

SURVEY REPORT : 2Q 2019

# GEORGIA BUSINESS LEADERS ON EDUCATION REFORM

 BUSINESS FORWARD



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Business Forward is a national trade group that has worked with more than 5,000 business leaders across Georgia.**

We cover a range of issues, including education reform, tax reform, trade, infrastructure, clean energy, and immigration. We've organized hundreds of briefings across the country on education reform, focusing on career and technical training, promising education technologies, school choice, and charters. These briefings have included the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Labor, two deputy secretaries, and hundreds of other officials.

**For the past year, we have talked with business leaders in Georgia about the changes they believe schools should make to better prepare students for the workforce.** We asked them about funding, standards, teacher autonomy, accountability, and skills.

**Nearly half of the responses focused on fixing how schools teach,** from offering more personalized teaching and smaller classes, to focusing on basic skills and critical thinking.

**One in three responses covered school funding,** including more funding for the neediest schools, and more funding, in general.

**One in five of the responses focused on skills,** including technical training (like software coding) and life skills (like balancing a checkbook).

**One in 10 responses covered social issues,** such as bullying and discipline, work ethic, morality, and “liberal indoctrination.”

**Four in 10 responses mentioned charter schools,** and nearly all responses were in favor of them. This concentration of remarks reflects the large amount of programming we conducted on charters in 2018.

**Respondents are pro-teacher and anti-bureaucrat.** Complaints were more likely to focus on the education system than those working within it. While some were critical of teachers, respondents who mentioned teachers were more likely to support giving them more autonomy.

# GEORGIA BUSINESS LEADERS RECOMMENDATIONS

We have worked with more than 5,000 business leaders across Georgia, and nearly 800 of them have participated in programming on how to improve public schools. We asked Georgia business leaders to tell us about the changes they believe schools should make to better prepare students for the workforce. More than 100 of them provided recommendations.

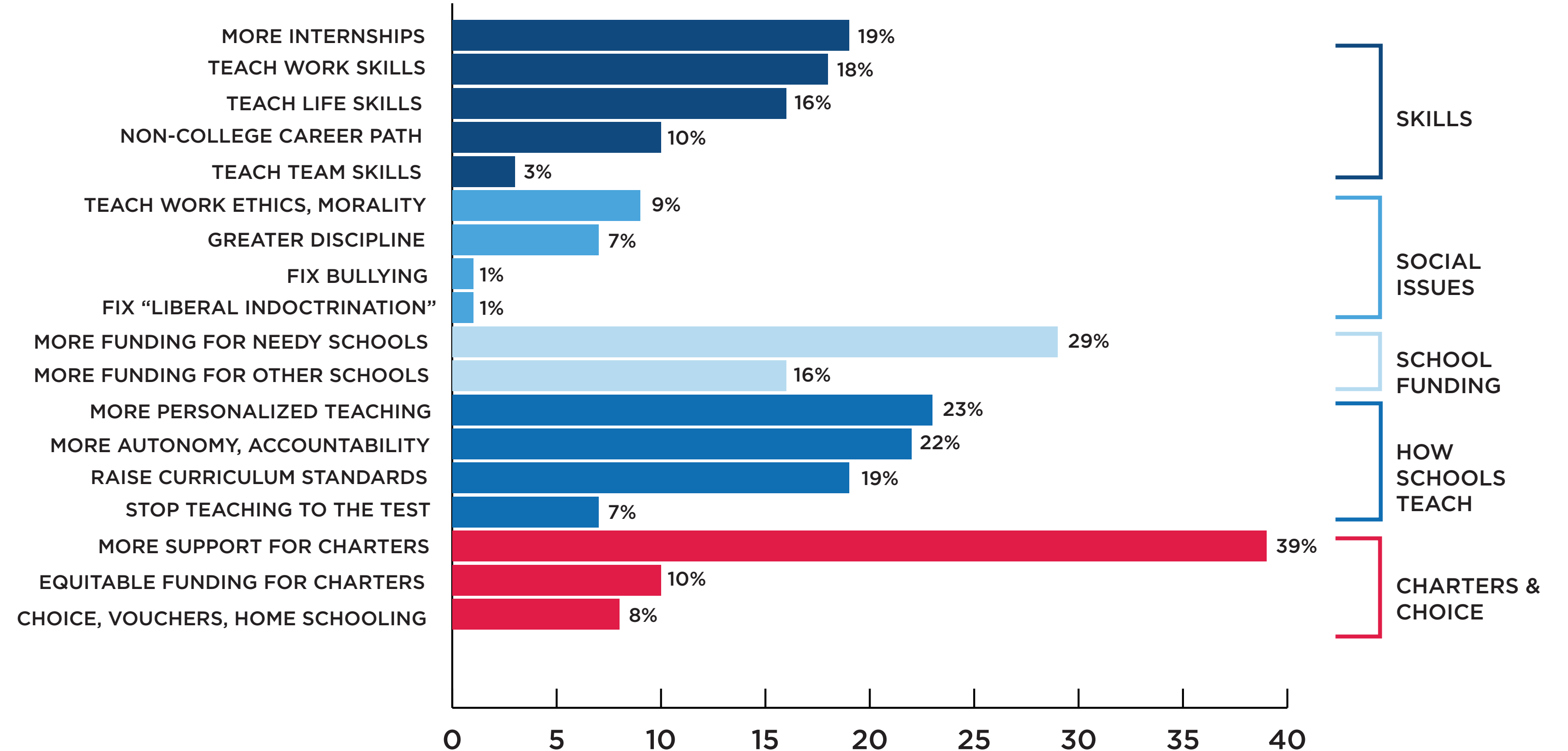
**Half of the responses focused on fixing how schools teach**, from offering more personalized teaching (23% of recommendations), giving teachers more autonomy over their teaching and holding them more accountable (22%), raising standards (19%), and ending the practice of teaching to achievement tests (7%).

**One in three responses focused on funding**, with 29% of comments focused funding for Georgia’s neediest schools and 16% focused on more funding for schools, in general.

**One in five responses focused on skills**, including more internships (19%) and more emphasis on work skills, life skills, and offering a non-college path.

**One in 10 responses focused on social issues**, such as school discipline, bullying, teaching ethics and morality, and concerns about “liberal indoctrination.”

**Four in 10 responses focused on charters**, with nearly all responses in favor of charters. We note, however, that this result reflects our extensive programming this past year on charters. Ten percent of responses focused on equitable funding for charters, while 8% focused on choice, vouchers, and the benefits of home schooling.



\* COMMENTS ABOUT CHARTER SCHOOLS COMPRISE A GREATER PERCENTAGE OF TOPICS DISCUSSED, WHICH IS LIKELY THE RESULT OF ASKING RESPONDENTS ABOUT EDUCATION REFORM

# HOW SCHOOLS TEACH

Half of the responses focused on fixing how schools teach, from offering more personalized teaching and smaller classes, to focusing on basic skills and critical thinking.

“

**There is too much red tape. We can't use common sense anymore to solve issues. There is too much political control.**

”

**- DEBORAH DOEBEREINER**  
BUSINESS EXECUTIVE,  
ACWORTH, GA

“

**The education system is driven from the county level. It's so top heavy with administrators. If on-site principals and teachers had more choice on what is used, and access to resources, our public school system would advance.**

”

**- VICKIE CARR**  
TEACHER,  
SAVANNAH, GA

“

**I do not feel faculty have the freedom and support to provide the practical skills and training to individualized student needs.**

”

**- JENNIFER WORD**  
LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR,  
DULUTH, GA

“

**Teachers don't have enough autonomy in their classrooms.**

”

**- CONNITA RANSOM,**  
NURSE,  
LITHONIA, GA

“

**When education is centered around test-taking and passing through to the next grade, as opposed to teaching critical thinking, grammar, arts and sciences, I am left with the burden of teaching what should have been taught in school.**

”

**- WILLIA JOHNSON,**  
CEO,  
DISCOVER WHOLENESS COUNSELING,  
SAVANNAH, GA



# FUNDING

One-third of the responses focused on funding, including securing more equitable funding for the neediest schools and increasing funding more generally.

“**Parents should have the option to enroll their child in whatever school they want. Or home school.**”

- LAURIE CLARK  
BUSINESS OWNER,  
BLAIRSVILLE, GA

“**Public schools are not equally funded. Sadly, most inequity can be seen in low-income areas where equal funding is needed the most!**”

- VERA CAUSEY  
FORMER PUBLIC SCHOOL  
ELEMENTARY TEACHER,  
MABLETON, GA

“**I've also seen classrooms that had barely any supplies at all. Young teachers that are just starting out have very limited resources in their classrooms.**”

- DARLENE MEYER  
FORMER PRESCHOOL TEACHER,  
SUWANEE, GA

“**Low income areas are not funded well.**”

- OUIDA RANDLE  
ACCOUNTING CLERK,  
GEORGIA DEPT. OF LABOR,  
ATLANTA, GA

“**Monies need to be put toward children and teachers payroll. Teachers should not have to buy supplies for children and classrooms.**”

- SUSAN SMITH  
ELLABELL, GA

# SKILLS

One in five responses recommended that schools provide more technical training and access to internships.

“

**College preparatory classes in high school help kids prepare for college work. There needs to be more hands-on training in both high school and college. More employers prefer job specific training and certification.**

”

**- QUONTWAIS HUDSON**  
CEO & FOUNDER,  
HUDSON LOGISTICS GROUP  
SNELLVILLE, GA

“

**Students should receive technical training and internships.**

”

**- THOMAS ROBINSON**  
ATTORNEY,  
THOMAS ROBINSON AND ASSOCIATES,  
POWDER SPRINGS, GA

“

**Students should know what a business wants from them by communicating with business representatives directly.**

”

**- BENJAMIN BACON**  
OWNER,  
PLANE SPACE DESIGN,  
SAVANNAH, GA

“

**It is essential that all high school students are presented with various avenues for success. Not all students are college material, but that does not mean they cannot be well prepared for jobs that will meet their needs for making a living and will also meet the growing needs of the communities in which they reside.**

”

**- ELIZABETH RICHARDSON**  
CEO,  
ELIZABETH'S ESCAPES FOR TRAVELING SINGLES, LLC,  
DOUGLASVILLE, GA

“

**Local schools should listen to the business community and prepare students to be knowledgeable contributors as members of the workforce.**

”

**- NELSON JACKSON,**  
VICE PRESIDENT,  
LINKAGE & ASSOCIATES, INC.  
ATLANTA, GA

# CHARTERS AND CHOICE

Four in 10 responses covered charter schools and school choice. Nearly all respondents expressed a favorable opinion toward charter schools.

“  
In the charter school system, we can offer every child the opportunity to succeed at their own pace, in their own timeframe so that 100% have the ability to graduate.”

- TONY EWERS  
MOUNTAIN EDUCATION CHARTER  
HIGH SCHOOL,  
CANTON, GA

“  
Charter schools, if done correctly, are a solution for parents who cannot afford to put their children in private school.”

- JACQUELIN TWISS  
ENTREPRENEUR,  
WINDER, GA

“  
My county school district is one of the worst, not only in the state, but in the nation. Stewart County, GA also happens to be one of the poorest counties in our country. The schools have consistently shown below average on tests scores and the literacy rate is below the national average.”

- AMY CADENHEAD,  
PARENT,  
LUMPKIN, GA

“  
I was impressed with the charter school my son attended. The staff and parents both had more control than the county did.”

- MECCA HERSHEY  
ENTREPRENEUR,  
CARTERSVILLE, GA

“  
Our charter school—ANCS—is great and is not fully funded as other public schools.”

- DOROTHY PIRZAD,  
PARENT,  
LUMPKIN, GA



# NATIONAL SURVEY

As part of our work on education reform, Business Forward surveyed our national network of business leaders on the state of public schools and how to improve them. The business leaders responding represented a range of industries, businesses sizes, and more than 40 states and territories. Two-thirds either have children currently enrolled in public school or have children who have graduated from public school.

A majority of these business leaders (57%) believe our schools are on the wrong track. One in four worries that poor schools will hurt her business's ability to compete. Half believe our schools are underfunded. And 85% support one or more market-driven reforms, including greater school autonomy (59%), replacing underperforming schools (29%), and expanding charter schools (34%).

These results are consistent with what we've heard from business leaders at the hundreds of briefings we've organized around the country on career and technical training, promising education technologies, school choice, and charters. These briefings have included the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Labor, two deputy secretaries, and hundreds of other officials.

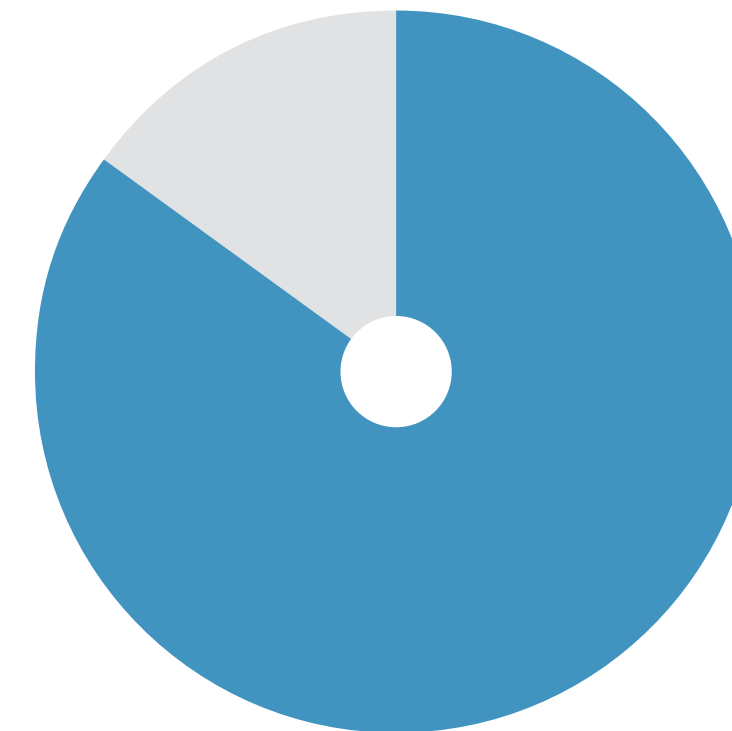
**57% BELIEVE OUR SCHOOLS ARE ON THE WRONG TRACK**



**25% WORRY POOR SCHOOLS HURT BUSINESS'S ABILITY TO COMPETE**



**85% SUPPORT MARKET-DRIVEN REFORMS**



**50% BELIEVE OUR SCHOOLS ARE UNDERFUNDED**



For complete results, click to: <https://www.businessfwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Education-Survey-July-2018.pdf>



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