

# COVID-19 BUDGET IMPACT SURVEY



**Georgia Educators Identify Increased Student  
Needs Amidst State Funding Cut Debate**





SHORTAGE OF DEVICES  
EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING  
HEALTH & SAFETY  
COMMITMENT  
EXPERTISE  
RESOURCES  
BUDGET  
CUTS  
FURLOUGHS  
CONSEQUENCES  
INTERNET ACCESS  
CORONAVIRUS

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# EDUCATORS

Georgia educators are concerned about the impact potential budget cuts could have on students in the 2020-2021 school year, according to a new PAGE survey. More than 9,100 educators participated in the survey, which captured their perspectives on current state and local budget deliberations. From districts across the state, educators cited additional supports that students will need in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

These added supports require extra resources. Survey respondents are also troubled by the effects funding cuts could have on their own families and households. Respondents support state revenue increases to offset the harmful effects of potential budget cuts.

# KEY FINDINGS

## Georgia educators recognize resources are essential.

- Survey respondents are monitoring discussions about state education funding. More than 95 percent are aware of the proposed \$1.5 billion cut to the Georgia Department of Education.
- Seven out of 10 educators report their districts have indicated budget cuts are likely.
- Educators will face financial difficulties if budget cuts trigger furlough days. Some will leave the profession.
- Over 85 percent of respondents support increasing state revenues to offset potential budget cuts.

## Georgia educators focus on student well-being.

- Ensuring students' academic success is a priority for Georgia educators. More than 80 percent of survey respondents identified having devices and internet access as a necessity, and over half said remedial learning is critical.
- Nearly three-quarters of respondents say additional cleaning of school buildings is essential, and 65 percent consider personal protective equipment a necessity.
- Learning loss was flagged by nearly 90 percent of Georgia teachers if state funding cuts trigger furlough days. Other harmful consequences include disengagement from peers and educators and lost access to school meals.





*“Approximately 70 percent of respondents said their districts have indicated that budget cuts are likely... Most educators are uncertain how the cuts will be implemented.”*



## RESOURCES ARE ESSENTIAL

Georgia educators are following lawmakers’ discussions about the Fiscal Year 2021 budget. Over 95 percent of respondents reported they know legislators requested GaDOE to set its FY 2021 cutting 14 percent (or \$1.5 billion) from its FY 2020 budget. PAGE surveyed educators before Gov. Brian Kemp announced on June 3 that state revenue declined by 11 percent in the wake of the pandemic-spurred economic shutdown. This is a lower amount than expected. Legislators may revise requested budget cuts based on this updated information.

Approximately 70 percent of respondents said their districts have indicated that budget cuts are likely. Almost 90 percent of school-level administrators and central office staff anticipate budget cuts.

### Budget Cut Consequences

Most educators are uncertain how the cuts will be implemented. Twenty-six percent of classroom teachers report that their districts have shared information about implementation of the cuts though higher portions of school-level administrators—45 percent—and central office staff—51 percent—say they have received this information.



## *Missed Opportunity to Tap Educators' Expertise*

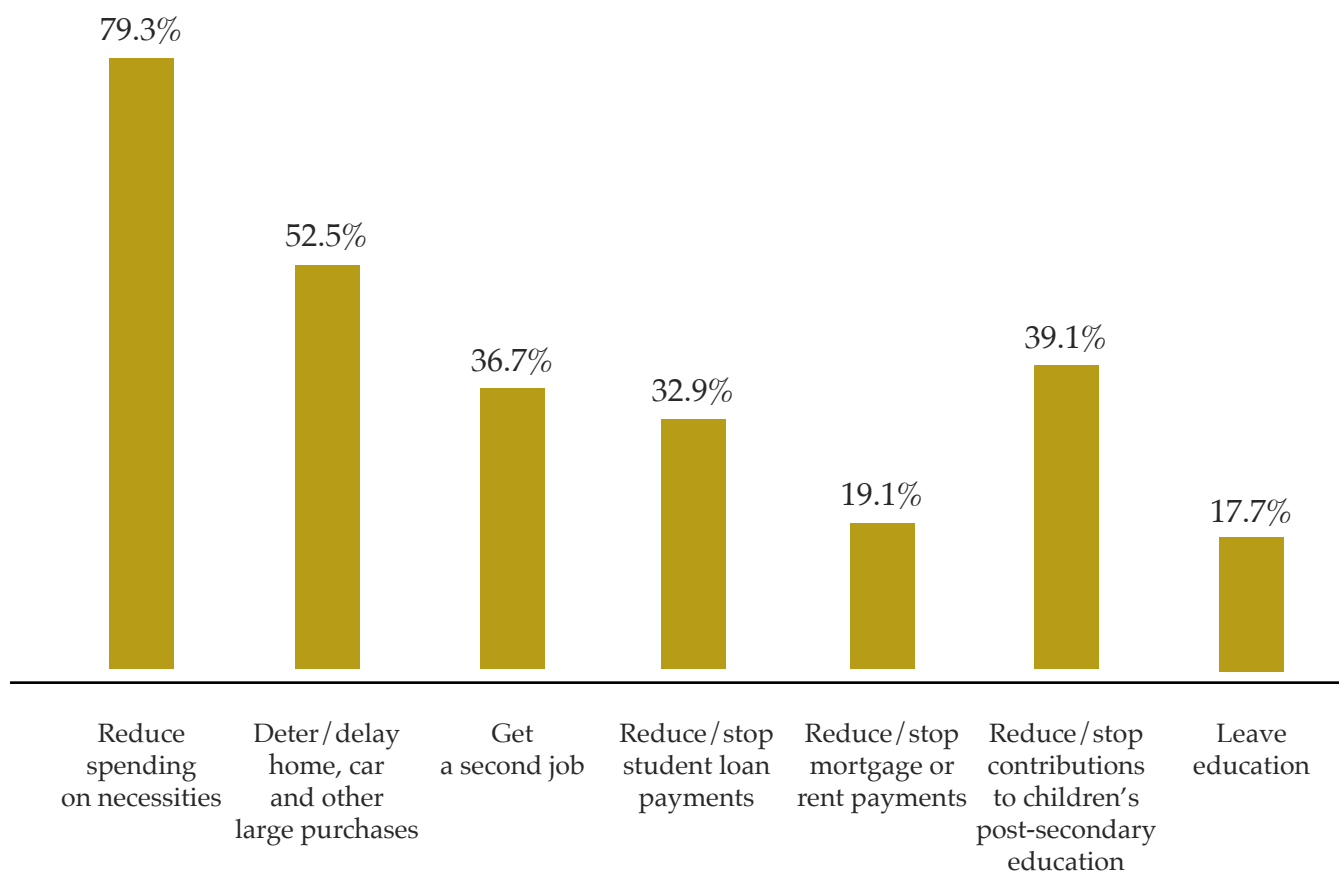
*Few educators report having opportunities to provide input into their districts' budgets. Sixteen percent of respondents say they have had such opportunities while 84 percent indicate they have not. Input into districts' budgets also varies by role. More than 36 percent of school-level administrators and nearly 32 percent of central office staff have input into districts' budgets while 13 percent of teachers report doing so.*

Furlough days and eliminating vacant positions are the two most common budget-cutting strategies cited by respondents. More than 62 percent of respondents expect that their districts will cope with potential cuts by furloughing staff. Smaller portions of school-level administrators and central office staff anticipate furloughs—55.7 percent and 47.4 percent respectively. About two-thirds of educators in these roles expect vacant positions to be eliminated while about 47 percent of classroom teachers do.

One in four paraprofessionals, school nutrition and transportation staff expect salary reductions. These staff members are often among districts' lowest paid employees. Less than 15 percent of teachers and under 10 percent of school-level administrators and central office staff anticipate similar reductions in their districts' salary schedule.

Educators will experience difficult financial disruptions if districts implement furloughs to cope with state funding cuts.

## Educators' Responses to Possible Furloughs



Role and years of experience shape educators' responses to possible furloughs. More than one in five teachers with 10 or fewer years of experience say they will leave teaching if furloughs are implemented. They are also more likely to seek a second job, and over half of those who have taught for five years or less expect to reduce or stop student loan payments if furloughed. Half of paraprofessionals would take a second job, and a quarter would leave education. Over 26 percent of transportation staff would also leave the field. In written responses, some educators noted that furloughs diminish employee morale.

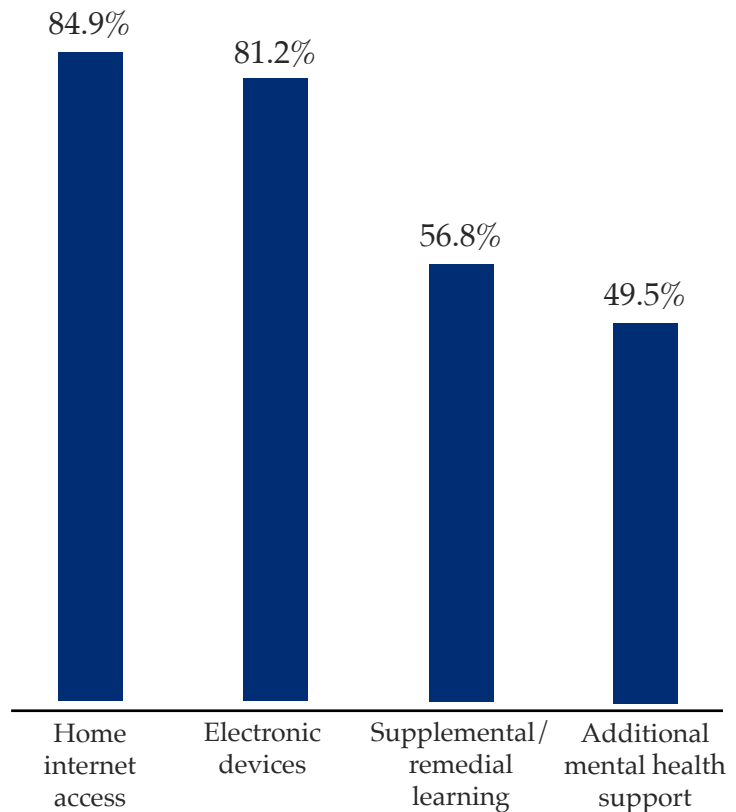
More than 87 percent of Georgia educators favor increasing state revenues to offset potential budget cuts and higher costs due to the pandemic. The top strategy cited by educators is increasing the cigarette tax followed by eliminating the private school voucher program, which carries a \$100 million annual price tag. In their written responses, educators identify other options including raising taxes on alcohol and vaping products as well as bumping the sales tax.

## STUDENT WELL-BEING



Educators identified multiple supports students will need when schools reopen beginning with full access to online learning. Over eight in 10 educators say students must have devices and internet access at home during the 2020-2021 school year. Many also highlighted the need for more supplemental and remedial learning opportunities and additional mental health services.

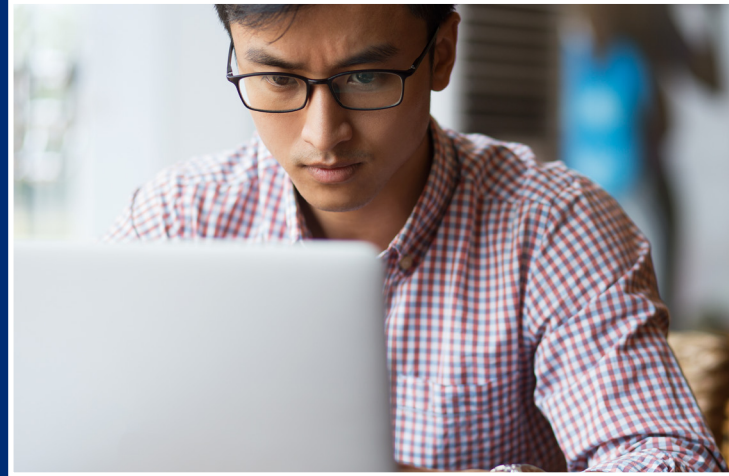
### Critical Student Supports Identified by Educators



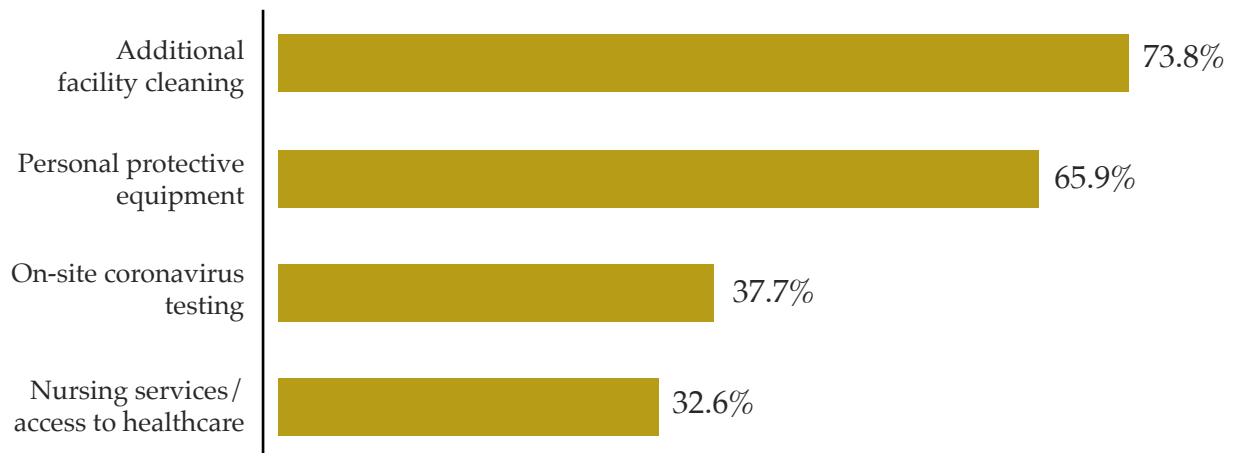
Protecting the health and safety of students and staff is a concern for most educators. The majority of educators say additional cleaning of buildings and personal protective equipment are needed. About one-third also support on-site coronavirus testing and nursing services.



*“Many educators need additional support before the 2020-2021 school year begins. More than 40 percent report that teachers need devices and internet access at home.”*



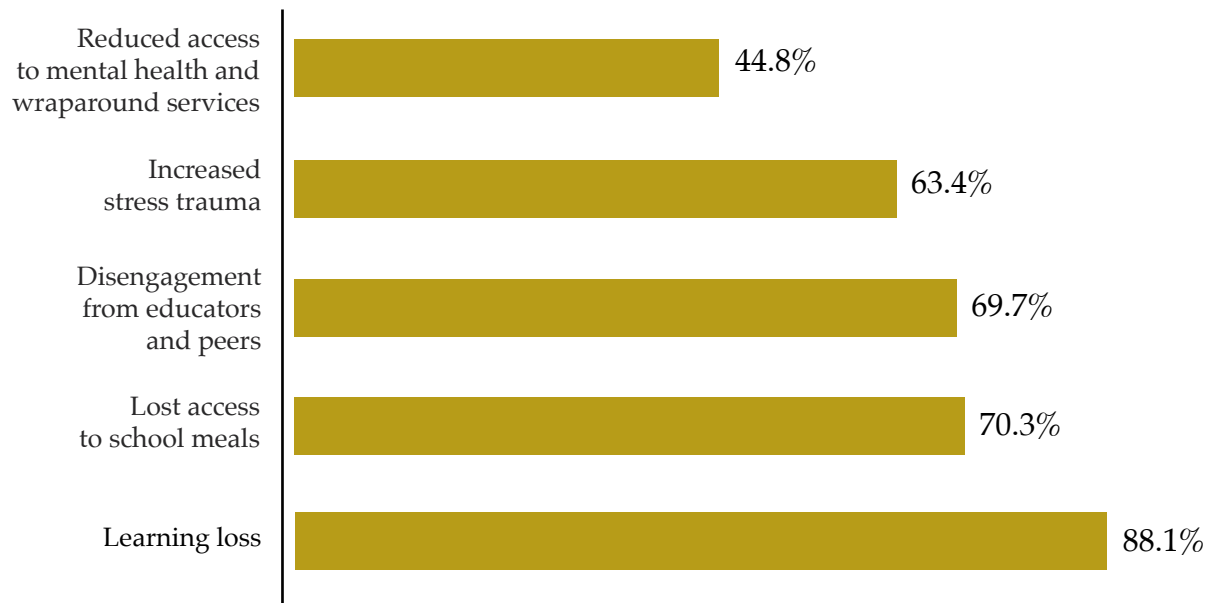
### Health & Safety Concerns Highlighted by Educators



Many educators need additional support before the 2020-2021 school year begins. More than 40 percent report that teachers need devices and internet access at home. About 38 percent of all teachers flagged professional learning as necessary, but many more new teachers—47 percent—said it is needed.

Educators highlighted harmful effects of possible furloughs on students, including broad consensus that students would lose learning.

## Furlough Effects on Students: Issues Flagged by Educators



In written responses, educators also noted that furlough days can have a disproportionate impact on students with special needs. Some are concerned that furloughs could raise childcare challenges for parents, which could result in job loss or children left unsupervised while parents work.



*As one Georgia educator stated, “When you cut schools, you tell kids exactly how important you think their future is.”*



## GEORGIA EDUCATORS' COMMITMENT TO GEORGIA STUDENTS

Georgia's educators are deeply committed to their students. This was evident when schools shut down in the spring, and educators rapidly shifted to online instruction, often with little training and limited support.

As PAGE's previous survey revealed, they pulled together new lesson plans, became tech support specialists for parents, and maintained connections to students with continuous emails, text messages, and phone calls. More than 25 percent of respondents reported using personal funds to pay for materials and supplies needed by students during the shutdown.

Access the Educator Impact survey results, analysis, and related resources [here](#).

Lawmakers should do all they can to limit cuts and ensure that students and educators have the resources needed to thrive academically and stay healthy.

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*Prepared by Claire Suggs, PAGE Senior Education Policy Analyst*



PAGE is Georgia's largest independent educator association. Serving more than 97,000 teachers, administrators, and school personnel, PAGE provides critical legal protection, legislative advocacy, professional development, grants, scholarships, and student / educator recognition programs.

With the onset of COVID-19-related impact on Georgia public education, PAGE initiated coronavirus-specific advocacy and resources – beginning with the March 2020 Educator Impact survey. This June 2020 Budget Impact survey and analysis is the second in a series of member-feedback opportunities prepared by the PAGE legislative team.

Visit the PAGE website for more information, insight, and resources – including detailed analysis of education-related bills and policy in PAGE Capitol Reports. Members can also opt-in to receive these reports directly [here](#).

PAGE is honored to serve Georgia's educators — and the 1.8 million children who rely on them.



P.O. Box 942270  
Atlanta, GA 31141

2971 Flowers Road South  
Suite 151  
Atlanta, GA 30341

[www.pageinc.org](http://www.pageinc.org)

770-216-8555  
800-334-6861

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