



## **BRIDGE Legislation: Building Resourceful Individuals to Develop Georgia's Economy**

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The picture of educational and career planning in Georgia will change dramatically in the next several years with the passage of new legislation from the Georgia General Assembly in May 2010. Then-Governor Sonny Perdue signed into law House Bill 400, authored by State Representative Fran Millar, now serving in the State Senate (R-District 40), which mandates student advisement in grades 6-12.

Educational and career planning was mandated in policy by the Georgia State Board of Education and encouraged through multiple sets of standards, tools and resources. The actual process, however, was rarely implemented to the degree that students and their families received the necessary information to make good, informed decisions about course work and future planning.

Unfortunately, Georgia educators often found themselves filling slots in a master schedule rather than meeting the state's, country's and, ultimately, world's economic and workforce needs. Confirmation from local public school educators was always readily received but there was little action taken in public schools to provide a comprehensive and developmental approach to the ultimate planning issue affecting the student's current course selections and future plans.

### **Planning for the future**

With the growing importance of having a two or four-year postsecondary education to be competitive in the job market, this new legislation will afford Georgia students and their families an educational and career-planning process. The planning process begins in middle school and continues beyond high school graduation to include apprenticeship, military, technical or community college, or two and four-year college and university. Georgia, like so many other state departments of education, saw disconnects between education departments and levels, academic curriculum versus career and technical curriculum, college prep versus vocational and students who work with their mind versus students who work with their hands.

The ultimate goal is for educators to produce students who can work simultaneously with their minds and hands. With new legislation and new State Schools Superintendent John D. Barge, the picture is changing for Georgia students with work playing a key role in their schooling. In



Barge's educational vision, "Education that works for all Georgia students," Barge has made the critical connection between school and work. The silos are coming down in Georgia, the disconnected departments are working together, and educators are beginning to see a bigger picture.

As Dan Hull said in his book, *Career Pathways*, this is "education with a purpose."<sup>1</sup> The purpose is to provide an education that will equip students with the skills and knowledge they need to be marketable in the workforce; they need to become self-sufficient by "building resourceful individuals."

As Georgia races to the top, struggles with the implementation of common core state standards, deals with a less than 80% state graduation rate, and contends with budget cuts and teacher furloughs, optimism prevails as students and their families can benefit from this new legislation that mandates student advisement in grades 6-12.

According to the law:<sup>2</sup>

- In the sixth, seventh and eighth grades, students shall be provided counseling, advisement, career awareness, career interest inventories and information to assist them in evaluating their academic skills and career interests.
- Before the end of the second semester of the eighth grade, students shall develop individual graduation plans in consultation with their parents, guardians or individuals appointed by the parents or guardians to serve as their designee.
- High school students shall be provided guidance, advisement and regularly scheduled counseling that will enable them to successfully complete their individual graduation plans, preparing them for a seamless transition to postsecondary study, further training or employment.

The law continues by providing the elements of an individual graduation plan that:

- Includes rigorous academic core subjects and focused course work in math and science or in humanities, fine arts and foreign language or sequenced career pathway course work.
- Incorporates provisions of a student's individualized education program (IEP) where applicable.
- Aligns educational and broad career goals with a student's course of study.

- Is based on the student's selected academic and career focus area as approved by the student's parent or guardian.
- Includes experience-based, career-oriented learning experiences that may include, but not be limited to, internships, apprenticeships, mentoring, co-op education and service learning.
- Includes opportunities for post-secondary studies through articulation, dual enrollment and joint enrollment.
- Is flexible to allow change in the course of study but is sufficiently structured to meet graduation requirements and qualify the student for admission to post-secondary education.
- Is approved by the student and the student's parent or guardian with guidance from the student's school counselor or teacher adviser.

The law states an individual graduation plan shall be reviewed annually and can be revised at any time throughout a student's high school career, if appropriate, upon approval by the student and the student's parent or guardian with guidance from the student's school counselor or teacher adviser.

### **Putting into practice**

The challenge for Georgia educators was implementing the law in a short period of time. The concept was not a new one; the process implementation, however, was new to many systems, especially at the middle school level.

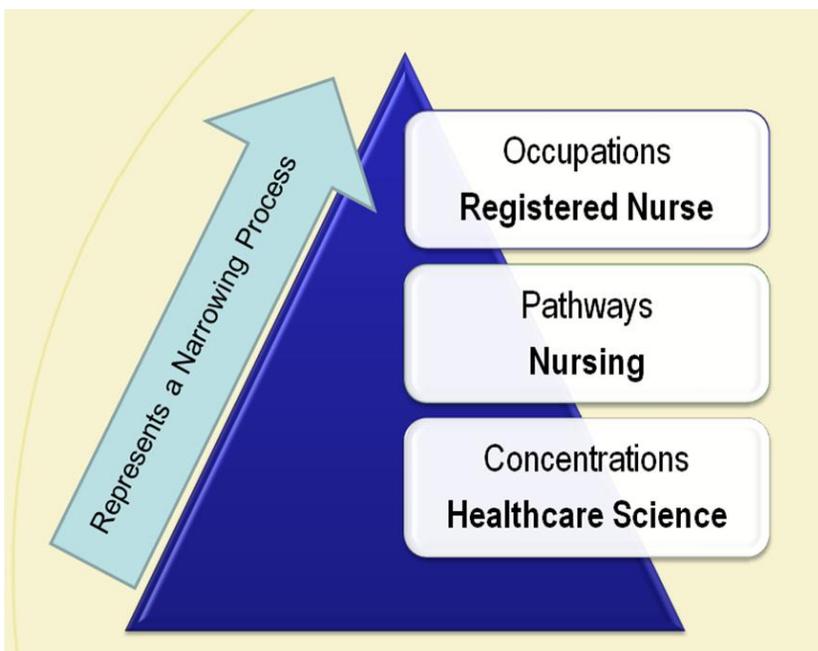
Middle schools were mandated to create a six-year plan. The career exploration process begins in the sixth grade, when students have multiple opportunities to take career assessments to determine talents and personal interests, explore their inventory results to help them narrow their career choices and manage the information to create their six-year plan by the end of the eighth grade.

It was equally challenging to evaluate the process. Fortunately, the state has maintained a relationship with several Georgia-specific career information systems. Working collaboratively, the state used data from each system to provide the accountability and evidence of compliance needed at the system and state level.

Georgia identified three possible delivery systems for Building Resourceful Individuals to Develop Georgia's Economy (BRIDGE) legislation (student advisement):

- Georgia's Teachers-As-Advisors program, based on standards aligned with the National Career Development Guidelines.
- Georgia's middle school curriculum (career awareness, career discovery and career management) based on Georgia Performance Standards.
- Georgia's Professional School Counseling Program aligned with national school counseling standards including Career Development.

**Figure 1 Georgia's career-planning model**



Systems can determine the delivery system they incorporate. No matter what delivery method the system chooses, however, the model remains the same. Georgia has created 11 unique program concentrations similar to career clusters with aligned pathways. This model, when coupled with developmental career and workforce information, will allow students to begin the process from narrowing a concentration to a pathway to, perhaps, a specific

occupation as the model indicates.

Throughout the process, students are provided the information and assistance to answer three essential questions:

- **Who am I?** Students will have multiple opportunities to learn about themselves through such assessments as career keys and a career cluster survey.

- **Where am I going?** Students will have multiple opportunities to explore the work world and link to that critical post-secondary option in classroom guidance, teacher-as-advisor activities, career centers and work-based learning.
- **How am I going to get there?** Students will manage their information in an electronic portfolio to create a study plan of study (individual graduation plan) by the end of the eighth grade and continue in grades 9-12 with annual advisement.

This is Georgia's first year for implementation after receiving the bill in May 2010. This year, local public school systems are working to develop their implementation plan for career development guidance in grades 6-12. Therefore, there is no outcome or usage data to present at this time. Georgia will continue to collaborate with career information systems to gather data used as evidence of compliance and collect outcome data based on such indicators as the number of students enrolling in postsecondary education, graduation rate and ninth-grade retention rate.

As a result of this new legislation, Georgia is confident that within the next three years it will see an increase in the graduation rate, an increase in post-secondary enrollment and completion without remedial courses, and a decrease in the drop-out rate.

## References

1. Georgia General Assembly, "Building Resourceful Individuals to Develop Georgia's Economy Act," May 2010.
2. Dan Hall, *Career Pathways: Education with a Purpose*, CORD, 2006.

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