 2005 and 2013, while the state average increase was only 9 percentage points during that time period. The percentage of failing schools in the RSD decreased from 65% in 2008 to 20% by 2013. Tennessee began the Achievement School District program in 2011 and has seen improvements in grade 3-8 reading, math, and science. High schools saw double digit score gains in algebra 1, English 1, and biology. Student and parent surveys yielded positive ratings for school culture and effectiveness.

Governor Deal sees the Opportunity School District as a strategy to fulfill the obligation of the state to provide hope for the families, students, and communities where schools have historically struggled. The Opportunity School District will provide the authority for the state to more effectively provide support and remove barriers to the students' success.