Preparation of New Teachers by University System of Georgia Institutions

2007 Report on the Production, Hiring, and Retention of New Teachers

The need for quality teachers in Georgia has never been greater. In response, the University System of Georgia (USG) has designated teacher preparation as a top priority. The focus on preparing quality teachers is not a recent occurrence, however. Nearly a decade ago, the Board of Regents set the standard for teacher preparation when it approved the Regents' Principles and Actions for the Preparation of Educators for the Schools.

USG has also extended the emphasis on quality to include counselors and school leaders. Working with school districts across the state, USG initiatives are training new and veteran counselors and leaders to meet the challenges in today’s schools.

In addition to its emphasis on quality, the University System is committed to expanding the number of teachers that USG institutions prepare. Through the development of alternative preparation programs and innovative recruitment projects, USG institutions have dramatically increased teacher recruitment and production in recent years.

USG-prepared teachers in classrooms throughout the state

Georgia’s schools need teachers, counselors and leaders who are qualified to work in today’s schools. USG teacher preparation programs are filling this need.

- 170 out of 180 school districts in the state hired new USG-prepared teachers in 2006.
- 77% of new USG-prepared teachers were employed in Georgia’s public schools at the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year.

New USG-prepared teachers in Georgia classrooms in 2006

Number of new teachers in school systems

0
1-24
25-47
48-126
127-224
A teacher’s perspective

Oatanisha Dawson

Oatanisha always knew she wanted to teach. She began working with students as a paraprofessional at Jane Macon Middle School in Brunswick, Georgia. Unfortunately, however, in 1998, the state of Georgia had to eliminate a number of paraprofessional positions.

Despite many obstacles, Oatanisha earned her Bachelor’s Degree in Middle Education Mathematics at Armstrong Atlantic State University (AASU) supported by the Pathways Program. She went on to earn her Masters of Education Degree at Armstrong Atlantic State University as well. Armstrong holds a very strong place in Oatanisha’s heart. “Armstrong is not just brick and mortar. Armstrong is a place where I gained a family, I’ve gained self-respect, and I’ve grown as a professional. So when I think of Armstrong, I think of home.”

Oatanisha returned to Jane Macon Middle School as a fully certified middle school mathematics teacher where she is highly regarded and where she wanted to create an educational family of her own. Oatanisha’s commitment is evidenced in her words: “I come to work to give my students hope.”

Quality teachers guaranteed

The Board of Regents strongly supports the important mission of preparing high-quality teachers for Georgia’s public schools. Within the University System, teacher preparation is conducted in accordance with the Regents’ Principles and Actions for the Preparation of Educators for the Schools. The Regents’ Principles feature three themes:

- Quality assurance
- Collaboration
- Responsiveness

Why the commitment to quality, collaboration, and responsiveness? Research clearly shows that well-prepared teachers working in positive school environments are more successful in bringing students to high levels of learning. In short, high-quality teachers foster student success.

USG-prepared teachers are greatly valued by Georgia’s public school systems. Lowndes County School District Superintendent Dr. Steve Smith commends the USG teacher preparation program and its impact on student achievement: “Our University System of Georgia teachers are well prepared to enter the classroom due to their comprehensive preparation and thorough understanding of learning styles and the teaching strategies that have a high impact on student achievement. We are appreciative of how the University System of Georgia works collaboratively with local school systems to help meet our needs for highly qualified and highly effective teachers.”

Valdosta School Superintendent Sam Allen shares his positive experience with the USG teacher preparation program: “The Valdosta City School System is in a very unique position because of the close proximity and relationships that have been formed with the Dewar College of Education at Valdosta State University. These relationships have allowed us (the school system and the university) to collaboratively focus on specific needs, prepare their students for the ‘real world,’ and provide my veteran teachers with opportunities to observe new best practices in the education field.” Superintendent Allen goes on to state, “The graduates whom we have employed have been prepared for the classroom and the retention rate for those employees is extremely high.”
Meet State’s High Demands

**USG teacher production efforts paying off**

University System of Georgia production of new teachers is increasing:

- USG institutions increased annual production of new teachers by 44% since 2002 (from 2,660 to 3,822) when the Regents’ Principles went into effect.
- USG institutions have prepared 20,106 new teachers since 2002.

**USG teachers stay and work in Georgia’s public schools**

Teacher attrition costs the state nearly $400 million dollars annually, which is one reason why hiring and retaining good teachers is so important and why USG-prepared teachers are a good investment. In addition to teacher attrition, teacher mobility (i.e., leaving one system to work in another system within the state) is also a costly issue for school systems. In the same way that USG-prepared teachers have a lower attrition rate than non USG-prepared teachers, they also have a lower mobility rate.

- 95% of the new teachers prepared by USG institutions in 2005 and hired in Georgia’s public schools in 2006, continued to teach in Georgia in 2007 vs. 86% of non-USG-prepared teachers.
- Over 85% of new USG-prepared teachers were working in 2007 in the same school system as they were in 2006 vs. 80% statewide.

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**A new way of doing business**

The University System is using innovative recruitment and program delivery methods to meet the demand—not just for more teachers, but for teachers qualified in critical shortage fields.

Advances in technology and social shifts in the workforce offer opportunities to reach new targets for potential teachers and prepare them for their work in the classroom.

New recruitment efforts are now focusing on professionals looking for mid-life career changes, recent college graduates, and retired military personnel. Methods to reach these markets include:

- Email recruitment campaigns
- Interactive web sites
- Collaborative partnerships

Once recruited, career changers from these new markets are asking for—and receiving—new ways to use their experience and gain teaching knowledge through:

- Online graduate programs
- Flexible classes and coursework
- Course credit for prior learning gained through work and experience

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Since the Regents’ Principles for the Preparation of Educators for the Schools went into effect, teacher production rates have increased 44%
USG-prepared teachers: diverse in demographic groups and subject area specialties

The most common route to becoming a teacher is the traditional one: an individual enters a baccalaureate degree program. However, there is also considerable growth in the number of individuals entering the teaching profession through other routes.

“...the University System of Georgia works collaboratively with local school systems to help meet our needs for highly qualified and highly effective teachers.”

Dr. Steve Smith
School Superintendent

Programs designed for college graduates or mid-career professionals, known as “non-traditional,” or “alternative route,” have become increasingly popular.

- More than one-fourth of all new USG-prepared teachers in 2007 completed alternative-route programs.

Diversity

The University System continues to target minorities for teacher recruitment to ensure that these populations are proportionately represented in Georgia’s K-12 classrooms.

- Since 2004, USG institutions have increased production of minority teachers by 17% (from 601 to 702).

Alternative-route programs have become a very good means of increasing the diversity of the new teachers the University System prepares.

- 36% of all new 2007 USG-prepared minority teachers were prepared through alternative route programs.

Subject areas

USG institutions prepare teachers in a very wide array of content areas. The specific preparation areas for the 2007 USG-prepared teachers were grouped into the clusters shown in the graph below. As can be seen, Early Childhood / Elementary Education was by far the largest cluster (37% of the total new teachers for that year). Special Education (16%) and Middle Grades (13%) were the next largest clusters. The majority of the remaining clusters encompass secondary (high school) education.

Twenty USG institutions offer teacher preparation*

1. Albany State University
2. Armstrong Atlantic State University
3. Augusta State University
4. Clayton State University
5. Columbus State University
6. Dalton State College
7. Fort Valley State University
8. Gainesville State College
9. Georgia College & State University
10. Georgia Gwinnett College**
11. Georgia Southern University
12. Georgia Southwestern State University
13. Georgia State University
14. Gordon College
15. Kennesaw State University
16. Macon State College
17. North Georgia College & State University
18. University of Georgia
19. University of West Georgia
20. Valdosta State University

* USG also offers online programs for prospective and current teachers.

** Teacher preparation program currently under development

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New USG-prepared teachers by preparation area