

EDUCATION REFORM IN A CHANGING GEORGIA



PROMOTING HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE SUCCESS FOR IMMIGRANT YOUTH

By Sarah Hooker, Michael Fix, and Margie McHugh

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Executive Summary

A classic “new growth” state, Georgia has experienced one of the fastest rates of growth from immigration in the United States over the past two decades. Today, one in five Georgia youth is an immigrant or has immigrant parents.¹ While Georgia’s native-born white population is aging rapidly, the Latino population in particular remains much younger, and stands to play a decisive role in the state’s current and future workforce competitiveness.

The educational outcomes of the state’s first- and second- generation young adults² are cause for concern, however. Many are English Language Learners (ELLs), and they lag considerably behind their nonimmigrant peers in terms of high school graduation, college access, and postsecondary degree completion. They often face extra hurdles as they seek to develop academic English-language skills, complete high school course requirements, navigate the transition to college and careers, and finance postsecondary education—often while juggling work and family responsibilities. This report explores these hurdles, and shows that Georgia’s recent education reform efforts—while ambitious in scope—often do not address the unique needs of immigrant youth and ELLs). Moreover, state policies have created barriers to entry into the state’s adult education programs and flagship universities, not just for unauthorized immigrants but also for youth who are granted legal permission to remain in the United States under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.³

Georgia’s recent education reform efforts—while ambitious in scope—often do not address the unique needs of immigrant youth.

As part of a five-state series, this report examines the educational experiences and outcomes of first- and second-generation youth ages 16 to 26 across the education systems in Georgia, encompassing K-12, adult education, and postsecondary education.⁴

The findings draw from qualitative fieldwork and quantitative analyses of the most recently available data from the U.S. Census Bureau and state education agencies. The authors conducted interviews with approximately 50 respondents in Georgia, including school district and college administrators and faculty, as well as community-based organizations serving immigrants. The fieldwork focused on Gwinnett and DeKalb counties. Gwinnett County has more immigrants than any other Georgia county and enrolls one-fifth of the state’s ELL students. DeKalb County is the state’s largest refugee resettlement destination.

- ¹ Unless otherwise noted, youth or young adult refers to those between the ages of 16 and 26 throughout the report. We focus on the 16 to 26 age group because this time period plays a critical role in a young person’s educational, professional, and personal development. See Jeanne Batalova and Michael Fix, *Up for Grabs: The Gains and Prospects of First- and Second-Generation Young Adults* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2011), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/prospects-first-second-generation-young-adults-up-for-grabs.
- ² First-generation immigrants are those who were born abroad and immigrated to the United States; the second generation is U.S. born with foreign-born parents; and the third (or subsequent) generations are U.S. born with U.S.-born parents.
- ³ Launched in August 2012 by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program is available to young adults ages 15 to 30 who came to the United States before age 16, and who are currently enrolled in school or workforce training, have graduated from high school or earned a GED, or have been honorably discharged from the U.S. armed forces. Georgia had a substantially higher DACA application rate during the first year of the program than the nation overall, with 63 percent of the immediately eligible population submitting applications by June 30, 2013, versus a national average of 49 percent. For more information, see Jeanne Batalova, Sarah Hooker, and Randy Capps, *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals at the One-Year Mark: A Profile of Currently Eligible Youth and Applicants* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2013), www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/CIRbrief-DACAatOneYear.pdf.
- ⁴ This scope of work was supported by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The other states included in the project are California, Florida, New York, and Washington. See Sarah Hooker, Margie McHugh, Michael Fix, and Randy Capps, *Shaping Our Futures: The Educational and Career Success of Washington State’s Immigrant Youth* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2013), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/shaping-our-futures-educational-and-career-success-washington-state%E2%80%99s-immigrant-youth. The other state reports will be published in 2014.



This executive summary offers a brief profile of Georgia’s immigrant youth, and then summarizes the report’s key findings and recommendations regarding four components of Georgia’s education system: high school, opportunities for career and college preparation, adult education, and postsecondary education (encompassing colleges, universities, and professional certifications).

A. Georgia’s Immigrant Population and Policy Environment

Few states have experienced a faster rate of growth in immigration over recent decades. During the 1990s, Georgia’s foreign-born population grew 233 percent, the second-fastest growth rate in the United States.⁵ By 2012, Georgia ranked eighth in immigrant population size, up from sixteenth place in 1990.

Over the past few years, the demographic profile of the state’s youth population has shifted, with a slowdown in new immigration to the state as well as a strong increase in the number of second-generation youth (the U.S.-born children of immigrants). Georgia’s second-generation youth population grew 43 percent from 2007 to 2012, compared to a national average of 29 percent. Together, there were approximately 263,000 first- and second-generation young adults in Georgia in 2012, out of a total youth population of 1.44 million.

Some of the policies and practices in Georgia’s educational system . . . are at odds with the state’s education and workforce development imperatives.

Georgia also has the sixth-largest population of unauthorized immigrants in the country.⁶ Among foreign-born youth, approximately 62 percent were unauthorized immigrants in the 2007-11 period, a higher share than the national average (47 percent). Overall, unauthorized immigrants comprised 6.5 percent of Georgia’s youth population. Many of these young adults have been granted relief from deportation and temporary work authorization through DACA.

The state has one of the nation’s broadest laws to deter illegal immigration—House Bill (HB) 87, enacted in 2011—a provision of which restricts unauthorized immigrants’ access to public services.⁷ Further, Georgia is one of only three states that bar unauthorized immigrants from admission to certain public colleges and universities.⁸

Some of the policies and practices in Georgia’s educational system—whether focused specifically on DACA recipients and unauthorized immigrants or affecting legal immigrants and the children of immigrants more broadly—are at odds with the state’s education and workforce development imperatives. By 2020 Georgia will need an additional 250,000 college-educated workers to keep up with the growth in jobs requiring postsecondary education.⁹ While it is clear that future economic growth will be concentrated in jobs

5 North Carolina had the fastest growth rate during this period.

6 The top five states in terms of the unauthorized population are California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois. This calculation is based on a Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of Current Population Survey-Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS-ASEC) data for 2006-08, pooled, and augmented with assignments of legal status to noncitizens by Jeffrey S. Passel at the Pew Research Center’s Hispanic Trends Project.

7 House Bill 87, State of Georgia, 151st Legislature (July 1, 2011): HB 87, www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20112012/116631.pdf.

8 South Carolina legislation bars unauthorized immigrants from enrolling in any public college or university, and Alabama restricts enrollment in public community colleges. In all other states, public colleges and universities allow academically qualified unauthorized immigrant students to enroll, though many states require that they pay out-of-state tuition. For more information, see United We DREAM, “Tuition Equity for Undocumented Students: Access by State,” accessed February 14, 2014, <http://unitedwedream.org/about/projects/education-deep/>.

9 The University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia, *Complete College Georgia: Georgia’s Higher Education Completion Plan 2012* (Atlanta: University System of Georgia, November 2011), www.usg.edu/educational_access/documents/GaHigherEducationCompletionPlan2012.pdf.



requiring at least a high school diploma,¹⁰ Georgia's 2012 high school graduation rate was among the lowest in the nation.¹¹

In spite of these challenges, this report also finds signs of progress and recognizes innovative efforts to support immigrant students' success at various levels of the educational pipeline. These include training content-area teachers in strategies for making instruction accessible to ELLs; offering summer school to help ELLs catch up to their peers; providing counseling, academic assistance, and scholarships for college students from immigrant families; and analyzing foreign transcripts to award credit for courses students have taken prior to immigrating.

The following sections describe these bright spots, and also summarize the barriers to success that many immigrant youth face in the various parts of Georgia's education system.

B. High School Achievement and Completion

Our analysis begins at the high school level. Georgia's growing immigrant population has had a demonstrable impact on the makeup of the state's public schools. The share of Latino¹² students in grades K-12 in Georgia's public schools has more than doubled since the 2000-01 school year,¹³ reaching 12 percent of total enrollment in 2011-12.¹⁴ Statewide, nearly 91,000 students in grades K-12 were enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs during the 2011-12 school year. In Gwinnett County Public Schools, the student population was 31 percent white, 30 percent Black, 25 percent Latino, and 10 percent Asian in 2011-12.¹⁵

In 2012, Georgia's four-year high school graduation rate was 70 percent, with Latinos and Blacks lagging behind at 60 percent and 62 percent, respectively.¹⁶ For ELLs, the prospects of earning a high school diploma were lower: 44 percent of ELLs who had entered as freshmen four years earlier graduated.¹⁷ Still, this figure represents substantial improvement from the 2011 ELL graduation rate of 32 percent. The state's overall graduation rate improved by two percentage points during the same period.¹⁸

Improving graduation rates among ELLs requires progress along several dimensions, which include:

- **Tailored approaches** that offer a range of programs for ELLs with varied needs
- **Specially-trained teachers who can support ELL students** in all subject areas

10 State Workforce Investment Board, *Georgia Integrated State Plan: July 1, 2012- June 30, 2017* (Atlanta: State Workforce Investment Board, 2013), http://workforce.georgia.gov/sites/workforce.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/Georgia%20Integrated%20State%20Plan.pdf.

11 Three states did not submit a regulatory adjusted cohort graduation rate to the U.S. Department of Education in 2011-12. Among the 47 states with available data, Georgia's graduation rate was tied with Alaska and New Mexico at 45th place. U.S. Department of Education, "Ed Data Express," accessed January 15, 2014, <http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/state-tables-report.cfm>.

12 Throughout this report, the terms "Latino" and "Hispanic" are used interchangeably. Most sources of national and state data cited in this report used the term "Hispanic," and we have used the corresponding term in tables and figures.

13 Office of Education Accountability, "2001-2002 Annual Report Card on K-12 Public Schools," accessed January 15, 2014, <http://reportcard2002.gaosa.org/K12/Demographics.asp?TestType=Demographics&ID=ALL:ALL>; Georgia Department of Education, "Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Grade Level (PK-12)," Enrollment on October 4, 2011, http://app3.doe.k12.ga.us/ows-bin/owa/fte_pack_ethnicsex.entry_form.

14 Georgia Department of Education, "Enrollment by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Grade (PK-12)," Enrollment on October 4, 2011, app3.doe.k12.ga.us/ows-bin/owa/fte_pack_ethnicsex.entry_form.

15 Ibid.

16 U.S. Department of Education, "Ed Data Express."

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid. It is worth noting that Georgia's overall graduation rate increased again from 2012 to 2013, by 1.8 percentage points. Graduation rate gains were seen across most subgroups, including Latino and Black students. The English Language Learner (ELL) graduation rate remained steady at 44 percent. We cited the 2012 graduation rate data in this report because that is the most recent year for which data are available at the national level from the U.S. Department of Education. Georgia Department of Education, "Georgia's High School Graduation Rate Continues to Increase" (news release, December 11, 2013), www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Pages/PressReleaseDetails.aspx?PressView=default&pid=147.



- ***Creative solutions for time pressures*** that high school students face as they learn English and strive to meet increasingly rigorous state standards.

The following subsections address each of these in turn, summarizing existing practices and programs that show the most progress and promise, and also reviewing the most significant deficiencies.

I. Need for Tailored Programs to Address Diverse ELL Needs

Gwinnett County educators have a strong focus on the needs of newcomer students who immigrate to the United States during the middle and high school grades. The International Newcomers' Center in Gwinnett analyzes transcripts from all over the world, assesses incoming students' English proficiency and academic skills in their native language, and places students in classes accordingly. Newcomers are immediately integrated into their district high schools, where they receive a mixture of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course work, sheltered content courses,¹⁹ and regular grade-level classes with native English speakers, depending on their language and academic proficiency as well as on the school's course offerings.

However, some high school ELLs, many of them U.S. citizens by birth, have attended U.S. schools since the elementary grades, but they have still not developed full English fluency and can be characterized as "long-term ELLs." Twenty-nine percent of Georgia's ELLs in grades 9 to 12 had been in U.S. schools for six or more years in 2011-12,²⁰ indicating that the instruction they have received has not sufficiently addressed their language acquisition needs.

The authors' site visits did not reveal an express instructional strategy to address the academic language needs of these long-term ELLs. Further, unlike California and New York, Georgia does not require districts to distinguish between recently arrived and long-term ELLs in their data systems or instruction.²¹ This data gap is one barrier to formulating a tailored approach to ELL education that recognizes the diversity within this population.

2. Need for ELL-Focused Teacher Training

National education experts caution that for ELLs to access rigorous curricula, such as the Common Core State Standards²² and the Next Generation Science Standards²³—two state-led efforts to define the knowledge and skills that students should master at each grade level—states and districts must train a wider spectrum of teachers to promote these students' English language development in all subject areas.²⁴ While Georgia legislators are, at the time of this writing, considering a bill that would halt implementation of these standards, the challenge of preparing ELLs to master the same broad academic competencies as all

19 Sheltered content courses refer to academic courses in subjects such as math, science, and social studies that are taught specifically for ELLs by a teacher with an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement or certification. In Georgia, all instruction takes place in English, but teachers rely on specific language acquisition strategies to make the curriculum more accessible to ELLs.

20 Data provided by the Georgia Department of Education to MPI and on file with the authors. Georgia does not have a common, statewide definition of long-term ELLs, but national education experts often define the population as those who have been in U.S. schools for at least six years without gaining sufficient English proficiency to be reclassified.

21 See California Assembly Bill No. 2193, Chapter 427, September 21, 2012, http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201120120AB2193 and the New York State Department of Education (NYSED), *Guidelines for Educating Limited English Proficient Students with Interrupted Formal Education* (Albany: NYSED, 2011), www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/docs/NYSEDSIFEGuidelines.pdf.

22 Common Core Standards Initiative, "In the States," accessed January 15, 2014, www.corestandards.org/in-the-states.

23 Next Generation Science Standards, "Lead State Partners," accessed January 15, 2014, www.nextgenscience.org/lead-state-partners.

24 Delia Pompa and Kenji Hakuta, "Opportunities for Policy Advancement for ELLs Created by the New Standards Movement" (paper presented at the Understanding Language Conference, Stanford University, California, January 13-14, 2012), <http://ell.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/academic-papers/12-Pompa%20Hakuta%20Policy%20Principles%20FINAL.pdf>; Mariana Haynes, *The Role of Language and Literacy in College- and Career-Ready Standards: Rethinking Policy and Practice in Support of English Language Learners* (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2012), www.all4ed.org/files/LangAndLiteracyInStandardsELLS.pdf.



other students remains. In short, all teachers must be able to teach language and course content (such as math or history) at the same time, with or without the Common Core.

In an effort to bolster the ranks of educators with specialized credentials to teach ELLs, Gwinnett County provides a year-long ESOL certification program for its content-area teachers as well as a shorter, 30-hour training program called Teaching Academic Language and Content (TALC), which is focused on strategies to support ELLs' language development in courses such as math, science, and social studies. To reach the broader teaching force—including those who do not pursue ESOL credentials—some schools also focus on ELLs as part of their general professional development offerings for mainstream teachers. At one of Gwinnett's schools, approximately 60 teachers had participated in ELL-focused training.

States and districts must train a wider spectrum of teachers to promote these students' English language development in all subject areas.

However, such training is not mandatory for content-area teachers in Georgia and competes with other priorities for funding and teachers' limited time. Moreover, at the same time that districts were struggling to build their staff of ESOL specialists, the budget crisis descended, leading to teacher layoffs in some districts. A state policy that limited high school ESOL class sizes to 18 students per teacher has been suspended since 2011-12 due to budget constraints, and class sizes have risen as a result.²⁵

3. Time Pressures Facing ELLs

High school ELLs face pressure to improve their English proficiency, complete required credits, and prepare for college and careers in a short timeframe. They must perform double the work of native English speakers, as they are "learning English at the same time they are studying core content areas through English."²⁶

Georgia educators, as others, confront an abiding tension between promoting steady grade-level progress and ensuring that ELLs have adequate English skills to succeed at the next level. Georgia requires all graduates to pass 11 specific core courses throughout their high school career, and to take statewide tests at the end of each course.²⁷ Students do not need to pass these to graduate,²⁸ but schools are held accountable for their students' performance. According to interviewees in Gwinnett County, this assessment system results in competing incentives for schools, which must ensure that students both graduate as quickly as possible and succeed on these tests—which are delivered only in English.

To address this issue, some schools delay placing lower-level ELLs in core courses. Interviewees report that ELLs are sometimes retained in grades 9 or 10 if they lack core credits, which may cause students to become discouraged and drop out.

One promising redress to this problem is the use of summer school to help increase graduation rates. Nearly all high school ELLs in Gwinnett County participate in summer school, and most participants complete two required courses per summer. The district has dedicated a significant portion of its federal Title III funds²⁹

25 Georgia Department of Education, *ESOL/ Title III Resource Guide, 2013-2014* (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Education, 2013), www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Documents/ESOL/2013-2014%20ESOL%20Title%20III%20Resource%20Guide.pdf.

26 Debra J. Short and Shannon Fitzsimmons, *Double the Work: Challenges and Solutions to Acquiring Language and Academic Literacy for Adolescent English Language Learners* (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007), www.all4ed.org/files/DoubleWork.pdf.

27 This series of tests replaces Georgia's comprehensive high school exit examination. However, students must still pass the Georgia High School Writing Test in order to graduate. The main administration of this test takes place in 11th grade, though students who do not pass have multiple opportunities to retake the test before the end of 12th grade.

28 Scores on these tests count as 20 percent of the course grade. Georgia Department of Education, "End of Course Tests (EOCT)," accessed February 14, 2014, www.doe.k12.ga.us/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/EOCT.aspx.

29 Title III of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) is the specific section of federal legislation targeting the



to support ELLs' participation in summer school, allowing these students to take classes tuition-free; non-ELLs must pay \$225 per course. Summer school also serves as a critical antidote to the shorter school year brought about by recent budget cuts. Two-thirds of Georgia districts reduced the school year below the traditional 180 days in fiscal year (FY) 2013.³⁰ The consequences of decreased learning time are likely to be particularly acute for ELLs.

For some ELLs—including recently arrived immigrants—expanding the high school timeline may be necessary to build English proficiency, complete graduation requirements, and prepare for postsecondary education. Georgia's new accountability system, the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI), may make this option more attractive to schools, as it incorporates both four-year (on-time) and five-year (extended) graduation rates, offering schools and districts an incentive to retain and support students who need additional time.³¹

C. College and Career Preparation

First- and second-generation youth often face barriers to accessing academic and career-focused opportunities that help other students prepare for the postsecondary transition. Financial barriers also deter many immigrant youth from enrolling in postsecondary education.

I. Limited Access to College Prep Opportunities

Dual enrollment provides high school students with the chance to take college-level courses—often on a college campus—and earn both high school and college credit.³² Dual enrollment and early college high schools³³ have been linked to higher rates of enrollment in higher education—findings that hold for ELLs and native English speakers.³⁴ In Georgia, state financial aid programs such as the Accel Program and the HOPE Grant cover the cost of dual enrollment for qualifying high school students. However, the authors' fieldwork and data analyses suggest that dual enrollment programs and early college high schools remain out of reach for many students from immigrant families in Georgia.

Students must be U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents in order to receive funding through Accel or HOPE.³⁵ At one college the authors visited, DACA recipients and unauthorized immigrants are excluded from an early college high school program for high school dropouts because the program relies on Accel funds for dual enrollment.

linguistic and academic achievement of ELLs and immigrant students. Title III authorizes specific funds to support the language development of these students, while also establishing a system of accountability for demonstrating that students are making expected yearly progress.

30 Cedric D. Johnson, *Survey Says: Trouble for Schools* (Atlanta: Georgia Budget and Policy Institute, 2012), <http://gbpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/survey-says-trouble-for-schools-11082012.pdf>.

31 Georgia Department of Education, "2013 CCRPI Indicators," October 11, 2013, www.gadoe.org/CCRPI/Documents/2013%20CCRPI%20Indicators%2010.11.13.pdf.

32 Melinda Mechur Karp, et al., *The Postsecondary Achievement of Participants in Dual Enrollment: An Analysis of Student Outcomes in Two States* (New York: The National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, 2007), <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/dual-enrollment-student-outcomes.html>; Joni Swanson, *An Analysis of the Impacts of High School Dual Enrollment Course Participation on Post-Secondary Academic Success, Persistence and Degree Completion* (Iowa City: The University of Iowa College of Education, 2008), http://nacep.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/2008_joni_swanson_summary.pdf.

33 Early college high schools are small schools that function as partnerships between a local school district and an institution of higher education. Their goal is to provide all students with the opportunity to earn 1-2 years of transferrable college credit—as well as an associate's degree, in some cases—by high school graduation. By design, these schools often target students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

34 Stella M. Flores, Jeanne Batalova, and Michael Fix, *The Educational Trajectories of English Language Learners in Texas* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2012), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/educational-trajectories-english-language-learners-texas.

35 Georgia Student Finance Commission, *2012-2013 Accel Program Regulations* (Tucker, GA: Georgia Student Finance Commission, 2012), www.gsfc.org/Main/publishing/pdf/2012/2013-Accel.pdf.



Even among youth who are legal residents and U.S. citizens, family income may pose a barrier to participation. State funding streams do not cover the student fees assessed by local colleges for activities, campus facilities, and other mandatory costs, which can be as high as \$275 per semester, and students must also purchase textbooks and provide their own transportation to college campuses.

Another component of college preparation, beyond academic readiness, is “college knowledge:” the formal and informal information that students need to enroll in college and navigate postsecondary education.³⁶ The entire process is all the more daunting for families that are unfamiliar with the U.S. education system, have limited English proficiency, and may have concerns about their legal immigration status.³⁷ Gwinnett County addresses this issue by using federal Title III funds to provide bilingual college counseling and organize local college tours specifically for ELLs. Nonprofit and community-based organizations also offer college access programs, but these are only able to reach a small subset of the state’s low-income immigrant and second-generation youth. Here again, staffing reductions have undercut school districts’ capacity to provide intensive and personalized services for immigrant students and their families.

2. The Challenge of College Affordability

As in many states, substantial state budget cuts have caused tuition increases and affected the affordability of higher education in Georgia. Between Fall 2008 and Fall 2012, tuition rates across the University System of Georgia rose by an average of 70 percent.³⁸

DACA recipients and unauthorized immigrant youth remain ineligible for state and federal financial aid programs, as well as in-state tuition. These students are charged tuition rates that are three to four times higher than the rates for state residents. At Georgia Perimeter College, for instance, full-time out-of-state tuition and fees were approximately \$5,300 per semester in 2012-13, compared to \$1,800 for state residents.

Higher education is virtually unattainable for most unauthorized immigrants due to high tuition prices.

Some privately-funded scholarships accept applicants regardless of immigration status, though these opportunities tend to be highly competitive. Private colleges have also played an important role in providing scholarships and expanding access for unauthorized immigrants. Overall, however, higher education is virtually unattainable for most unauthorized immigrants due to high tuition prices.

D. Adult Education

Adult education stands to play an important role in providing language instruction and basic education for youth from immigrant families, including those who dropped out of U.S. high schools as well as those who immigrated in later adolescence and never entered Georgia’s K-12 system.

In the 2010-12 period, nearly one-third of Georgia’s first-generation immigrants ages 21 to 26—those who were too old to enroll in traditional high schools—lacked a high school diploma or its equivalent, compared

36 David T. Conley, *Redefining College Readiness* (Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center, 2001), www.aypf.org/documents/RedefiningCollegeReadiness.pdf; James E. Rosenbaum, “The Complexities of College for All: Beyond Fairy-tale Dreams,” *Sociology of Education* 84, no. 2 (2011): 113-17.

37 Louis G. Tornatzky, Richard Cutler, and Jongho Lee, *College Knowledge: What Latino Parents Need to Know and Why They Don’t Know It* (Los Angeles: Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, 2002), www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED469295.pdf.

38 Cedric D. Johnson, *FY 2013 Budget Analysis: Higher Education. A Review of the Enacted 2013 Budget* (Atlanta: Georgia Budget and Policy Institute, 2012), <http://gbpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/fy2013-budget-analysis-higher-education-05162012-FINAL1.pdf>.



to 13 percent of all youth of that age.³⁹ While adult education programs have long served as unheralded integrating institutions for newcomers nationwide, they have been especially vulnerable to budget cuts in the wake of the recession,⁴⁰ and language and legal status barriers make these programs inaccessible to many immigrant youth in Georgia.

Georgia’s adult education system, which is administered through the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), includes noncredit English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and Adult Basic Education (ABE) courses to prepare students to earn a General Equivalency Diploma (GED). The system has recently increased its focus on helping low-skilled adults make the transition from ABE classes into college-level career training, helped along by its selection for the national Accelerating Opportunity initiative, which is based on Washington State’s successful Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model.⁴¹ However, Georgia’s program requires a middle school reading level in English, and so is not accessible to many ESL students—who comprise over one-fifth of the state’s adult education enrollment.⁴² By contrast, Washington State’s I-BEST model includes programs for ESL students.

For some immigrants, legal status remains a significant barrier to enrolling in adult education.

Data from TCSG demonstrate large gaps in the pipeline from ESL to college-level instruction. While Latinos and Asians together comprised 80 percent of ESL enrollment in 2011-12, these two groups made up just 6 percent of enrollment in the technical colleges’ degree and certificate programs.⁴³

For some immigrants, legal status remains a significant barrier to enrolling in adult education. Georgia state legislation passed in April 2006 required individuals to prove lawful presence in order to receive “public benefits,”⁴⁴ and subsequent legislation (HB 2, enacted in January 2010) extended this restriction to publicly funded adult education.⁴⁵

This policy had an immediate impact on the adult education system: from FY 2009-10 to FY 2010-11, Georgia saw a 60 percent drop in adult ESL enrollment.⁴⁶ Denying access to adult education poses particular challenges for youth who would otherwise be eligible for DACA but lack a high school diploma or GED. According to guidelines from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), these youth could still be eligible to apply for DACA if they are currently enrolled

From FY 2009-10 to FY 2010-11, Georgia saw a 60 percent drop in adult ESL enrollment.

³⁹ MPI analysis of data from the 2010-12 American Community Survey (ACS), pooled.

⁴⁰ Marcie Foster with Lennox McLendon, *Sinking or Swimming? Findings from a Survey of State Adult Education Tuition and Financing Policies* (Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy and National Council of State Directors of Adult Education, 2012), www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/Sinking-or-Swimming-State-Adult-Education-Tuition-and-Financing-Policies.pdf.

⁴¹ For more information on Accelerating Opportunity, see Rachel Pleasants, *Building Integrated Pathways to Sustainable Careers: An Introduction to the Accelerating Opportunity Initiative* (Boston, MA: Accelerating Opportunity and Jobs for the Future, 2011), www.jff.org/sites/default/files/AO_BuidlingIntegratedPathways_080811.pdf. For more information on I-BEST, see Hooker, McHugh, Fix, and Capps, *Shaping our Futures*.

⁴² National College Transition Network, “Georgia’s Adult Education: Georgia’s Transition Initiative,” November 15, 2010, www.collegetransition.org/Conference-2010/ReedTaylorPolicyPanel.pdf.

⁴³ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), “Participants by Program Type and Age, NRS Data from 2011-2012” (National Reporting System, Statistical Section, Georgia, Program Year 2011, Table 3), <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/tables/index.cfm>; Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), “Credit Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Spring Semester 2012 (Term 2012-2014),” provided by TCSG to MPI. Information on file with the authors.

⁴⁴ *Georgia Security and Immigration Compliance Act*, Senate Bill 529, State of Georgia, 148th Legislature (April 17, 2006), www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20052006/64549.pdf.

⁴⁵ House Bill 2, State of Georgia, 150th Legislature (May 11, 2009), www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20092010/96748.pdf.

⁴⁶ U.S. Department of Education, OVAE, “Georgia Narrative Report 2010-2011” (National Reporting System, Narrative Section, Georgia, Program Year 2010), <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/login.cfm>.



in an adult education or workforce training program.⁴⁷ In Georgia, however, the vast majority of these programs—those receiving federal or state funds—are closed to the unauthorized population.

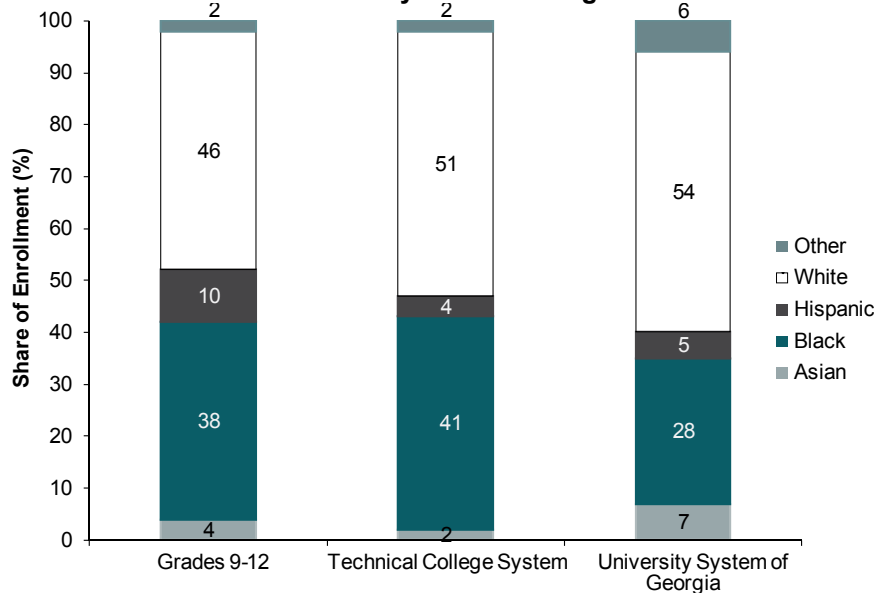
E. Postsecondary Education

Higher education in Georgia—including two- and four-year college degrees—is divided between two statewide systems with different missions: the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and the University System of Georgia (USG). The technical colleges offer workforce-oriented programs of study. The USG includes institutions of varying selectivity that confer academically oriented degrees ranging from the associate’s to doctoral levels.

In both systems, immigrant participation is uneven. Enrollment data suggest that some groups are underrepresented, while others are overrepresented (see Figure 1). In Spring 2012, Hispanic enrollment was much lower at the postsecondary level than the high school level. This disparity is not a function of demographics; there are more Hispanic youth in the 18- to 21-year-old age range (the traditional college-going years) than the 14- to 17-year-old age range, but they have lower rates of enrollment than other youth. Georgia’s technical colleges enroll relatively low numbers of both Hispanic and Asian youth, suggesting that students from immigrant families are underutilizing the workforce training programs offered by these institutions.

Lower enrollment in postsecondary education also translates to lower rates of college degree attainment by age 21 to 26 (see Figure 2). While the same trends are seen at the national level, the gap between Hispanic youth and their non-Hispanic peers is particularly large in Georgia.

Figure 1. Racial and Ethnic Diversity Across Georgia’s Educational Sectors, Spring 2012

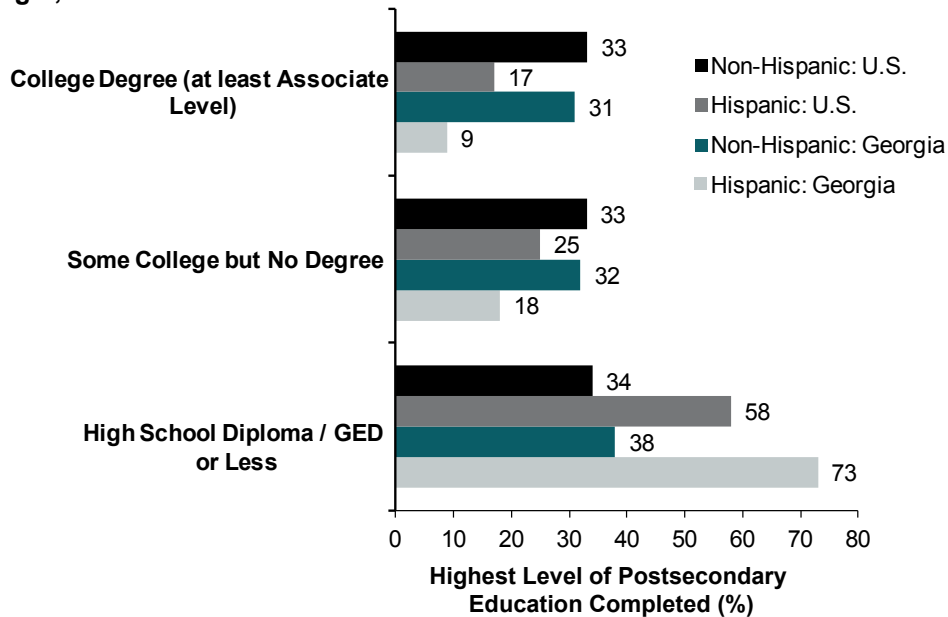


Note: The “Other” category includes the groups American Indian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, “two or more races,” and “race unknown or undeclared.” Technical College System data include only students enrolled in college credit programs; adult education students are excluded.

Source: Georgia Department of Education, “Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Grade Level (PK-12),” Enrollment on March 1, 2012, http://app3.doe.k12.ga.us/ows-bin/owa/fte_pack_ethnicsex_entry_form; Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, *Spring 2012 Semester Enrollment Report* (Atlanta, GA: Office of Research and Policy Analysis, March 15, 2012), www.usg.edu/research/documents/enrollment_reports/spr2012.pdf; TCSG data “Credit Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Spring Semester 2012 (Term 2012-2014),” provided to MPI by Georgia Piedmont Technical College. Information on file with the authors.

⁴⁷ In order to meet the definition of “currently enrolled in school,” applicants must be enrolled in an education, literacy, or training program designed to lead to a high school diploma or GED, or placement in employment, postsecondary education, or job training. USCIS, “Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Process,” accessed February 14, 2014, www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-process.

Figure 2. Highest Level of Postsecondary Education Completed among Youth (Ages 21-26), by Latino Origin, 2009-13



Note: “Hispanic” includes all youth with Hispanic origins, regardless of immigrant generation. The “Some College but No Degree” population includes youth who are currently enrolled or have in the past been enrolled in postsecondary education, but have not completed an associate’s degree or higher.

Source: Migration Policy Institute analysis of data from the U.S. Current Population Survey, March Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS-ASEC, 2009-13 pooled).

1. Complete College Georgia

Georgia policymakers have laid a foundation for higher education reform, but broad efforts to target immigrant or ELL populations are largely absent as yet. The Complete College Georgia initiative, launched in 2011 by Governor Nathan Deal, includes shared efforts between USG and TCSG to improve student success at various stages on the way to a college degree.⁴⁸ As further evidence of the state’s commitment to raising student success rates, Georgia also plans to restructure funding for colleges and universities. Institutions will receive new funds based on student progression and completion of degrees and certificates, rather than increased enrollment, beginning in FY 2016. While colleges will be able earn additional, weighted funds based on the success of high-priority groups, the funding formula does not include an extra weight for the success of students with limited English proficiency.⁴⁹

2. Reforming Remedial Instruction

The Complete College Georgia initiative also focuses on revamping traditional developmental (i.e. remedial) education programs. First- and second-generation youth are especially likely to need these, due to gaps in their language proficiency and academic preparation.⁵⁰ The colleges studied here have experimented with their own innovations in this area. For instance, the Segue English program at Georgia Gwinnett College allows higher-scoring developmental education students to enroll directly in college-level courses with mainstream students, while also participating in a supplemental tutorial taught by the same instructor. Early results show increased course completion rates.⁵¹

⁴⁸ The University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia, *Complete College Georgia*.

⁴⁹ By contrast, Washington State awards a certain share of higher education appropriations through a similar performance funding system. However, in Washington State, colleges can also earn extra funds based on ESL students’ success in attaining English proficiency. See Hooker, McHugh, Fix, and Capps, *Shaping our Futures*.

⁵⁰ Sandra Staklis and Laura Horn, *New Americans in Postsecondary Education: A Profile of Immigrant and Second-Generation American Undergraduates* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012213.pdf>.

⁵¹ Data provided by Georgia Gwinnett College to MPI, on file with the authors.



Instead of participating in developmental education, however, many non-native English speakers are channeled into a separate set of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses in USG institutions. On the whole, the innovative statewide reforms designed to shorten the amount of time students spend in remedial instruction have not yet reached EAP courses, which can be rather lengthy endeavors. At Georgia Perimeter College, for instance, students entering at the lowest level of EAP may be required to complete up to three semesters of EAP courses—whereas mainstream developmental education requirements generally take no more than two semesters.

3. Advising and Mentoring Programs: Effective but Limited in Scope

Targeted advising and mentoring programs have much potential to improve completion rates. First- and second-generation immigrants are more likely than their peers to be “nontraditional” college students, meaning that they often enroll in postsecondary education at older ages, attend college part-time,⁵² and need help balancing work and school schedules, finding child care, and navigating the bureaucratic aspects of college life.⁵³

The authors’ site visits revealed a number of social support initiatives benefitting immigrants and other students. For example, the Georgia Perimeter Education Achievement Program (GEAP) was a comprehensive scholarship and support program at Georgia Perimeter College that featured individualized advising and mentoring for a cohort of Latino peers.⁵⁴ GEAP was considered to be one of the college’s most successful programs; the scholarship component ended, however, when grant funding expired in Fall 2013. GEAP continues to provide advising resources for approximately 120 Latino students (out of a total Latino population of 1,800 across the college’s campuses).

*Targeted advising and mentoring programs
have much potential to improve completion rates.*

Another promising approach is Georgia Gwinnett’s college-wide mentoring model. As a new college with an institutional commitment to serving underrepresented students, Georgia Gwinnett College aims to provide an intensive array of support services for its diverse student body. All freshmen are assigned a faculty mentor, and mentoring is a key component of faculty job responsibilities. Such personalization is considered a key ingredient in the college’s formula for achieving the highest retention rates among Georgia’s open-access colleges.⁵⁵ This innovative model depends upon substantial commitments of financial resources as well as staff time, however, both of which remain in short supply.

Both of these examples demonstrate the importance of adapting colleges’ advising and retention services to reflect the circumstances of today’s students, as well as the challenge of sustaining and scaling up comprehensive programs to meet the needs of the state’s growing population of immigrant students.

Finally, legal immigration status persists as a barrier to college access and completion for many immigrant young adults in Georgia. DACA has recently opened new opportunities for unauthorized immigrant youth in Georgia and nationwide, providing temporary protection from deportation along with a work permit. However, DACA recipients in Georgia who receive deferred action must still pay out-of-state tuition to public

52 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, “Profile of Undergraduates in U.S. Postsecondary Education Institutions: 2003-04, With a Special Analysis of Community College Students” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2006), as cited in Robert T. Teranishi, Carola Suárez-Orozco, and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, “Immigrants in Community Colleges,” *The Future of Children* 21, no. 1 (2011): 153-65.

53 Jennifer Engle and Vincent Tinto, *Moving Beyond College Access: College Success for Low-income, First-Generation Students* (Washington, DC: The Pell Institute, 2008), www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Moving_Beyond_Access_2008.pdf.

54 Data on program features and retention rates provided by Georgia Perimeter College to MPI, on file with the authors.

55 The Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, “2010-11 University System Report Card,” accessed January 15, 2014, <http://gaosa.org/University.aspx?PageReq=108&StateId=ALL&SY=2011>.



colleges and universities, are unable to access financial aid,⁵⁶ and remain barred from the state’s most selective universities.⁵⁷ Therefore, in addition to the ongoing need to build academic and social support services for immigrant youth, more basic issues of access to higher education must still be resolved for a significant proportion of students.

F. **Conclusions and the Road Ahead**

This report shows some of the ways in which Georgia’s education and workforce-preparing institutions have positively shaped the future prospects of youth from immigrant families—along with the size of the task ahead.

A few striking examples of the challenges: 44 percent of the state’s high school ELL students graduated on schedule in 2012, compared to an overall graduation rate of 70 percent. One-third of the state’s immigrant youth lack a high school diploma or GED—nearly triple the state’s overall rate of 13 percent. And just 9 percent of Hispanics ages 21 to 26 have completed a two-year college degree, compared to 31 percent of non-Hispanic young adults.

The following recommendations provide a framework for addressing these issues, and ultimately seeing that first- and second-generation youth play an active role in advancing Georgia’s college completion goals and meeting future labor market needs.

I. **High School Completion**

- **Expand access to content for ELLs.** In order to substantially improve graduation rates, course placement strategies and accountability policies that may hold ELLs back will need to be reexamined. A growing consensus among national education experts supports teaching language and content simultaneously, instead of sequentially, in order to accelerate ELLs’ progress and high school completion.⁵⁸

In Georgia, ELLs with low English proficiency are often discouraged from attempting core courses because they are likely to perform poorly on the mandatory End-of-Course Tests (EOCTs), which are delivered only in English. As an alternative, accountability policies could be revised to reward schools for ELLs’ participation in core courses.

- **Invest in teacher training and professional development.** ELLs also need teachers who can adapt instruction and support language development across the school day. ELL-focused professional development can expand the instructional skills of all content-area teachers and school administrators serving this population. Additionally, offering salary supplements to teachers who earn an ESOL certificate or endorsement would likely provide a potent incentive for more educators to develop this expertise.

2. **Preparing for College and Careers**

- **Enhance college access for DACA recipients.** Georgia is one of only three states that explicitly bar unauthorized immigrants from their most selective public colleges and universities—a restriction that holds even for youth who have been granted deferred action. By removing this ban, the state could provide an opportunity for academically qualified youth who might reinvest their talents in Georgia’s labor market and are likely to remain permanently in the United States. Extending

56 National Immigration Law Center, “DACA and Driver’s Licenses,” updated June 19, 2013, www.nilc.org/dacadriverslicenses.html.

57 Georgia State University Undergraduate Admissions, “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA),” accessed February 25, 2014, <http://admissions.gsu.edu/how-do-i-apply/international-students/daca/>.

58 Understanding Language, *Key Principles for ELL Instruction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2013), http://ell.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Key%20Principles%20for%20ELL%20Instruction%20with%20references_0.pdf.



in-state tuition to DACA recipients would also remove a substantial hurdle to college access and further the state's goal of increasing postsecondary degree production.

3. Adult Education

- **Improve ESL and career training pathways.** The pathway from adult education to postsecondary degree and certificate programs is far from seamless, and few ESL students succeed in making this transition. Within the technical college system, Latino and Asian students make up the vast majority of noncredit ESL enrollment, but represent a small share of students in degree and certificate programs. Georgia's recent adult education reform initiatives seek to compress the process of learning basic skills and completing college-level workforce training courses—but these programs were designed for English-speaking GED students. In order to build immigrants' human capital and expand college access, Georgia's technical colleges should logically extend these initiatives to ESL students.
- **Remove legal-status barriers to adult education for youth who otherwise qualify for DACA.** Unauthorized immigrants who lack a high school diploma—and are not enrolled in traditional high schools—cannot enroll in Georgia's adult education system. Unable to advance their education and build their English proficiency, they may be denied the opportunity to qualify for DACA, as Georgia is one of only two states that makes enrollment in adult education contingent on legal status. Georgia policymakers could restore access to federally funded adult education courses for those who would otherwise be eligible for deferred action.

4. Postsecondary Education

- **Extend lessons learned from developmental education reform to improve the remedial process for English learners.** Postsecondary education reform initiatives such as Complete College Georgia have attempted to overhaul developmental education and accelerate students' progress into credit-bearing courses. These efforts have yet to reach English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs, however, that may require several semesters of full-time instruction. Alternative approaches could borrow from recent innovations in developmental education by providing opportunities for immigrant students to enroll in mainstream college courses at the same time that they are improving their English skills, or delivering EAP courses in shorter, self-paced modules.
- **Incorporate a focus on ESL students into Georgia's Outcomes-Based Funding Formula.** Georgia's new outcomes-based funding formula provides a mechanism for policymakers to reward colleges for their progress on indicators aligned with the state's higher education completion goals. These indicators range from GED attainment to associate and bachelor's degree completion. However, Georgia's proposed funding formula does not reward institutions for the progress of ESL students, and does not provide an extra weight for serving this group. In Washington State, by contrast, colleges are able to earn "momentum points" based on their ESL students' progress in attaining English proficiency—creating a new incentive for institutions to support the success of immigrant students.

5. Across Systems

- **Track and report data on ELLs and immigrant youth.** A sharper focus on ELLs and immigrant students in data collection and analysis—at both the K-12 and postsecondary levels—would allow educators to identify barriers to student success and develop targeted instructional approaches. Georgia might consider adopting a shared typology of ELL subgroups (such as long-term ELLs) across districts. Tracking and publicly reporting data on the progress of former ELLs would be especially helpful, allowing policymakers to evaluate the effects of various policy reforms—including Georgia's *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) waiver and new statewide accountability system—on the long-term achievement of students from immigrant families.



- At the postsecondary level, Georgia’s higher education systems do not disaggregate data on students with limited English proficiency. Without such data, stakeholders lack a full and accurate picture of how these students fare in terms of college enrollment, degree completion, and the labor market, or the instructional practices that work with different subgroups.

Georgia has recently laid the groundwork for innovation in K-12 schools, adult education programs, and higher education institutions—but this agenda for change has not always taken into account the needs of youth from immigrant families. The outcomes of the large and growing second-generation population—the Latino population in particular—will play an undeniable role in shaping Georgia’s future prosperity as the state continues to recover from the recession’s lasting effects.

I. Introduction

Immigration has profoundly altered the makeup of Georgia’s educational institutions over the past few decades. During the 1990s, Georgia’s immigrant population grew 233 percent, the second-fastest growth rate in the United States. Members of this wave of immigration have since established roots in Georgia, and young adults who are immigrants or the children of now make up nearly one-fifth of the state’s youth population.⁵⁹

Young adults from immigrant families lag considerably behind their nonimmigrant peers in high school graduation, college access, and postsecondary degree completion. English Language Learners (ELLs) in Georgia’s high schools face particularly tough odds of success, with 44 percent graduating in four years, compared to a 70 percent average for all students.⁶⁰ Among young adults ages 21 to 26, 9 percent of Latinos hold an associate’s degree or higher, versus 31 percent of non-Latinos.⁶¹

*During the 1990s,
Georgia’s immigrant population
grew 233 percent.*

A. Georgia’s Immigrant Education Imperative

Looking to the future, Georgia faces a critical shortage of highly skilled workers, and its first- and second-generation youth stand to play a decisive role in filling this gap. The state was particularly hard-hit by the economic downturn,⁶² budget cuts have taken a toll on public education funding, and education outcomes continue to lag behind U.S. averages. To keep up with employer demands, Georgia will need an additional 250,000 college-educated workers by 2020.⁶³ In response, Governor Nathan Deal’s Complete College Georgia initiative has set an ambitious goal of 60 percent postsecondary degree or certificate completion among young adults, a substantial increase over the state’s current rate of 42 percent.⁶⁴

59 Unless otherwise noted, youth or young adult refers to those between the ages of 16 and 26 throughout the report. We focus on the 16 to 26 age group because this time period plays a critical role in a young person’s educational, professional, and personal development. See Batalova and Fix, *Up for Grabs: The Gains and Prospects of First- and Second-Generation Young Adults*.

60 These figures refer to 2012 four-year regulatory adjusted cohort graduation rates. U.S. Department of Education, “Ed Data Express,” accessed February 25, 2014, <http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/state-tables-report.cfm>.

61 MPI analysis of pooled 2009-13 Current Population Survey-Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS-ASEC) data.

62 State Workforce Investment Board, *Georgia Integrated State Plan: July 1, 2012- June 30, 2017* (Atlanta: State Workforce Investment Board, 2013), http://workforce.georgia.gov/sites/workforce.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/Georgia%20Integrated%20State%20Plan.pdf.

63 In this calculation, “college-educated workers” include those with workforce certificates, associate’s degrees, bachelor’s degrees, and advanced degrees. The University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia, *Complete College Georgia: Georgia’s Higher Education Completion Plan 2012* (Atlanta: University System of Georgia, November 2011), www.usg.edu/educational_access/documents/GaHigherEducationCompletionPlan2012.pdf.

64 Ibid. These figures refer to young adults ages 25 to 34.



At the same time, an increasing share of Georgia's population is aging out the workforce, creating shortages in many critical industries. In skilled manufacturing, for instance, the state will need to replace nearly half of its workforce by 2020 due to retirement.⁶⁵

Georgia's Latino population, however, is significantly younger than other racial/ethnic groups, with an average age of 25, compared to 40 for whites.⁶⁶ The state's second-generation Latino population, comprised of the U.S.-born children of Latino immigrants, continues to grow rapidly. As Latino young adults increasingly replace older, white workers in the state's labor force, efforts to increase Latino college degree attainment become central to the state's economic recovery and future competitiveness.⁶⁷

Georgia faces a critical shortage of highly skilled workers, and its first- and second-generation youth stand to play a decisive role in filling this gap.

In recent years Georgia has undertaken several broad education reform efforts that aim to dramatically increase the numbers of students entering postsecondary education and completing college degrees and certificates. Complete College Georgia, for instance, has brought together stakeholders from the secondary and postsecondary levels, charging each system with implementing comprehensive reforms aimed at raising student success rates. While these efforts are laudable and timely, they appear to overlook key systemic capacities that are needed to meet the needs of immigrants, ELLs, and Latino students. Given the state's demographic reality, educators and policymakers face the task of effectively extending these reforms to youth from immigrant families.

B. Study Approach

This report provides a cross-system analysis of the educational experiences and outcomes of first- and second-generation young adults (ages 16 to 26)⁶⁸ in Georgia. The systems covered by the report include K-12 education; adult education; and postsecondary education, including colleges, universities, and certificate-granting institutions. By examining these separate-but-interconnected elements of Georgia's education system together, the analysis offers a set of linked strategies for advancing the educational attainment of Georgia's immigrant youth.

The findings are based on interviews with approximately 50 respondents in Georgia, including school district and college administrators, local and state government officials, and community leaders and activists in the nonprofit sector. The fieldwork focused on two counties in the metropolitan Atlanta area: Gwinnett County, which has more immigrants than any other Georgia county, and De Kalb County, which is the state's largest refugee resettlement destination.⁶⁹ The report integrates this fieldwork with data analyses from multiple sources (in particular the most recently available data from the U.S. Census Bureau as well as administrative data from state agencies and schools), and the existing literature on Georgia's education

65 These are ten-year labor market projections, with 2010 as the base year. State Workforce Investment Board, *Georgia Integrated State Plan*.

66 Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project, "Demographic Profile of Hispanics in Georgia, 2011," accessed February 26, 2014, www.pewhispanic.org/states/state/ga/.

67 For more information on the economic imperative of addressing achievement gaps for Latino and ELL youth in Georgia, see Pedro Portes and Paula Mellom, "Framing a Comprehensive Strategy to Address the Needs of ELLs in Georgia" in *2010 Education Policy Papers*, ed. Eric A. Houck (Athens, GA: Educational Policy and Evaluation Center, University of Georgia, 2010), www.coe.uga.edu/dean/files/2010/08/PP2010_final.pdf.

68 First-generation immigrants are those who immigrated to the United States themselves; the second generation is U.S.-born with immigrant parents; and the third (or subsequent) generations are people of a migration background with U.S.-born parents.

69 Site visits included several high schools in Gwinnett County, as well as the following colleges: Georgia Piedmont Technical College, Georgia Perimeter College, and Georgia Gwinnett College. It is worth noting that these sites were chosen for a variety of reasons, including the size of their immigrant and refugee populations. They are not a representative sample of districts and higher education institutions in Georgia, and there are many other schools and colleges that are dedicated to improving the outcomes of first- and second-generation youth throughout the state. For more information on the factors considered in our site selection process, see the Appendix.



and workforce development initiatives. The result is a broad exploration of how the first- and second-generation youth populations have fared within the context of state and local efforts to promote college and career readiness and completion. The methodological approach of the study and details on the sources are covered extensively in the Appendix.

This report is the second in a five-state series that aims to identify promising efforts across the country that can be leveraged and replicated, as well as to discern the areas of greatest need.⁷⁰

C. *Trade-Offs in Education Policy and Practice*

Across the secondary and postsecondary levels, our fieldwork uncovered a number of enduring dilemmas faced by educators, administrators, and policymakers that shed light on some of the promising practices and barriers to immigrant youth progress. These trade-offs include:

- ***Access vs. rigor.*** While the national education reform agenda embraces the goal of preparing all youth for postsecondary education and career success, educators struggle to make college-level coursework available to students who are still learning English. In Georgia, for example, ELLs with low English proficiency may be held back from attempting the core academic courses required for graduation. At the postsecondary level, efforts to raise institutional graduation rates have driven increasingly selective admissions and remediation policies. Educators frequently noted challenges in balancing the priorities of access—particularly for ELLs and students with low basic skills—with concerns about maintaining program rigor and quality.
- ***Mainstream vs. sheltered instruction.*** Are ELLs and immigrant students best served by inclusion in mainstream programs, or in sheltered learning environments that target their specific needs and abilities? Responsive educational programs weigh the potential pros and cons of each alternative, taking into account such factors as age at arrival and years of education in the home country.
- ***Scale vs. intensity.*** The site visits revealed a number of intensive college access and success programs that involve personalized assistance and comprehensive support for small and targeted groups of students. Alternatively, other programs have a wider reach but involve less-intensive support. In an environment of significant resource constraints, policymakers and educators frequently find themselves weighing these competing priorities.

As the remainder of this report demonstrates, educators' and policymakers' approaches to these trade-offs have significant consequences for immigrant youth's educational experiences and outcomes. The following two sections begin by presenting the research findings on the high school level, with a particular focus on the specific needs of the state's ELL population.

II. Policy Context: Unauthorized Immigrant Youth in Georgia

Education and workforce development issues in Georgia inevitably collide with issues of legal status and immigration policy. While many foreign-born youth are legal residents and U.S. citizens, Georgia has the sixth-largest population of unauthorized immigrants in the country.⁷¹ Approximately 62 percent of

⁷⁰ The other states included in the study are California, Florida, and New York, and Washington. See Hooker, McHugh, Fix, and Capps, *Shaping Our Futures*.

⁷¹ The top five states in terms of the unauthorized population are California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois. This calculation is based on an MPI analysis of CPS-ASEC data for 2006-08, pooled, and augmented with assignments of legal status



Georgia's first-generation youth were unauthorized immigrants in the 2007-11 period, compared to a national average of 47 percent. Policies that affect this group play a role in shaping immigrants' overall educational attainment.

A. Access to Education: State Policies

As in many states, participation in public institutions of higher education has become a battleground issue in the larger debate over immigration enforcement. In Fall 2010, the University System of Georgia (USG) Board of Regents began requiring colleges to verify applicants' citizenship or legal residency, and barred unauthorized immigrants from the state's most competitive public institutions: those that "for the two most recent academic years, did not admit all academically qualified applicants." This group currently comprises five universities.⁷² Georgia is one of only three states that restrict unauthorized immigrants' enrollment in certain public colleges and universities.⁷³

The Board of Regents added this restriction as a response to those who argued that U.S. citizens were denied seats in top colleges so that unauthorized immigrants could attend. At the time of the change, the USG Residency Verification Committee found that fewer than 30 unauthorized immigrant students were actually enrolled in the most selective group of universities. Across all USG institutions, there were 501 unauthorized immigrants, representing less than 0.2 percent of total enrollment.⁷⁴

Georgia is one of only three states that restrict unauthorized immigrants' enrollment in certain public colleges and universities.

Unauthorized immigrant students are still eligible to attend the remaining 30 USG institutions and all technical colleges. These students must pay out-of-state tuition, which is three to four times higher than the cost of in-state tuition.⁷⁵ At Georgia Perimeter College, for instance, full-time out-of-state tuition and fees were approximately \$5,300 per semester in 2012-13, compared to \$1,800 for state residents. In the technical colleges, unauthorized students must pay a "noncitizen" rate that is four times higher than the in-state rate.⁷⁶ A proposal in the 2012 state legislative session—Senate Bill 458—sought to deny admission to unauthorized immigrants at all of Georgia's public institutions of higher education. This bill never came to a full vote, but the debate about it indicates that college access for unauthorized youth remains a controversial topic in the state.

Recent state legislation also restricts unauthorized immigrants' access to public adult education. The *Georgia Security and Immigration Compliance Act* of 2006 (Senate Bill 529) began requiring all agencies providing "public benefits" to verify applicants' lawful presence,⁷⁷ and in 2010 this legislation was extended

to noncitizens by Jeffrey S. Passel at the Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project.

72 University System of Georgia, "Regents Adopt New Policies on Undocumented Students" (news release, October 13, 2010), www.usg.edu/news/release/regents_adopt_new_policies_on_undocumented_students. The institutions that meet these criteria currently include the following universities: University of Georgia, Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia State University, Medical College of Georgia, and Georgia College and State University.

73 South Carolina legislation bars unauthorized immigrants from enrolling in any public college or university, and Alabama restricts enrollment in public community colleges. In all other states, public colleges and universities allow academically qualified unauthorized immigrant students to enroll, though many states require that they pay out-of-state tuition. For more information, see United We DREAM, "Tuition Equity for Undocumented Students: Access by State."

74 Ibid.

75 Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, "Appendix IIA: Tuition Rates per Semester – Fiscal Year 2013," April 17, 2012, www.usg.edu/fiscal_affairs/documents/tuition_and_fees/fy13_undergraduate_tuition.pdf.

76 Technical College System of Georgia, "Policy V. B. 3 Residency," revised February 3, 2011, <https://tcsgeu.com/tcsgpolicy/docs/V.B.3.Residency.html>.

77 *Georgia Security and Immigration Compliance Act*, Senate Bill 529, State of Georgia, 148th Legislature (April 17, 2006),



to specifically include adult education as a public benefit.⁷⁸ In 2011, Georgia's *Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act* (HB 87) further restricted access by requiring that applicants submit one of a specified list of "secure and verifiable documents" to prove their lawful presence.⁷⁹

These state policies hold significant implications for educational access and workforce development for a critical share of the state's immigrant youth.

B. Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

Providing a partial remedy for some of the challenges facing unauthorized immigrant youth, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, launched by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in August 2012, offers temporary relief from deportation and work authorization. DACA is available to young adults ages 15 to 30 who came to the United States before age 16, and who are currently enrolled in school or workforce training, have graduated from high school or earned a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), or have been honorably discharged from the U.S. armed forces.⁸⁰ The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) estimates that approximately 1.1 million unauthorized youth nationwide currently meet DACA's education and age requirements—including approximately 28,000 youth in Georgia.⁸¹ Applications from Georgia outpaced the national average in the first year of the program, with 18,000 individuals—an estimated 63 percent of the immediately eligible population—submitting an application by June 30, 2013.⁸²

Still, DACA recipients remain ineligible for in-state tuition or financial aid in Georgia, and the USG continues to bar DACA recipients from enrolling in the state's most selective universities. The USG does not recognize deferred action recipients as having "lawful status," even though they have been granted permission to remain in the United States by USCIS.⁸³ At the time of this writing, Georgia stands out as the only state that bans enrollment in its top-tier institutions of higher education for DACA recipients.⁸⁴ Moreover, the state's restriction on participation in adult education courses effectively closes the pathway to deferred action for youth who would otherwise be eligible for DACA, but who lack a high school diploma or GED.

Georgia stands out as the only state that bans enrollment in its top-tier institutions of higher education for DACA recipients.

DACA-eligible youth may be among the most likely beneficiaries of any immigration legislation emerging from the current Congress. For instance, the Senate immigration bill passed in June 2013 includes an expedited pathway to permanent legal status and citizenship—a provision known as the *Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act* of 2013—for this group. Under this proposal, applicants for the *DREAM Act* will need to have earned a high school diploma or its equivalent in the United States, as well as a postsecondary degree or at least two years of postsecondary study toward a bachelor's degree.⁸⁵ Leaders in

www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20052006/64549.pdf.

78 House Bill 2, State of Georgia, 151st General Assembly (July 1, 2013), www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20132014/HB/2.

79 House Bill 87, State of Georgia, 151st General Assembly (July 1, 2011), www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20112012/116631.pdf.

80 Jeanne Batalova and Michelle Mittelstadt, *Relief from Deportation: Demographic Profile of DREAMers Potentially Eligible Under the Deferred Action Policy* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2012), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/DACA-deferred-action-DREAMers; USCIS, "Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Process."

81 Batalova, Hooker, and Capps, *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals at the One-Year Mark*.

82 Ibid.

83 Georgia State University Undergraduate Admissions, "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)."

84 In both South Carolina and Alabama—the other two states that ban enrollment in certain public colleges for unauthorized immigrants—enrollment bans have been lifted for DACA recipients in some institutions. Personal communication to authors from University of Alabama, July 2013; personal communication to authors from University of South Carolina, July 2013. For more information, see United We DREAM, "Tuition Equity for Undocumented Students: Access by State."

85 *Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013*, S.744, 113th Congress, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c113:S.744>.



the House have indicated support for similar legislation targeting this population. Prospects for citizenship may increase incentives for DACA recipients to remain in school, and enroll and persist in college.

III. A Demographic Profile of Georgia's Immigrants

Much of the growth of Georgia's immigrant population in the 1990s can be traced to a surge in demand for construction workers and other jobs in the years leading up to the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, as well as to rising housing construction and an increased demand for workers in agriculture. In addition, Georgia has been a major refugee-receiving state over the past three decades.

Today, the size and pace of growth of Georgia's immigrant population is trending closer to national averages. The rate of immigration slowed substantially during and after the recession, in which the construction industry in particular was deeply affected.

As the growth in Georgia's immigrant population has slowed, the demographic profile of the young adult population has also shifted, with a substantial decline in the number of first-generation youth, as well as a marked increase in the population of second-generation youth. This section provides an overview of this and other key demographic trends among Georgia's youth from immigrant families.

Countries of Origin. The slowdown in immigration to Georgia over the past decade is in part related to the nationwide drop in Mexican immigration. Between 2005 and 2010, net migration from Mexico—i.e., the number of immigrants coming to the United States minus the number returning to Mexico—was zero, representing at least a temporary pause in the decades-long wave of Mexican immigration. Researchers have attributed the pause in Mexican immigration to a number of factors, including the U.S. recession, which lowered demand for Mexican immigrant workers; a falling birthrate in Mexico, which lowered the supply of potential migrants; relative improvements in the Mexican economy and education system, which increased incentives to stay in Mexico; and tighter U.S.-Mexico border enforcement, which has made it more difficult to enter the country illegally.⁸⁶ Between 2007 and 2012 the Mexican share of all immigrants in Georgia fell from 32 to 28 percent, representing a decline from 274,000 to 261,000 individuals.⁸⁷

After Mexico, Georgia's largest group of immigrants is from Central American countries—primarily El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. These immigrant populations have continued to grow during the recession—albeit more slowly than before—because the economies of these Central American countries are much weaker than that of Mexico, and their populations are continuing to increase rapidly due to high birthrates.⁸⁸ Georgia's third-largest Latino group—after Mexicans and Central Americans—has Puerto Rican origins. Puerto Ricans are not considered first- or second-generation immigrants as Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory.⁸⁹

As of 2012, just over half (52 percent) of Georgia's immigrants had origins in Latin America, with the remainder representing a wide variety of regions.⁹⁰ Twenty-eight percent of the state's immigrants had Asian origins; 10 percent had European origins; and 8 percent had African origins. The most common Asian countries of origin were India (7 percent of the total foreign-born population), China and Vietnam (4 percent each), and Korea (2 percent).

86 Jeffrey Passel, D'Vera Cohn, and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, *Net Migration from Mexico Falls to Zero – and Perhaps Less* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2012), www.pewhispanic.org/files/2012/04/Mexican-migrants-report_final.pdf.

87 U.S. Census Bureau, "Table B05006: Place of Birth for the Foreign-born Population in the United States, 2006 and 2012 ACS one-year estimates," accessed from American Factfinder, <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>.

88 Aaron Terrazas, Demetrios G. Papademetriou, and Marc R. Rosenblum, *Evolving Demographic and Human-Capital Trends in Mexico and Central America and Their Implications for Regional Migration* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2011), www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/RMSG-human-capital.pdf.

89 Puerto Ricans do not need an immigration status to enter the U.S. mainland.

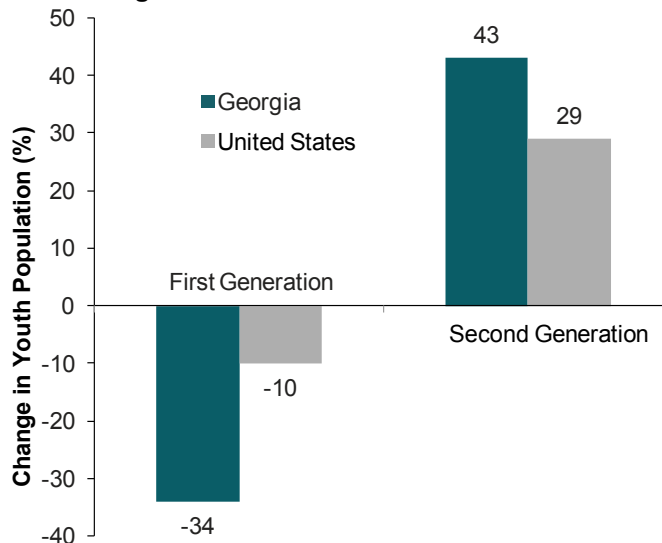
90 U.S. Census Bureau, "Table B05006: Place of Birth for the Foreign-born Population in the United States."



Youth Ages 16 to 26. Recent changes in Georgia’s immigration patterns are especially pronounced among youth ages 16 to 26. Between 2007 and 2012, Georgia’s population of first-generation youth ages 16 to 26 dropped by 34 percent, compared to a national average of a 10 percent drop (see Figure 3). However, many of the immigrants who arrived in the 1990s have U.S.-born children who are now reaching young adulthood, leading to a robust increase of 43 percent in the second-generation youth population (compared to 29 percent nationwide). Together, there were approximately 263,000 first- and second-generation youth in Georgia in 2012, out of a total youth population of 1.44 million. Thus nearly 20 percent of Georgia’s youth are immigrants or have immigrant parents.

Thus nearly 20 percent of Georgia’s youth are immigrants or have immigrant parents.

Figure 3. Changes in the First- and Second-Generation Youth (Ages 16-26) Population, 2007-12



Source: MPI analysis of data from U.S. Current Population Survey, CPS-ASEC, 2006-08 pooled, and 2011-13 pooled.

Recent Census data indicate that the second-generation youth population will continue growing rapidly in Georgia in the near future. In 2012, there were about 230,000 second-generation children ages 6 to 15, compared to only 140,000 second-generation young adults ages 16 to 26. Among Latinos, the number of second-generation children is more than double the number of young adults (120,000 versus 50,000).⁹¹ These second-generation children will soon reach college-going age, which will bring even larger changes in the demographics of Georgia’s higher education institutions.

The second-generation youth population will continue growing rapidly in Georgia in the near future.

Most young adults in Georgia identified themselves as white (52 percent) or Black (33 percent) during the 2009-13 period (see Table 1).⁹² First- and second-generation immigrant youth, however, were predominately Latino or Asian/Pacific Islander. Because Georgia’s first- and second-generation populations are growing so rapidly, the Latino and Asian shares of the total youth population will continue to rise in the coming years.

⁹¹ MPI analysis of Current Population Survey (CPS) 2009-13 data.

⁹² Throughout the report, the racial/ethnic term “white” refers to the non-Hispanic white population; and we use “Black” instead of “African American” because the data may refer to youth from Black immigrant families, rather than native-born families.

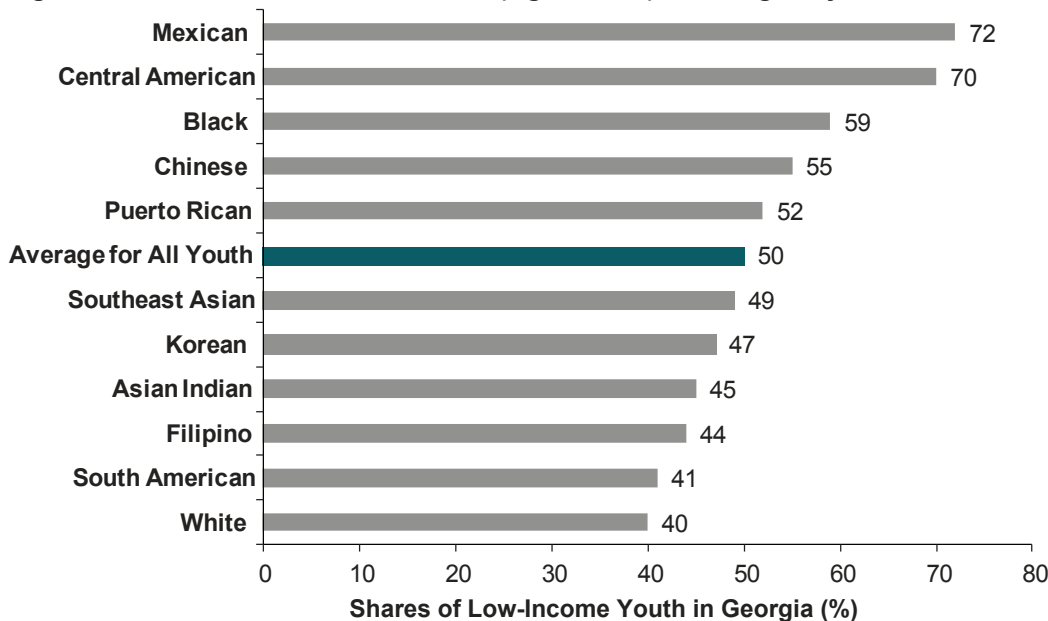
**Table 1. Race/ Ethnicity of Georgia Youth (Ages 16-26), 2009-13**

	Latino	Asian/ Pacific Islander	White	Black
Total	10%	4%	52%	33%
First Generation	56%	21%	11%	13%
Second Generation	36%	18%	19%	23%
Third + Subsequent Generations	3%	<1%	60%	37%

Note: Percentages do not equal 100, as the Native American population has been omitted.

Source: MPI analysis of 2009-13 CPS-ASEC data pooled.

Low-Income Youth. Fifty percent of young adults in Georgia were members of low-income households between 2010 and 2012, defined here as having a family income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (see Figure 4). The national average was 44 percent during the same period. The data reveal wide variations in income among the major racial/ethnic groups in the state, as well as substantial variation within the Latino and Asian groups. The vast majority of Mexican and Central American youth were low-income (at 72 percent and 70 percent, respectively). At the same time, many Asian-origin groups in Georgia also had low-income rates that were at or above the national average.

Figure 4. Shares of Low-Income Youth (Ages 16-26) in Georgia, by Race or Ancestry, 2010-12

Note: Low-income youth have family incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Rates are shown for all youth reporting a certain ancestry/race regardless of immigrant generation. "Central American" youth include those with Costa Rican, Guatemalan, Honduran, Nicaraguan, Panamanian, or Salvadoran ancestry. "Southeast Asian" youth include those with Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, or Thai ancestry.

Source: MPI analysis of data from the American Community Survey (ACS), 2010-12 pooled.

Unauthorized Immigrant Youth. Approximately 62 percent of Georgia's first-generation youth ages 16 to 26 (about 94,000 individuals) were unauthorized immigrants in the 2007-11 period. This rate is considerably higher than the national average for this age group (47 percent), which likely reflects Georgia's relatively high share of immigrants from Mexico and Central America. Overall, unauthorized immigrants represented 6.5 percent of the state's total young adult population during this time period.



Refugees. Georgia has been a major refugee-receiving state for more than three decades. During the 1980s and 1990s, the state received approximately 43,000 refugees.⁹³ The early waves of refugee resettlement in Georgia included large numbers of Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian refugees fleeing violence and civil wars in these Southeast Asian countries. During the 1990s, refugee flows shifted, reflecting conflicts and political instability in other part of the world: Bosnia, Iraq, Somalia, and the countries of the former Soviet Union.⁹⁴ In 2012, Georgia ranked sixth among all states in the number of refugees resettled.⁹⁵ Nearly all of the state's 2,500 newly arriving refugees in that year were resettled in the Atlanta metropolitan area, with approximately 60 percent in DeKalb County alone.⁹⁶ Refugees arriving in 2012 primarily came from Bhutan, Burma, and Somalia along with Iraq, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, and Iran.⁹⁷

*Georgia has been a major refugee-receiving state
for more than three decades.*

Children and youth in refugee families face great challenges upon entry into U.S. schools; in addition to limited English proficiency and interrupted education, they frequently arrive with a range of personal and social service needs related to poverty, trauma, acculturation, and physical and mental health issues. The federal Refugee School Impact Grant (RSIG), administered by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, allocates formula funds to states for instruction and support services for refugee children ages 5-18, along with their families. Refugee students who have been in the United States for less than three years are eligible to participate in RSIG programs.

IV. The Characteristics and Performance of Immigrant Youth in Georgia High Schools

The demographics of the K-12 school system reflect Georgia's growing immigrant population. The share of Latino students in Georgia more than doubled during the 2000s;⁹⁸ over the same time period, the share of Latinos in all U.S. schools increased by 40 percent.⁹⁹ Latinos are slightly more highly represented in the younger grades, forming 12 percent of pre-kindergarten to grade 12 enrollment, and 10 percent of enrollment in grades 9 to 12 (see Table 2).

Nearly 91,000 students (comprising 5 percent of Georgia students in grades K-12) were enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs during the 2011-12 school year.¹⁰⁰ Between the 1997-98 and 2007-08 school years, Georgia's ELL population increased by nearly 250 percent, placing Georgia among the top ten states in ELL population growth nationwide during this time period.¹⁰¹ The ELL population

93 Georgia Refugee Health Program, "Refugee Arrivals 1981-2001," March 9, 2002, <http://garefugees.wordpress.com/state-reports-data/>.

94 Ibid.

95 U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), "Fiscal Year 2012 Refugee Arrivals," January 24, 2013, www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/fiscal-year-2012-refugee-arrivals.

96 Georgia Refugee Community, "YTD Refugee Arrivals by County," accessed February 14, 2014, <http://garefugees.wordpress.com/state-reports-data/>.

97 ORR, "Fiscal Year 2012 Refugee Arrivals."

98 The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, "2010-11 University System Report Card," accessed January 15, 2014, <http://gaosa.org/University.aspx?PageReq=108&StateId=ALL&SY=2011>; The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, "2000-01 University System Report Card," accessed January 15, 2014, <http://reportcard2001.gaosa.org/>.

99 Susan Aud, et al., *The Condition of Education 2012* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012045.pdf>.

100 Data provided by Georgia Department of Education to MPI. Information on file with the authors.

101 Jeanne Batalova and Margie McHugh, "Number and Growth of Students in US Schools in Need of English Instruction" (ELL Information Center Fact Sheet Series, No. 1, MPI, Washington, DC, 2010), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/number-and-growth-students-us-schools-need-english-instruction.



includes a significant number of *second*-generation children who speak a non-English language at home and begin kindergarten with limited English proficiency. As in other states, ELLs in Georgia tend to be concentrated in the early elementary grades; many are reclassified out of the ELL subgroup by grade 3. In grades 9 to 12, ELLs represented 2 percent of students in 2011-12.¹⁰²

Table 2. Georgia Public School Enrollment by Grade Level and Race/Ethnicity, Spring 2012

Race	PreK-12 (%)	Grades 9-12 (%)
Hispanic/ Latino	12	10
Black	37	38
Two or More Races	3	3
Asian & Pacific Islander	4	4
White	44	46

Source: Georgia Department of Education, “Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Grade Level (PK-12),” Enrollment on March 1, 2012, http://app3.doe.k12.ga.us/ows-bin/owa/fte_pack_ethnicsex_entry_form.

Seventy-eight percent of Georgia’s ELLs spoke Spanish in 2010-11 (a rate comparable to national figures).¹⁰³ After Spanish, the second-largest language group was Vietnamese, which was spoken by 3 percent of the state’s ELLs, followed by Korean and Chinese at 2 percent each. Five percent of the state’s ELLs spoke a wide variety of lower-incidence languages—a reflection, in part, of the state’s diverse population of refugees from African and Asian countries.¹⁰⁴

78 percent of Georgia’s ELLs spoke Spanish in 2010-11.

A. The Demographics of Gwinnett County Public Schools

The authors’ fieldwork at the high school level focused on Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS). GCPS experienced dramatic demographic changes between the 2000-01 and 2011-12 school years, with particularly large increases in the shares of students who were Latino and Black, and a decline in the share of white students (see Figure 5). The share of ELL and low-income students also rose substantially.

GCPS was considerably more diverse than the rest of the state in 2011-12. The Asian share of GCPS students was more than three times the state average (10 percent versus 3 percent), owing to the county’s large Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and other Asian immigrant populations. GCPS also had a greater proportion of ELLs (12 percent) than the state average (5 percent) in the 2011-12 school year. With approximately 19,000 students classified as ELLs, GCPS educates nearly 20 percent of all ELLs in the state.

As the flow of new immigrants has declined, Gwinnett County’s total ELL population has shifted from primarily foreign-born to overwhelmingly U.S.-born. Whereas in 2002 only 26 percent of the district’s ELLs were born in the United States, by Fall 2012 the share of U.S.-born ELLs had risen to 80 percent.¹⁰⁵ It is worth noting, however, that in grades 9 to 12, ELLs continued to be predominately foreign-born, with only 21 percent born in the United States.¹⁰⁶

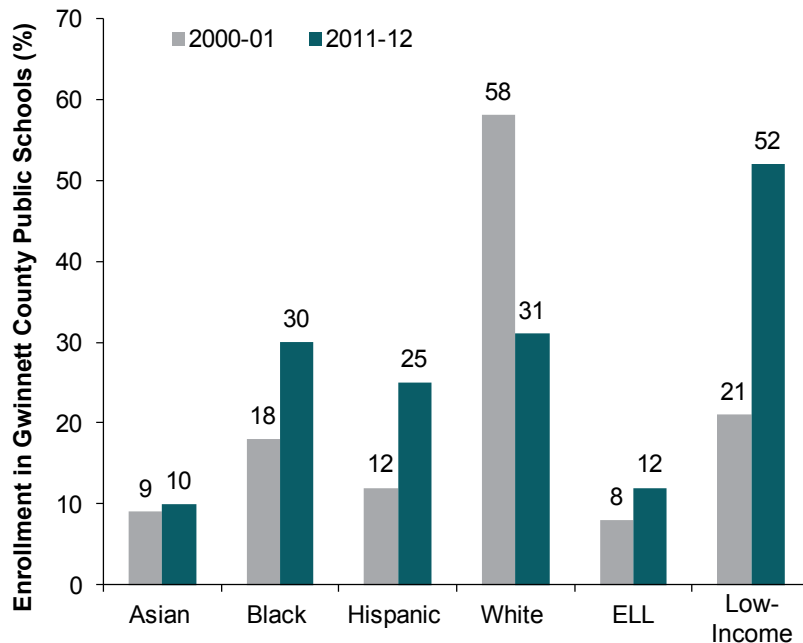
¹⁰² Data provided by Georgia Department of Education to MPI. Information on file with the authors.

¹⁰³ U.S. Department of Education, *Georgia Consolidated State Performance Report, 2010-11* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2012), on file with authors; Jeanne Batalova and Margie McHugh, “Top 5 Languages Spoken by English Language Learners Nationally and by State” (ELL Information Center Fact Sheet Series, No. 3, MPI, Washington, DC, 2010), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/top-languages-spoken-english-language-learners-nationally-and-state.

¹⁰⁴ These lower-incidence languages were reported as “no linguistic content” in the *Georgia Consolidated State Performance Report, and include the language groups “Other African,” “Other Asian,” “Other Indian,” and “Other European.”* U.S. Department of Education, *Georgia Consolidated State Performance Report, 2010-11*.

¹⁰⁵ Data provided by Gwinnett County Public Schools to MPI. Information on file with the authors.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Figure 5. Demographic Change in Gwinnett County Public Schools, 2000-01 to 2011-12

Source: Office of Education Accountability, “2000-2001 Annual Report Card on K-12 Public Schools, Gwinnett County,” <http://reportcard2002.gaosa.org/K12/Demographics.asp?TestType=Demographics&ID=667:ALL>; Georgia Department of Education, “Enrollment by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Grade (PK-12),” “Enrollment on October 4, 2011,” http://app3.doe.k12.ga.us/ows-bin/owa/fte_pack_ethnicsex.entry_form.

B. Identifying ELL Subgroups with Unique Educational Needs

ELLs are a central focus of this series of reports, as these students confront the dual task of mastering English and learning the academic content required at each grade level. Within this group, the analysis highlights a number of subgroups that have distinct educational needs: newcomers, students with interrupted formal education (SIFE), and long-term ELLs.

ELLs . . . confront the dual task of mastering English and learning the academic content required at each grade level.

I. Newcomers and Students with Interrupted Formal Education

Immigrant youth who arrive during the middle school and high school years can be challenging to educate, because they often miss some years of schooling in their home countries, and the education they have received may differ from that provided in the United States. It is common for adolescents to immigrate after elementary school: half of first-generation youth in Georgia arrived in the United States at age 16 and older, and another 21 percent arrived at ages 12 through 15.¹⁰⁷ Among public school students in Georgia, 40 percent of all ELLs in grades 9 to 12 were “recent immigrants” in 2011-12, meaning that they had been in U.S. schools for less than three years.¹⁰⁸ In GCPS, the International Newcomers’ Center, which is charged with providing orientation and assessment services for newcomer students in grades 6-12, served nearly 1,600 students in 2008, but this number fell to approximately 1,100 in 2011 as immigration to the county

¹⁰⁷ MPI analysis of CPS-ASEC data, 2007-11, pooled.

¹⁰⁸ This is based on the federal definition of “immigrant” students: those who were not born in the United States or Puerto Rico, are ages 3 to 21, and have been in U.S. schools for less than three years. Data provided by Georgia Department of Education to MPI. Information on file with the authors.



slowed.¹⁰⁹

Some newcomers bring a strong academic background from their countries of origin, while others arrive significantly below grade level and can be characterized as students with interrupted formal education. Among Georgia's largest refugee groups, for instance, interviewees noted that Burmese youth are among the most likely to be SIFE, as they often had limited access to education in refugee camps in Thailand. Our fieldwork interviews suggested that newcomers who have received consistent schooling and have strong literacy in their native language often develop English proficiency quickly through their district's standard ELL instructional program. However, interviewees frequently mentioned the difficulties in meeting the needs of adolescents who enter U.S. schools with very low levels of basic education.

Georgia does not have a common, statewide definition of long-term ELLs.

2. Long-Term ELLs

Another group of students with unique educational needs is long-term ELLs: those who have been classified as ELLs for several years and still remain in this category. Many of these students are second-generation youth and have been in U.S. schools for their entire education, indicating that the instruction they have received has not sufficiently addressed their language acquisition needs. Long-term ELLs may have strong social English skills, but they typically struggle with academic reading and writing, and have not reached proficiency on statewide assessments of language or content skills.

Precise definitions of the length of time that constitutes long-term ELL status remain contested by researchers and educators; according to one 2010 study, long-term ELLs are those who have been in U.S. schools for more than six years without "reaching sufficient English proficiency to be reclassified."¹¹⁰ They often lack literacy skills in their home language as well as English. Interviewees mentioned that transience occasionally contributes to students becoming long-term ELLs; as families move back and forth between districts, and sometimes return to their countries of origin for extended periods of time, youth lack a consistent focus on their language development.

Georgia does not have a common, statewide definition of long-term ELLs. However, in the 2011-12 school year, 29 percent of the state's ELLs in grades 9 to 12 had been in U.S. schools for six or more years.¹¹¹

29 percent of the state's ELLs in grades 9 to 12 had been in U.S. schools for six or more years.

C. The Achievement Gap for High School ELLs

Achievement gaps between ELLs and their English-proficient peers persist nationwide. On the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 71 percent of ELLs in 8th grade scored at the "below basic"¹¹² level in math, compared to 24 percent of their non-ELL peers; reading scores followed a similar pattern. Even among former ELLs who in theory have attained English proficiency, 38 percent scored at the below basic level in math.¹¹³ The NAEP performance of Georgia's 8th-grade ELLs mirrors these national

¹⁰⁹ Data provided by Gwinnett County Public Schools to MPI. Information on file with the authors.

¹¹⁰ Laurie Olsen, *Reparable Harm: Fulfilling the Unkept Promise of Educational Opportunity for California's English Learners* (Long Beach, CA: Californians Together, 2010), www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/smu/download/rs/24586/Reparable_Harm_4.pdf.

¹¹¹ Data provided by Georgia Department of Education to MPI. Information on file with the authors.

¹¹² Students at the "basic" level have demonstrated "partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade." Students scoring below this level are considered "below basic." See National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), "National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) — How Results are Reported," accessed February 14, 2014, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/nathowreport.asp>.

¹¹³ NCES, *The Nation's Report Card: Mathematics 2011* (Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2011), <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2011/2012458.pdf>; NCES, *The Nation's Report Card: Reading 2011* (Washington, DC: Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, 2011), <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2011/2012457.pdf>.



averages.¹¹⁴ These and other standardized test scores show that ELLs enter high school significantly behind their non-ELL peers; language barriers can severely limit their access to the content knowledge. Test performance and graduation rates reveal that this achievement gap continues throughout high school.

High School Test Performance. Georgia’s high school ELLs are among the state’s lowest-achieving subgroups. In 2011-12, ELLs had lower End-of-Course-Test (EOCT) passing rates than their non-ELL peers in each of 10 tested subjects.¹¹⁵ For instance, 42 percent of ELLs passed the “Mathematics I” test, compared to 67 percent of non-ELLs. The fact that ELLs would have lower-than-average scores on EOCTs—which are administered in English—is not surprising, because by definition, ELLs are still developing language proficiency. The particularly low scores in mathematics, however, indicate that ELLs are struggling with grade-level content even in quantitative courses. As Georgia does not publicly report the test scores of former ELLs, it is unclear whether these students perform at a level on par with native English speakers. With regard to racial/ ethnic groups, Georgia’s Black students had the lowest passing rates in all subject areas, and Latino students also had below-average performance.

*Georgia’s high school ELLs are among the state’s
lowest-achieving subgroups.*

Students in Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) generally outperformed state averages on EOCTs in 2011-12. GCPS has earned national recognition for raising the performance of minority and low-income students: in 2010, GCPS received the prestigious Broad Prize for Urban Education. This \$1 million prize is the largest education award offered to U.S. public school districts to fund scholarships for graduating seniors.¹¹⁶ However, as demonstrated below, achievement and graduation rate gaps persist, especially for ELLs and Latinos.

High School Graduation Rates. In 2011-12, Georgia’s four-year high school graduation rate ranked among the lowest in the nation for all students as well as for ELLs.¹¹⁷ Seventy percent of all students graduated in four years, compared to 44 percent of ELLs¹¹⁸ (see Figure 6). Still, the ELL graduation rate improved notably from 2010-11, when it was just 32 percent. The state’s overall graduation rate improved by two percentage points during the same period.¹¹⁹

*In 2011-12, 70 percent of
all students graduated in
four years, compared to
44 percent of ELLs.*

Hispanic, Black, and low-income students all had four-year graduation rates that fell below the state average in 2011-12. The graduation rate gap between Asian and Hispanic students—the groups with the highest and lowest rates—was 22 percentage points. Census Bureau data and fieldwork findings suggest that there is likely to be substantial variation in high school completion rates among Asian ethnic groups.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ NCES, *The Nation’s Report Card: Reading 2011*.

¹¹⁵ The Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, “K-12 Public Schools Report Card—Georgia Tests,” accessed February 14, 2014, <https://usg.gosa.ga.gov/analytics/saw.dll?Dashboard>.

¹¹⁶ The Broad Prize for Urban Education, “2010 Broad Prize Awarded to Gwinnett County Public Schools; Georgia District Wins \$1 Million in Scholarships, Four Finalists Each Win \$250,000” (news release, October 19, 2010), www.broadprize.org/asset/0-tbp%202010%20press%20release.pdf.

¹¹⁷ Three states did not submit a regulatory adjusted cohort graduation rate in 2011-12. Among the 47 states with available data, Georgia’s overall graduation rate was tied at 45th place, and its ELL graduation rate was tied at 44th place. U.S. Department of Education, “Ed Data Express.”

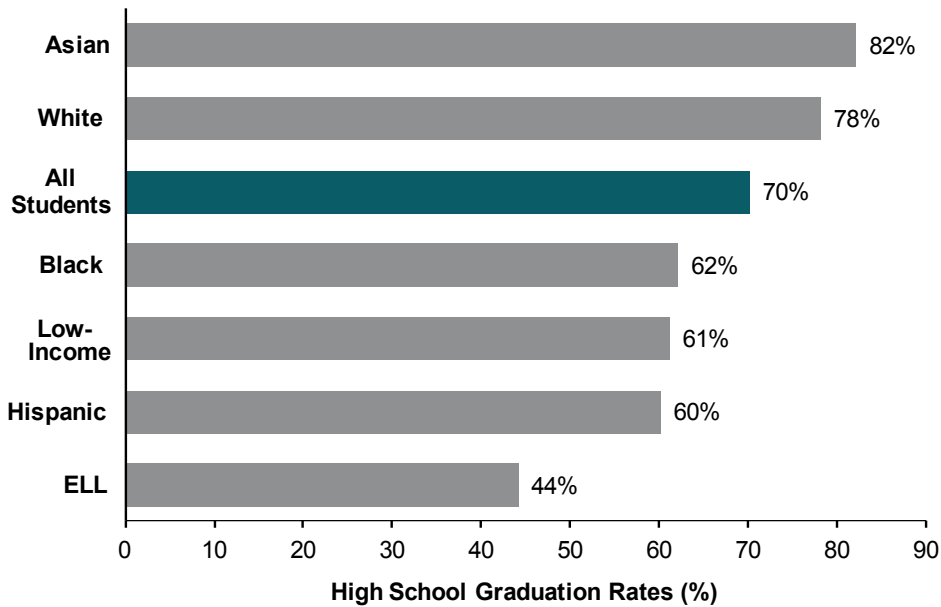
¹¹⁸ Georgia does not report high school graduation rates for former ELLs.

¹¹⁹ It is worth noting that Georgia’s overall graduation rate increased again from 2011-12 to 2012-13, by 1.8 percentage points. Graduation rate gains were seen across most subgroups, including Latino and Black students. The ELL graduation rate remained steady at 44 percent. We cited the 2011-12 graduation rate data in this report because that is the most recent year for which data are available at the national level from the U.S. Department of Education. Georgia Department of Education, “Georgia’s High School Graduation Rate Continues to Increase.”

¹²⁰ High school graduation statistics do not disaggregate Asian ethnic groups, but ACS data on educational attainment (2008-10) suggest that Southeast Asian (i.e., Cambodian, Hmong, Lao, Thai, and Vietnamese) young adults are less likely to have completed a high school diploma or its equivalent, as compared with other Asian youth. These statistics are described in greater detail in



Figure 6. Four-Year High School Graduation Rates in Georgia, 2011-12



Note: The English Language Learner (ELL) graduation rate includes students who were classified as ELLs at any point during their high school years.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, “Ed Data Express,” <http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/state-tables-report.cfm>.

GCPS four-year graduation rates mirrored statewide trends in 2011-12, with some notable exceptions: the Hispanic graduation rate lagged behind the state average at 53 percent.¹²¹ It is worth noting that GCPS graduation requirements are higher than Georgia’s statewide graduation requirements, as students must pass an additional writing test—the GCPS High School Gateway Assessment—which is administered in Grade 10.

An analysis of longitudinal data on GCPS students by the Center for Policy Research at Harvard University found that even after accounting for income and prior academic performance (based on eighth-grade test scores), Hispanic students in GCPS had substantially lower four-year graduation rates than all other racial/ ethnic groups.¹²² Gaps in graduation rates between Asian, Black, and white students disappeared when comparing students who entered high school with high test scores, but high-performing Hispanic students remained less likely to graduate in four years than their peers from other racial groups. This finding highlights that Hispanic students likely have distinctive needs, and that the reasons for their low high school graduation rates are multifaceted.

Figure 7 and its accompanying text in the Adult Education section of the report.

121 Georgia Department of Education, “2012 4-Year Cohort State and System Graduation Rate,” data accessed February 26, 2014, www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Pages/PressReleaseDetails.aspx?PressView=default&pid=147.

122 This study used longitudinal data on ninth grade cohorts from 2003-04 to 2005-06. The study did not disaggregate findings by students’ ELL status. Strategic Data Project, *Exploring Postsecondary Attainment: SDP College-Going Diagnostic; Gwinnett County Public Schools, Georgia* (Cambridge, MA: The Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University, May 2012), www.gse.harvard.edu/cepr-resources/files/news-events/sdp-gcps-cg.pdf.



Box I. Policy Spotlight: Georgia's New Accountability System for K-12 Education

In 2011-12, the U.S. Department of Education gave states the opportunity to apply for waivers from many provisions of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*, and develop their own accountability systems to replace ESEA's metrics of Adequate Yearly Progress. Georgia was among the first ten states to receive approval for its waiver application in February 2012.

As under ESEA, Georgia's new accountability system includes performance and graduation rate targets for each student subgroup, including ELLs, students with disabilities, low-income students, and racial/ethnic subgroups. However, while ESEA is based on the ambitious goal of having all students achieve proficiency in reading and math by 2013-14, Georgia's revised goal is a 50 percent reduction in the ranks of the lowest-performing students—those who score below the proficient level on each required state assessment—by 2016-17. Unlike under ESEA, each subgroup now has a different annual performance target based on its 2011 scores, with the lowest targets for ELLs and students with disabilities.

Low school-wide or subgroup performance—or wide achievement gaps between groups within a school—can cause a school to be designated as “Priority,” “Focus,” or “Alert,” triggering interventions including data analysis, professional development, and in some cases, replacing the principal.

Schools are also evaluated on a new set of metrics related to postsecondary readiness: the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). The 19 indicators on the high school CCRPI have to do with graduation rates, rates of participation in dual enrollment or other accelerated programs for college credit, and various other measures of achievement at the high school and college levels.

Beyond the key indicators, schools can earn additional points for “supplemental indicators,” one of which is the percentage of ELLs demonstrating improvement on the state's English-language proficiency test. However, the full implications of the new assessment system for ELL accountability in all schools—including consequences for schools that do not improve their performance after receiving a special designation—remain to be seen. Tracking and analyzing data on the long-term achievement of former ELLs would allow stakeholders to more closely monitor the effects of this policy change on ELL performance.

Source: Daria Hall, *A Step Forward or a Step Back? State Accountability in the Waiver Era* (Washington, DC: The Education Trust, 2013), www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/A_Step_Forward_Or_A_Step_Back.pdf; Sam Rauschenberg, “The Federal Requirements of the ESEA Waiver” (Atlanta, GA: Governor's Office of Student Achievement, September 13, 2012), <http://gosa.georgia.gov/federal-requirements-esea-waiver>; Georgia Department of Education, “College and Career Ready Performance Index,” www.doe.k12.ga.us/CCRPI/Pages/default.aspx; The Education Trust, *Georgia NCLB Waiver Summary: Accountability* (Washington, DC: The Education Trust, 2012), www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/Georgia_AccountabilitySummary_FINAL_2_29_12.pdf.

The following section turns to some of these topics, along with a broader assessment of current district- and school-level policies and instructional practices, and potential areas of improvement.

V. Promising Practices and Ongoing Challenges at the High School Level

This section explores the specific programs and policies that affect the high school performance and completion of first- and second-generation immigrant and ELL youth. The pressure on ELLs to both master English and learn academic content is particularly pronounced in grades 9 to 12, where the curriculum is the most challenging and the clock is ticking for students to fulfill graduation requirements and pass high school exit exams.



Within Gwinnett County Public Schools, the authors conducted site visits at three large, comprehensive high schools serving grades 9 to 12. Each of these high schools serves a diverse population, including a significant share of ELLs. Located in different parts of the county, each school has felt the effects of the region's changing demographics and developed distinct approaches to serving students from immigrant families.

All of Georgia's K-12 schools have had to adapt to the new imperative of implementing the Common Core State Standards—a nationwide effort to define the knowledge and skills that students should master at each grade level, in order to graduate with the level of academic preparation required for postsecondary education and careers in an increasingly knowledge-based economy. Georgia is also one of 26 states that have developed a similar set of standards for science—the Next Generation Science Standards—led by Achieve, the National Research Council, and other national organizations. Georgia began implementing the new standards in 2012-13 and continues this transition in 2013-14. At the time of this writing, however, legislators were weighing a proposal to halt Georgia's participation in these multi-state initiatives and instead begin a new process of reviewing and updating the state's own content standards.

The pressure on ELLs to both master English and learn academic content is particularly pronounced in grades 9 to 12.

Nationally, the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards have had significant implications for ELL instruction, because of the “prominent role that language plays in them,” according to ELL education experts Delia Pompa and Kenji Hakuta.¹²³ Accordingly, literacy development “across the curriculum” is all the more important all the more important: all teachers need to help students learn the language skills required by subjects such as math, science, and history.¹²⁴ Whether Georgia retains or abandons the Common Core, the imperative of keeping ELLs front and center on districts' professional development agendas remains critical as the state prepares students for college and careers.

123 Pompa and Hakuta, “Opportunities for Policy Advancement for ELLs Created by the New Standards Movement.”

124 Mariana Haynes, *The Role of Language and Literacy in College- and Career-Ready Standards: Rethinking Policy and Practice in Support of English Language Learners* (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2012), www.all4ed.org/files/LangAndLiteracyInStandardsELLs.pdf.



Box 2. Rigorous and Appropriate Instruction for English Language Learners

National research underscores the importance of building “academic literacy” for adolescent ELLs, including the ability to understand and respond to the complex academic and professional texts that are required for college and career success. However, promoting academic literacy is not a simple proposition; it requires teachers who understand the principles of second-language acquisition and can foster students’ development across multiple domains of language—including reading, writing, listening, and speaking—within the context of the core academic subjects. Specialists who have a credential in ESOL typically have had to demonstrate specific knowledge and competencies related to language acquisition and teaching, along with an understanding of how a state’s English language proficiency standards should be taught in conjunction with mainstream curriculum standards. Given the size of the ELL population, educators and advocates also emphasize the importance of training mainstream, content-area teachers to differentiate instruction for ELLs, promote their language development, and interact with students and parents in a culturally competent manner.

Experts recommend that school and district administrators develop plans for raising ELL achievement, based on high expectations and targeted support. Elements of effective school-level strategies include collaborative teaching and planning between content-area teachers and ESOL specialists, using student-level data to monitor progress and tailor instruction, and creating small class sizes and personalized learning environments. Prior studies also highlight the benefits of extended learning time and academic support programs that take place after school or during the summer. At the district level, research has found that school systems demonstrating improvements in ELL outcomes have expanded their data capacity and adopted a district-wide instructional strategy that includes professional development for all teachers of ELLs and school leaders.

Source: Debra J. Short and Shannon Fitzsimmons, *Double the Work: Challenges and Solutions to Acquiring Language and Academic Literacy for Adolescent English Language Learners* (Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007), www.all4ed.org/files/DoubleWork.pdf; Jennifer F. Samson and Brian A. Collins, *Preparing All Teachers to Meet the Needs of English Language Learners* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2012), www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2012/04/pdf/ell_report.pdf; Aida Walqui, et al., *What Are We Doing to Middle School English Learners? Findings and Recommendations for Change from a Study of California EL Programs* (San Francisco: WestEd, 2010), www.wested.org/online_pubs/PD-10-02-full.pdf; Amanda Rose Horowitz, et al., *Succeeding with English Language Learners: Lessons from the Great City Schools* (Washington, DC: The Council of the Great City Schools, 2009), www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/dc00001581/centricity/domain/4/ell_report09.pdf; Catherine Bitter and Laura Golden, *Approaches to Promoting College Readiness for English Learners* (Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, 2009), www.air.org/files/Knowledge_Capture_ELL_College_Readiness_04-12-2010.pdf; Shelly Spaulding, Barbara Carolino, and Kali-Ahset Amen, *Immigrant Students and Secondary School Reform: Compendium of Best Practices* (Washington, DC: Council of Chief School Officers, 2004), www.inpathways.net/ImmigrantStudentBestPractices.pdf.

The sections below explore Georgia’s progress in implementing research-supported components of effective high school programs for ELLs as the state makes the transition to the new standards; focusing on funding, instructional programs, educator capacity, and time for learning.

A. K-12 Education Funding in Georgia

As in other states, the recession and state fiscal crisis brought substantial reductions in education spending in Georgia, and school districts are still reeling from the effects of these cuts. Georgia’s main K-12 education funding mechanism, the Quality Basic Education (QBE) program, is based on the premise that the state and local districts share the cost of implementing the state’s required educational programs and policies—ideally with a ratio of 80 percent state funds and 20 percent local funds. However, Georgia began reducing state education spending in 2003, and has underfunded the state share of QBE for the last decade.¹²⁵ Stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act helped Georgia offset the most severe education funding cuts in FY 2010 and 2011. Even with these extra funds, the portion of QBE funded by the state fell to

125 Catherine C. Sielke, “A Reversal of Fortune: Georgia Legislative Update 1992-2012,” *Journal of Education Finance* 37, no. 2 (2011): 175-84.



65 percent in FY 2011.¹²⁶ As state funding has diminished, local school districts have had to assume a rising share of education funding—a burden that many have been unable to shoulder, especially given the slump in local property values during the same period.¹²⁷

Despite a modest restoration of state education funding in FY 2014,¹²⁸ our fieldwork found many examples of cuts to programs and services. At the local level, consequences included larger class sizes, a shorter school year, fewer guidance counselors, and the closure of numerous academic and social support programs—all of which have had distinct and perhaps disproportionate effects on ELLs and immigrant students.

Our fieldwork found many examples of cuts to programs and services.

B. Tailored Programs that Serve a Diverse ELL Population

In Georgia, high school ESOL programs feature a variety of instructional models, the most common of which include a “scheduled class period”—in which students receive language development or content instruction in a “sheltered”¹²⁹ class that is comprised solely of ELLs—and a “push-in” model, in which students remain in mainstream academic classes and receive special assistance from a second teacher with an ESOL credential.¹³⁰ School- and district-level decisions about program design are typically based on the concentration of ELLs, staff capacity, funding considerations, and individual students’ needs. According to Georgia policies, all ELLs must receive at least one period of ESOL instruction per day, and the maximum amount of state-funded ESOL varies by grade level. High school ELLs can receive up to five periods (out of a six-period day). ESOL funding is based on instructional hours: districts receive additional funds based on the number of periods of ESOL instruction provided to each ELL student.¹³¹ ESOL instruction was funded at approximately 2.5 times the base funding level for grades 9 to 12 in FY 2012.¹³²

Georgia policies do not specify the type or amount of ESOL instruction that should be provided to each subgroup within the ELL population, including newcomers or long-term ELLs. Nationwide, however, a growing body of literature examines effective practices for meeting the widely varied needs of these distinct groups. For instance, research on special programs for recently arrived students demonstrates the importance of emphasizing basic literacy for students with interrupted formal education (SIFE), using native language instruction or content-based ESL instruction in core academic subjects, and meeting the social service needs of newly arrived families.¹³³ For long-term ELLs, researchers recommend exposing students to rigorous content, while also providing ongoing, specialized support for their language development and literacy skills.¹³⁴

126 Ibid.

127 Johnson, *Survey Says: Trouble for Schools*.

128 Georgia’s FY 2014 budget increased K-12 education funding, though state spending still fell \$1 billion short of the level needed to fully fund the Quality Basic Education (QBE) program. Claire Suggs, *Overview of Georgia’s 2014 Fiscal Year Budget for PK-12* (Atlanta, GA: Georgia Budget and Policy Institute, 2013), http://gbpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/fy2014_Budget-Analysis_Ed_k12_012320122.pdf.

129 In this context, sheltered instruction refers to the practice of providing separate instruction for ELL students in academic subjects (e.g., science, social studies). English is used as the primary mode of instruction, and teachers use specific strategies and adaptations to make the curriculum accessible to students with limited English proficiency.

130 Georgia Department of Education, *ESOL/ Title III Resource Guide, 2013-2014* (Atlanta: Georgia Department of Education, 2013), www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Documents/ESOL/2013-2014%20ESOL%20Title%20III%20Resource%20Guide.pdf.

131 Ibid.

132 Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, “The Education Policy Toolbox: A-Z Index of Educational Tools,” accessed February 26, 2014, <http://toolbox.gpee.org/Finance-and-Funding/240.0.html>.

133 Deborah J. Short and Beverly A. Boyson, *Helping Newcomer Students Succeed in Secondary Schools and Beyond* (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 2012), <http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/Reporter/23/helping-newcomer-students-succeed-in-secondary-schools-and-beyond.pdf>.

134 Olsen, *Reparable Harm*.



Whatever the program, developing targeted approaches to serving ELL subgroups depends on having access to disaggregated data on a variety of student characteristics, including English proficiency, academic proficiency, prior schooling, and length of time in U.S. schools. However, statewide data capacity limitations affect the ability of educators to identify long-term ELLs and other subgroups within the ELL population. Further, unlike California and New York, Georgia does not require districts to distinguish between newcomers, SIFE, and long-term ELLs in their data systems. Without formal definitions of these subgroups or the ability to analyze data on these characteristics, school and district leaders face challenges in their efforts to plan and implement differentiated programs to meet their unique needs.

Statewide data capacity limitations affect the ability of educators to identify long-term ELLs and other subgroups within the ELL population.

Overall, the fieldwork revealed some successful programs aimed at specific subgroups of ELLs—particularly for newcomers—and highlighted a remaining need for differentiated program options.

1. Successful Orientation and Placement for Newcomers

As Gwinnett County has served as a gateway community for large numbers of newly-arrived immigrants since the late 1990s, the school system has developed substantial expertise in assessing the academic ability of newcomer students and assigning them to appropriate classes. The district’s International Newcomers Center is the first point of entry for immigrant youth in the secondary grades (6 to 12). The center is staffed with multilingual student advisors who work with incoming students and their parents. New students complete assessments in English, math, and native-language literacy; staff also analyze foreign transcripts in order to award credit for prior learning and place students in the most appropriate grade level. The center has an extensive library on various countries’ curricula and grading systems, and the staff reaches out to foreign education agencies to resolve questions about the specific content of courses and their equivalents in Georgia’s public schools. After testing and transcript analysis, the advisors refer students to their neighborhood high schools and provide recommendations for placement within the schools’ menu of ESOL and mainstream course offerings.

2. Instructional Strategies Needed for Long-Term ELLs

Our site visits did not reveal a specific instructional strategy to address the persistent academic language gaps of long-term ELLs. Compared to traditional immigrant destination states, Georgia’s schools have considerably less experience with serving long-term ELLs.

In an effort to move long-term ELLs into mainstream instruction more quickly, GCPS has recently adopted a more aggressive position on “reclassifying” long-term ELLs—transitioning them out of ESOL services. In order for students to be reclassified, they typically must achieve minimum scores on the state’s English language proficiency assessment¹³⁵ and English language arts tests. Students who do not meet this benchmark but who score within a borderline range can also be reclassified, based on the judgment of a committee of school personnel, and schools are now trying to exercise this option more frequently. During 2011-12, approximately 20 percent of the district’s ELLs (4,000 students) were reclassified, exceeding the statewide reclassification rate of 15 percent.¹³⁶ There may be a trade-off, however, between the benefits of being reclassified versus the potential benefits of continued ESOL support; and it remains to be seen whether these students have developed the academic language skills needed for college and careers.

¹³⁵ Georgia uses the ACCESS for ELLs’ language proficiency assessment developed by the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium.

¹³⁶ Official from the Georgia Department of Education, interview with authors, November 1, 2012.



3. A Lack of Bilingual Programs

English is the official language of instruction in Georgia; the state does not have a bilingual education program or a bilingual teaching credential. This policy may pose an additional challenge for some ELL students—particularly newcomers who arrive in the United States during high school. Without the opportunity to take academic courses in Spanish or other native languages, immigrant students’ access to grade-level content is highly dependent on their level of English proficiency. Multiple studies have linked English-only instruction to inferior student performance as well as increased ELL dropout rates, compared to bilingual or dual language education.¹³⁷ Across the country, some states and districts use native language instruction to help immigrants stay on track in subjects such as math and social studies, while also learning English.

C. Teacher Credentialing and Professional Development

In order to target interventions to different ELL subgroups—including long-term ELLs and newcomers—teachers should be trained to meet these groups’ instructional needs. Georgia requires all teachers in state-funded ESOL courses to hold a certificate or endorsement in ESOL. This funding model ensures that all ELLs are exposed to a teacher with the proper credentials for at least one period per day. However, it also places a heavy emphasis on instruction from ESOL “specialists,” and does not fund schools for the amount of time that ELLs spend in mainstream classes unless there are two teachers in the classroom—one of whom is responsible for teaching academic content to all students, and the other for providing ESOL support.

Like many other “new growth” states, however, Georgia reports a shortage of teachers with ESOL credentials.¹³⁸ As many school districts have seen their ELL populations rise steeply over a relatively short time period, administrators have struggled to develop their content-area teachers into ESOL specialists, and to provide the broader teaching force with effective strategies for reaching the ELLs in their classes.

I. Increased Opportunities for Teachers to Earn ESOL Credentials

The Georgia Department of Education and GCPS have taken a proactive approach to building the ranks of teachers who are prepared and authorized to teach ESOL. Content-area teachers can obtain a second certificate in ESOL by passing a state certification exam. Alternatively, teachers can add an “endorsement” in ESOL after completing three required, graduate-level courses. Administrators at both the state and district levels said they prefer the endorsement option, because it is a better guarantee that a teacher has participated in an extensive program of study focused on ELLs. However, the courses leading to an ESOL endorsement are costly and time-consuming: a full-time teacher would typically need three semesters to complete the three courses.

The Georgia Department of Education also provides a free, online ESOL endorsement program for teachers in districts with relatively small ELL populations, as well teachers in schools that serve a high proportion of low-income students.¹³⁹ This program is supported through a combination of federal Title I¹⁴⁰ and Title III funds, and approximately 250 teachers participate in it each year. Interviewees noted that the program has helped Georgia to make headway in increasing the number of ESOL teachers.

137 Patricia Gándara and Megan Hopkins, eds., *Forbidden Language: English Learners and Restrictive Language Policies* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 2010).

138 U.S. Department of Education, *Consolidated State Performance Report: Parts I and II. School Year 2009-10 for Georgia* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2011), www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/sy09-10part2/ga.pdf.

139 Districts with relatively small ELL populations are eligible to join the statewide “Georgia Title III Consortium” of districts that share federal funds for ELL education. This consortium allows these districts to access Title III funds that are typically only available to districts with larger numbers of ELLs.

140 Title I of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) distributes funding to schools and districts with a high proportion of students from low-income families.



The state authorized a few large districts, including GCPS, to offer their own ESOL endorsement programs. GCPS has also recently piloted an alternative, less time-consuming option for mainstream teachers to receive advanced training in building ELLs' language skills. The Teaching Academic Language and Content (TALC) program is a 30-hour training program delivered by the district's ESOL department after school. Teachers receive a small stipend, and they also have the option of taking the state ESOL certification exam.

The Georgia Department of Education and GCPS have taken a proactive approach to building the ranks of teachers who are prepared and authorized to teach ESOL.

Georgia does not provide a salary incentive for teachers to earn ESOL certificates or endorsements, however, which may pose an obstacle to meeting districts' staffing needs in this high-priority subject. Interviewees noted that some teachers are reluctant to pursue a second credential, as they anticipate an increase in responsibility without an accompanying increase in pay.

2. Professional Development Options for Mainstream Teachers

Raising ELL achievement in all academic subjects requires a professional development strategy that extends beyond ESOL specialists, and builds the skills of all mainstream teachers who have ELLs in their classes. At one of our study high schools, over 60 teachers had received training in the research-based Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model, which aims to provide content-area teachers in subjects such as math, science, and social studies the tools to build ELLs' understanding of the "academic language" of each discipline.¹⁴¹ ESOL Coordinators in GCPS high schools play an important role in delivering this type of professional development to the mainstream teaching staff. In some schools, ESOL Coordinators also conduct classroom visits and provide teachers with feedback on their efforts to support ELLs.

Despite these promising examples of professional development focused on ELLs, such training is not mandatory for content-area teachers in Gwinnett County; rather, the district offers this training to schools as part of a broader menu of school improvement resources. Thus, schools must balance their limited professional development time and funding among several pressing initiatives, including the implementation of the Common Core.

3. Budget Cuts Contribute to Staffing and Class Size Issues

The combination of budget cuts and the recent decline in ELL enrollment has meant a reduction in ESOL teachers and support staff in Gwinnett County and elsewhere. The International Newcomers Center recently lost several full-time staff positions, and two of the schools in this study reported that they have reduced their team of ESOL teachers over the past several years. Still, GCPS has avoided the widespread layoffs seen in many districts; instead, most dually-certified teachers have kept their jobs and have been reassigned to other academic departments, where they continue to teach ELLs along with other students.

Budget cuts have also brought rising class sizes statewide. Prior to the recession, state policy limited the size of high school ESOL courses to 18 students with one teacher (or 20 students with one teacher and one paraprofessional). This provision allowed teachers to provide ELLs with individualized assistance, acknowledging that these students often need more support than their English-proficient peers. However, districts have been allowed to waive these class size requirements since the 2010-11 school year, in light of the "financial and staff constraints that school districts are experiencing."¹⁴² Interviewees at the state level note that many districts have increased their ESOL class sizes incrementally.

¹⁴¹ For more information on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model, see Pearson, "About Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol - SIOP," accessed February 26, 2014. <http://siop.pearson.com/about-siop/>.

¹⁴² Georgia Department of Education, *ESOL/ Title III Resource Guide, 2011-2012*.



D. Not Enough Time: Credit Accumulation and Graduation Challenges for ELLs

Across all of our study states, the issue of *time* emerged as a major concern among high school administrators, teachers, and counselors. ELLs must develop their language skills, complete required high school credits, and prepare for college and careers, all within a few years. National education experts Deborah Short and Shannon Fitzsimmons have written that adolescent ELLs must perform “double the work” of native English speakers, as they are “learning English at the same time they are studying core content areas through English.”¹⁴³ Due to the extra demands on ELLs, extended time plays a critical role in high school completion—including during the school day, additional out-of-school time, and in some cases extra years in high school.

Across all of our study states, the issue of time emerged as a major concern among high school administrators, teachers, and counselors.

In general, high school ELLs have less flexibility in their schedules than other students, as they have to complete required ESOL classes in addition to their core courses in subjects such as English, mathematics, science, and social studies. While these dedicated language development classes are critical to developing English proficiency, there is a trade-off between the amount of time spent in them and other core classes, as well as extracurricular activities.

The time crunch has become particularly acute over the past several years, as many Georgia districts have coped with state budget cuts by shortening the regular school year. Only 34 percent of school districts maintained a traditional, 180-day school calendar in FY 2013, compared to 90 percent of districts in FY 2009.¹⁴⁴

Only 34 percent of school districts maintained a traditional, 180-day school calendar in FY 2013.

I. End-of-Course Tests Create Competing Incentives for Schools

The issues of time and credit accumulation are intertwined with the topic of assessments, as students must take statewide tests in core subject areas; these tests hold high stakes for students as well as for schools and districts. As of 2011-12, Georgia requires all graduates to pass 11 specific core courses throughout their high school career, and to take End-of-Course Tests (EOCTs) in each of them.¹⁴⁵ Notably, a student does not necessarily have to pass the EOCT in order to pass the class and fulfill graduation requirements; the EOCT counts as 20 percent of the course grade.¹⁴⁶ Schools are held accountable, however, for their students' rates of passing the EOCTs. Schools with the lowest overall scores on these tests—as well as those with the largest gaps between the highest-achieving and lowest-achieving subgroups—can be identified as “Priority,” “Focus,” or “Alert” schools, triggering intervention from the Georgia Department of Education.¹⁴⁷ According to our interviewees, this policy can create a situation of competing incentives for schools when it comes to deciding which courses students should take. While schools need to help students progress toward graduation as quickly as possible, they also have an incentive to ensure that students are prepared to succeed on the EOCTs, which are administered in English. Schools can choose to offer sheltered sections of core courses for ELLs in subjects such as mathematics and science, but students taking these classes must still take the

¹⁴³ Short and Fitzsimmons, *Double the Work: Challenges and Solutions to Acquiring Language and Academic Literacy for Adolescent English Language Learners*.

¹⁴⁴ Johnson, *Survey Says: Trouble for Schools*.

¹⁴⁵ This series of tests replaces Georgia's comprehensive high school exit examination. However, students must still pass the Georgia High School Writing Test in order to graduate. The main administration of this test takes place in 11th grade, though students who do not pass have multiple opportunities to retake the test before the end of 12th grade.

¹⁴⁶ Georgia Department of Education, “End of Course Tests (EOCT),” accessed February 14, 2014, www.doe.k12.ga.us/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/EOCT.aspx.

¹⁴⁷ Georgia Department of Education, “Georgia's College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCPRI) and ESEA Flexibility” (presented to Superintendents and School Leadership, March 2012), www.doe.k12.ga.us/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Accountability/Documents/CCPRI%20and%20ESEA%20flexibility%20for%20RESAs%203-28-12.pdf.



regular EOCTs. Unlike some states, Georgia does not offer ELLs the option to take state assessments in their native language.

As a result, high schools in Georgia sometimes delay placing ELLs with low English proficiency in core courses, which further reduces these students' chances of graduating on time. The Georgia Department of Education recommends waiting until ELLs attain at least an intermediate to advanced level of English proficiency¹⁴⁸ before attempting two required English courses—Ninth Grade Literature and Composition and American Literature and Composition—due to the complex language skills required to pass the EOCTs aligned with these courses.¹⁴⁹ Many other core courses also require strong academic literacy skills, and in some cases ELLs are discouraged from taking them before they have a strong command of English. Interviewees described instances of ELLs being held back in 9th or 10th grade because they lacked core credits—though Gwinnett County has made an effort to eliminate this practice.

High schools in Georgia sometimes delay placing ELLs with low English proficiency in core courses.

While ELLs are building their English proficiency, they are often placed in a number of elective courses. Districts have the autonomy to decide whether ESOL courses—which are language development courses specifically for ELLs at one of four proficiency levels—will count as core credits toward the required four years of English for high school graduation, or whether they will be treated as elective credits.¹⁵⁰ This decision holds significant implications for students' prospects of graduating within the traditional four-year timeline. This issue reflects a central tension between rigor and access: as states strive to align their graduation requirements with the demands of college and careers, policy changes can have large, sometimes unanticipated consequences for ELLs.

For some ELLs, including recently arrived immigrants, expanding the high school timeline may be necessary to allow them to complete graduation requirements and prepare for postsecondary education. Georgia's new accountability system, the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI), may alleviate the time crunch by assessing schools based on both four-year (on-time) and five-year (extended) graduation rates. Extended graduation rates offer schools and districts an incentive to retain and support students who do not have enough credits to graduate after four years.¹⁵¹ Further, the CCRPI may ease some of the pressure on high schools to demonstrate high passing rates on EOCTs. Schools will still be evaluated on the basis of these test scores, but the CCRPI also includes many other indicators of a school's performance in preparing its graduates for postsecondary education.

2. Beyond the School Day: Summer School and Other Expanded Learning Opportunities

Educators in GCPS found summer school to be a particularly effective strategy for helping ELLs to maximize learning time. Summer school is “basically mandatory” for high school ELLs, allowing them an opportunity to take sheltered core courses that may not be offered at their regular high schools, along with ESOL classes. Approximately 475 ELLs participated in summer school in GCPS in 2012, and these students earned a total of 863 core credits toward graduation. The district has dedicated a significant portion of their Title III funds to support ELLs' participation in summer school, allowing these students to take classes tuition-free; non-ELLs must pay \$225 per course. As summer school is only offered at a few locations throughout the district, some schools use Title I funds to provide transportation for low-income students. By participating every year, students can make substantial progress toward fulfilling their graduation requirements.

148 Specifically, the Georgia Department of Education recommends that students have a Composite Proficiency Level of 4.3-4.8 on ACCESS for ELLs—the state's English language proficiency exam—plus a “strong proficiency score in reading.”

149 Georgia Department of Education, *ESOL/ Title III Resource Guide, 2011-2012*.

150 *Ibid.*

151 Georgia Department of Education, “2013 CCRPI Indicators,” October 11, 2013, www.gadoe.org/CCRPI/Documents/2013%20CCRPI%20Indicators%2010.11.13.pdf.



Nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education also play an important role in providing academic enrichment for ELLs beyond the school day. In DeKalb County, for instance, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has hosted the Youth Futures afterschool program for refugee students—supported by federal Refugee Youth funds—for the past 12 years. The daily program served approximately 90 students at two high schools in Fall 2012, with a curriculum that focused on building language skills through project-based learning, creative writing, oral storytelling, and visual art. During the summer, students participate in cultural fieldtrips, service-learning activities, and college visits. Participants in the program generally have stronger outcomes than their ELL peers: for instance, all seniors in IRC’s Youth Futures program graduated on time in the 2011-12 school year.¹⁵²

Educators in GCPS found summer school to be a particularly effective strategy for helping ELLs to maximize learning time.

Beginning in 2006, the University of Georgia’s Center for Latino Achievement and Success in Education (CLASE) hosted a Summer Academy for Language, Science and Aspirations (SALSA) for rising 9th and 10th grade ELLs. The SALSA program, conducted in collaboration with GCPS and Clarke County School District, was designed to build participating students’ academic English skills and science knowledge, while also raising their college-going aspirations.¹⁵³ CLASE discontinued the summer program in 2011 due to lack of funding, but it continues to monitor the outcomes of former participants to determine the long-term impacts of the program on retention, graduation, and college entrance and completion rates.

VI. Preparation for College and Careers

The previous section explored strategies that can help first- and second-generation youth overcome barriers to high school graduation. However, obtaining a high school diploma will not automatically place these young people on a path to postsecondary education or a job paying a family-sustaining wage. Youth also need rigorous courses and experiences that prepare them for college and careers.

Among youth who graduate from high school in GCPS, the odds of enrolling directly in postsecondary education vary by race and ethnicity, as well as academic achievement. District-wide, 64 percent of graduates from 2006-07 to 2008-09 enrolled in postsecondary education in the fall after high school graduation. Of these college-going students, nearly 83 percent enrolled in a four-year college,¹⁵⁴ which is significantly higher than the national average of 61 percent.¹⁵⁵ The remaining 17 percent enrolled in a two-year college.¹⁵⁶ Latino students, once again, had the lowest college enrollment rates of any group, even after accounting for differences in eighth-grade test scores. Racial gaps in college enrollment between Asian, Black, and white students with similar eighth-grade test scores were much smaller.¹⁵⁷ Georgia does not yet publish similar statewide data on the disaggregated college enrollment outcomes of high school graduates.

Latino students had the lowest college enrollment rates of any group.

¹⁵² Authors’ interview with International Rescue Committee staff, December 2012.

¹⁵³ For more information, see University of Georgia College of Education, “SALSA,” accessed February 26, 2014, www.coe.uga.edu/clase/salsa/.

¹⁵⁴ Strategic Data Project, *Exploring Postsecondary Attainment*.

¹⁵⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “College Enrollment and Work Activity of 2011 High School Graduates” (Economic News Release, April 19, 2012), www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/hsgec_04192012.htm.

¹⁵⁶ Strategic Data Project, *Exploring Postsecondary Attainment*.

¹⁵⁷ Strategic Data Project, “Gwinnett County Public Schools: Strategic Data Project College-Going Analyses,” PowerPoint presentation, January 7, 2011. On file with authors.



This section describes some of the obstacles that first- and second-generation youth face in preparing for college and careers, as well as strategies at the state, district, and school levels directed at underrepresented groups. These strategies include: exposure to college-level academic content, opportunities to build career skills, and help navigating the college planning process and affording postsecondary education.

A. Access to College-Ready Content

National research demonstrates that the most crucial factor influencing one's chances of earning a bachelor's degree is the rigor of the high school curriculum.¹⁵⁸ Advanced courses are particularly important for students from underrepresented minority groups, low-income students, and those who will be the first in their families to attend college.¹⁵⁹

Georgia has made an effort to expand promising college-preparatory strategies—including Advanced Placement (AP) courses, dual-enrollment options, and early college high schools—to reach students from underrepresented groups. However, ELLs and other students from immigrant families face considerable barriers in accessing these programs' benefits, again reflecting the abiding tension between access and rigor.

The most crucial factor influencing one's chances of earning a bachelor's degree is the rigor of the high school curriculum.

I. Advanced Placement

Perhaps the most well-known college-preparatory initiative, the AP system offers rigorous courses for high school students and allows participants to earn college credit for achieving qualifying scores on the national exams associated with these courses. Our interviewees in GCPS high schools expressed strong support for the AP system, and discussed concerted efforts to increase the participation of immigrants and underrepresented minority students, as well as ELLs, in these courses. At one school, the ESOL coordinators promote ELL participation in AP courses in subjects such as math, science, and computer science, as these classes are less language-based and rely instead on quantitative and technology skills. This school also encourages native Spanish speakers to take the AP Spanish course, in order to expose them to the demands of a college-level course and allow them the opportunity to earn postsecondary credit. As evidence of GCPS' efforts to promote AP course-taking, all of the district's traditional high schools were designated as "AP Honors Schools" by the Georgia Department of Education in 2012. Eight schools were recognized as "AP Access and Support Schools" for the high rates of AP participation and test performance among Latino and Black students.¹⁶⁰ Significant increases in AP participation rates for minority students district-wide also helped GCPS to earn the national Broad Prize in 2010.¹⁶¹

2. Dual Enrollment and Early College Schools

Dual enrollment provides high school students with the chance to take college courses—often on a college campus—and earn both postsecondary and high school credit.¹⁶² Many college access initiatives use dual

158 Clifford Adelman, *The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion from High School through College* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2006). www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/toolboxrevisit/toolbox.pdf; Clifford Adelman, *Answers in the Toolbox: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns and Bachelor's Degree Attainment* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1999). www2.ed.gov/pubs/Toolbox/index.html.

159 Ty M. Cruce, et al., "The Relationships between First-generation Status and Academic Self-Efficacy among Entering College Students" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Philadelphia, November 17-19, 2005), http://nsse.iub.edu/pdf/conference_presentations/2005/First-Generation%20Academic%20Self-Efficacy%20-%20ASHE.pdf.

160 Gwinnett County Public Schools, "20 GCPS high schools named 'AP Honor Schools' by GaDOE," *Spotlight*, May 23, 2013, www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/Spotlight.nsf/#link6.

161 The Broad Prize for Urban Education, *Gwinnett County Public Schools Georgia District Fact Sheet*.

162 Melinda Mechur Karp et al., *The Postsecondary Achievement of Participants in Dual Enrollment: An Analysis of Student Outcomes*



enrollment as a means of building college readiness, promoting a more seamless transition between secondary and postsecondary education, reducing the time that it takes to earn a college degree, and lowering college costs for students and families. Many immigrant students in Georgia face barriers to participating in dual enrollment, however, including academic requirements, transportation challenges, fees, and legal immigration status.

High school students can receive state funding to participate in a variety of dual enrollment initiatives, broadly referred to as College Credit Now programs. The Accel scholarship program covers the cost of tuition for dual enrollment in academic, credit-bearing college courses in core subjects, such as math, science, and English. Academic qualifications and other criteria for participation are determined by local agreements between colleges and school districts. At Georgia Gwinnett College, for instance, participants must have at least a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) and achieve a minimum score on a national college admission test (e.g., the SAT or ACT). For students who are interested in career-focused dual enrollment, the HOPE Grant covers tuition in technical college courses.

Many immigrant students in Georgia face barriers to participating in dual enrollment.

While most dual enrollment options are geared to high-achieving students, the national “early college” model provides dual enrollment opportunities to youth who may not have traditionally had access to such programs, including low-income, underrepresented minority, and first-generation college-going students, and students who have average or below-average academic performance. Early college high schools are generally small schools that function as partnerships between a local school district and an institution of higher education. Their goal is to provide all students with the opportunity to earn one to two years of transferrable college credit—as well as an associate’s degree, in some cases—by high school graduation. The Georgia Early College Initiative, which is directed by the USG, has created ten small, early college schools throughout Georgia since 2005, with start-up support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation. Tuition for college courses is covered by the Accel scholarship.

The USG reports that 86 percent of Georgia’s early college students in 2011 were students of color—but does not report data on the proportion of these students who were Latino. The authors were able to access detailed demographic data on Latino and ELL enrollment from four of Georgia’s ten early college high schools. This subset of early college schools served a significantly smaller share of ELLs and Latino students than district and state averages.¹⁶³ In some cases, these small schools may lack the capacity to provide the same type of specialized instruction that ELLs would receive in larger high schools. These schools typically do not have enough ELLs to generate funding for a full-time ESOL-certified teacher, and often share staff positions with other schools.

Early college and dual enrollment students generally must provide their own transportation to college campuses. Interviewees said that lack of transportation is a common barrier for students from low-income, immigrant families. As one interviewee recalled, an early college school in DeKalb County saw a precipitous drop in its Latino enrollment after the district stopped providing a bus for students from a lower-income, predominately Latino neighborhood. Transportation challenges are particularly acute for unauthorized immigrant youth—as well as those with unauthorized parents—as proof of lawful presence is required to obtain a driver’s license in Georgia. These transportation issues have grown more acute since the passage of House Bill 87 in 2011, which allows police to ask individuals for proof of legal presence if they are detained

in Two States (New York: The National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, 2007), <http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/dual-enrollment-student-outcomes.html>.

¹⁶³ The Georgia Department of Education only published 2010-11 Report Cards for four of Georgia’s ten early college high schools. At three of these schools, ELLs comprised less than 1 percent of enrollment in 2010-11. The fourth school had an ELL enrollment of 2 percent, compared to a district average of 11 percent. At the same school, Latinos comprised 6 percent of students, compared to a district average of 12 percent.



for a minor traffic violation; interviewees report that this policy has caused many families to avoid driving out of fear of immigration enforcement. However, DACA has alleviated transportation challenges for some families, as youth with deferred action are able to obtain a driver's license in Georgia as of this report's writing.

The cost of college fees and textbooks may also pose a barrier for youth from low-income families. The Accel program and the HOPE Grant can be used to pay tuition costs, but they no longer cover mandatory student fees assessed by local colleges. At Georgia Perimeter College, early college high school students are charged \$275 per semester in fees, which may be out-of-reach for many families. The college provides a few scholarships for low-income students who continue in the program after the first semester; still, the vast majority of students must pay this fee. Additionally, while the Georgia State Finance Commission has historically provided textbook stipends for dual enrollment students, it discontinued this support in the 2012-13 school year.

3. Legal-Status Barriers to College Preparation

Legal status is a major barrier to access for both early college high schools and dual enrollment programs, which are effectively closed to the 60 percent of first-generation youth who are unauthorized, regardless of whether they have received deferred action through DACA. In order to access state dual enrollment funding through Accel or the HOPE Grant, students must be U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents; they must also be able to demonstrate that they have been Georgia residents for at least one year.¹⁶⁴ Without access to these funding streams, DACA recipients would instead need to pay nonresident tuition rates for college courses—effectively erasing the incentive of earning college credits while in high school. This funding issue has implications for access to small schools and alternative programs based on a dual enrollment model, such as early college schools. As all students are legally entitled to a free public education in grades K-12,¹⁶⁵ regardless of immigration status, school districts typically prohibit their employees from asking students or their families for proof of legal residency. Georgia's restrictions on dual enrollment funding, however, put these schools in the position of verifying immigration status as a condition for access. For instance, Georgia Perimeter College, in partnership with the DeKalb County School District, operates an early college high school for students ages 16 to 20 who have previously dropped out of school. Interviewees reported that students are required to demonstrate legal residency in order to enroll in this school because the dual enrollment program relies on Accel funds.

Efforts to increase participation in accelerated academic programs are likely to take on a heightened sense of urgency, as the new College and Career Ready Performance Index awards points to schools based on the number of students earning high school credit through these programs. It remains to be seen whether these accelerated programs—which have been shown to increase college-going and postsecondary outcomes among youth from disadvantaged groups—will become more accessible to the groups that stand to benefit the most, including immigrants.

B. Building Students' Career Skills

In addition to college-preparatory opportunities, career-oriented programs play an important role in advancing the employment and economic prospects of youth from low-income, immigrant families. Career and technical education (CTE),¹⁶⁶ out-of-school-time programs, and internships allow young people to explore future employment options and build both technical expertise and “soft” skills valued in the

¹⁶⁴ Georgia Student Finance Commission, *2012-2013 Accel Program Regulations* (Tucker, GA: Georgia Student Finance Commission, 2012), www.gsfc.org/Main/publishing/pdf/2012/2013-Accel.pdf.

¹⁶⁵ Under the 1982 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Plyler v. Doe*, public schools may not deny primary and secondary education to students on the basis of legal immigration status. See Michael A. Olivas, “*Plyler v. Doe*: Still Guaranteeing Unauthorized Immigrant Children's Right to Attend U.S. Public Schools,” *Migration Information Source*, September 9, 2010, www.migrationpolicy.org/article/plyler-v-doe-still-guaranteeing-unauthorized-immigrant-childrens-right-attend-us-public.

¹⁶⁶ In Georgia, the term “career and technical education” (CTE) is also referred to as Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE).



workforce. Nationwide, stakeholders from the education and business communities have called for the revitalization and reform of high school CTE programs, with an emphasis on models that integrate rigorous academics with knowledge and skills that are relevant to specific career fields and that lead to industry-recognized credentials.¹⁶⁷

CTE stands to play an important role in preparing Georgia's immigrant youth to fill critical workforce shortages caused by the retirement of older workers. The state faces an impending skills gap in many fields: for every four skilled tradesmen that retire, for instance, only one new worker enters the profession.¹⁶⁸ By expanding access to high-quality career training for Latinos—the state's youngest demographic group—Georgia can continue to meet employer needs while also promoting economic advancement among youth from immigrant families. Immigrant teenagers are often motivated by financial pressures to enter the workforce and contribute to family income; they often have stronger English skills than their parents, allowing them to find higher-paying jobs. In mixed-status families, second-generation youth have far better employment prospects than unauthorized immigrant adults.

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For many first-generation youth, DACA has offered an opportunity to obtain temporary work authorization. For this group of young people, programs that provide exposure to middle-skill and high-skill careers can raise their professional aspirations and connect them to better-paying jobs. Previous MPI research also found that ELLs who work while in high school are more likely to enroll in college.¹⁶⁹ Employment may provide opportunities for ELLs to build their English proficiency in a real-world setting, while also earning money for college.

In this area, Georgia's promising practices include career counseling, comprehensive CTE programs, and community partnerships that provide mentorship and career exploration opportunities for targeted groups of students.

I. Career Counseling

Recent state policies have emphasized career planning and skill-building for all Georgia students. The *Building Resourceful Individuals to Develop Georgia's Economy (BRIDGE) Act*, passed in 2010, requires middle and high schools to provide career counseling and regularly-scheduled career advising for all students. The *BRIDGE Act* also requires all 8th grade students to choose a career area and to complete an Individual Graduation Plan, which is intended to map out the high school courses needed to prepare youth for their chosen careers and postsecondary fields of study.¹⁷⁰ Middle school students must take career assessments to identify their occupational interests; the results of these assessments are used to create the Individual Graduation Plans, which are saved electronically and updated annually. One challenge, however, is a shortage of counseling staff needed to make this planning process individualized and meaningful.

2. Access to Career and Technical Education in High School

¹⁶⁷ For more information, see the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium, "CTE: Learning that works for America," accessed February 26, 2014, www.careertech.org/.

¹⁶⁸ These predictions reflect ten-year labor market projections, with 2010 as the base year. State Workforce Investment Board, *Georgia Integrated State Plan*.

¹⁶⁹ Flores, Batalova, and Fix, *The Educational Trajectories of English Language Learners in Texas*.

¹⁷⁰ Georgia Department of Education, "What is the BRIDGE law?" August 2011, www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Documents/BRIDGE-separate-card.pdf.



Gwinnett County Public Schools offers a strong set of hands-on career training opportunities. GCPS students can enroll in partial-day CTE programs at a district-operated charter school that provides instruction in 14 career fields, ranging from architecture to health care and marketing. By concentrating these programs in a single location, the school is able to provide more appropriate equipment and instructional facilities than a single high school could support. All high school juniors and seniors are eligible to participate, and GCPS provides transportation between the student’s main school and the CTE school. Students who complete all of the courses in a pathway—a defined set of courses in a specific career field—can take “end-of-pathway assessments,” which are based on national industry certifications, occupational assessments, and state licensures.¹⁷¹ Some of the programs confer dual high school and college credit, through an articulation agreement with Gwinnett Technical College. These courses are funded by the HOPE Grant, which covers tuition for dual enrollment in technical colleges. Interviewees at our three study high schools reported that ELL students frequently participate in these CTE programs. The CTE school has two ESOL teachers who provide language support for ELLs.

Recent state policies have emphasized career planning and skill-building for all Georgia students.

3. Community Partnerships that Encourage Career Exploration

External partners also provide opportunities for career exploration and enrichment in GCPS, and their programs often target students from underrepresented groups. As one example, a partnership between GCPS and Georgia Tech aims to increase the number of Latinos pursuing postsecondary education in STEM fields. As part of the project, approximately 80 Latino students—including ELLs and non-ELLs—participate in afterschool STEM courses and receive mentoring from current Georgia Tech students.¹⁷² Weekend and summer programs offer opportunities for career exploration and college visits. Georgia Tech graduate students and faculty also provide classroom support and professional development for science and math teachers in GCPS, with the long-term goal of creating a comprehensive system of mentoring and enrichment for students and teachers from grades K-12.¹⁷³

Interviewees also highlighted GCPS’ strong partnerships with the local business community, which serves as a valuable resource for formal and informal career mentoring and internship opportunities. The district offers work-based learning programs, which allow juniors and seniors to participate in internships, apprenticeships, or cooperative learning programs and receive elective credit, along with work-release time. At one of our study schools, students who complete a marketing class can participate in a paid internship in a professional office setting for 15 to 20 hours per week. Interviewees noted that very few ELLs participate in this program, however.

4. Legal-Status Barriers and Transportation Challenges Limit Career Preparation

Many of the same barriers that affect immigrant students’ participation in college-preparatory programs also limit their opportunities for career training. Legal immigration status is a necessary precondition for all state-funded dual enrollment programs, including those leading to a technical degree or certificate; it also plays an undeniable role in shaping students’ broader career choices and employment opportunities. And interviewees again cited transportation as a key barrier to participation in work-based learning opportunities, affecting both unauthorized and legal immigrant youth. While GCPS provides transportation to its CTE-focused charter school, students participating in internships or other career-related programs must arrange their own transportation.

171 Georgia Department of Education, “Georgia’s Technical Skill Attainment Inventory 2013-2014,” accessed February 26, 2014, www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Pages/CTAE-Georgia-Assessments.aspx.

172 Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics, and Computing, Georgia Institute of Technology, “Pathways in Gwinnett,” accessed February 26, 2014, www.ceismc.gatech.edu/cmp/pathways-gwinnett.

173 Georgia Institute of Technology, “GoSTEM – About Us,” accessed February 26, 2014, <http://gostem.gatech.edu/en/about-us>.



C. Sources of “College Knowledge:” How Immigrant Youth Navigate the Higher Education System

Beyond academic knowledge and relevant career skills, youth also need to build “college knowledge,” which refers to the formal and informal information that students need to enroll in college and navigate the higher education system.¹⁷⁴ College knowledge involves an understanding of complex processes such as applying for admission; choosing a college; accessing financial aid and scholarships; and making critical decisions about courses, majors, and degrees to pursue. This entire college-going process is all the more daunting for families that have a limited understanding of the U.S. education system and do not speak English proficiently.¹⁷⁵ Immigrant and refugee families are often unaware of the differences between two-year and four-year colleges in areas such as cost, language services, and academic support services; let alone the process of transferring between these institutions. Our interviewees added that immigrant parents are often unprepared to assist their children with making the high-stakes decisions that they face during the postsecondary transition, and these informational barriers can lead to intergenerational conflicts, family stress, and students’ disengagement from school.

Immigrant students in Georgia are particularly susceptible to misinformation about college and uncertainty about the legal status requirements for enrollment in certain USG institutions. Interviewees explained that since the USG Board of Regents’ 2010 decision to bar unauthorized immigrants from enrolling in the state’s most competitive institutions,¹⁷⁶ they have noticed widespread confusion regarding colleges’ admissions requirements. As one teacher stated, “The more this issue is in the news, the more that immigrants think that they can’t go to college.” Our findings also suggest that there has been a broader spillover effect on legal immigrant students, including those in mixed-status families, many of whom may mistakenly believe that they cannot apply for college if their parents are not legal residents or U.S. citizens. While the majority of unauthorized immigrants are Latino, interviewees also noted that there are Korean students who are unauthorized immigrants or have unauthorized immigrant parents and are similarly affected by Georgia’s college admissions and financial aid policies.

Immigrant students in Georgia are particularly susceptible to misinformation about college.

Strategies for improving immigrant students’ college knowledge include bilingual counseling, campus visits, and college fairs that are specifically designed for this population. School districts, nonprofit community groups, and state and federal initiatives all play a role in facilitating access to information about college, though inadequate funding remains a barrier to meeting the demand for such services.

I. College Counseling and Campus Visits for Immigrant Youth

Gwinnett County’s district-level ESOL department has recently strengthened its partnership with the counseling department, in order to ensure that counselors receive training on specific issues affecting ELLs. The ESOL department also strategically deploys bilingual support staff—including three Adolescent Outreach Specialists and two counselors from the International Newcomers’ Center—to advise ELLs at the lowest proficiency levels throughout the district. This team, which is supported by federal Title III funds,

¹⁷⁴ David T. Conley, *Redefining College Readiness* (Eugene, OR: Educational Policy Improvement Center, 2001), www.aypf.org/documents/RedefiningCollegeReadiness.pdf; James E. Rosenbaum, “The Complexities of College for All: Beyond Fairy-tale Dreams,” *Sociology of Education* 84, no. 2 (2011): 113-17.

¹⁷⁵ Louis G. Tornatzky, Richard Cutler, and Jongho Lee, *College Knowledge: What Latino Parents Need to Know and Why They Don’t Know It* (Los Angeles: Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, 2002), www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED469295.pdf.

¹⁷⁶ Unauthorized immigrants are barred from enrollment in institutions that, for the two most recent academic years, did not admit all academically qualified applicants. The institutions in this category currently include: University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, Georgia State University, Georgia Medical College, and Georgia College and State University.



works with school administrators and counselors to deliver college counseling sessions for immigrant students and their parents in Spanish, Korean, and Vietnamese. GCPS also uses Title III funds to provide college tours specifically for ELLs. These visits allow students to explore various institutions of higher education in the Atlanta metropolitan area. One of the schools visited during the fieldwork also received a grant from the College Board to take students in AP courses—including ELLs and non-ELLs—on a more extensive tour of East Coast colleges, including those in the Washington, DC area. The trip agenda was intentionally designed to include institutions that admit students regardless of legal immigration status.

In spite of these innovative efforts, school counselors throughout the state lack the capacity to provide adequate college planning assistance to the broader population of immigrant students, including ELLs and non-ELLs. Counselors are covered under the state’s general, weighted education funding formula, Quality Basic Education (QBE)—but as the state has not fully funded QBE over the past several years and districts have been forced to make cuts, non-teaching positions have been particularly vulnerable.

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Moreover, Georgia’s school counselor allotments traditionally have been based on the number of general education students per counselor—excluding special populations, such as ELLs, students with disabilities, and gifted students from the calculation used to assign counseling staff to a particular school. In practice, this means that counselors in schools with large numbers of students in special programs (such as ESOL or special education) typically have higher and more complex caseloads.

The State Education Finance Study Commission addressed this problem in its 2012 recommendations. The commission proposed increasing overall funding for school counselors over a three-year period, standardizing counselor-to-student ratios across the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and changing the funding formula to include ELLs and students with disabilities in the student-to-counselor ratio starting in FY 2015.¹⁷⁷

While GCPS already has a strong district-level partnership between the ESOL department and the counseling department, interviewees still reported that counselors seldom have time to focus on the specific needs of ELLs and often feel unprepared to address their concerns. One of our study high schools reported that it used to have a counselor dedicated to serving ELLs, as well as a specific teacher who was responsible for monitoring and assisting former ELLs after they exited the ESOL program. Due to staffing cuts, the school can no longer maintain an ELL counselor or assign these responsibilities to a particular teacher.

2. Community Partners Supporting College Knowledge

Local nonprofit and philanthropic organizations, along with institutions of higher education and the USG Board of Regents, play a critical role in supplementing the college- and career-preparation services provided by local school districts, and building college knowledge among immigrant youth and families. The International Rescue Committee’s Youth Futures program for refugee students in DeKalb County includes a focus on college exploration and application assistance, and dedicates a portion of its summer program to visiting local college campuses. In Gwinnett County, the Asian American Legal Advocacy Center (AALAC) provides workshops on the college-going process that are attended by over 200 participants. The workshops are publicized in Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Japanese local media, and include interpretation assistance.

¹⁷⁷ The State Education Finance Study Commission also recommended including students in gifted and remedial programs in the student-to-counselor ratios starting in fiscal year (FY) 2016. Georgia Department of Education, “State Education Finance Study Commission Summary of Recommendations,” accessed February 26, 2014, www.gadoe.org/Finance-and-Business-Operations/Financial-Review/Documents/HB%20192%20Documents/Final%20HB%20192%20Documents/Summary%20of%20Commission%20Recommendations.pdf.



Numerous college access initiatives focus on Latinos, a group that is particularly underrepresented in higher education in Georgia. The Latin American Association (LAA), an immigrant-serving nonprofit organization in Atlanta, hosts annual college access conferences and Latino Youth Leadership conferences. These events draw over 1,000 middle and high school students, along with hundreds of parents and teachers, and provide mentoring activities and bilingual workshops. The conferences are typically located on college campuses in the Atlanta metropolitan area, and are co-sponsored by the USG Board of Regents and Communities in Schools of Georgia. Another college fair at Georgia Tech focuses on STEM degree and career opportunities for Latinos. The Hispanic Scholarship Fund also organizes large-scale college fairs targeted to Latino students, with support from private corporations and foundations.

In Gwinnett County, the Asian American Legal Advocacy Center provides workshops on the college-going process.

3. State and Federal Initiatives and Funding

Georgia has received over \$12 million of federal College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) funds since 2008—which have been matched by state funds of \$6 million—to support postsecondary readiness and increase college success among low-income and underrepresented minority students, as well as among adults who have some college education but never earned a degree.¹⁷⁸ Spearheading the CACG efforts, the USG Board of Regents sponsors community engagement events and college application workshops at schools and CBOs that predominately serve students of color. These events are staffed by volunteers who guide students through the process of submitting their college and financial aid applications—and these volunteers are trained to answer common questions related to legal immigration status. Another component of the CACG, the Near Peer Program, has been particularly popular in regions with large Latino populations. This program trains current college students to serve as mentors and role models for low-income high school students and assist with the college planning process.

D. College Affordability and Financial Aid

Affordability plays an indisputable role in access to college for first- and second-generation immigrant students. High school students from low-income families have higher college success rates if they receive financial aid.¹⁷⁹ However, access to financial aid is closely related to the issue of college knowledge; immigrants tend to underuse financial aid, and may have misperceptions about college costs.¹⁸⁰ Research has shown that Latino youth and families also tend to be particularly loan-averse,¹⁸¹ for this reason, maintaining low tuition prices and offering grant aid are critical components of efforts to promote college access. Immigrant youth are also likely to attend college part-time and work while going to school.¹⁸² Part-time students cannot access grants and scholarships that require full-time study.

Substantial state budget cuts have meant sharp increases in college tuition rates in Georgia during

¹⁷⁸ University System of Georgia, “College Access Challenge Grant,” updated February 15, 2013, www.usg.edu/educational_access/access_success/college_access_challenge_grant/.

¹⁷⁹ Noga O’Connor, Floyd M. Hammack, and Marc A. Scott, “Social Capital, Financial Knowledge, and Hispanic Student College Choices,” *Research in Higher Education* 51, no. 3 (2010): 195-219.

¹⁸⁰ Robert T. Teranishi, Carola Suárez-Orozco, and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, “Immigrants in Community Colleges,” *The Future of Children* 21, no. 1 (2011): 153-65; O’Connor, Hammack, and Scott, “Social Capital, Financial Knowledge, and Hispanic Student College Choices,” 195-219.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² Sandra Staklis and Laura Horn, *New Americans in Postsecondary Education: A Profile of Immigrant and Second-Generation American Undergraduates* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, 2012), <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012213.pdf>.



recent years. Between Fall 2008 and Fall 2012, resident tuition rates at USG institutions rose by an average of 70 percent.¹⁸³ The annual cost of full-time tuition and fees for state residents ranges from approximately \$3,330 at two-year colleges to nearly \$10,000 at research universities.¹⁸⁴ Technical college tuition rates are determined by local institutions, and are typically less expensive than USG colleges and universities. Overall, Georgia's two-year and four-year college costs remained slightly below national averages in the 2011-12 school year.¹⁸⁵

Between Fall 2008 and Fall 2012, resident tuition rates at USG institutions rose by an average of 70 percent.

DACA recipients and unauthorized immigrant youth are charged out-of-state tuition rates that are three to four times higher than in-state rates in Georgia's public colleges and universities. At Georgia Perimeter College, for instance, full-time out-of-state tuition and fees were approximately \$5,300 per semester in 2012-13, compared to approximately \$1,800 for state residents. Further, as DACA recipients are also ineligible for state or federal financial aid, they are disproportionately affected by rising college costs. Throughout our site visit, interviewees asserted that higher education is virtually unattainable for most DACA recipients and unauthorized immigrants, due to the high cost of out-of-state tuition.

DACA recipients and unauthorized immigrant youth are charged out-of-state tuition rates that are three to four times higher than in-state rates.

DACA recipients are able to work legally, which provides a new avenue for financing college tuition. For current students, DACA also increases the return-on-investment for higher education, since DACA recipients will be able to join their peers in the job market upon graduation.

In light of the significant financial needs of unauthorized youth, some of Georgia's privately funded scholarship programs award grants to academically qualified students regardless of immigration status. One such program annually awards scholarships to 120 low-income, Latino students pursuing full-time studies at USG institutions. Still, such opportunities are very competitive and typically do not cover the full cost of out-of-state tuition and fees.

At the local level, educators and advocates for immigrant students have established informal networks to share information on scholarship options available to DACA recipients and unauthorized immigrants. Some interviewees reported that they advise students to take online college classes, since some colleges charge a flat tuition rate for their online programs regardless of state residency. On some campuses, book-borrowing programs allow immigrant students to avoid buying expensive textbooks. Private colleges have also played an important role in providing scholarships and expanding access for high-achieving DACA recipients and unauthorized immigrant students—particularly for those who would have otherwise attended public research universities, but are unable to enroll due to their legal status.

Many first-generation immigrant students—and all second-generation students—do have legal status, however, and can benefit from Georgia's state financial aid programs. The Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) program is Georgia's lottery-funded scholarship system that provides financial assistance for students pursuing either full-time or part-time studies at Georgia public and private colleges and universities, as well as public technical colleges. There are various types of HOPE awards, based on a student's qualifications and the type of postsecondary education being pursued.

The HOPE Scholarship is a merit-based award for USG students who had a minimum 3.0 GPA in high school,

¹⁸³ Johnson, *FY 2013 Budget Analysis: Higher Education. A Review of the Enacted 2013 Budget*.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ The College Board, "In-State Tuition and Fees by State Sector, 2012-13 and 5-Year Percent Changes," accessed February 25, 2014, <http://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/in-state-tuition-fees-state-2013-14-and-5-year-percentage-changes>.



and maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA at key milestones during their college education. The HOPE Grant, on the other hand, funds technical college courses leading to a degree or diploma, as well as dual enrollment courses taken by high school students at technical colleges.

The HOPE program has been significantly curtailed in recent years, and remains in jeopardy.

HOPE scholarships and grants are not based on family income. As of the 2011-12 school year, Georgia was the only Southern state that did not have a statewide, need-based financial aid program.¹⁸⁶ However, Governor Nathan Deal's recent scholarship initiative, Realizing Educational Achievement Can Happen (REACH) will offer a new opportunity for current low-income¹⁸⁷ middle school students to earn college scholarships based on both need and merit. As a "promise scholarship," REACH guarantees college funding for current 7th grade students who are legal Georgia residents and who sign a pledge to achieve a minimum 2.5 GPA in core courses throughout high school, maintain a clean criminal and disciplinary record and strong attendance, and participate in the program's required mentorship activities.¹⁸⁸ REACH began on a limited basis during the 2012-13 school year by accepting middle school applicants from two counties—Douglas and Rabun—with plans to expand its scope each year.

The HOPE program has been significantly curtailed in recent years, and remains in jeopardy. Funds for HOPE Grants were cut by 53 percent between FY 2011 and FY 2014.¹⁸⁹

VII. Adult Education as an On-Ramp to Postsecondary Success

The adult education system serves many first- and second-generation youth who did not complete high school or have low English proficiency, either because they have dropped out or because they are late-arriving immigrants who never enrolled in K-12 schools. Adult education can provide an on-ramp to postsecondary education and career advancement—though as this section shows, this process is far from seamless and remains inaccessible to some groups of immigrant youth. That said, the adult education system has played a central, if overlooked, role in immigrant integration nationwide throughout the past century.

A. The Need for Adult Education among Georgia's Immigrant Youth

Data on the educational attainment of Georgia's immigrant youth demonstrate the scale of the task facing the adult education system. Among young adults ages 21 to 26—those who are beyond the age limits of the traditional K-12 education system—31 percent of first-generation immigrants lacked a high school diploma or its equivalent during the 2010-12 time period, compared to 13 percent of all Georgia youth and 11

¹⁸⁶ Cedric D. Johnson, *Making the Case for Need-Based Financial Aid in Georgia* (Atlanta, GA: Georgia Budget and Policy Institute, December 2011), <http://gbpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/case-for-need-based-financial-aid-20111208.pdf>.

¹⁸⁷ Income eligibility will be based on eligibility for the federal Free and Reduced Price Meals program, which has an income threshold of 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

¹⁸⁸ Georgia Student Finance Commission, GAcollege411, "REACH Georgia Scholarship Program Overview," accessed February 26, 2014, <http://secure.gacollege411.org/Financial Aid Planning/Scholarships/Grants and Scholarships/REACH Scholarship/REACH Scholarship.aspx>; Office of the Governor, State of Georgia, "Deal announces needs-based scholarship" (news release, February 6, 2012), http://gov.georgia.gov/00/press/detail/0,2668,165937316_180136645_181221085,00.html.

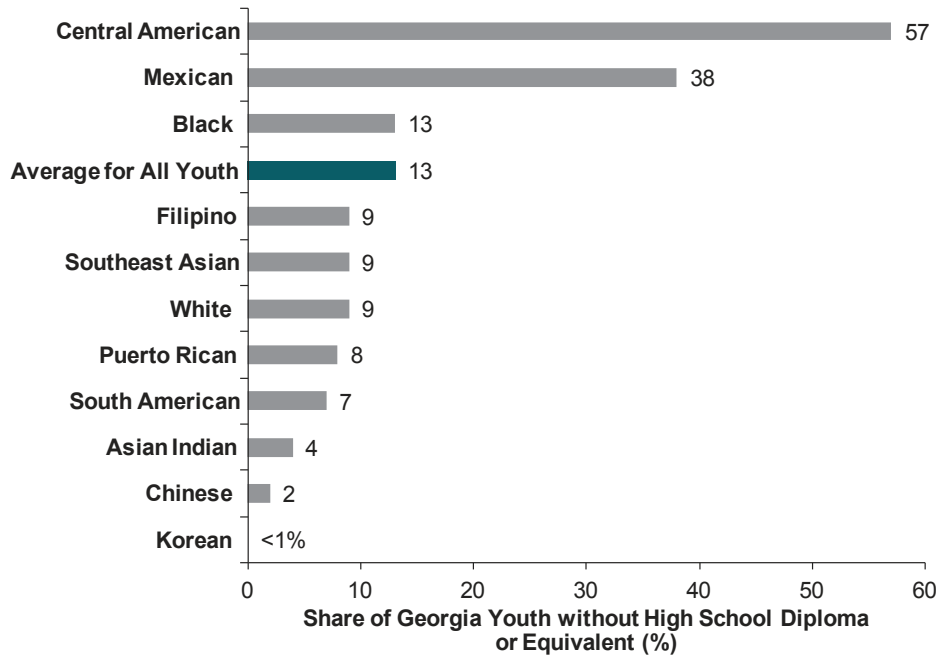
¹⁸⁹ Suggs, *Overview of Georgia's Fiscal 2014 Budget for Higher Ed*.



percent of all youth nationwide.¹⁹⁰ And regardless of immigrant generation, youth with Central American and Mexican origins have particularly low educational attainment (see Figure 7).

Patterns of high school attainment generally correspond to average family income, as groups that are more likely to be low-income are also the most likely to lack a high school diploma or equivalent. A notable exception is Chinese youth, who are among the most likely to be low income but are among the *least* likely to lack a high school diploma.

Figure 7. Shares of Georgia Youth (Ages 21-26) Without a High School Diploma or its Equivalent, by Selected Racial/Ethnic Groups, 2010-12



Note: Rates are shown for all youth reporting a certain ancestry/race regardless of immigrant generation. “Central American” youth include those with Costa Rican, Guatemalan, Honduran, Nicaraguan, Panamanian, or Salvadoran ancestry. “Southeast Asian” youth include those with Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, or Thai ancestry.

Source: MPI analysis of 2010-12 ACS data.

B. Enrollment in Georgia’s Adult Education System

The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) oversees publicly funded adult education in the state, serving approximately 60,000 students in 37 regional programs during 2011-12.¹⁹¹ The majority of adult education programs are delivered as noncredit courses at local technical colleges, though some regions of the state offer courses through K-12 school districts or other agencies.¹⁹² English as a Second Language (ESL) and adult basic education (ABE) courses are free to participants, though there is a fee to take the GED exam.¹⁹³ Forty-four percent of all the state’s adult education students were age 24 or younger in 2011-12.¹⁹⁴ ESL students made up 22 percent of all adult education enrollment.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ MPI analysis of 2010-12 ACS data.

¹⁹¹ U.S. Department of Education, OVAE, “Participants by Program Type and Age, NRS Data from 2011-2012.”

¹⁹² Office of Adult Education, Technical College System of Georgia, “Policy and Procedure Administrative Manual for Adult Education and Family Literacy Programs,” accessed February 26, 2014. <http://literacy.myweb.uga.edu/ppm.shtml>.

¹⁹³ Marcie Foster with Lennox McLendon, *Sinking or Swimming? Findings from a Survey of State Adult Education Tuition and Financing Policies* (Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy and National Council of State Directors of Adult Education, 2012), www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/Sinking-or-Swimming-State-Adult-Education-Tuition-and-Financing-Policies.pdf.

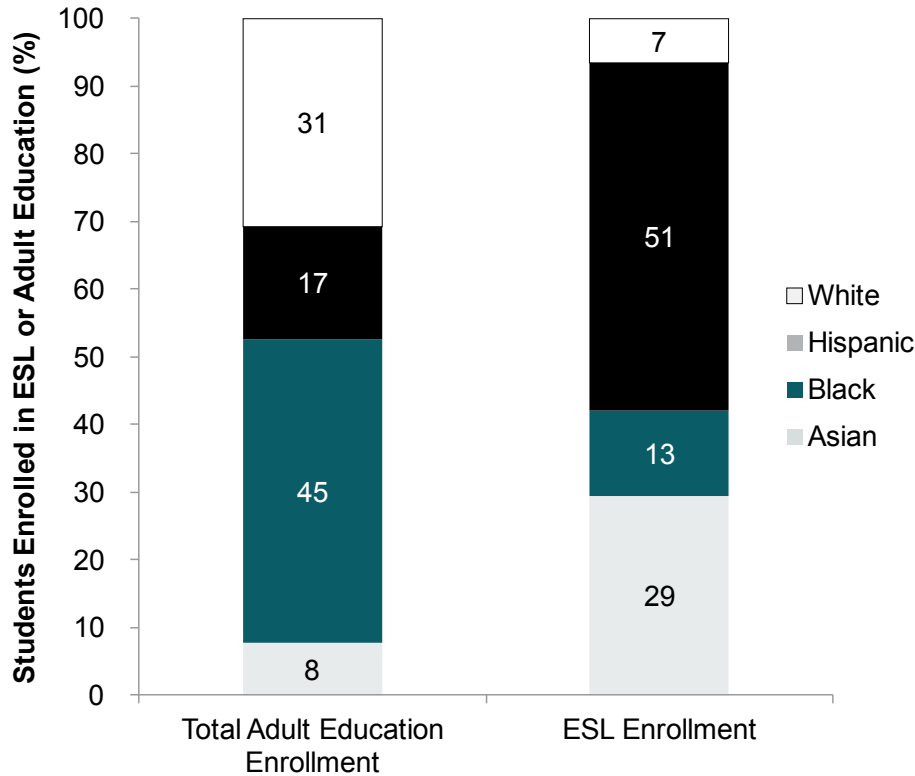
¹⁹⁴ U.S. Department of Education, OVAE, “Participants by Program Type and Age.”

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*



Overall, Black students comprised the highest share (45 percent) of adult education students in Georgia in 2011-12 (see Figure 8). Students in ESL classes, however, were predominately Hispanic (51 percent) and Asian (29 percent). Still, Black students made up 13 percent of ESL enrollment—an indication of Georgia’s sizeable African immigrant population.¹⁹⁶

Figure 8. Georgia’s ESL and Overall Adult Education Enrollment, 2011-12



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), “Participants by Program Type and Age, NRS Data from 2011-2012” (National Reporting System, Statistical Section, Georgia, Program Year 2011, Table 3), <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/tables/index.cfm>.

¹⁹⁶ U.S. Department of Education, OVAE, “Participants by Age, Ethnicity and Sex, NRS Data from 2011-2012” (National Reporting System, Statistical Section, Georgia, Program Year 2011, Table 2), <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/tables/view.cfm?state=GA&year=2011&tableID=2>.



Box 3. Common Barriers and Emerging Best Practices in the Adult Education Field

National research documents a number of personal and institutional barriers that limit persistence and success in adult education programs.

- **Personal hurdles.** Students are likely to be low-income, and many lack access to transportation, child care, and other important social supports.
- **Curriculum design.** Adult education programs often have linear course sequences that require students to progress to the highest levels of ESL courses and then complete adult basic education (ABE) before pursuing vocational training programs. These course sequences can be too lengthy and time-consuming for working adults and the curriculum may lack relevance to their career and personal goals.
- **Confusing requirements.** Noncredit adult education programs and their faculty are typically administratively separate from the for-credit offerings, creating confusion about requirements among those interested in pursuing a postsecondary degree, and perpetuating misinformation about available programs of study, career fields, and campus resources.

In order to address these common barriers, national experts recommend that states pursue several key reforms to better align ESL and ABE instruction with postsecondary education.

Accelerated learning strategies aim to move students through adult education more quickly, often by integrating basic skills training with college-level coursework. Contextualized instruction, focused on learning the basic skills necessary for a specific career field, also makes courses more relevant for students, and can have immediate benefits in the workplace. Such reforms break down the division between adult and postsecondary education, and provide clear guidance for students making the transition from noncredit to credit courses. Comprehensive social supports—such as counseling and connections to community-based organizations—can help students to address personal barriers to persistence, and programs can also schedule classes at times that are the most manageable for working students.

Source: National Research Council, *Improving Adult Literacy Instruction: Options for Practice and Research* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2012); Rachel Pleasants, *Building Integrated Pathways to Sustainable Careers: An Introduction to the Accelerating Opportunity Initiative* (Boston, MA: Accelerating Opportunity and Jobs for the Future, 2011), www.jff.org/sites/default/files/AO_BuildingIntegratedPathways_080811.pdf; Marty Liebowitz and Judith Combes Taylor, *Breaking Through: Helping Low-Skilled Adults Enter and Succeed in College and Careers* (Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future and National Council for Workforce Education, 2004), www.breakingthroughcc.org/sites/default/files/BreakingThrough.pdf.

C. Diverse Program Options at Georgia Piedmont Technical College

As the largest provider of adult education in the state, Georgia Piedmont Technical College offers a wide variety of ESL and ABE/GED programs that are tailored for its particularly diverse student body. The college enrolls over 5,100 students in ESL and ABE/GED classes each year. Administrators at Georgia Piedmont estimate that 60 percent of their ESL students college-wide—and 80 percent of ESL students at the Clarkston campus—are refugees who have been in the United States for five years or less. The college's ESL students represented 106 countries of origin and spoke 333 languages in Spring 2012.¹⁹⁷

With a long history as a refugee-serving institution, Georgia Piedmont has developed expertise in teaching newcomers with low levels of prior education. While national adult education data categorize ESL students' English proficiency on a six-level scale, Georgia Piedmont uses an internal classification system that subdivides the first level into four groups, in order to allow a more precise course placement for "pre-literate" students—i.e., those who are not literate in their native language. The college has approximately 600 to 800 pre-literate students each year, who face the task of building basic phonemic awareness while

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.



learning English. At the other end of the spectrum, approximately 8 percent of ESL students have already earned a college degree in their country of origin.¹⁹⁸

Georgia Piedmont’s “Limited English Proficiency Lab” provides extra academic support, including one-on-one, bilingual tutoring and computer-based enrichment programs for adult ESL students, as well as college credit students who have remaining language development needs. After completing the highest level of ESL, students can enroll in one of Georgia Piedmont’s many types of ABE and GED-preparation programs.

Georgia Piedmont has recently sharpened its focus on helping adult education students transition into college-level programs.

Recognizing that youth often have different learning styles and needs than those of older adults, Georgia Piedmont also offers a designated “underage” class for GED students ages 16 to 19. According to interviewees, this class is taught by an instructor who is particularly skilled in engaging youth and addressing the unique issues facing high school dropouts and late-arriving immigrant students. Another GED course option is the Fast Track program, which allows higher-scoring students to take intensive, two-week courses that address specific skill gaps. This accelerated program is self-paced; students complete computerized tutorials and receive instruction from Skills Tutors in a campus computer lab.

Georgia Piedmont has recently sharpened its focus on helping adult education students transition into college-level programs. The college’s Next Step program provides academic and social support services for GED-completers who are interested in pursuing college certificates and degrees. Next Step resources include individual and group counseling, college admissions and financial aid workshops, presentations on “college survival skills” and career options, and free tutoring. Overall approximately 26 percent of GED completers (400 students) transitioned into a credit-bearing program in 2010-11.¹⁹⁹

D. State Efforts to Promote College Transitions for Adult Education Students

Georgia Piedmont’s college transition programs are part of a broader state and national effort to increase the number of adult education students who pursue and complete college degrees. To assist students in taking this step, Georgia provides the HOPE GED Grant, which is a one-time scholarship of \$500 for students who enroll in a public or private college in Georgia within two years of completing their GED. The scholarship can be used for tuition, fees, or books, and can be combined with other sources of financial aid. As cost is commonly mentioned as a barrier to transitioning from adult education programs into college credit courses, the HOPE GED Grant provides some assistance to overcome this hurdle. Like all other types of state-funded financial aid, HOPE GED Grant recipients must be citizens or legal residents of Georgia.

Georgia’s Office of Adult Education also promotes the development of “transition initiatives,” as well as programs that allow adult education students to concurrently enroll in college credit courses.²⁰⁰ During 2011-12, TCSG provided funds for adult education programs to hire and train “transition coordinators” who are charged with counseling adult education students on college admissions requirements and program options, along with the steps needed to achieve their career goals.²⁰¹ In Fall 2013, TCSG partnered with the

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ The share of these GED-completers that began their studies in ESL programs is unknown, as Georgia does not disaggregate completion data based on this characteristic. Data provided by Georgia Piedmont Technical College to MPI; on file with the authors.

²⁰⁰ National College Transition Network, *Postsecondary Success of Young Adults: System Impact Opportunities in Adult Education. In-Depth State Profiles* (Boston, MA: National College Transition Network, 2010), www.collegetransition.org/docs/Gates-Indepth%20State%20Profiles.pdf.

²⁰¹ U.S. Department of Education, OVAE, “Georgia Narrative Report 2011-2012” (National Reporting System, Narrative Section, Georgia, Program Year 2011), <http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/login.cfm>.



Latin American Association to offer an ESL Summit for adult ESL instructors, which focused on improving course completion rates and preparing students to transition to GED and college-level programs.

Georgia is also one of seven states implementing Accelerating Opportunity, an initiative led by Jobs for the Future and supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, along with several other philanthropies.²⁰² This initiative seeks to redesign state adult education systems, drawing on elements of Washington State's successful Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model. I-BEST combines adult basic education with college-level, career-technical training, in order to simultaneously build both literacy and workforce skills.²⁰³ Georgia's Accelerating Opportunity model similarly offers opportunities for adult education students to pursue short-term career certificates in fields ranging from early childhood education to welding, while also completing their GED and receiving support services such as tutoring and transportation. Middle Georgia Technical College²⁰⁴ first piloted the model in 2012-13, with plans for expansion to six additional colleges—including Georgia Piedmont—by Spring 2014. However, ESL instruction has not been a focus of Georgia's efforts to integrate adult education and career-technical training. Unlike Washington State's I-BEST initiative, which includes separate programs designed for ESL and GED instruction, Georgia's Accelerating Opportunity model does not include specific ESL pathways. The program is open to both ESL and GED students, though it requires at least a sixth grade reading level in English. This benchmark may be particularly hard to reach for immigrants entering with lower English proficiency. As ESL students represent over one-fifth of Georgia's adult education enrollment, there is a remaining need for interventions focused on this population. Moreover, Accelerating Opportunity did not enroll any Latino or Asian students during the pilot phase at Middle Georgia Technical College.²⁰⁵

ESL instruction has not been a focus of Georgia's efforts to integrate adult education and career-technical training.

Data from TCSG indicate that the pipeline from adult education to college completion is losing many ESL students. While Latinos and Asians together comprised 80 percent of ESL enrollment in 2011-12, these two groups made up just 6 percent of enrollment in the technical colleges' degree and certificate programs.²⁰⁶ This state-level trend is also reflected in Georgia Piedmont Technical College's demographic data, where Asians represented 45 percent of noncredit ESL students but just 3 percent of students in college credit programs.²⁰⁷

Unlike Washington State, Georgia does not track longitudinal data on the outcomes—including GED completion or college enrollment—of students who began their studies in ESL courses. In the absence of detailed, longitudinal data on ESL students, it is difficult to determine the size of the population that stands to benefit from Georgia's college transition initiatives.

202 For more information on Accelerating Opportunity, see Rachel Pleasants, *Building Integrated Pathways to Sustainable Careers: An Introduction to the Accelerating Opportunity Initiative* (Boston, MA: Accelerating Opportunity and Jobs for the Future, 2011), www.jff.org/sites/default/files/AO_BuildingIntegratedPathways_080811.pdf. In July 2013, Georgia received \$1.2 million to implement Accelerating Opportunity from Jobs for the Future and the Woodruff Foundation.

203 For more information on I-BEST, see John Wachen, Davis Jenkins, and Michelle Van Noy, "Integrating Basic Skills and Career-Technical Instruction: Findings from a Field Study of Washington State's I-BEST Model," *Community College Review* 39, no. 2 (2011): 136-59.

204 Middle Georgia Technical College merged with Central Georgia Technical College (CGTC) to form the new CGTC on July 1, 2013.

205 Josh Delaney, "Accelerating Opportunity: Transforming Adult Education at Georgia's Technical Colleges," July 3, 2013, <http://gosa.georgia.gov/accelerating-opportunity-transforming-adult-education-georgias-technical-colleges>.

206 U.S. Department of Education, OVAE, "Participants by Program Type and Age, NRS Data from 2011-12;" Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), "Credit Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Spring Semester 2012 (Term 2012-2014)," provided by TCSG to MPI. Information on file with the authors.

207 Data provided to MPI by Georgia Piedmont Technical College, on file with the authors.



E. Legal-Status Barriers to Adult ESL

Access to adult education has been affected by broader state legislation on immigration enforcement. A bill passed in 2006 required individuals to demonstrate lawful presence in order to receive “public benefits,”²⁰⁸ and subsequent legislation (HB 2, enacted in 2010) extended this provision to a number of state services, including publicly funded adult education.²⁰⁹ For the first time, adult education students were required to complete a “Verification of Eligibility” form and demonstrate proof of citizenship or legal immigration status in order to enroll in courses. This policy change had an immediate impact on ESL programs: the adult education system saw a 60 percent drop in ESL enrollment in the first year after this policy’s enactment (from FY 2009-10 to FY 2010-11).²¹⁰ Data indicate that Latino students, in particular, withdrew from programs in large numbers. Apart from Georgia, Arizona is the only other state to deny access to public adult education programs for unauthorized immigrants. As of 2011-12, ESL enrollment across Georgia had rebounded somewhat, but remained significantly below its pre-2010 level.²¹¹

Access to adult education has been affected by broader state legislation on immigration enforcement.

Implementation of HB 2, particularly as it applies to adult education, has fluctuated due to varying judicial interpretations of the policy. During 2012, TCSG suspended the legal immigration status requirement for adult education enrollment. This period coincided with the introduction of DACA at the national level. According to interviewees, there was an initial increase in demand for adult education programs among youth hoping to qualify for DACA. However, this door was closed in Georgia as of January 1, 2013, based on a new attorney general’s ruling that reinstated the Verification of Eligibility requirement. Georgia’s restriction on enrollment for youth who would otherwise qualify for DACA is particularly notable because adult education is largely a federally funded system, and DACA is an explicit federal priority.²¹²

VIII. Persistence and Success in Postsecondary Education

Public postsecondary education in Georgia is divided between two statewide systems: the Technical College System of Georgia and the University System of Georgia. These two systems have different missions and differing admissions requirements. Unlike many other states, Georgia does not have a single agency that governs public, two-year colleges, and both TCSG and USG institutions offer two-year degrees.

The 25 technical colleges offer workforce-oriented programs of study. They grant Certificates of Credit (which generally require one year of study or less); Technical Diplomas (requiring at least one year, including a general education core); and Associate of Applied Science degrees (requiring two years). As mentioned previously, the technical colleges also provide most of the state’s adult education programs.

The USG, which is governed by the Board of Regents, consists of 35 institutions of varying selectivity that confer academically oriented degrees ranging from the associate’s to doctoral levels. There are 14 “state

208 *Georgia Security and Immigration Compliance Act* (SB 529), State of Georgia, 148th Legislature (April 17, 2006), www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20052006/64549.pdf.

209 House Bill 2, State of Georgia. 151st General Assembly.

210 U.S. Department of Education, OVAE, “Georgia Narrative Report 2010-2011.”

211 U.S. Department of Education, OVAE, “Georgia Narrative Report 2011-2012.”

212 The DACA guidelines from USCIS state that qualifying adult education programs must be recipients of federal or state funds, or meet a standard of “demonstrated effectiveness.” Enrolling in a publicly funded program is therefore the most clear-cut pathway to DACA eligibility in most states. USCIS, “Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Process.”



colleges” and 2 “two-year colleges” that are considered open-access institutions, meaning that they accept all students who can meet minimum criteria for admission. The state’s four “research universities”—University of Georgia, Georgia State University, Georgia Institute of Technology, and Georgia Health Sciences University—have the most rigorous admissions criteria.

In addition to Georgia Piedmont Technical College (part of the TCSG), this study includes two USG institutions—Georgia Perimeter College and Georgia Gwinnett College. Both of these are open-access state colleges. Georgia Perimeter primarily confers associate’s degrees and prepares students to transfer to four-year degree programs at other institutions. Considered by stakeholders as the system’s “transfer engine,” approximately two-thirds of all transfer students in the USG begin their studies at Georgia Perimeter.²¹³ Georgia Gwinnett College is a new, bachelor’s degree-granting institution that opened in 2006.

Black students in particular remained underrepresented at the most elite levels of higher education, while Asian students were overrepresented.

A. Enrollment in Georgia’s Postsecondary Institutions

Enrollment data show that some groups of youth are under-represented in Georgia’s higher education institutions, while others are overrepresented (see Figure 9). In Spring 2012, Hispanics were 10 percent of all high school students in Georgia, but only 4 percent of all technical college students and 5 percent of all students in USG institutions. These figures suggest that Hispanics face unique barriers to college enrollment, as they were the only major ethnic group that experienced such a steep drop-off in enrollment between the secondary and postsecondary levels. This disparity was not a function of demographics; there were more Hispanic youth in the 18- to 21-year-old age range (the traditional college-going years) than the 14- to 17-year-old age range, but these youth did not enroll in the state’s institutions of higher education at levels proportional to their share of the population.

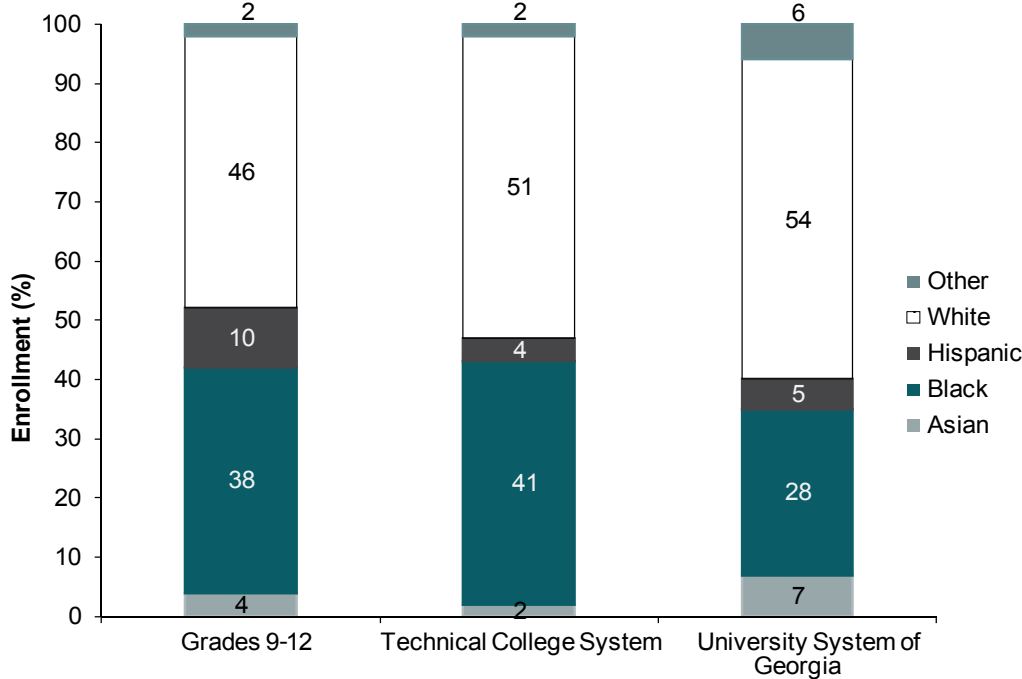
In Spring 2012, Hispanics were 10 percent of all high school students in Georgia, but only 4 percent of all technical college students.

When the demographics of the state’s most selective institutions (research universities) are compared to the least selective institutions (state and two-year colleges), further gaps emerge between racial and ethnic groups (see Figure 10). These trends demonstrate that Black students in particular remained underrepresented at the most elite levels of higher education, while Asian students were overrepresented. By contrast, Hispanic enrollment was low across both levels.

²¹³ Georgia Perimeter College, “Academic and Student Affairs: Weaving College-Wide Assessment with Support, Retention, Graduation, and Transfer Initiatives” (presentation at American Association of Community Colleges Annual Conference, Orlando, FL, April 24, 2012).



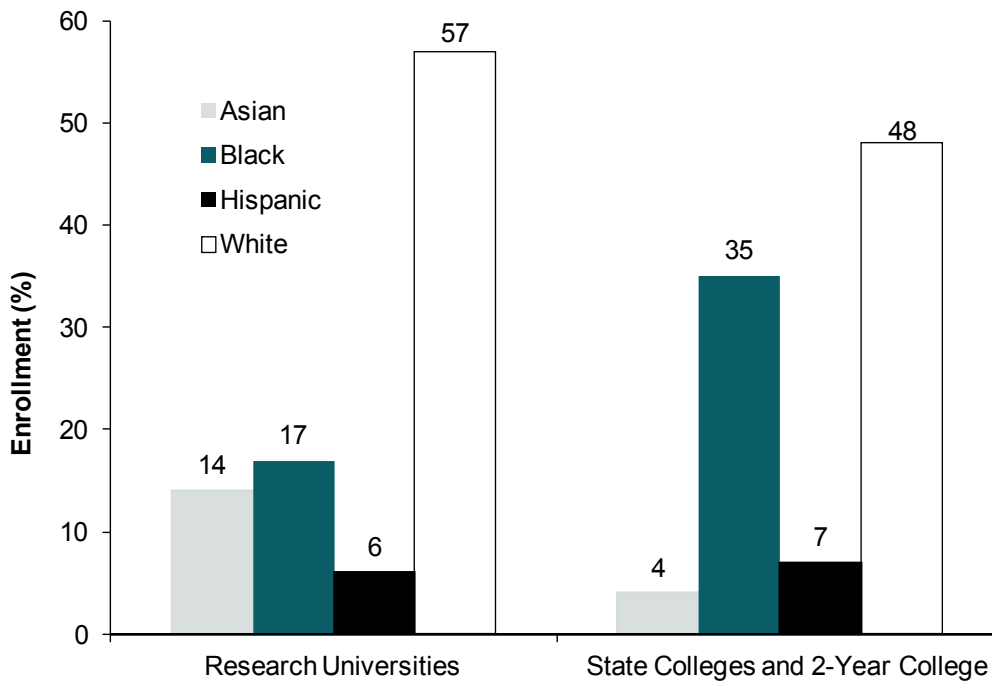
Figure 9. Racial and Ethnic Diversity across Georgia’s Education Sectors, Spring 2012



Notes: The “Other” category includes the groups American Indian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, “two or more races”, and “race unknown or undeclared.” Technical College System data include only students enrolled in college credit programs; adult education students are excluded.

Sources: Georgia Department of Education, “Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Grade Level (PK-12),” Enrollment on March 1, 2012, http://app3.doe.k12.ga.us/ows-bin/owa/fte_pack_ethnicsex.entry_form,” Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, *Spring 2012 Semester Enrollment Report*; TCGS data “Credit Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Spring Semester 2012 (Term 2012-2014),” provided to MPI by Georgia Piedmont Technical College. Information on file with the authors.

Figure 10. Enrollment in University System of Georgia by Institutional Category, Spring 2012

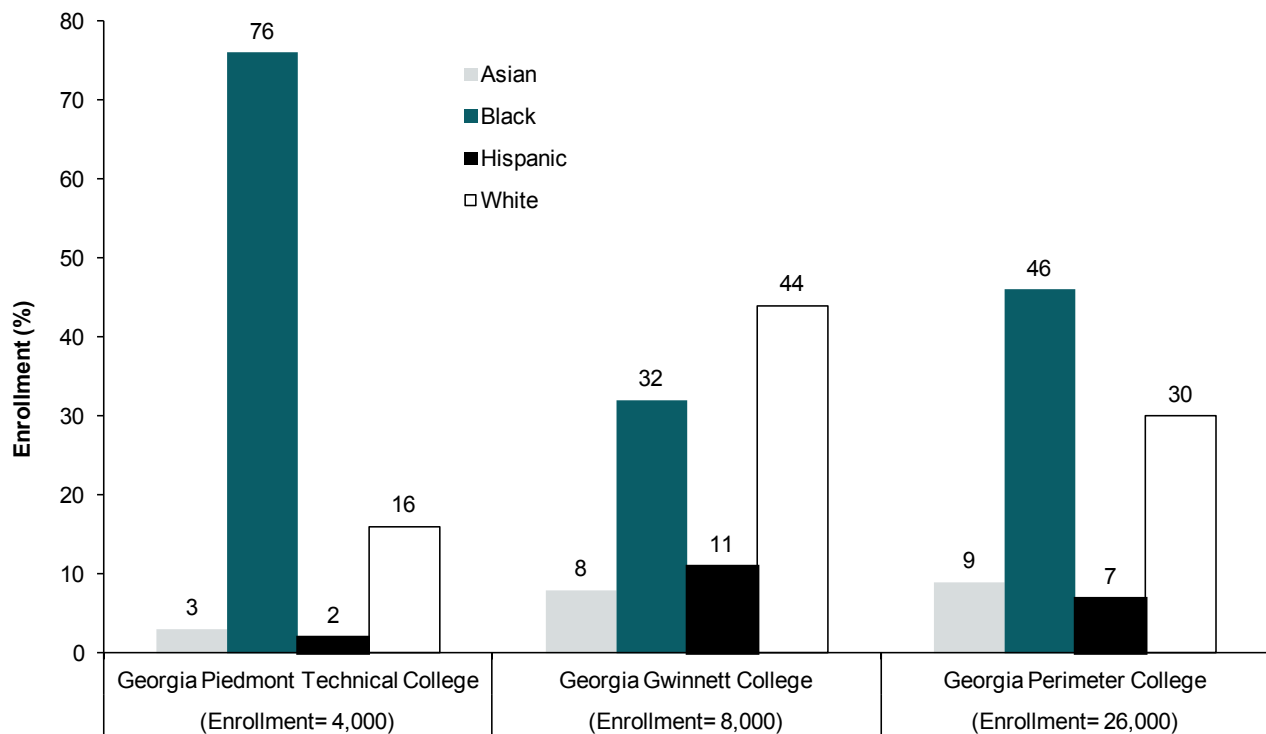


Source: Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, *Spring 2012 Semester Enrollment Report*.

B. Demographics of Study Colleges

The demographics of the study institutions varied widely (see Figure 11). Georgia Piedmont Technical College's enrollment was predominately Black, while our other two colleges represented a broader mix of racial and ethnic groups.²¹⁴ Georgia Perimeter College had the highest Asian student enrollment, at 9 percent. The enrollment trends of Georgia Gwinnett College are noteworthy, as this college was chartered in 2006 with the specific mission of serving the increasingly diverse population of Gwinnett County and the surrounding area. The total student body has grown from 118 students in 2006-07 to 9,400 students in Fall 2012.²¹⁵ Along with this remarkable growth rate, the proportion of students who are Black and Latino has also risen steadily. The share of Black students nearly tripled, from 11 percent in 2007 to 32 percent in Spring 2012, while the Latino share of enrollment increased from 7 percent to 11 percent.²¹⁶ Georgia Gwinnett College had the highest share of Latino students among our study colleges: more than double the USG system-wide average of 5 percent.

Figure 11. Demographics of Study Colleges, Spring 2012



Notes: The percentages do not equal 100 percent, as the groups “Two or More Races” and “Race or Ethnicity Unknown or Undeclared” were omitted. American Indian/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander were also omitted; these groups comprise less than 0.4 percent of total system enrollment. Data from Georgia Piedmont Technical College reflects enrollment in college credit courses only (omitting adult education students).

Source: Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, *Spring 2012 Semester Enrollment Report*; “Georgia Piedmont Technical College: Credit Enrollment Summary Data as of 5/2/2012” provided by Georgia Piedmont Technical College to MPI. Information on file with the authors.

214 Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, *Spring 2012 Semester Enrollment Report* (Atlanta, GA: Office of Research and Policy Analysis, March 15, 2012), www.usg.edu/research/documents/enrollment_reports/spr2012.pdf.

215 Georgia Gwinnett College, “GGC Facts: Student Demographics,” accessed February 26, 2014, www.ggc.edu/about-ggc/at-a-glance/2012-demographics/.

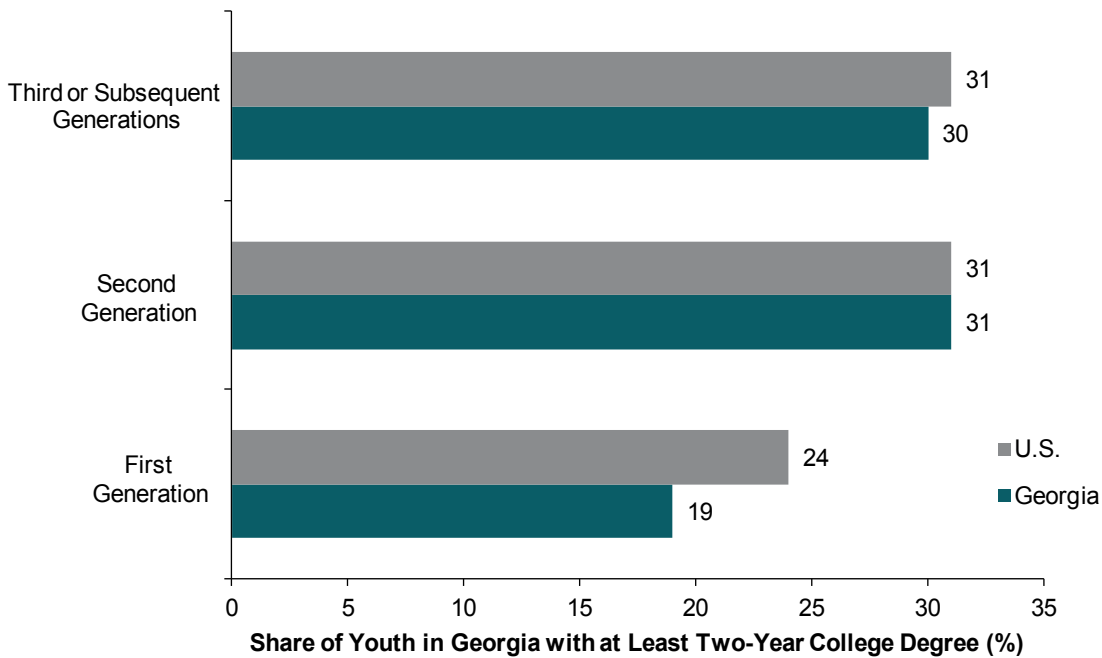
216 Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, *Spring 2012 Semester Enrollment Report*; 2007 enrollment data provided by Georgia Gwinnett College to MPI, on file with the authors.



C. Postsecondary Degree Completion

Lower enrollment in postsecondary education translates to lower rates of college degree attainment for underrepresented groups. Georgia's first-generation immigrant youth have significantly lower college degree attainment by ages 21 to 26 than their second- and third-generation peers (see Figure 12). While this trend is also seen at the national level, Georgia's first-generation youth were even less likely to hold at least a two-year college degree (19 percent) than first-generation youth nationwide (24 percent) in the 2009-13 period.²¹⁷ The data in Figure 12 demonstrate substantial generational progress, however: by the second generation, young adults from immigrant families had closed the gap in college-degree attainment with youth from native families (third or subsequent generations)—and their completion rates were on par with national averages. It is important to note, however, that these data are based on youth born between 1983 and 1992. It remains to be seen whether the second-generation children of those who arrived during the large immigration wave of the 1990s and 2000s—a greater share of whom are Latino—will have the same educational outcomes by the time they reach their twenties.

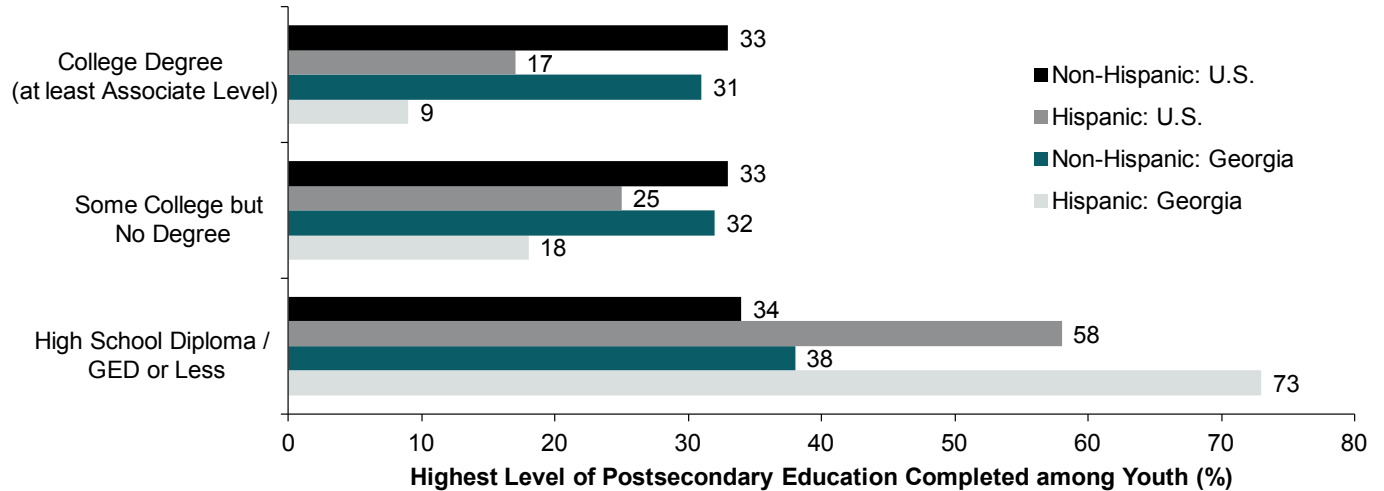
Figure 12. Share of Youth (Ages 21-26) in Georgia and Nationally with at Least a Two-Year College Degree, by Generation, 2009-13



Source: MPI analysis of pooled 2009-13 CPS-ASEC data.

While the data in Figure 12 paint a picture of improving educational outcomes for the second and third generations, analyses of degree attainment by race/ ethnicity demonstrate significant, ongoing disparities. Regardless of immigrant generation, Latinos in Georgia have below-average rates of attempting and or earning a college degree by age 21 to 26 (see Figure 13). Just 9 percent of Latinos ages 21 to 26 had earned at least an associate's degree during 2009-13, compared to 31 percent of non-Latino youth in the state. However, the majority of Georgia's Latinos in this age range are first-generation immigrants—many of whom came to the United States to work and never entered the U.S. education system. While the second-generation Latino population is growing rapidly, it is still concentrated among younger children who are not yet old enough to have completed a college degree.

²¹⁷ The data on the first generation include youth who received a degree in their home country prior to immigrating, as well as those who completed degrees from public and private colleges in the United States.

**Figure 13. Highest Level of Postsecondary Education Completed by Latinos and Non-Latinos (Ages 21-26), Georgia and United States, 2009-13**

Note: “Latino” includes all youth with Latino origins, regardless of immigrant generation. The “Some College but No Degree” population includes youth who are currently enrolled or have in the past been enrolled in postsecondary education, but have not completed an Associate’s degree or higher.

Source: MPI analysis of pooled 2009-13 CPS-ASEC data.

Immigrant students often face a number of risk factors that are associated with lower rates of college retention and degree completion. National research demonstrates that immigrant students are more likely to be “nontraditional” college students, meaning that they often enroll in postsecondary education at older ages; attend college part time; work while going to school; and often have their own minor children.²¹⁸ Within the first generation, these characteristics are generally shared by both Latino and Asian immigrants.²¹⁹ In the second generation, however, this trend is reversed for Asian undergraduates: they enroll in college at a younger age than their peers, and they are more likely to enroll full time. Second-generation Latinos, on the other hand, continue to enroll part time in greater numbers than the overall college student population.²²⁰

D. Georgia’s Major Higher Education Reform Initiatives

Over the past several years, policymakers in Georgia, as well as the nation, have cast a spotlight on the issue of low college graduation rates and called on public postsecondary education institutions to increase the production of degrees and certificates. In the state, as elsewhere, graduation rates show ample room for improvement: 29 percent of full time students in associate’s degree programs earn a degree or certificate in three years, which is on par with the national average.²²¹

Before discussing the particular programs that can potentially improve outcomes for Georgia’s immigrant youth, this section provides an overview of the state’s broader efforts to transform postsecondary education policies and funding, with the goal of increasing the success of all students.

218 U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, “Profile of Undergraduates in U.S. Postsecondary Education Institutions: 2003-04, With a Special Analysis of Community College Students” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2006), as cited in Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, and Suárez-Orozco, “Immigrants in Community Colleges.”

219 Stakis and Horn, *New Americans in Postsecondary Education*.

220 Ibid.

221 Data from first-time, full-time students, 2009. National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), “NCHEMS Information System,” accessed February 26, 2014, www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?measure=19. In University System of Georgia institutions, associate’s degree graduation rates were much lower, at 10 percent for the Fall 2007 cohort. (See the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, “2010-11 University System Report Card,” accessed January 15, 2014, <http://gaosa.org/University.aspx?PageReq=108&StateId=ALL&SY=2011>). In technical colleges, the average three-year associate’s degree graduation rate was significantly higher—32 percent—but the total number of students pursuing an associate’s degree was much lower.



I. Complete College Georgia

In August 2011, Governor Nathan Deal launched the Complete College Georgia initiative. The initiative stems from Georgia's participation in the national Complete College America network, which aims "to significantly increase the number of Americans with quality career certificates or college degrees and to close attainment gaps for traditionally under-represented populations."²²² Georgia was one of ten states to receive a grant from Complete College America in 2011 to support policy innovations aimed at increasing student success and graduation rates. The state has committed to reaching a goal of 60 percent postsecondary degree or certificate completion among young adults—a substantial increase over the current rate of 42 percent—by 2020.²²³

Interviewees reported a sense of optimism about the opportunities presented by Complete College Georgia.

To accomplish this goal, USG and TCSG released a statewide Higher Education Completion Plan, which outlines comprehensive reform efforts in areas such as increasing alignment between K-12 and higher education, improving articulation between the technical colleges and USG institutions, transforming remediation, and improving instructional delivery.²²⁴ Innovations in these areas cut across the various topics addressed in this report, and stand to play an important role in the college success of immigrant students, as well as other students from underrepresented groups. Each college was also required to develop a three-year Campus Completion Plan that identified performance indicators, targets, and institutional strategies for increasing certificate and degree completion rates. Overall, interviewees reported a sense of optimism about the opportunities presented by Complete College Georgia, as well as a commitment to working collaboratively across education systems to improve student success rates.

2. Restructuring Postsecondary Education Funding

Under the umbrella of the Complete College Georgia initiative, Governor Deal created a Higher Education Funding Commission charged with redesigning the state's funding formula to reward higher education institutions based on student outcomes, rather than solely based on enrollment. In its December 2012 report, the commission outlined a new funding structure for colleges based on annual improvements in student progression (e.g. the number of students completing 15 or 30 college credits) and awards conferred (ranging from GEDs to certificates, associate's degrees, bachelor's degrees, and graduate degrees). The proposal also includes extra weight for the success of Pell Grant recipients (used as a proxy for low-income students) and adult learners over age 25. The new formula is expected to be used to develop a revenue-neutral base in the FY 2015 budget, and will be used as the basis for awarding new funds in FY 2016 and beyond.²²⁵

This funding formula will align Georgia with a handful of other states—including Washington State, which is also part of this study—that have tied some or all of their college funding on student outcomes and degree productivity in recent years. Washington's Student Achievement Initiative similarly provides financial awards to colleges based on their progress in moving students through a series of intermediate benchmarks—including completion of adult education, remediation, and college credits—on the pathway to a degree or certificate.²²⁶ However, Washington's outcomes-based funding system—unlike Georgia's—

²²² Complete College America, "About Us," accessed February 26, 2014, www.completecollege.org/about/.

²²³ The University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia, *Complete College Georgia: Georgia's Higher Education Completion Plan 2012*.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ State of Georgia Higher Education Funding Commission, *Report to Governor Deal* (Atlanta, GA: State of Georgia Higher Education Funding Commission, 2012), http://gov.georgia.gov/sites/gov.georgia.gov/files/related_files/press_release/Recommendations%20of%20the%20Higher%20Education%20Funding%20Commission.pdf.

²²⁶ Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges, "Student Achievement Initiative," updated June 5, 2013,



rewards colleges for ESL students' success in attaining English proficiency. Georgia's proposed funding formula does not require colleges to track students who begin their studies in ESL, and does not provide an extra weight for this group.

As in other states, critics warn that the outcomes-based funding model may have unintended consequences, such as reducing the rigor of college degree programs or promoting institutional creaming, as colleges face financial pressure to demonstrate improvement. Georgia's plan also goes further than most other states, by using outcomes-based funding to award 100 percent of new funds by FY 2016.²²⁷ At the same time, some interviewees were optimistic that the new funding mechanism will drive important institutional reforms.

Georgia's proposed funding formula does not require colleges to track students who begin their studies in ESL.

Leaders of state and national efforts to raise college completion rates highlight several critical areas of intervention for nontraditional and academically underprepared students. The following sections examine Georgia's progress in several of these areas, while also drawing attention to issues that are particularly relevant to immigrant students. These topics include:

- Policies on admissions and testing
- Developmental education
- Language instruction for non-native English speakers
- Advising and student support services

E. Admissions and Placement Testing

In Georgia, as in many states, even colleges that are considered "open-access" institutions typically require degree-seeking students to demonstrate college readiness before enrolling in courses that confer credit toward an associate's or bachelor's degree. Students scoring below a certain threshold on college placement tests must complete developmental education courses (also commonly referred to as remediation, or "Learning Support" in Georgia) in math, reading and/or writing, depending on their areas of skill deficiencies.

In Georgia, 59 percent of entering students in the USG's two-year colleges and 48 percent of entering students in state colleges require developmental education in at least one subject. Approximately three quarters of entering freshmen at Georgia Gwinnett College required remediation in 2011-12—a particularly high rate for a four-year college. Developmental education has been identified as a key sticking point for many students.²²⁸ In both USG and TCSG colleges, students who require developmental education have only a 7 percent graduation rate after three years.²²⁹ According a state-level interviewee, among students with the greatest skills deficiencies—those requiring developmental education in all three subject areas—fewer than

www.sbctc.edu/college/e_studentachievement.aspx. For more information, see Hooker, McHugh, Fix, and Capps, *Shaping our Futures*.

227 Currently, the only state that awards nearly 100 percent of higher education appropriations on the basis of performance funding is Tennessee. Dennis Jones, *Outcome-Based Funding: The Wave of Implementation* (Washington, DC: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems and Complete College America, 2013), www.completecollege.org/pdfs/Outcomes-Based-Funding-Report-Final.pdf.

228 Complete College America, *Remediation: Higher Education's Bridge to Nowhere* (Washington, DC: Complete College America, 2012), www.completecollege.org/docs/CCA-Remediation-final.pdf; Thomas Bailey, Dong Wook Jeong, and Sung-Woo Cho, "Referral, Enrollment, and Completion in Developmental Education Courses in Community Colleges," *Economics of Education Review* 29, no. 2 (2010): 255-70.

229 The University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia, *Complete College Georgia: Georgia's Higher Education Completion Plan 2012*.



In both USG and TCSG colleges, students who require developmental education have only a 7 percent graduation rate after three years.

10 percent ever finish a college degree.²³⁰ Developmental education also comes at a significant cost, as students who spend several terms taking these courses risk using up much of their federal financial aid allotment before they begin pursuing their major. Further, as of Fall 2011, Georgia's HOPE Scholarship cannot be used to pay for developmental education in USG institutions.²³¹

In response to growing concern over the low college success rates among students requiring developmental education, the USG Board of Regents mandated significant changes to admissions and placement testing policies in Fall 2012. Students who require developmental education in all three subject areas (math, reading, and writing) are now denied admission to USG institutions, due to the intensity of their remedial needs. During the 2011-12 school year, approximately 2,600 freshmen in the University System of Georgia required developmental education in all three subjects; these students would not have been admitted under the new policy.²³² Colleges have the ability to issue a limited number of "Presidential waivers," in order to admit students who demonstrate potential but do not meet minimum placement test scores. Students who are denied admission to USG colleges have the option to enroll in technical colleges to complete their developmental education requirements, and then apply to USG colleges as transfer students. Alternately, students could choose to attend private, for-profit, or out-of-state institutions.

The new USG admissions and developmental education policies remain controversial and have wide-ranging implications for colleges serving lower-performing students. The Board of Regents maintains that these standards represent the minimum level of preparation needed for students to achieve success in USG institutions, though interviewees expressed concerns regarding the implications for students from underrepresented groups, including immigrants and second-generation youth.

Further on the horizon, Georgia, like other states, plans to shift a greater share of placement testing and remediation to the high school level. Ultimately, the goal is for Georgia to use one set of assessments for the dual purposes of measuring high school achievement and determining college readiness. It remains to be seen whether these new assessments will be valid and reliable for ELLs, as well as native English-speaking students. Since tests taken at the high school level will likely feature even more prominently in students' postsecondary choices and outcomes, it is all the more critical to ensure that ELLs develop strong reading, writing, and math skills at the high school level.

F. Developmental Education Reform

In spite of changes in USG admissions policies, many students still enter college with remedial needs in at least one subject area. Immigrant and second-generation students may be especially likely to require developmental education courses, due to gaps in their literacy and math skills. National research has found that 52 percent of first-generation Latino immigrant college students and 40 percent of first-generation Asian immigrant students take at least one developmental education course, compared to 35 percent of all undergraduates.²³³

Complete College Georgia has emphasized the need to restructure traditional, one-size-fits-all developmental education programs to provide streamlined approaches to addressing students' particular skill deficits as quickly as possible. As part of this initiative, two USG colleges and two technical colleges were given grants in 2012 to pilot new approaches to remediation and create alternative program options for students with varying skill levels. The selected institutions included two of our study colleges: Georgia Gwinnett College and Georgia Piedmont Technical College. These efforts target the diverse population of

²³⁰ Data provided by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia to MPI, on file with the authors.

²³¹ Technical College System of Georgia, "HOPE Legislation Fact Sheet," accessed February 26, 2014,

http://tcsgeu/all_documents/HOPE_Change_Background_Summary_v.7.pdf.

²³² Laura Diamond, "College Not an Option if Lots of Remedial Help Needed," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, August 5, 2012.

²³³ Stakis and Horn, *New Americans in Postsecondary Education*.



students in developmental education programs—including students from immigrant and nonimmigrant families.

1. Accelerated Classes with Extra Support

Both Georgia Gwinnett College and Georgia Piedmont Technical College are exploring opportunities for students at the higher end of the developmental education spectrum to enroll directly in college-level courses—skipping developmental education entirely—while also receiving extra academic support. Georgia Gwinnett calls this “co-requisite” model their Segue program. The English department implemented Segue in Spring 2012 with approximately 80 students, and nearly doubled the program in Fall 2012. Developmental education students take credit-bearing English courses with mainstream students, and enroll in a supplemental support section taught by the same instructor. All instructors in the Segue program have a unique pedagogical background in rhetoric and composition. Early results from the program are promising, with rising completion rates in both the remedial and credit-bearing English courses as of Spring 2013.²³⁴ Interviewees noted that the program has changed their approach to developmental education: faculty used to think that the students needed more time, but now they believe that the college has to accelerate instruction if students are going to catch up to their peers.

While accelerated programs have demonstrated promise, interviewees cautioned that the approach may not work as well for all students. Georgia Gwinnett College has found that accelerated programs have strong results for first-time freshmen, but are less effective for repeating students who have failed developmental education courses on their first attempts. These students may have deeper, underlying learning needs, and they may fall through the cracks in faster-paced, more challenging programs.

2. Self-Paced and Customized Remediation

At Georgia Piedmont Technical College, technology-based innovations allow developmental education students to complete customized modules targeting their specific academic deficiencies. With support from the Complete College Georgia grant and the national Achieving the Dream initiative,²³⁵ as well as a federal grant for Predominately Black Institutions, the college opened two new Learning Support Labs in Spring 2012. Students use computer software programs that tailor instruction in reading, writing, and math. The labs are staffed by 16 full-time “learning coaches.” According to interviewees, this modular approach allows higher-performing students to complete developmental education requirements more quickly than traditional, semester-based classroom instruction. The highest-scoring students are allowed to enroll directly in college-level courses, with the stipulation that they must also complete developmental education modules in the Learning Support Labs on their own time. Georgia Piedmont Technical College also has a Limited English Proficiency Lab, which provides similar, computer-based tutorial programs for ESL students in its adult education and credit-based programs.

*Models that require extra academic support
and personalized assistance may be particularly difficult to
implement during a period of restricted funding.*

Georgia’s institutions of higher education face the challenge of sustaining and scaling up these promising developmental education initiatives that are currently developed and supported in part through the

Complete College Georgia initiative. Models that require extra academic support and personalized assistance may be particularly difficult to implement during a period of restricted funding.

²³⁴ Data provided by Georgia Gwinnett College to MPI, on file with the authors.

²³⁵ Achieving the Dream (ATD) is a national nonprofit created by the Lumina Foundation and other partners that supports a network of community colleges engaged in institutional reforms designed to increase student success rates and close achievement gaps. For more information, see Achieving the Dream, “About Us,” accessed February 26, 2014, www.achievingthedream.org/about.



G. English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Courses

In many USG institutions, immigrant students with limited English proficiency are required to enroll in a separate set of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses instead of developmental education courses. Unlike the ESL courses provided through the adult education programs in technical colleges, EAP programs are designed for students who have been admitted to USG institutions as tuition-paying, degree-seeking students. These students have already earned a high school diploma, either in U.S. schools or in foreign countries, and they have at least an intermediate level of English proficiency, but they have not yet mastered the level of academic English needed to enter college-level courses. At Georgia Gwinnett College, interviewees reported that the majority of EAP students could be considered “Generation 1.5” youth: they were born abroad, but have been in the United States for several years. In fact, nearly 50 percent of EAP students at Georgia Gwinnett were U.S. citizens in 2012.²³⁶ Georgia Gwinnett had approximately 100 students in EAP in Spring 2012, and Georgia Perimeter College had over 500 EAP participants.

At Georgia Gwinnett, Georgia Perimeter, and other colleges that have EAP programs, non-native English speakers are directed to take a separate version of the placement test if they took ESOL classes in high school or attended high school in another country. Institutions establish their own EAP placement criteria and course requirements; EAP was not included under the umbrella of the Board of Regents’ new admissions policies. In other words, testing into EAP courses does not disqualify students for admission. Colleges are not required to offer EAP programs, however, and some institutions serve all of their immigrant and nonimmigrant students through the same set of developmental education courses.

At Georgia Perimeter College, the EAP program consists of courses in three different subject areas: Applied Grammar, Academic Communication Skills, and Academic Reading. For students entering at the lower levels of proficiency, the EAP course sequence is longer than the regular developmental education sequence: there are three levels of each EAP course, compared to one level of developmental reading and writing courses, and two levels of developmental math. As with developmental education students, EAP students are restricted from enrolling in most college-credit classes until they complete their EAP requirements and pass an exit exam. However, some students take up to one additional, college-credit course per semester in subjects that do not require advanced language skills, such as math, computer science, and the arts.

EAP students benefit from the expertise of highly-professionalized educators who are specially trained in fields such as linguistics and second-language acquisition. At Georgia Gwinnett College, for instance, all EAP faculty have doctoral degrees in relevant disciplines. And EAP class sizes are capped at 16-18 students to allow faculty to provide more individualized student attention and promote student participation.

I. Integrating Language Development and Service Learning Programs

The EAP department at Georgia Perimeter College’s Clarkston Campus has developed a unique approach to fostering English language development and college success skills through service learning: upper-level EAP students serve as tutors and mentors for other immigrants in the local community with much lower English skills. Since 2004, Georgia Perimeter’s advanced EAP students have participated in a weekly, classroom-based tutoring program with immigrant newcomer students at Clarkston High School, a DeKalb County Public School which is located directly across the street from the college campus. Approximately one-third of Clarkston High School students are foreign-born, including a significant population of recently arrived refugees and students with interrupted formal education. College-level EAP students assist ninth-grade ELL students with language-based projects in fields such as drama and creative writing. A similar project, Connect to Success, brings EAP students into the classrooms of nearby Indian Creek Elementary School to tutor younger ELL students. Over 200 college-level EAP students have participated in the school-based tutoring projects since the partnerships began.²³⁷

²³⁶ U.S. citizens include those born in the United States, as well as naturalized, foreign-born individuals. Data provided by Georgia Gwinnett College to MPI, on file with the authors.

²³⁷ Rebecca Rakoczy, “Community Connections,” *The Chronicle: The Magazine of Georgia Perimeter College*, Fall 2009.



Another advanced EAP class focuses on assisting senior citizens. Project SHINE (Students Helping in the Naturalization of Elders) is a national initiative developed at Temple University that pairs college tutors with elderly immigrants and refugees who are studying ESL and civics in preparation for the U.S. citizenship exam.²³⁸ According to interviewees, many of the elderly participants have very low literacy in their native languages, and may need assistance navigating daily tasks such as paying bills and opening a bank account.

These innovative programs connect classroom instruction to real-world experience: college students are required to complete journals and give oral presentations about their tutoring sessions. Faculty report that the college students also gain academic self-confidence and begin to see themselves as role models, as they are among a select group of immigrants who have the chance to pursue higher education. In recognition of these community engagement projects, Georgia Perimeter was one of ten colleges nationwide to receive a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2012, as part of the initiative “Bridging Cultures to Form a Nation: Difference, Community, and Democratic Thinking.” Staff from Georgia Perimeter had the opportunity to participate in peer learning events with the other colleges and explore opportunities to scale up service-learning to other departments throughout the college.

2. Lengthy EAP Course Requirements and Lack of Accelerated Models

While innovative programs help some college students solidify their English-language skills and move through the EAP course sequence, completing these requirements remains a lengthy and costly endeavor. Interviewees noted that some students become discouraged when they realize that the EAP course sequence can be longer than the regular developmental education sequence. At Georgia Perimeter College, it can take up to three semesters of full-time study to complete EAP requirements. While the field of developmental education is seeking to reduce the time students spend in remediation before enrolling in college-level courses, our site visits did not reveal similar concerns regarding the length of the remedial process for EAP students.

Many incoming college students resist being identified as EAP students: they may have felt stigmatized after being placed in ESOL programs in high school, or they may feel they will make more progress in mainstream courses in college with native English speakers. However, college faculty report that many of these students never reached the level of academic English proficiency required for college-level work—and they feel that these students’ specific needs are better addressed through EAP courses than developmental reading and writing. They also maintain that these students are unlikely to succeed in regular developmental education, and will likely have trouble passing the required exit exam.

*Students with limited English proficiency
do not appear to be at the forefront of Georgia’s investments
in improving college success and completion rates.*

The conflicting perspectives of students and faculty reflect a tension between the priorities of integrating immigrants with native English speakers versus providing intensive, sheltered language development programs. More research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of EAP courses versus other types of remediation for non-native English speakers.

On the whole, many of the innovative statewide reforms directed toward other forms of developmental instruction have yet to reach EAP programs. EAP was not featured in the state’s Higher Education Completion Plan, and colleges are not required to disaggregate performance outcomes for EAP students. As a

²³⁸ In 2011, Project Shine was a recipient of MPI’s E Pluribus Unum prize, a national honor recognizing exceptional immigrant integration initiatives. For more information, see MPI, “E Pluribus Unum Prizes,” accessed February 26, 2014, www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/e-pluribus-unum-prizes.



result, students with limited English proficiency do not appear to be at the forefront of Georgia's investments in improving college success and completion rates.

H. Advising, Support Services, and Campus Culture

Beyond instructional innovations, efforts to increase degree completion also incorporate support services, such as advising, counseling, and mentoring. National research demonstrates the critical importance of such support services for students from underrepresented minority groups, low-income students, and those who are the first in their families to attend college. These students often experience greater difficulty adjusting to the bureaucratic aspects of college life, such as financial aid policies, course registration procedures, and class pre-requisites, due to their lack of exposure to higher education.²³⁹ Just as high school students need guidance in building college knowledge, older youth also need assistance in navigating the various requirements, processes, expectations, and resources available at the college level.

Students from immigrant families may also need assistance with balancing work schedules, childcare, and additional family responsibilities.²⁴⁰ Immigrant and underrepresented minority students may also experience a sense of isolation on college campuses, and need assistance in weathering social and emotional challenges. Efforts to create a welcoming college culture which promotes diversity can play an important role in college enrollment and retention for immigrant students.²⁴¹

Site visits in Georgia revealed a number of innovative approaches to advising, mentoring, and student support. In some cases, these efforts explicitly target the needs of Latinos—the immigrant group with the lowest educational attainment in the state. Some colleges have transformed their approaches to advising and orientation for all students, in an effort to dramatically improve retention and degree completion rates.

I. Scholarships and Support for Latino Student Success at Georgia Perimeter

The Georgia Perimeter Educational Achievement Program (GEAP) offers comprehensive support services for a cohort of Latino students. The original, grant-funded program provided partial scholarships for 120 students annually from the 2010-11 to 2012-13 school years. Grant recipients had to be full-time students, demonstrate financial need, and maintain a minimum 2.6 GPA. Freshmen and their parents attended a bilingual, on-campus orientation program, and students enrolled together in a First Year Experience course, which focused on goal-setting and college success skills. Through a peer mentoring program, second-year GEAP students provided weekly assistance to freshmen. The second year of the program also focused on preparing students to transfer to four-year colleges. The Program Director was in constant communication with all participants, and used an “early alert” system to intervene with students who were on track to receive a “C” or lower in any class.

GEAP's intensive approach produced strong outcomes. The academic year retention rate for the cohort of students entering college in Fall 2011 was 95 percent. Nearly 90 percent of GEAP scholars met the college's definition of “good academic standing,” earning a GPA of at least 2.0 (though some of these students did not maintain the minimum GPA of 2.6 required to remain in GEAP).²⁴² Georgia Perimeter's senior administrators considered GEAP to be one of their most successful programs. In March 2013, GEAP was recognized as the Southeast regional winner of an Excellence in Advising award from the National Association for Academic Advising.²⁴³ Since the program required students to enroll full time, its target population was somewhat

239 Jennifer Engle and Vincent Tinto, *Moving Beyond College Access: College Success for Low-income, First-Generation Students* (Washington, DC: The Pell Institute, 2008), www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Moving_Beyond_Access_2008.pdf.

240 Vivian Tseng, “Family Interdependence and Academic Adjustment in College: Youth from Immigrant and U.S.-Born Families,” *Child Development* 75, no. 3 (2004): 966-83.

241 Jill Casner-Lotto, *Increasing Opportunities for Immigrant Students: Community College Strategies for Success* (Westchester, NY: Community College Consortium on Immigrant Education, 2011), http://cccce.org/images/stories/pdf/Increasing_Opportunities_for_Immigrant_Students_2011.pdf.

242 Data provided by Georgia Perimeter College to MPI, on file with the authors.

243 Georgia Perimeter College, “GPC Program for Latino Students Wins National Award” (news release, February 20, 2013), http://depts.gpc.edu/~pubrel/news/press_details.php3?press=680.



selective. In the context of the economic downturn, interviewees saw students shift from full- to part-time enrollment due to finances, making them unable to stay in the program.

Grant funding for GEAP expired in Fall 2013, however, and the scholarship program ended. Georgia Perimeter has maintained institutional support for the advising component of the program; the GEAP Program Director continues to provide academic and social support to Latino students, along with assistance in obtaining other types of scholarships and financial aid. The college also developed a web-based resource center, which serves Latino students enrolled in online courses.

Overall, as the population of immigrant youth in Georgia's institutions of higher education continues to rise, it may become more challenging to support their success through small, intensive programs such as GEAP. Even when fully funded, GEAP was only able to serve 120 students, out of the college's total enrollment of over 1,800 Latinos. Its strong results were the product of intensive academic advising and social support, combined with financial aid—attributes which are difficult to sustain and take to scale. This central conflict of scale versus intensity recurred as a common theme throughout our fieldwork.

As the population of immigrant youth in . . . higher education continues to rise, it may become more challenging to support their success through small, intensive programs.

2. Georgia Gwinnett's College-Wide Mentoring Program

As a newer college with an institutional focus on serving underrepresented students, Georgia Gwinnett College has developed a unique, college-wide advising, mentoring, and student retention strategy. All first-year students are assigned a faculty mentor, who is typically one of their professors during the first semester. Students meet with their faculty mentor at least twice during each term. By the time students complete 27 credit hours, they can switch to a faculty mentor in their major.

In order to maintain this highly personalized approach, mentoring is included as a key component of faculty members' job responsibilities—in addition to teaching, research, and institutional service. The college has developed a broad infrastructure of resources to train and support faculty in this role. "Senior mentors" in each of the four divisions of the college—liberal arts, education, business, and criminal justice—advise other faculty and provide peer workshops on topics such as helping students choose a major. The college also has a mentoring manual and a webpage to help faculty provide timely and accurate information to their mentees.

This high level of individual assistance is a point of pride for Georgia Gwinnett College, which also caps class sizes at 25 students for most courses. These efforts have paid off thus far, as the college—which enrolls the second-highest share of Latino students in the state²⁴⁴—has achieved the highest retention rate among the USG's open-access institutions.²⁴⁵ Here again, however, positive results have been achieved through a significant investment of time and resources, and Georgia Gwinnett's model places particularly high demands on faculty. In the college's school of liberal arts, each faculty member is responsible for mentoring approximately 27 to 30 students—and the caseload can be higher in the schools of criminal justice and business. While all interviewees demonstrated a strong commitment to the college's model of student engagement, some raised concerns about the sustainability of the mentoring program. As they noted, maintaining a highly-personalized learning environment becomes more difficult as the college transitions from a very small institution—with 118 students in 2006—to a much larger one enrolling 9,400 students in Fall 2012.

²⁴⁴ Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, *Spring 2012 Semester Enrollment Report*.

²⁴⁵ The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, "2010-11 University System Report Card."



3. Challenges in Supporting a Diverse Group of Immigrant and Refugee Students

It is also worth noting that site visits did not reveal examples of major college access and success programs that target African and Afro-Caribbean immigrants or refugees—groups which are generally low-income and face unique barriers to higher education. While Black immigrants comprise 12 percent of the state’s first-generation youth population, they become nearly invisible at the postsecondary level, as they are reported in college data as part of the larger Black student subgroup. However, the academic and social support needs of Black immigrants may differ significantly from those of their African American peers. The lack of disaggregated data on the prevalence of African immigrants and refugees in Georgia’s institutions of higher education complicates efforts to develop linguistically and culturally appropriate outreach and support services for these students.

The academic and social support needs of Black immigrants may differ significantly from those of their African American peers.

IX. Conclusions and the Road Ahead

First- and second-generation youth—who together make up nearly one-fifth of Georgia’s young adult population—are changing the face of Georgia’s educational institutions. While the tide of immigration that swept the state over the past two decades has ebbed in recent years, the second-generation population of youth ages 16 to 26 has grown rapidly. Immigration is no longer a new phenomenon in Georgia, which now enrolls nearly 91,000 English Language Learners (ELLs) in its K-12 public schools. While extensive fieldwork uncovered many examples of innovative local efforts on behalf of immigrant students, ELLs continue to face tough odds of earning a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED). Latinos—the state’s youngest major demographic group—have particularly low rates of college enrollment and completion.

First- and second-generation youth have the potential to play a critical role in meeting the state’s projected need for 250,000 additional college-educated workers in the coming years²⁴⁶ if educators and policymakers take the necessary steps to build the skills of this population. The following policy recommendations provide a framework for bringing education reform to Georgia’s youth from immigrant families.

A. High School Completion

- **Expand access to content for ELLs.** In order to substantially improve graduation rates, course placement strategies and accountability policies that may hold ELLs back will need to be reexamined. A growing consensus among national education experts supports teaching language and content simultaneously, instead of sequentially, in order to accelerate ELLs’ progress and high school completion.²⁴⁷

In Georgia, ELLs with low English proficiency are often discouraged from attempting core courses because they are likely to perform poorly on the mandatory End-of-Course Tests (EOCTs)—delivered only in English. As an alternative, accountability policies could be revised to reward schools for ELLs’ participation in core courses.

- **Invest in teacher training and professional development.** ELLs also need teachers who can adapt instruction and support language development across the school day. ELL-focused

²⁴⁶ State Workforce Investment Board, *Georgia Integrated State Plan*.

²⁴⁷ Understanding Language, *Key Principles for ELL Instruction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2013), http://ell.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Key%20Principles%20for%20ELL%20Instruction%20with%20references_0.pdf.



professional development can expand the instructional skills of all content-area teachers and school administrators serving this population. Additionally, offering salary supplements to teachers who earn an ESOL certificate or endorsement would likely provide a potent incentive for more educators to develop this expertise.

B. Preparing for College and Careers

- **Enhance college access for DACA recipients.** Georgia is one of only three states that explicitly bars unauthorized immigrants from the state’s most selective public colleges and universities—a restriction that holds even for youth who have been granted deferred action. By removing this ban, the state could provide an opportunity for academically qualified youth who might reinvest their talents in Georgia’s labor market and are likely to remain permanently in the United States. Extending in-state tuition to DACA recipients would also remove a substantial hurdle to college access and further the state’s goal of increasing postsecondary degree production.

C. Adult Education

- **Improve ESL and career training pathways.** The pathway from adult education to postsecondary degree and certificate programs is far from seamless, and few ESL students succeed in making this transition. Within the technical college system, Latino and Asian students make up the vast majority of noncredit ESL enrollment, but represent a small share of students in degree and certificate programs. Georgia’s recent adult education reform initiatives seek to compress the process of learning basic skills and completing college-level workforce training courses—but these programs were designed for English-speaking GED students. In order to build immigrants’ human capital and expand college access, Georgia’s technical colleges should logically extend these initiatives to ESL students.
- **Remove legal-status barriers to adult education for youth who otherwise qualify for DACA.** Unauthorized immigrants who lack a high school diploma—and are not enrolled in traditional high schools—cannot enroll in Georgia’s adult education system. Unable to advance their education and build their English proficiency, they may be denied the opportunity to qualify for DACA, as Georgia is one of only two states that makes enrollment in adult education contingent on legal status. Georgia policymakers could restore access to federally funded adult education courses for those who would otherwise be eligible for deferred action.

D. Postsecondary Education

- **Extend lessons learned from developmental education reform to improve the remedial process for English learners.** Postsecondary education reform initiatives such as Complete College Georgia have attempted to overhaul developmental education and accelerate students’ progress into credit-bearing courses. These efforts have yet to reach English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs, however, that may require several semesters of full-time instruction. Alternative approaches could borrow from recent innovations in developmental education by providing opportunities for immigrant students to enroll in mainstream college courses at the same time that they are improving their English skills, or delivering EAP courses in shorter, self-paced modules.
- **Incorporate a focus on ESL students into Georgia’s Outcomes-Based Funding Formula.** Georgia’s new outcomes-based funding formula provides a mechanism for policymakers to reward colleges for their progress on indicators aligned with the state’s higher education completion goals. These indicators range from GED attainment to associate’s and bachelor’s degree completion. However, Georgia’s proposed funding formula does not reward institutions



for the progress of ESL students, and does not provide an extra weight for serving this group. In Washington State, by contrast, colleges are able to earn “momentum points” based on their ESL students’ progress in attaining English proficiency—creating a new incentive for institutions to support the success of immigrant students.

E. Across Systems

- **Track and report data on ELLs and immigrant youth.** A sharper focus on ELLs and immigrant students in data collection and analysis—at both the K-12 and postsecondary levels—would allow educators to identify barriers to student success and develop targeted instructional approaches. Georgia might consider adopting a shared typology of ELL subgroups (such as long-term ELLs) across districts. Tracking and publicly reporting data on the progress of former ELLs would be especially helpful, allowing policymakers to evaluate the effects of various policy reforms—including Georgia’s *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) waiver and new statewide accountability system—on the long-term achievement of students from immigrant families.

At the postsecondary level, Georgia’s higher education systems do not disaggregate data on students with limited English proficiency. Without such data, stakeholders lack a full and accurate picture of how these students fare in terms of college enrollment, degree completion and the labor market, or the instructional practices that work with different subgroups.

The outcomes of the large and growing second-generation Latino population . . . will play an undeniable role in shaping Georgia’s future prosperity.

Georgia has recently laid the policy groundwork for innovation in K-12 schools, adult education programs, and colleges and universities—but this change agenda has not always taken into account the needs of youth from immigrant families. The outcomes of the large and growing second-generation Latino population, in particular, will play an undeniable role in shaping Georgia’s future prosperity, as the state continues to recover from the recession’s lasting effects. Educators and policymakers have the opportunity to remove common roadblocks facing these youth and, in doing so, advance immigrant integration in Georgia.



Appendix: Study Approach

This report’s findings are based on research using a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative data analyses with qualitative fieldwork. Our quantitative analyses used survey data from the U.S. Census Bureau—specifically, the most recent available years of the American Community Survey (ACS) and U.S. Current Population Survey (CPS)²⁴⁸—to examine sociodemographic characteristics and differences in educational attainment among immigrant youth and their peers in Georgia.

We focus on the population between ages 16 and 26, as this time period plays a critical role in a young person’s educational, professional, and personal development.²⁴⁹ We also disaggregate the youth population by generation, defining the first generation as those who immigrated to the United States; the second generation as U.S.-born youth with immigrant parents; and the third (or subsequent) generations as youth with U.S.-born parents. Within the first-generation population, we disaggregate youth from the most prevalent countries of origin (Mexico, Central America, and several East and Southeast Asian countries, in the case of Georgia), as well as those with and without legal authorization to reside in the United States. The degree of disaggregation depends on the measures employed and the strength of the available data.

We also examine administrative data from state agencies, including the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, which provides information on the demographics and performance of students in Georgia’s K-12 schools and public colleges and universities. The study high schools and colleges provided us with additional data upon request.

In general, the survey data (ACS and CPS) describe self-reported school attendance and completion, rather than actual enrollment or attendance. The administrative data lack the demographic detail available in the ACS and CPS—in particular, they seldom report the immigrant origins of students or their parents—but they provide much more complete and accurate counts of school enrollment and completion, while also describing a broader range of educational outcomes.

We also review a wide body of literature on Georgia’s education and workforce development initiatives. Analyzing previous research allows us to explore how the first- and second-generation youth populations have fared within the broader context of state and local efforts to promote college- and career-readiness.

Our fieldwork centered on secondary schools and public colleges, as well as youth-serving nonprofit organizations and state agencies. We focused on two counties in the northeastern Atlanta metropolitan area that have large immigrant populations: Gwinnett and DeKalb. We visited three high schools and three colleges in this region (see Table A-1).

Table A-1. Georgia Fieldwork Sites

K-12 School District	Technical College System of Georgia	University System of Georgia
Gwinnett County Public Schools	Georgia Piedmont Technical College (DeKalb County)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Georgia Perimeter College (DeKalb County) ■ Georgia Gwinnett College (Gwinnett County)

We chose these sites based on a variety of factors, including:

Number of English Language Learners (ELLs) and immigrants. Gwinnett County has more immigrants

248 We incorporated data from the 2012 American Community Survey (ACS) and 2013 Current Population Survey (CPS)—the most recently available statistics at the time of this writing.

249 Batalova and Fix, *Up for Grabs: The Gains and Prospects of First- and Second-Generation Young Adults*.



than any other Georgia county (206,000) and is home to 22 percent of all immigrants in the state. Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) is the largest school district in Georgia, with approximately 160,000 students and the highest number of ELLs. One-fifth of all ELLs in the state are enrolled in this district. DeKalb County has the third-highest number of immigrants: 117,000; or 12 percent of the state's immigrants.²⁵⁰ At the postsecondary level, Georgia Perimeter College enrolls the highest number of Latino students among the state's public, open-access colleges; Georgia Gwinnett College, meanwhile, has a higher share of Latino students.²⁵¹

Diversity of immigrant communities. Georgia's first- and second-generation youth are remarkably diverse. While most are Latino, there are many Asian and African immigrants across the state—particularly in the northeast Atlanta metropolitan area. We selected sites that would allow us to capture this diversity. As Georgia is also one of the nation's top refugee-receiving states, we also included sites that enroll youth from refugee families. DeKalb County was the largest refugee resettlement destination in Georgia in 2012—receiving over 60 percent of all refugees.²⁵² The DeKalb County town of Clarkston—which is home to Georgia Piedmont Technical College and a main campus of Georgia Perimeter College—has been a longtime center for refugee resettlement.

Diversity of institutional missions. We selected three colleges representing distinct segments of Georgia's public institutions of higher education: one technical college (Georgia Piedmont Technical College); one USG institution that primarily confers two-year degrees and prepares students to transfer to four-year colleges (Georgia Perimeter College); and one USG institution that primarily awards four-year degrees (Georgia Gwinnett College). All of these colleges are considered “open-access” institutions, meaning that they are committed to enrolling all students meeting minimum admission criteria; however, these criteria vary across the three institutions.

Reputation for high levels of achievement, commitment, and promising practices in serving immigrant youth. Finally, we selected institutions that had developed a reputation for efforts to promote the achievement of ELL and immigrant youth. We consulted with researchers and stakeholders across Georgia to help us identify schools, districts, and colleges that had demonstrated a commitment to serving the immigrant youth population, and reviewed prior research on relevant institutions in the state.

As a result of this process, we chose the fieldwork sites listed in Table A-1. We recognize that these sites are not a representative sample of districts and higher education institutions in Georgia, and that other schools and colleges are dedicated to improving the outcomes of first- and second-generation youth throughout the state; unfortunately we could not include all of them in this study. Additionally, we did not include private or for-profit colleges in our analysis.

We also acknowledge that school districts and colleges outside of the Atlanta metropolitan area—particularly those in rural areas—face a very different set of challenges in serving their ELL and immigrant students. Approximately 15 percent of Georgia's immigrant population lives in nonmetropolitan areas, and the state has a significant number of rural agricultural workers.²⁵³ There are also several small cities that have large immigrant populations, such as Dalton and Gainesville; poultry processing, carpet-making, and other manufacturing industries are major immigrant employers in these areas.

In GCPS, we conducted semi-structured, qualitative interviews with district and school administrators, teachers, and counselors. At the colleges, we interviewed senior administrators and small groups of faculty. We also met with several nonprofit organizations and state agencies, including the Georgia Department of Education, the Technical College System of Georgia, and the University System of Georgia Board of Regents. In total, we conducted in-person or telephone interviews with approximately 50 respondents in the state.

250 Data from the 2010 ACS.

251 Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, *Spring 2012 Semester Enrollment Report*.

252 Georgia Refugee Community, “YTD Refugee Arrivals by County,” accessed February 14, 2014, <http://garefugees.wordpress.com/state-reports-data/>.

253 MPI analysis of 2010 ACS data.



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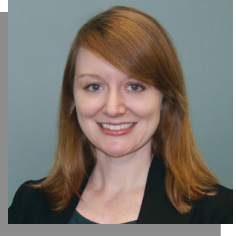
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For more on MPI's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy visit:

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