

# EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE STATE OF GEORGIA

## **Governor Nathan Deal's Education Budget for AFY15-FY16**

Gov. Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal have made education one of their top priorities for our state. Driven by the belief that there is no better place to invest, Georgia has made incredible improvements within our various systems of learning and higher education. Listed below are just a few of the further investments the state will make in education as a result of the adopted AFY 2015 and FY 2016 budgets. These items include supporting digital learning, creating a film academy for a burgeoning industry and allowing local school districts to reduce furlough days and provide pay increases for teachers. A more comprehensive breakdown can be found here once the budget has been signed: <http://opb.georgia.gov/appropriations-bills>.

### **Overall**

**55%** of all state dollars in the FY 2016 budget will be spent on education, and over half of all state funds have been dedicated to education every year since the Governor's inauguration.

Gov. Deal has spent more of the state general funds budget on K-12 education than any governor in the past 50 years (FY 1967 to FY 2016), with QBE funding increasing 21 percent during his term.

### **Early Learning**

**\$3 million** in lottery funds will restore Pre-K planning days back to 10, effectively raising teacher salaries, improving retention rates and granting more time to prepare quality lessons.

**\$1.4 million** in lottery funds will add 60 additional Summer Transition Program classes, which help eligible low-income rising Pre-K and kindergarten students prepare academically for school. This program helps reduce the achievement gap, with the increase in classes supporting roughly 920 additional children.

\*All budget items refer to the amended fiscal year 2015 and fiscal year 2016 recommendations proposed by Gov. Nathan Deal as passed by the General Assembly through HB 75 and HB 76.

## K-12

**\$368 million** is to account for enrollment growth in our schools, with Georgia serving over 1.7 million students. Funding for the State Charter School Supplement and the Charter Systems Grant are included in this total.

**\$280 million** in additional funds will allow local K-12 school systems to increase instructional days, reduce teacher furloughs and enhance teacher salaries. This funding represents a significant portion of the over half a billion dollar increase for K-12 education and is in addition to the \$314 million added in fiscal year 2015. This step provides local school districts with the resources and flexibility to address the most critical needs of their students and teachers.

**\$262 million** in bond funding will go toward public schools for construction and renovation projects, buses, and equipment upgrades.

**\$35 million** will help expand internet and digital learning resources to classrooms throughout Georgia. Additional funding will be set aside to increase significantly the bandwidth available to school systems around the state.

**\$27 million** in additional funding will provide further support to low wealth school systems.

**\$6.5 million** will set up strategic statewide professional development initiatives for teachers so that Georgia can continue to foster a quality learning experience for students.

**\$1.5 million** will provide additional support for the Georgia Innovation Fund to award grants to local school systems using innovative programs in public education.

## Higher Education

**\$332 million** in bonds will be provided to schools in the University System of Georgia and the Georgia Public Library System to build new structures and renovate or repair existing ones.

**\$65 million** in bonds will allow the Technical College System of Georgia to repair or renovate existing structures, as well as fund equipment upgrades.

**\$23 million** in lottery funds will provide another increase in the award amounts for HOPE Scholarships and Grants and will help meet demand for Low Interest Loans. Four new industries, including computer programming and film and set design, will also be added to the strategic industries grant, which helps cover the cost of tuition at technical colleges for students pursuing these in-demand fields.

**\$24 million** will offset continued growth in the Accel program, which encourages high school students to earn college credit and funds tuition for dual enrollment.

**\$3 million** will help establish the Georgia Film Academy, an institute started through a cooperative partnership between the University and Technical College systems. This academy will support Georgia's growing film industry.

**\$1.5 million** in capital bonds, as well as \$485,000 in state funds will provide academic and workforce development resources to veterans at the Military and Academic Training Center in Warner Robins.

## Governor's Education Goals for the State of Georgia

- **Increase the number of students who are able to read at a third grade level by the completion of third grade, as well as the number of programs in Quality Rated**

The time from when a child is born until their eighth birthday is critical for development. Children who cannot read on grade level by the third grade often require costly remediation and struggle to succeed later in life. Focusing on early childhood education can ensure that Georgia's youngest students will be poised for academic excellence in the future and also that the state uses its resources efficiently.

- **Increase the percentage of Georgians who hold a postsecondary credential**

By 2020, more than 60 percent of job openings in Georgia will require some form of postsecondary degree. With this in mind, Gov. Deal's Complete College Georgia Initiative and other efforts are dedicated to increasing the number of students who earn meaningful degrees from a Georgia higher education institution.

- **Empower citizens with public school options and local flexibility to improve student achievement**

It is important that parents be provided with options when it comes to the education of Georgia's children. By allowing public school districts the ability to find creative ways to improve the success of their students, the state fosters an environment where innovation can thrive. Charter schools are an important avenue for encouraging this healthy growth, especially in areas where children may be trapped in failing schools.

- **Establish an Opportunity School District**

When schools fail to meet standards, they can damage the development of the children they serve. An Opportunity School District, if approved by voters, would allow the state to step in to rescue these schools and the children languishing in them.

Because education is a top priority for Georgia, Gov. Deal has also established the Education Reform Commission to look for more possible improvements. This group will study a number of issues in our state's education system and recommend potential improvements to the governor by August 1 of this year. A portion of this group will also examine the most appropriate ways to modernize our QBE funding formula, which has not been updated since the 1980s. An improved funding formula could go into effect as early as the 2016-17 school year.

\*All budget items refer to the amended fiscal year 2015 and fiscal year 2016 recommendations proposed by Gov. Nathan Deal as passed by the General Assembly through HB 75 and HB 76.