



Charter Systems

Using Flexibility to Shape Student Success
and Build a Stronger Georgia Economy

From the Board

Dear Governor Kemp and Members of the General Assembly:

The Charter System Foundation is a nonprofit that provides training on how to use flexibility and implement school-level governance. We also have led the way on several initiatives that have had statewide impact and are now promoting the creation of career pathways for high school students. We have much to share about the work being done throughout our state to support the education of all students, as well as economic development.

We ask that you protect charter system broad flexibility and local governance teams that foster innovative ways to address the needs of all students. Georgia's strategic waiver systems also benefit from targeted flexibility to help them overcome challenges to learning.

We invite you to take a few minutes to review this pamphlet to learn about the work we are doing and about the importance of flexibility. Georgia has been at the forefront of our nation in meaningful changes that enable districts to meet the individual needs of each student, such as Charter Systems where innovation and local school governance flourish, College & Career Academies, Dual Enrollment Option B Diploma, and others.

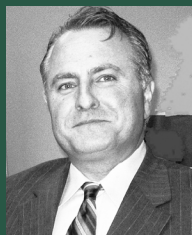
We hope this encourages you to speak with the districts you represent to learn how they are using flexibility. Thank you in advance for your consideration and for your work on behalf of the children of Georgia.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors
Charter System Foundation



Charter System Foundation Board of Directors



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Flexibility

Charter Systems and Strategic Waiver Systems

For decades, the General Assembly has added new education laws to Title 20 each year. Many of these laws mandate how districts must run schools. Examples include class size requirements, seat time, expenditure controls, educational programs, categorical allotment, salary schedule, certification requirements, schedule and organization of schools, public school choice, and many more.

Taken collectively, these one-size-fits-all mandates are restrictive and burdensome. They do not allow the flexibility needed to meet the diverse needs of individual students. Georgia is very diverse geographically, economically, and demographically. We welcome state laws that hold districts accountable for results, but we need flexibility in how to achieve results.

Charter Systems. In 2007, several districts asked the General Assembly to provide flexibility from the state mandates. The result was the Charter System Act, passed in 2007. This act allows a local board of education (BOE) to sign a performance/flexibility contract with the state BOE that

- grants flexibility, i.e., a broad waiver of most of the mandates in Title 20 (not including accountability and transparency),
- adds a layer of accountability by setting performance goals and requiring annual reporting, and
- requires the establishment of school-level governance teams with meaningful decision-making authority, with \$100 per student in additional funding.

The first charter systems in 2008 were Marietta City, Gainesville City, Decatur City, and Warren County.

Strategic Waiver Systems. Other districts, today known as Strategic Waiver systems, sought flexibility. In 2008, Mr. Alvin Wilbanks, then superintendent of Gwinnett County Schools, asked that the General Assembly authorize districts to sign a contract that sets performance goals and lists specific laws that would be waived for that district (rather than the broad waiver for charter systems). By electing to be Strategic Waiver systems, these districts chose not to establish school governance teams and not to receive the \$100 per student additional funding.

The law was amended in 2013 to require that all 180 districts choose a model by 2015. Today there are 48 Charter Systems, 130 Strategic Waiver Systems, and two Title 20/No Waivers systems (formerly "Status Quo") that have not opted for flexibility.

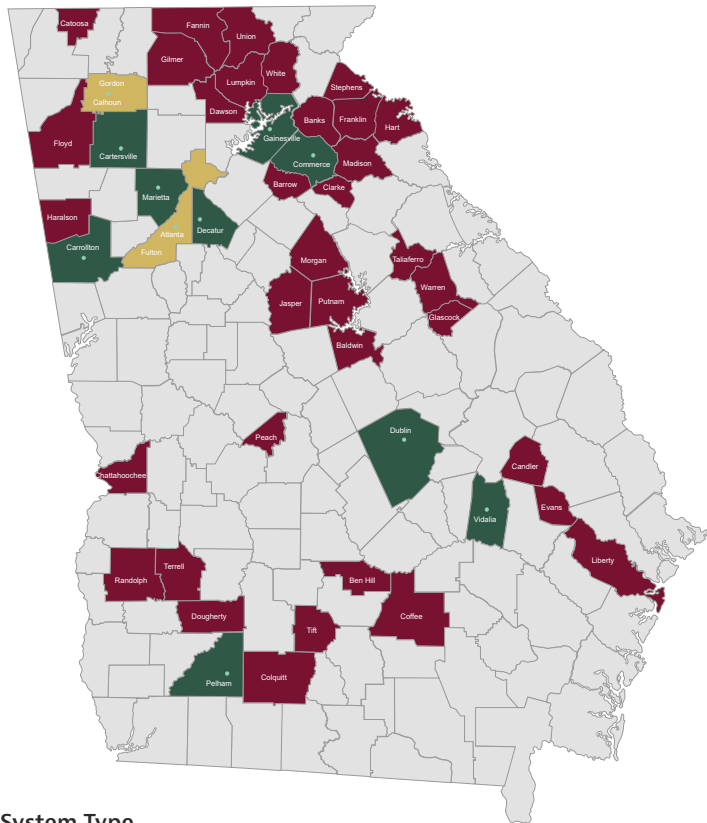
"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." —Ben Franklin



Governance

School-Level Governance

Governance is a key component of every charter system. The Charter System Act requires every school to implement a Local School Governance Team (LSGT) that gives parents, teachers, and community members decision-making authority at the school level. The LSGT considers the school's unique learning culture and responds with innovative strategies to meet the needs of diverse students. As Georgia becomes more diverse, more schools are opting for flexibility. The Foundation's reach extends to all regions of the state.



Charter Systems in Georgia

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Atlanta Public Schools | Gainesville City Schools |
| Baldwin County Schools | Gilmer County Schools |
| Banks County Schools | Glascock County Schools |
| Barrow County | Gordon County Schools |
| Ben Hill County | Haralson County Schools |
| Calhoun City Schools | Hart County Schools |
| Candler County Schools | Jasper County Schools |
| Carrollton City Schools | Liberty County Schools |
| Cartersville City Schools | Lumpkin County Schools |
| Catoosa County Schools | Madison County Schools |
| Chattahoochee County Schools | Marietta City Schools |
| Clarke County Schools | Morgan County Schools |
| Coffee County Schools | Peach County Schools |
| Colquitt County Schools | Pelham City Schools |
| Commerce City Schools | Putnam County Schools |
| Dawson County Schools | Randolph County Schools |
| Decatur City Schools | Stephens County Schools |
| Dougherty County Schools | Taliaferro County Schools |
| Dublin City Schools | Terrell County Schools |
| Evans County Schools | Tift County Schools |
| Fannin County Schools | Union County Schools |
| Floyd County Schools | Warren County Schools |
| Franklin County Schools | White County Schools |
| Fulton County Schools | Vidalia City Schools |

System Type

- County ■ City ■ City and County

Meet Our Flexibility and Governance Team

Our Flexibility and Governance Team conducts workshops and provides direct support to school governance teams, administrators, and local boards concerning best practices for school-level governance and the use of flexibility.



Ms. Susan Avant
Former Assistant Superintendent/
Chief Academic Officer
Liberty County Schools



Dr. Emily Lembeck
Former Superintendent
Marietta City Schools



Dr. Lynn Plunkett
Former Superintendent
Floyd County Schools

Innovation

High-Demand Career Pathways

Georgia's thriving industries and historic low unemployment rates in 2021 and 2022 have contributed to its status as the #1 State for Business. A recent study finds that more people are employed in Georgia now than before the pandemic. However, these positive trends have produced a talent shortage that constrains economic growth. School systems are responding to the workforce gap by offering innovative career readiness programs and opportunities for students to receive graduation credentials that lead to high-demand/high-wage careers.

Since late 2021, the Foundation has been leading a cohort of 20+ districts working to drive economic development and develop a skilled workforce by creating high-demand career pathways for students using Graduation Option B (SB 2 passed in 2015 to allow students to graduate with technical college credentials and work experience) and federally registered Apprenticeships (SB 379 passed in 2021). Examples of charter systems growing Option B and apprenticeships:

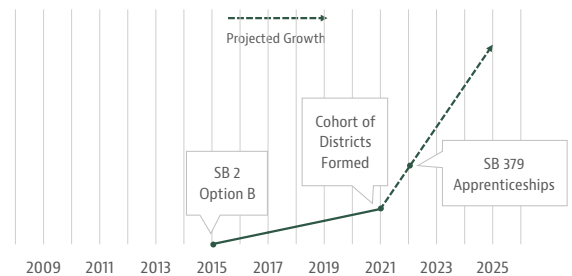
Dublin City: 30 Option B students with plans to grow to 100. Building German-style apprenticeship program.

Ben Hill County: 17 Option B students with plans to grow. Built program to encourage students to start small businesses with help from mentors.

Evans County: 23 Option B students with plans to grow to serve regional employers. Building pre-apprenticeship programs.

Fulton County: Building a "Middle College" with Atlanta Tech to serve 400 Option B students.

Georgia High-Demand Career Pathways
Option B and Apprenticeships (Projected Growth)



Charter System Foundation Initiatives with Statewide Impact

- Working with TCSG and GaDOE to provide training and support for college and career academies and to streamline the requirements of Perkins V, College and Career Academy Certification, and the Economic Development Partnership.
- Worked with GaDOE to design a streamlined Comprehensive Local Improvement Plan.
- Worked with GaDOE to develop a program that allows consolidation of federal, state, and local funds to better support success for all students, including Title I students.

“Georgia’s workforce may be an even more central piece of the growth puzzle than it seemed to be in 2019.”

—McKinsey & Company

Meet Our Career Development Team

Our Career Development Team works with districts, technical colleges, and employers to create high-demand career pathways for students.



Ms. Irene Munn
CEO
The Munn Firm



Dr. Shawn Utley
Retired Executive Vice President
of Academic Affairs
Wiregrass Georgia Technical College



Mr. Eric Waters
Retired CEO
Floyd County Schools College
and Career Academy

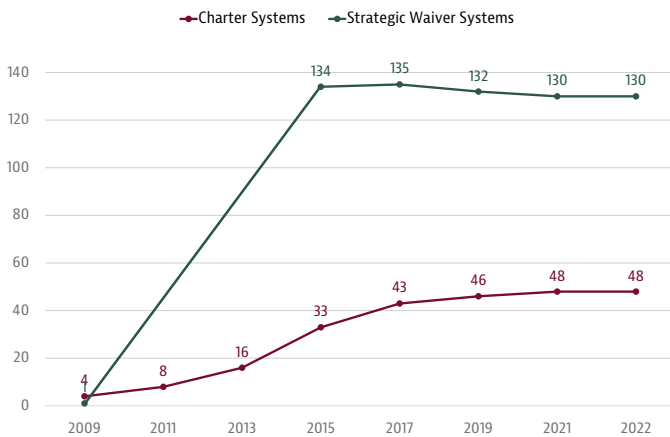
Accountability

Impact of Flexibility

The impact of flexibility has been significant, and should be considered and supported as districts meet the challenges associated with significant loss of student learning and increase in social-emotional issues.

Flexibility has provided freedom from "one-size-fits-all" mandates and allows for school-level decision-making.

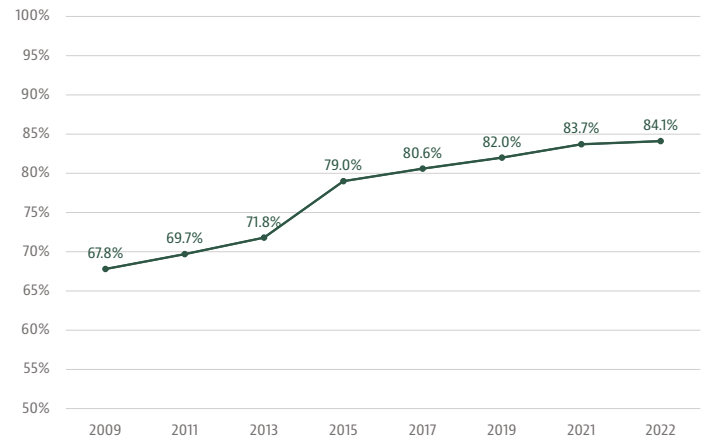
Number of Charter and Strategic Waiver Systems in Georgia



Source: <https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Charter-Schools/Pages/Annual-Reports.aspx>

Flexibility has given schools the opportunity to better help students with diverse needs find a pathway to graduation.

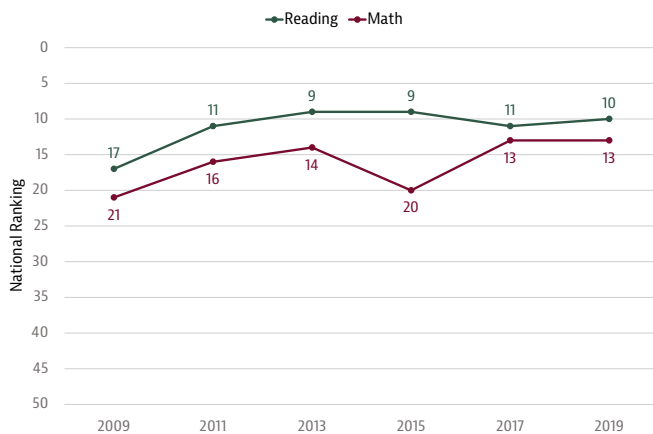
High School Graduation Rates (%)



Source: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2011/2011312.pdf>

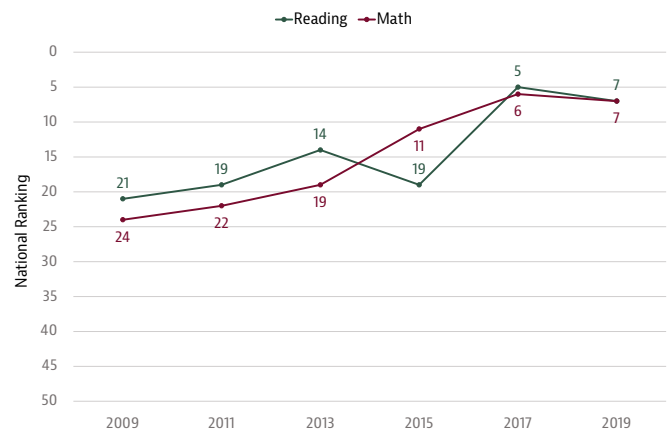
Flexibility has enabled Georgia to increase its national rankings (adjusted for demographics) on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Georgia's National Ranking 4th Grade NAEP Scores



Source: <https://apps.urban.org/features/naep/>

Georgia's National Ranking 8th Grade NAEP Scores



Source: <https://apps.urban.org/features/naep/>

To learn more about charter systems and the Charter System Foundation, please contact:

Dan Weber at dan@charter-system.org or
Pam Tallmadge at pam@charter-system.org

Visit www.charter-system.org.

