

School Changes in Student Achievement and Local Practice Under Georgia's District and School Flexibility Policy

REL 2022-125
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Publication of the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance at IES



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October 2021

Georgia instituted a flexibility policy in 2007 that provided districts with waivers from state education rules, provisions, and guidelines. In exchange, schools must meet academic performance targets. The performance contracts are meant to encourage schools and districts to implement innovative practices to increase achievement for all students in Georgia. Between 2008/09 and 2016/17, 178 of Georgia's 180 districts entered into performance contracts with the state. The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) asked Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast to analyze how each school's achievement changed after the start of their district's performance contracts and the factors related to those changes. GaDOE also requested information on schools' implementation of and experiences with the state's flexibility policy, focusing on how schools have prioritized local innovations in practice. Overall, the study found positive but small changes in achievement for grades 3–8 English language arts and math and found significant variation in changes in achievement across schools within districts, after adjusting for other factors. Changes in achievement after performance contracts were implemented were related to schools' demographic composition and prior achievement. In response to a survey, school leaders reported prioritizing innovations related to use of data to identify early intervention needs, formative assessments used to guide instruction, supplemental programs for low-performing students, and personalized learning for students. Leaders in schools with larger proportions of students eligible for the national school lunch program, Black students, and English learner students reported prioritizing innovations related to online and/or blended curricula more frequently than schools with smaller proportions of these students. School leaders also reported a great deal of school-level influence over decisions about priority innovations.

Why this study?

Seeking to increase achievement for all students across the state, Georgia education leaders and policymakers instituted a waiver program in 2007 through which school districts entered into performance contracts with the state. The performance contracts grant waivers from state rules, provisions, and guidelines, allowing schools and districts greater autonomy. In exchange, schools must meet academic performance targets or face consequences, such as state takeover, if they do not meet those targets after five years.¹ Performance contracts are intended to incentivize innovative practices at the district and school levels.² The waivers enable schools to use resources in new ways to implement innovations that align with their educational mission, vision, and goals for improving student outcomes.

From 2007/08 to 2013/14, only 31 of Georgia's 180 districts started performance contracts. From 2014/15 to 2016/17, 147 districts started performance contracts. By 2016/17, 178 of Georgia's 180 school districts had

¹ Just one district has faced consequences to date, in part because performance targets have been revised due to changes in standardized assessments and changes to Georgia's College and Career Ready Performance Index.

² Innovations—as defined by the Georgia Department of Education—are enacted changes to practice made by a district or school in response to the district's approved performance contracts.

converted from traditional school districts to either Charter Systems or Strategic Waivers School Systems (SWSS). Forty-two districts initially chose to operate as Charter Systems and 136 initially chose to operate as SWSSs.³

Districts that chose to receive blanket waivers covering all allowable state laws and regulations are called Charter Systems because the flexibilities they receive are the same flexibilities that individual charter schools in Georgia receive. In addition, Charter Systems are required to implement local school governance teams for each school in the district and may seek approximately \$100 per pupil annually to support their district and school transformations. However, schools in Charter Systems do not become charter schools; they retain the same designation they had prior to the start of their districts' performance contracts. Most schools in both SWSSs and Charter Systems are traditional public schools. Some Charter Systems and SWSSs also have a small number of charter, magnet, or other schools within their district.

An SWSS must request specific waivers from regulations rather than receiving all possible waivers as Charter Systems do. Across all SWSSs, the state issued waivers from 122 different regulations. On average, each SWSS requested 39 waivers. A total of more than 5,000 individual waivers were granted across the 136 SWSS districts. Unlike Charter Systems, SWSSs are not required to implement local school governance teams and do not receive supplemental per-pupil funding.

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) approached Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southeast with a request to help GaDOE staff analyze schools' implementation of and experiences with the state's flexibility policy. Specifically, GaDOE was interested in relationships between district and school characteristics and improvement in student achievement. GaDOE wanted to identify the innovative policies and practices schools in SWSSs and Charter Systems implemented and understanding schools' experiences with the policy.

In a prior study, REL Southeast examined changes after districts started their performance contracts in district-level achievement and district-level practices and experiences (Williams et al., 2020). That study found wide variation in changes across districts but little overall change in achievement at the district level. However, the district-level findings could not identify whether schools within districts had similar or different changes in achievement after their districts adopted performance contracts. For example, some districts saw large positive changes in student academic achievement after implementing a performance contract. Many districts saw small positive achievement changes. A positive district-level change may not have meant that all schools in that district were experiencing positive change. The change may have been driven by a small number of schools with especially large gains. Similarly, although some districts may not seem to have changed their student performance very much after the implementation of a performance contract, certain schools in that district may have experienced larger changes in their performance (positively or negatively). The current study, therefore, examined school-level performance and practices within districts. The study team conducted complementary analyses to those in the district-level study to help GaDOE understand variation in achievement change among schools and school-level prioritization of innovative practices. The study findings will help GaDOE leaders to develop support services, allocate resources, and disseminate information to aid schools' efforts to make use of the waivers in their districts' performance contracts. The findings also will inform Georgia schools about how other schools prioritized innovations.

The results will be of interest to states beyond Georgia considering similar deregulation policies. Georgia's flexibility policy is part of a growing trend in education reform to provide districts and schools autonomy from traditional state-led education processes and policies. The intent is to allow more flexibility in local decisionmaking and to improve student outcomes (Bulkley, 2005; Whitty & Power, 2000; Wrabel et al., 2018; see the district-level

³ Between 2017 and 2020, six SWSSs chose to switch to Charter Systems. This study examines schools' experiences following the start of their district's initial performance contract, so the switches are beyond this study's scope.

study for a review of the literature). The results contribute to knowledge about how schools experience autonomy to implement innovations that could inform other states' policies and plans.

Research questions

The study addressed two primary research questions, which are designed to understand the relationship between districts' performance contract adoption and changes in schools' academic achievement, as well as to identify the types of local practices and innovations that schools prioritized after their districts adopted a performance contract.

1. To what extent does the relationship between performance contracts and changes in student achievement in grades 3–8 English language arts (ELA) and math, grade 9 English, and grades 9–12 Algebra I vary among schools within districts after adjusting for other factors? What school features (demographic composition, prior achievement, and school type) are associated with this within-district variation?
2. Which changes to policies or practices did schools within Charter Systems and SWSSs prioritize after the start of their districts' performance contracts?
 - a. How do priority local practice changes vary by school features (grades served, demographic composition, and whether the school belonged to a Charter System or SWSS)?
 - b. Do school-level accounts of practice changes align with district-level accounts of practice changes?
 - c. Do school leaders report autonomy to make decisions about prioritizing innovative practices?

Understanding changes in student achievement and school practice under performance contracts

The study team used administrative data from GaDOE to examine whether and how school-level student achievement changed from the period before to the period after districts' performance contract adoption, adjusting for other factors (see table B4 in appendix B). Specifically, analyses of the administrative data provide information on:

- Overall school-level changes in achievement in grades 3–8 ELA and math, grade 9 English, and grades 9–12 Algebra I from before districts had performance contracts to after districts started their performance contracts.
- Variability in the changes in achievement across schools within districts.
- Links between school characteristics and changes in achievement.

A primary focus of the study is on schools' implementation of innovative practices. The analyses related to innovations use survey data that GaDOE collected, which were linked with administrative data on school and district characteristics. Survey questions asked schools to identify the innovations that were their first, second, and third priorities to implement across three waiver areas—academic programs, human resources, and finances—after the start of their district's performance contract. The data sources, sample, and methods used are shown in box 1 and described in appendix B. Key terms used in this report are defined in box 2.

Box 1. Data sources, sample, and methods

Data sources. For research question 1, the study team used data from Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) administrative records. These data were supplemented with school data from the federal Common Core of Data. For research question 2, GaDOE collected data from surveys administered to school leaders statewide. These data were merged with data from surveys GaDOE administered to district leaders for the district-level study.

Research question 1 examined several school characteristics that may be associated with school-level changes in student achievement following the start of districts' performance contracts. These characteristics include school enrollment size, school demographics (percentage of students who are Black, eligible for the national school lunch program, or English learners), school-level achievement before performance contract adoption, and school type (whether schools were

traditional public, public charter, magnet, or other school type). The models also adjusted for other characteristics of schools and their districts (see appendix B for the full list).

Research question 2 examined school leaders' responses to survey questions about the innovative practices they prioritized for implementation, overall and by school characteristics including grade levels served, demographic composition, district type (whether schools are part of an SWSS or Charter System). This question also examined survey responses regarding decisionmaking. A detailed description of the data sources, variables examined, sample, and study methodology is in appendix B.

Sample. The administrative data used for research question 1 comprise all students in grades 3–12 from 2,259 schools in the 178 SWSSs or Charter Systems in Georgia that operated between 2006/07 and 2018/19 and that contained outcomes from before and after the start of districts' performance contracts. The data include 11.2 million student scores on standardized achievement tests in four grade-subject groups (end-of-grade assessments in grades 3–8 ELA and grades 3–8 math, and end-of-course assessments in grade 9 English and grades 9–12 Algebra I), averaged by school, district, and year.

The survey sample data, used for research question 2, included 353 survey responses from a total of 2,259 schools in Strategic Waivers School Systems (SWSSs) and Charter Systems. The school-level survey response rate was 16 percent. Because the response rate was so low, the survey responses should be considered representative only of the schools that responded to the survey, and not of all schools in the state. The study team analyzed how the set of schools with survey responses compares with all districts in Georgia based on observable characteristics. The team found that school leaders who responded to the survey represented schools that had larger proportions of White students and smaller proportions of Black, Asian, Latino, and Native American students, and that were more likely to be in SWSSs than Charter Systems and in districts located in town and rural areas than urban and suburban areas (appendix B).

Methodology. For research question 1, the study team conducted a district-level longitudinal analysis of student outcomes to examine academic changes in achievement after performance contract adoption (that is, a generalized difference-in-differences analysis), and the degree to which achievement changes were related to school enrollment size, demographic composition, prior achievement, and school type. Because districts adopted performance contracts at different points in time, "change" is a relative measure. It is defined as the average difference between achievement outcomes before and after performance contract adoption for schools in districts that changed performance contract status, compared with differences in those same years for school in districts that had not changed their performance contract status at that time. For the earliest adopters (2008/09), changes in achievement from before performance contract adoption to after performance contract adoption are relative to changes in achievement in those same years among schools in other districts that would adopt a performance contract in the future. For the latest adopters (2016/17), changes in achievement from before performance contract adoption to after performance contract adoption are relative to changes in achievement in those same years among schools in all other districts that already had adopted a performance contract. The comparison can be thought of as a "value-add" of adopting a performance contract for 2016/17 adopters over and above any effects observed among the schools in districts that already had adopted a performance contract. For schools in districts that adopted a performance contract between 2009/10 and 2015/16, the comparison condition includes changes in achievement among both schools in districts that had not yet adopted a performance contract and schools in districts that had adopted a performance contract (see table B4 in appendix B for more details).

School achievement naturally varies over time and among schools, for reasons unrelated to Georgia's flexibility policy. Therefore, our modeling approach for research question 1 adjusted for natural variation among schools and natural variation over time to better isolate changes in achievement that coincided with the start of districts' performance contracts. To study how changes in achievement varied among schools, our modeling strategy estimated changes in achievement for each school within each district, adjusting for time-varying school and district compositional characteristics, including student composition by gender, race, eligibility for the national school lunch program, individualized education programs, English learner status, and teacher composition by average years of teaching experience and teacher degrees. Interaction terms between the indicator for pre- and post-performance contract adoption and indicators for school characteristics were used to examine their relationship (that is, the degree to which schools' enrollment size, percentage of Black students, percentage of students ever designated as English learners, percentage of students eligible for the national school lunch program, achievement before districts adopted a performance contract, and school type relate to changes in achievement after their districts adopted a performance contract).

For research question 2, the study team used descriptive statistics to identify schools' priority innovations after their districts' performance contract adoption, as indicated by survey responses from school leaders. When comparing responses by school

type, meaningful differences were defined as differences of 5 percentage points or larger. The study team tabulated school leaders' survey responses regarding whether schools required specific waivers to implement their innovations, schools' decisionmaking about priority innovative practices, and the autonomy school leaders experienced in making decisions about priority innovations. To examine how schools' experiences aligned with the experiences of their districts, the study team merged school leaders' survey responses with district leaders' responses to GaDOE's 2019 survey of district leaders. The team compared school leaders' survey responses about their top priorities with the top priorities reported by their district administrators. Of the 353 schools whose leader responded to the survey, 289 had a corresponding district-level survey response (see appendix B for details on this analysis).

This study has four main limitations. First, because most districts did not enter into a performance contract until 2015/16 or 2016/17 (see appendix A), findings about changes in achievement are driven heavily by schools in districts that have implemented performance contract–related innovations for two or three years. It will be important to continue to track changes in achievement as more schools in the early cohort approach five years or more with a performance contract. Second, the findings also cannot determine cause and effect. Finding an association between a school characteristic and a change in student achievement, even when statistically significant, does not mean that the school characteristic causes the predicted change in achievement and should not be interpreted as such. The study's findings reveal only the strength of the associations between specific school characteristics and changes in achievement. These associations can then be used to identify potential successes and challenges, and provide some guidance to GaDOE administrators who may want to further examine types of schools that show promise or could benefit from additional guidance or support. Third, survey nonresponse can introduce bias. GaDOE staff administered the survey in January 2021, in the middle of a school year affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The 353 school leaders who responded represent only 16 percent of all Georgia schools. Although schools with a respondent are similar to schools without a respondent with regard to many characteristics, they differ with regard to other characteristics and may differ in other ways that are not measured in the data. As a result, survey findings should still be interpreted with caution. Fourth, self-report data, like the survey data in this study, depend on respondent accuracy. In some cases, school leader respondents may not provide accurate responses about decisions made shortly after the start of their districts' performance contracts. Similarly, the accuracy of school leaders' responses to the school survey and district leaders' responses to the district survey conducted two years prior may differ, which may influence the finding for research question 2b, which examines alignment of district and school priorities.

Box 2. Key terms used in this report

Strategic Waivers School System (SWSS). An SWSS is a school district whose performance contract requires that the district request specific waivers from regulations. Across Georgia, 136 districts initially chose SWSS status.

Charter System. Districts that chose to receive blanket waivers from all allowable state laws and regulations are called Charter Systems. The term was coined by GaDOE to indicate that the school district's performance contract provides the same allowable flexibilities that individual charter schools in Georgia receive. Charter Systems must implement local school governance teams and may receive approximately \$100 per pupil annually in supplementary funding. However, schools within Charter Systems do not become charter schools. They retain the same designation they had prior to the start of their district's performance contract. Across districts in Georgia, 95 percent of elementary and middle schools and 88 percent of high schools are traditional public schools. Only 3 percent of elementary and middle schools and 4 percent of high schools are charter schools (table B3 in appendix B). The rest are magnet schools or other types of schools. Statewide, 42 districts initially chose Charter System status.

Changes in achievement. The average difference between schools' achievement outcomes before and after performance contract adoption for schools in districts that changed status, compared with differences in the same years for schools in districts that did not change their performance contract status in that year.

Meaningful and small changes in achievement. The study team defined meaningful changes as those that are statistically significant and 0.05 standard deviations or larger. Small changes are those that are statistically significant and smaller than 0.05 standard deviations. These thresholds are based on empirical benchmarks described in more detail in appendix B.

Findings

The report findings are organized by research question. The first two parts of this section focus on findings for research question 1, including school changes in academic achievement after their districts adopted performance contract; variation in changes in achievement; and the relationship between changes in achievement and school characteristics. The next seven parts focus on findings for research question 2, including (a) which innovations school leaders most frequently identified as priorities in their survey responses; (b) whether leaders from schools in different district types (SWSS or Charter System), serving different grades, and with different demographic compositions prioritized similar or different innovative practices, (c) whether schools' reported priority innovations aligned with their districts' reported priorities, and (d) who was involved in decisionmaking.

Overall, the average changes in school achievement were positive but small for grades 3–8 English language arts and math after their districts adopted a performance contract

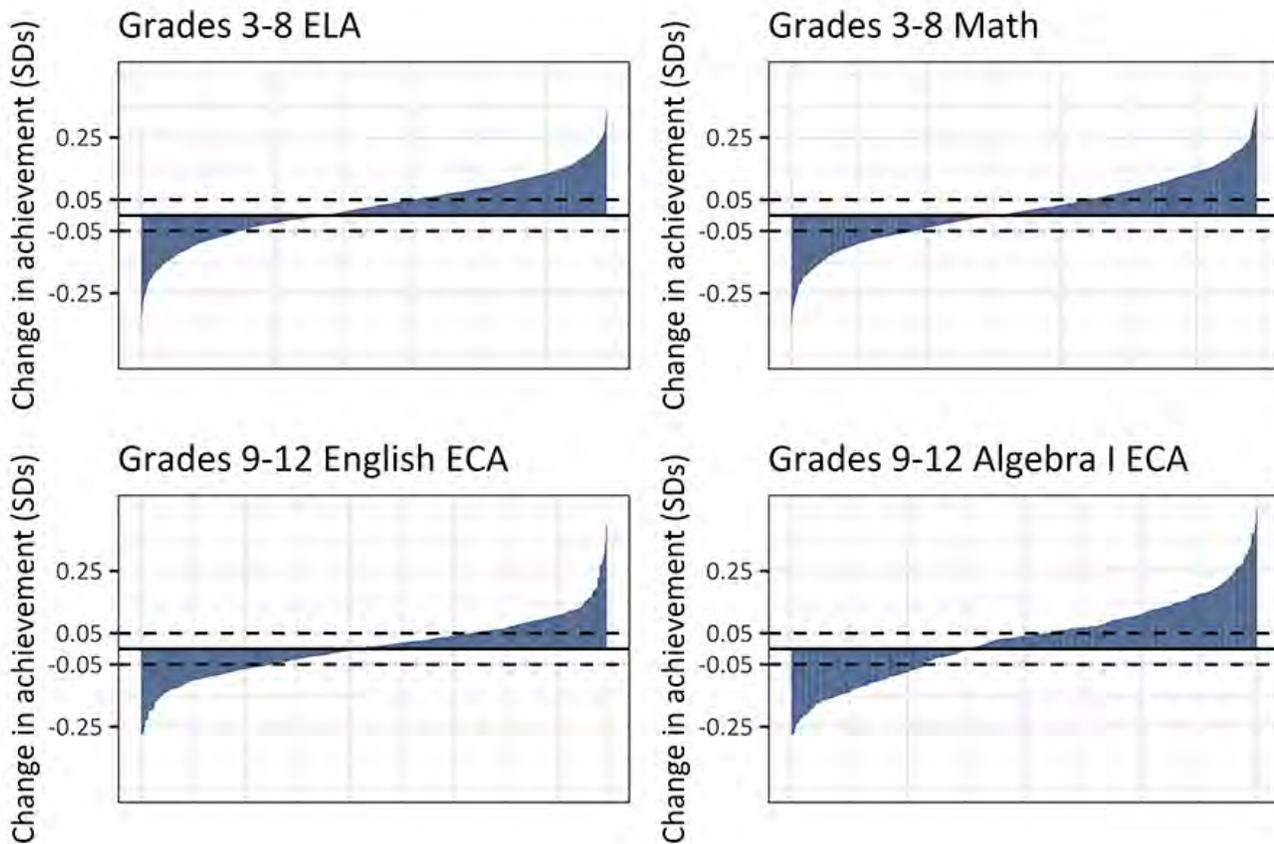
Average changes in school achievement in grades 3–8 ELA and math were positive and equivalent to about 2.5 weeks of learning in ELA [an effect size (ES) of 0.02 standard deviation units (SDs)] and about 3 weeks of learning in math (an ES of 0.03 SDs). The average changes in school achievement in grade 9 English and Algebra I also were positive, with increases of about 2.4 weeks of learning in grade 9 English (an ES of 0.01 SDs) and 9 weeks of learning in Algebra I (an ES of 0.04 SDs), after adjusting for other characteristics of schools and districts (see table C1 in appendix C; Hill et al., 2008). None of the average changes in achievement were meaningful (that is, they were all smaller than 0.05 SDs in effect size units). Only the results for ELA and math in grades 3–8 were statistically significant.

As was the case at the district level, schools' changes in achievement after the start of their districts' performance contracts varied from large decreases in achievement to large increases in achievement, and schools within districts were not more similar to one another than to schools in other districts

Although the statewide average change in school achievement was small and positive in all subjects, changes in achievement varied by school and were not consistently positive or negative. Some schools had meaningful decreases in achievement, some had small decreases in achievement, some had no change in achievement, some had small increases in achievement, and some had meaningful increases in achievement (figure 1). The probability that a school had a meaningful increase in achievement was 42 percent for grades 3–8 ELA, 43 percent for grades 3–8 math, 39 percent for Grade 9 English, and 48 percent for grade 9 Algebra I (see table C1 in appendix C).⁴ Although it was hypothesized that schools within the same district might have changes in achievement that were more similar to one another than to schools in other districts (that is, that variation in achievement changes within districts would be lower than variation in achievement changes between districts), this was not the case. Rather, variation among schools in their achievement changes was similar to the variation in achievement changes observed among districts in the prior district-level study (Williams et al., 2020).

⁴ This represents the expected probability that true changes in school achievement are 0.05 SDs or larger.

Figure 1. Schools' changes in achievement after their districts' performance contract adoption varied from meaningful decreases in achievement to meaningful increases in achievement



ECA is end-of-course assessment. ELA is English language arts.

Note: Each line represents one school. The dashed lines indicate the threshold for meaningful increases or decreases in achievement; schools whose blue lines extend beyond the dashed lines experienced meaningful changes in achievement after the start of their districts' performance contracts. These plots were generated from the model used to generate the findings in table C1 in appendix C. Additional details about the regression models used in these analyses are presented in appendix B. Related results are presented in tables C1 and C2.

Source: Authors' analysis using administrative data from Georgia Department of Education, 2006/07–2018/19.

After the start of their districts' performance contracts, schools with the largest proportions of Black students and students eligible for the national school lunch program, as well as schools with lower prior achievement, did not increase their achievement as much as schools with fewer Black students, fewer students eligible for the national school lunch program, and higher prior achievement

After the start of their districts' performance contracts, schools with the largest proportions of Black students did not increase their achievement as much as schools with smaller proportions of Black students [a gap of -0.06 SDs, which equates to about seven fewer weeks of learning in ELA and five fewer weeks of learning in math (table 1; Hill et al., 2008)]. These differences are statistically significant and meaningful in both grades 3–8 ELA and math. Schools with the largest proportions of students ever eligible for the national school lunch program did not increase their achievement as much as schools with smaller proportions of these students. The difference was statistically significant and meaningful in grades 9–12 Algebra I (-0.16 SDs), and significant but not meaningful in grades 3–8 ELA (-0.04 SDs) and math (-0.03 SDs). Finally, schools with higher academic achievement prior to the start of their districts' performance contracts increased their achievement in grades 3–8 ELA and math more than schools with lower prior academic achievement. All differences were statistically significant, but only the finding for schools with the highest prior achievement in grades 3–8 ELA was meaningful (0.06 SDs).

These patterns were not the same for schools with the highest proportions of English learner students. Changes in school achievement after the start of districts' performance contracts were not different for schools that had larger proportions of English learner students compared with schools that smaller proportions of English learner students. There were some differences between schools of different types and different sizes, but there also were not clear patterns to these differences.

Table 1. After their districts adopted a performance contract, schools with the largest proportions of Black students and students eligible for the national school lunch program, as well as schools with lower prior achievement, did not increase their achievement as much as schools with fewer Black students, fewer students eligible for the national school lunch program, and higher prior achievement, 2008/09–2018/19

Variable	Grades 3–8		Grades 9–12	
	ELA	Math	English ECA	Algebra I ECA
Difference in average change in achievement between schools with specified characteristic and schools with reference characteristic (SD units)				
School demographic characteristics (less than or equal to 50th percentile is reference)				
<i>Percentage Black</i>				
51st to 75th percentile	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.05* (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)
76th percentile or higher	-0.06* (0.01)	-0.06* (0.01)	0.03 (0.02)	0.06 (0.05)
<i>Percentage English learner students</i>				
51st to 75th percentile	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	0.04 (0.03)
76th percentile or higher	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)	0.04 (0.03)
<i>Percentage eligible for the national school lunch program</i>				
51st to 75th percentile	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.04)
76th percentile or higher	-0.04* (0.01)	-0.03* (0.01)	0.02 (0.03)	-0.16* (0.05)
<i>Enrollment size</i>				
51st to 75th percentile	0.00 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.03)
76th percentile or higher	-0.03* (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.06 (0.04)
<i>Adoption year academic achievement</i>				
51st to 75th percentile	0.04* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	0.03 (0.03)
76th percentile or higher	0.06* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	0.03 (0.04)
School type (regular school is reference)				
Magnet school	0.03 (0.03)	0.05 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.04)
Charter school	0.02 (0.02)	0.05* (0.02)	-0.09* (0.04)	-0.01 (0.08)
Other school	0.06 (0.07)	0.17* (0.08)	-0.07 (0.06)	0.03 (0.16)
<i>Number of schools</i>	1,724	1,724	445	399
<i>Number of school-by-year observations</i>	21,282	21,282	5,279	3,966

* Significant at $p < .05$.

ECA is end-of-course assessment. ELA is English language arts. SD is standard deviation. SWSS is Strategic Waivers School System.

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. See tables C3 and C4 in appendix C for full model results.

Source: Authors' analysis using administrative data from Georgia Department of Education.

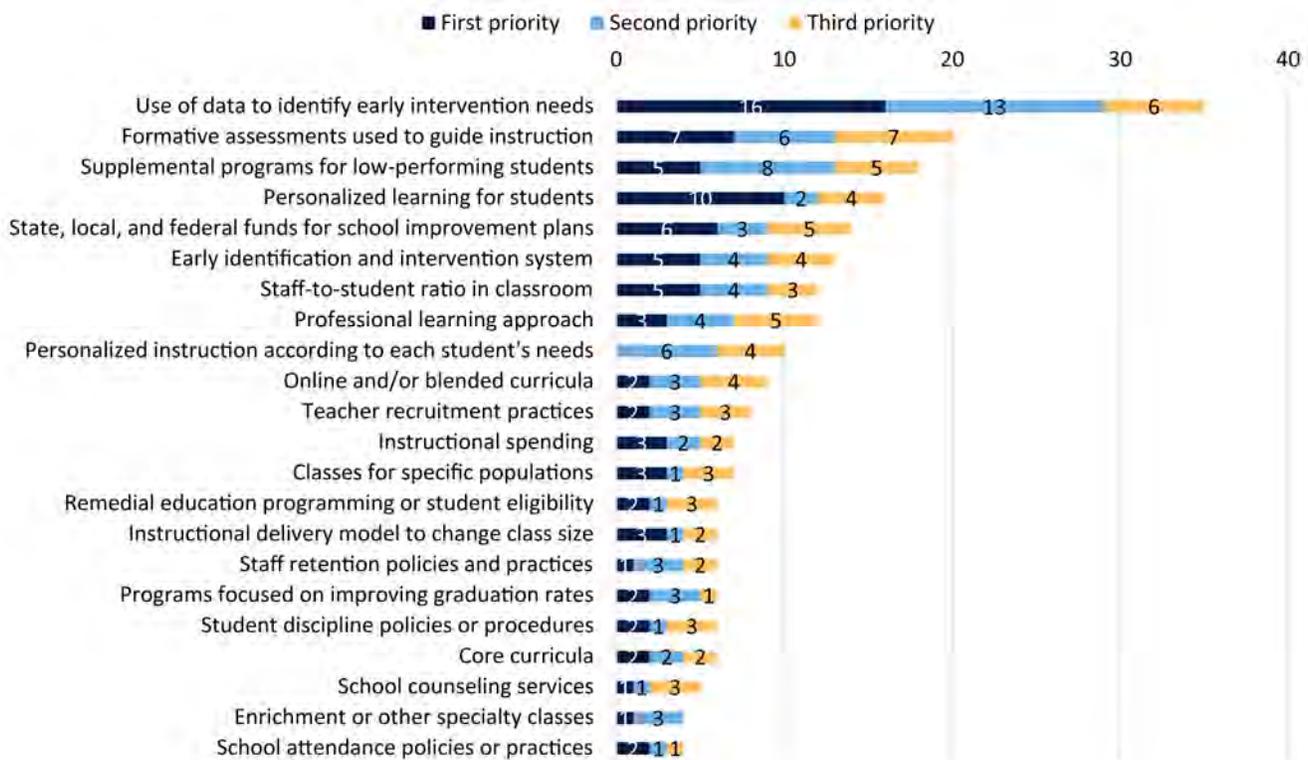
The 16 percent of schools that responded to the survey prioritized several academic innovations that can be categorized as using data or individualized approaches to meet students’ needs, and few schools prioritized innovations related to the “big four” waivers

The 353 Georgia school leaders who responded to the survey (a 16 percent response rate) most frequently reported top priority innovations that all can be categorized as using data or individualized approaches to meet students’ needs. Of the 59 innovations in the survey, 35 percent of school leaders reported prioritizing innovations related to use of data to identify the need for early intervention and 16 percent of school leaders ranked it as their school’s top priority (figure 2). The second most frequently ranked priority was innovations related to formative assessments used to guide instruction; 19 percent of school leaders ranked it as one of their top three priorities. These two data-driven innovations were followed by innovations related to supplemental programs for low-performing students (18 percent) and personalized learning (16 percent).

GaDOE called waivers related to (a) class size and reporting requirements, (b) teacher certification requirements, (c) salary schedule requirements, and (d) direct classroom expenditure control the “big four” waivers. Charter Systems automatically received all waivers including the “big four.” GaDOE required that districts applying to become an SWSS request at least one of the “big four” waivers. However, innovations related to the “big four” waivers were not widely prioritized. Seven percent of school leaders who responded to the survey reported that innovations related to instructional spending were one of their top three priorities. Six percent reported prioritizing innovations related to class size, 6 percent reported prioritizing innovations related to certification requirements for hiring staff or allocating staff for instruction, and 2 percent reported prioritizing innovations related to salary schedule (see table C5 in appendix C for the percentage of schools that prioritized each of the full list of innovations).

Figure 2. Schools prioritized several academic innovations that can be categorized as using data or individualized approaches to meet students’ needs, 2008/09–2016/17

Percentage



Note: The sample includes 353 schools.

Source: Authors’ analysis using data from surveys of district leaders administered by the Georgia Department of Education, 2021.

Of the school leaders who provided information about the need for a waiver, 72 percent reported that at least one of their prioritized innovations did not require a waiver

On the survey, 274 school leaders provided information about whether their top three prioritized innovations required a waiver. Of these leaders, 72 percent reported that at least one of their prioritized innovations did not require a waiver to implement: 15 percent reported that they did not need a waiver to implement any of their top priority innovations, 25 percent reported that only one of their three priority innovations required a waiver, and 32 percent reported that two of their three top priority innovations required a waiver. Twenty-eight percent of respondents reported that all three of their highest priority innovations required a waiver to implement. This was consistent with the finding in the district-level study that district administrators reported prioritizing a mix of innovations that did and did not require a waiver to implement (Williams et al., 2020).

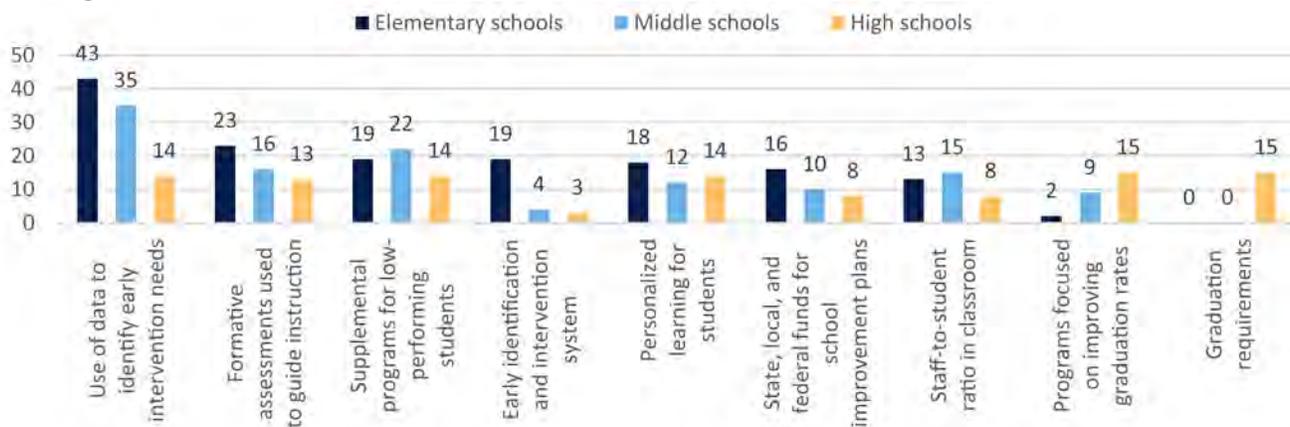
Elementary and middle school leaders more frequently reported prioritizing innovations related to use of data, formative assessments, and personalized learning, whereas high school leaders more frequently reported prioritizing programs focused on graduation and college and career readiness

The percentage of school leaders who reported prioritizing innovations related to using data to identify early intervention needs was higher among elementary and middle schools than among high schools (figure 3; meaningful differences are defined as differences of 5 percentage points or more). Forty-three percent of elementary school leaders and 35 percent of middle school leaders reported prioritizing innovations related to the use of data to identify early intervention needs, compared with 14 percent of high school leaders. Nineteen percent of elementary school leaders reported prioritizing innovations related to a formal early identification and intervention system, compared with 4 percent and 3 percent of middle and high schools, respectively.

Conversely, 15 percent of high school respondents reported prioritizing innovations related to programs focused on improving graduation rates (compared with 9 percent of middle school respondents and 2 percent of elementary school respondents) and innovations related to graduation requirements (whereas no elementary or middle school respondents reported this focus). Fourteen percent of high school leaders reported prioritizing college and career academies (not shown). Additional findings regarding priority differences for schools in an SWSS compared with a Charter System are presented in appendix D.

Figure 3. Elementary and middle schools more frequently reported prioritizing innovations related to use of data to identify early intervention needs, formative assessments to guide instruction, and personalized learning for students, 2008/09–2016/17

Percentage



Note: The sample includes 353 schools: 213 elementary schools, 72 middle schools, and 68 high schools.

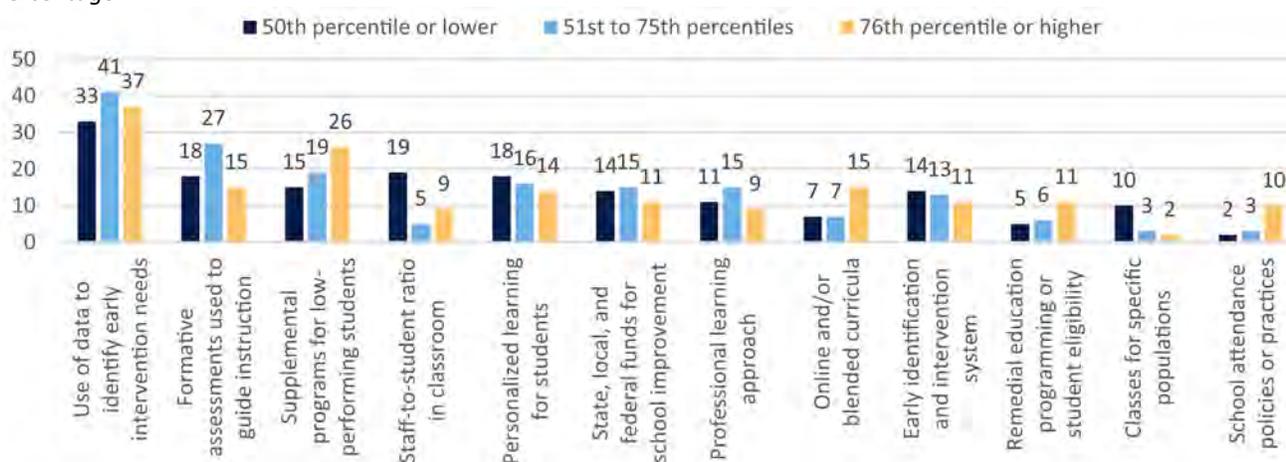
Source: Authors' analysis using data from surveys of district leaders administered by the Georgia Department of Education, 2021.

Leaders of schools with more students eligible for the national school lunch program reported prioritizing innovations related to supplemental programs for low-performing students, online and/or blended curricula, remedial education, and school attendance policies or practices more frequently than leaders of schools with fewer eligible students

Of the 353 school leaders who responded to the survey, leaders in schools with the most students eligible for the national school lunch program (those in the 76th percentile or higher) reported prioritizing innovations related to supplemental programs for low-performing students, online and/or blended curricula, remedial education, and school attendance policies or practices more frequently than leaders in schools with fewer eligible students (those in the 50th percentile or lower and 51st to 75th percentiles; figure 4). Of leaders in schools in the 76th percentile and higher of students eligible for the national school lunch program, 26 percent reported prioritizing innovations related to supplemental programs for low-performing students (compared with 15 and 19 percent of leaders in schools in the lower percentiles), 15 percent reported prioritizing innovations related to online and/or blended curricula (compared with 7 percent of other school leaders), 11 percent reported prioritizing innovations related to remedial education (compared with 5 and 6 percent of leaders in schools in the lower percentiles), and 10 percent reported prioritizing innovations related to school attendance policies or practices (compared with 2 and 3 percent of leaders in schools in the lower percentiles).

Figure 4. Schools with more students eligible for the national school lunch program reported prioritizing supplemental programs for low-performing students, online and/or blended curricula, remedial education, and school attendance policies or practices more frequently than schools with fewer eligible students, 2008/09–2016/17

Percentage



Note: The sample includes 353 schools. In the survey sample, the 178 schools at or below the 50th percentile had less than 64 percent of their students eligible for the national school lunch program, the 88 schools between the 51st and 75th percentiles had between 64 and 84 percent of their students eligible for the national school lunch program, and the 87 schools at or above the 76th percentile had more than 84 percent of students eligible for the national school lunch program (percentiles were rounded to the nearest whole number).

Source: Authors' analysis using data from surveys of district leaders administered by the Georgia Department of Education, 2021.

In their survey responses, leaders in schools with fewer students eligible for the national school lunch program (at or below the 50th percentile of all schools) reported prioritizing innovations related to the staff-to-student ratio in the classroom and innovations related to classes for specific populations, such as students identified as gifted or as English learners more frequently than leaders in schools with more of these students (19 percent of leaders in schools at the 50th percentile or lower prioritized staff-to-student ratio, compared with 5 and 9 percent of leaders in schools in the higher percentiles; 10 percent of leaders in schools at the 50th percentile or lower reported prioritizing classes for specific populations, compared with 3 and 2 percent of leaders in schools in the higher percentiles). Leaders in schools with fewer eligible students also were less likely to prioritize use of data to identify early intervention needs (33 percent of schools at the 50th percentile or lower, compared with 41 and 37

percent of schools in the higher percentiles). Additional findings regarding priority differences by schools' proportions of Black students and English learner students are presented in appendix D.

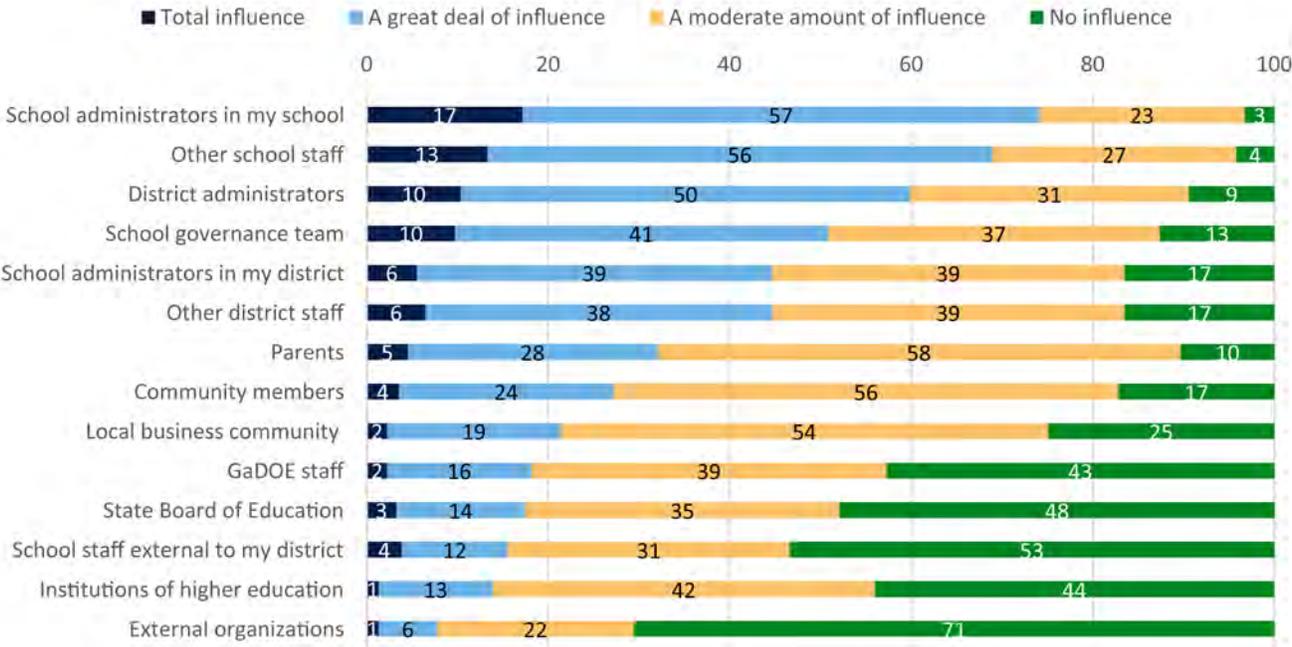
Most school leaders' top three reported priorities did not correspond with the reported priorities of their district leaders

Of the 353 school leaders who responded to the survey, 289 were in a district whose administrator completed the district survey. Of those school leaders, 117 (41 percent) reported at least one of their three top priorities that was also a top priority for their district administrators: 95 school leaders (33 percent) reported exactly one aligned priority, 19 school leaders (7 percent) reported two aligned priorities, and three school leaders (1 percent) reported alignment of all three top priorities. School leaders who shared at least two aligned priority innovations with their district more frequently reported prioritizing financial innovations related to instructional spending and state, local, and federal funding for school improvement than the full sample of school leader respondents.

School leaders reported a great deal of school-level influence over prioritization of innovations

School leaders who responded to the survey reported that a great deal of influence over decisions about selecting and implementing priority innovations occurred at the school level. Seventy-four percent of school leaders reported that school administrators in their school had substantial influence (“total influence” or “a great deal of influence”) over decisions; 69 percent reported that other school staff had substantial influence, and 51 percent reported that their school’s local school governance team had substantial influence over decisions about innovations (figure 5). Schools were influenced by other actors within their districts as well: 60 percent of respondents credited district administrators, 44 percent credited other district staff, and 45 percent credited other school administrators in their district with substantial influence over decisions about prioritizing and implementing their school’s decisions.

Figure 5. School leaders reported a great deal of influence over priority innovations, 2008/09–2016/17
Percentage



Note: The sample includes 353 schools.
Source: Authors' analysis using data from surveys of district leaders administered by the Georgia Department of Education, 2021.

Although school leaders less commonly reported that community stakeholder groups had substantial influence, they consistently reported that community stakeholders, including parents, community members, and the local

business community, had a moderate amount of influence over the decisionmaking process. Fifty-eight percent of respondents said parents had a moderate influence, 56 percent said community members had a moderate influence, and 54 percent said the local business community had a moderate influence.

Limitations

An important limitation of this study is the low response rate to the survey among school leaders. Survey nonresponse can introduce bias. In this study, the response rate (16 percent) was far below the 85 percent response goal. GaDOE staff administered the survey in January 2021, in the middle of a school year affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although GaDOE staff sent additional communications encouraging survey responses and extended the survey administration window, school leaders were focused on navigating unprecedented challenges, which may have limited their capacity to respond to the survey. The study team compared schools whose leaders responded to the survey with all schools statewide. The study team found that schools whose leaders responded to the survey were similar to all schools statewide in terms of many observed characteristics, including school achievement; percentage of English learner students; percentage of male students; percentage of students with an individualized education program; percentage of students eligible for the national school lunch program; percentage of Black, Latino, multiracial, and Native American students; and, for high schools, percentage of White and Asian students. However, elementary school leaders who responded to the survey represented schools that had larger proportions of White and Asian students. Respondents were more likely to be in traditional public or magnet schools and less likely to be in charter or other school types, and to be from SWSSs than from Charter Systems (see table B3 in appendix B). The similarities between the survey sample and all Georgia schools suggest that the low survey response rate may not be a major source of bias. However, it is possible schools whose leaders responded to the survey may differ from all schools on characteristics that are not observed in the data. The results still should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Implications

The study findings suggest potential directions for GaDOE to support schools' efforts to implement innovations associated with the waivers in their districts' performance contracts.

GaDOE should monitor changes in achievement over the coming years to determine whether additional statewide changes in schools' academic achievement emerge as their implemented innovations mature. The study results indicate that, on average, schools experienced positive but small changes in grades 3–8 ELA and math achievement after their districts adopted their performance contracts. It may be the case that schools have not yet fully implemented new innovative policies or practices, especially as most districts have had their performance contracts for only two or three years. In contrast, it may take more time after full implementation to see results.

Follow-up analyses could identify the extent to which adoption of performance contracts is associated with longer-term changes in achievement. GaDOE also could further explore the findings related to how changes in achievement varied by school characteristics. These findings are not causal, but they provide some initial insight into which school characteristics may be associated with larger or smaller changes in achievement following the start of districts' performance contracts. For example, GaDOE might consider following up with schools whose characteristics were associated with smaller changes in achievement to identify opportunities to provide additional supports to these schools. Additionally, GaDOE might consider a follow-up study to examine whether changes in achievement are associated with prioritizing or implementing different innovations. If the results of that study show a relationship between achievement and certain innovations, GaDOE could pursue a more rigorous study testing the impacts of those innovations. Such a study could provide causal evidence of the effectiveness of selected innovative practices.

GaDOE may want to explore whether the observed differences in prioritized innovations hold for all schools in the state, and examine the reasons schools adopt different approaches. For example, among school leaders who responded to

the survey, leaders in schools with larger proportions of students who were eligible for the national school lunch program reported prioritizing supplemental programs for low-performing students, online and/or blended curricula, remedial education, and school attendance policies or practices more frequently than leaders in schools with smaller proportions of these students. The study also found differences by other school-level demographic characteristics, including the proportion of students who were Black and who were English learners (see appendix D). If GaDOE finds that these differences hold for most or all schools in the state, they may want to examine whether these differences contribute to reducing or increasing inequalities among students who attend schools with different characteristics.

Most school leaders did not report any of the priorities that were reported by their district leaders. This could happen for several reasons. For example, the district survey was conducted two years earlier (although both surveys asked about initial priorities after the start of districts performance contracts), districts and schools often focus their energies on different sets of work. School leaders reported experiencing a great deal of autonomy in making decisions about priority innovations. However, 40 percent of school leaders did show alignment on at least one of their district's top three priorities. Schools and districts that completed the survey may have been more or less closely aligned on priorities, such that this finding may not be representative of all schools and districts statewide.⁵ Still, GaDOE may want to examine whether schools statewide that reported stronger alignment with their districts' priorities had larger changes in achievement and, if so, explore ways to increase communication or collaboration between districts and their schools.

Many of the innovations school leaders reported prioritizing did not require a waiver to implement. The district-level study reported this finding as well. It raises questions about whether schools and districts are making full use of their freedom to innovate. GaDOE may want to consider developing technical assistance or informational supports that encourage schools to implement innovative policies or practices that more fully take advantage of the flexibilities provided in their districts' performance contracts.

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⁵ Twenty-one percent of districts had no responses to either the district or the school survey.

REL 2022–125

October 2021

This report was prepared for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) under Contract ED-IES-17-C-0011 by Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast administered by Florida State University. The content of the publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

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Austin, M., Williams, R., & Conway-Turner, J. (2021). *School changes in student achievement and local practice under Georgia’s district and school flexibility policy* (REL 2022–125). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

This report is available on the Regional Educational Laboratory website at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

School Changes in Student Achievement and Local Practice Under Georgia's District and School Flexibility Policy

Appendix A. About Georgia's flexibility policy

Appendix B. Methods

Appendix C. Supporting analyses

Appendix D. Additional analyses

Appendix E. Survey instrument

Appendix A. About Georgia's flexibility policy

This study addressed questions that the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) brought to Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southeast regarding how school performance and practice changed after districts and schools implemented the state's flexibility policy. This appendix provides additional information about Georgia's flexibility policy as well as the implications of the study for GaDOE and other relevant audiences.

Georgia's district and school flexibility policy

In 2007 and 2008, state legislators passed a set of amendments to Georgia Code Title 20—the state's education law—that allowed all school districts to seek Charter System or Strategic Waivers School System (SWSS) status. These titles are designated by state policymakers. A Charter System is a district that receives all possible waivers of state law and regulations. These districts are called Charter Systems to indicate that they receive the same set of allowable flexibilities that individual charter schools in the state have been granted since their inception in 2000. However, schools in Charter Systems do not become charter schools. They retain the same designation they had prior to the start of their districts' performance contracts. The vast majority of schools in both SWSSs and Charter Systems are traditional public schools. Some Charter Systems and SWSSs also have a small number of charter, magnet, or other schools within their district. SWSSs request specific waivers in exchange for school academic targets and face the loss of governance over their schools if they do not meet their targets. Districts that chose to become SWSSs could apply for all waivers that Charter Systems automatically received; the waivers had to be connected to improving student outcomes.

Between 2008 and 2014, only three of Georgia's 180 districts applied to become SWSSs. Twenty-eight districts applied to become Charter Systems. However, all districts were required to select an option by June 30, 2015. As a result, by the end of the 2016/17 school year, 178 districts—all but two—had entered into performance contracts. One hundred thirty-six districts chose to operate as SWSSs and 42 chose to operate as Charter Systems. Two districts opted to remain Title 20/No Waivers School Systems—Georgia's name for districts with neither waivers nor stipulated accountability.

Georgia classifies the waivers available to both SWSSs and Charter Systems in Georgia into three categories: academic, human resource, and financial waivers. Academic waivers include flexibility from laws such as those related to educational programs, curriculum and instructional courses, the organization of schools, promotion and

retention, graduation, and attendance. Human resource waivers include flexibility from laws such as those related to class size, personnel, certification, and professional learning. Financial waivers include flexibility from laws such as those related to expenditure control, program appropriations, facility requirements, and funding formulas. Specific waivers within these categories include waivers that give the school districts flexibility to increase class size, revise graduation requirements, and spend less than 65 percent on direct classroom expenditures, among other options (table A1).

Districts applying to become SWSSs were required to request at least one of the “big four” waivers, which included waivers of class size and reporting requirements, teacher certification requirements, salary schedule requirements, and direct classroom expenditure control (noninstructional and instructional categorical allotments). SWSSs could request waivers from other state regulations, with the exception of waivers that were related to student health and safety. SWSSs requested fewer waivers than the total number of waivers allowed. Across all SWSS performance contracts, the state issued waivers from 122 different regulations. On average, each SWSS requested 39 waivers, and more than 5,000 waivers were granted across the 136 SWSS districts. The fewest waivers an SWSS requested was 22, and the most was 66 (GaDOE, personal communication, May 23, 2019).

Table A1. Most commonly granted waivers from Georgia regulations

Waiver	Relevant regulation	Number of SWSSs with waiver
<i>Academic program flexibility</i>		
High school graduation requirements	160-4-2-.48	136
Early intervention program for students at risk	§20-2-153	136
Remedial education program	§20-2-154	136
Program for limited-English-proficient students	§20-2-156	133
Promotion and retention	§20-2-283	133
Competencies and core curriculum	§20-2-142	131
Alternative education program	§20-2-154.1	131
Comprehensive health and physical education program plan	160-4-2-.12	129
General and career education programs	20-2-151	129
Online learning	20-2-140.1	124
School climate management program	§20-2-155	114
Education program for gifted students	160-4-2-.38	112
<i>Human resources flexibility</i>		
Organization of schools; employment of school administrative managers	§20-2-290	136
Personnel required	160-5-1-.22	135
Class size and reporting requirements ^a	§20-2-182	135 ^a
Teacher certification requirements ^a	§20-2-108, §20-2-200	135 ^a
School day and year for students and employees	§20-2-151, §20-2-160(a), §20-2-168(c)	130
Salary schedule requirements ^a	§20-2-212	126 ^a
<i>Financial flexibility</i>		
Direct classroom expenditure control ^a	§20-2-171	136 ^a
Program weights to reflect funds for maintenance and operation of facilities	§20-2-183	135
Program weights to reflect funds for media specialists	§20-2-184	135
Program weights to reflect funds for salaries for assistant principals and secretaries	§20-2-185	135

Waiver	Relevant regulation	Number of SWSSs with waiver
Allocation of funds to pay beginning salaries of superintendents, secretaries, accountants, nurses, and certain other personnel	§20-2-186	135
Quality Basic Education funding formula	§20-2-161	130
Categorical allotment requirements (funding for direct instructional, media center, staff development costs) and budget reporting	§20-2-167, §20-2-183 to §20-2-186	127
Scheduling for instruction/program enrollment and appropriations	§20-2-160	126

SWSS is Strategic Waivers School System.

a. This is one of the “big four” waivers.

Source: Georgia Department of Education administrative records, 2019.

Appendix B. Data and Methods

This study addressed questions brought to Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southeast by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) regarding how school performance and practice changed after implementation of the state’s flexibility policy. This appendix provides more information about the study’s data sources, sample, missing data, sensitivity analysis, measures, variables (see table B1), and analysis methods.

Data sources

Data for this study come from four sources: GaDOE administrative data, the Common Core of Data (CCD) from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and survey data collected by GaDOE and shared with REL Southeast.

Administrative data. The REL Southeast study team established a memorandum of understanding with GaDOE that allowed the study team to use the administrative data to conduct this research study. GaDOE provided data on every district’s status as a Charter System, Strategic Waivers School System (SWSS), or Title 20/No Waivers System, identifying the type of contractual flexibility agreement the district operated under and the year in which the performance contract began. GaDOE maintains student administrative records on a yearly basis for all 180 districts in the state. These records include student performance on state standardized exams and the student demographic characteristics needed for this study. Student-level data from 2006/07 to 2018/19 were used from the 178 districts that converted to SWSS or Charter System status. The study team obtained data on school districts’ urbanicity (urban, suburban, town, or rural) from the publicly available NCES CCD dataset for 2007/08. The study team used the following measures from the GaDOE administrative data and CCD.

Table B1. Student-, school-, and district-level variables used in the study

Variables	Source	Description
Student characteristics		
Gender	GaDOE	Coded as female or male
Race/ethnicity	GaDOE	Coded as Asian, Black, Latino, Multiracial, or White
Special education status	GaDOE	Whether a student had an individualized education program
English learner status	GaDOE	Whether a student was identified as an English learner
Migrant status	GaDOE	Whether a student is a migrant
Grade level	GaDOE	Indicates the student’s grade level, from 3 to 12
ELA and math performance	GaDOE	Student standardized assessment scores on grades 3–8 ELA and math assessments and grade 9 English and grades 9–12 Algebra I end-of-course assessments, for each year/grade/subject available between 2006/07 and 2018/19
School characteristics		
Other school-level descriptors	GaDOE	Percentage of all students in a school in each racial/ethnic category Percentage of all students in a school who are eligible for the national school lunch program Percentage of all students in a school identified as English learners Percentage of all students in a school who had an IEP Percentage of all students in each grade level Average teacher years of experience Percentage of teachers with a one-year vocational degree Percentage of teachers with a two-year vocational degree Percentage of teachers with a bachelor’s degree Percentage of teachers with a master’s degree Percentage of teachers with a specialist degree Percentage of teachers with a doctoral degree

Variables	Source	Description
District characteristics		
SWSS or Charter System	GaDOE	Coded as SWSS or Charter System
District size	GaDOE	Number of students enrolled in the district
District urbanicity	CCD	Coded as urban, suburban, town, or rural
Performance contract adoption cohort	GaDOE	Coded as early (2008/09–2014/15), middle (2015/16), or late (2016/17) adopter
Other district-level descriptors	GaDOE	Percentage of all students in a district in each racial/ethnic category Percentage of all students in a district identified as English learners Percentage of all students in a district who had an IEP Percentage of all students in a district who are migrants Average teacher years of experience Percentage of all students in each grade level Percentage of teachers with a one-year vocational degree Percentage of teachers with a two-year vocational degree Percentage of teachers with a bachelor’s degree Percentage of teachers with a master’s degree Percentage of teachers with a specialist degree Percentage of teachers with a doctoral degree

CCD is the Common Core of Data. ELA is English language arts. GaDOE is the Georgia Department of Education. IEP is individualized education program. SWSS is Strategic Waivers School System.
Source: Authors’ compilation.

School-level variables used

This study relied on school-level data for regression analyses used to answer research question 1. For each year in the dataset, student variables were aggregated (that is, averaged) to the school level, thereby representing the compositional makeup and characteristics of schools between 2006/07 and 2018/19. The following variables were used.

Average standardized English language arts (ELA) and math performance (grades 3–8). All students in grades 3–8 annually take a standardized end-of-grade assessment in the spring. The Georgia state standardized exam changed during the period of study. The Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests were replaced by the Georgia Milestones Assessment beginning in the 2014/15 school year. To facilitate comparisons over time, the study team standardized students’ ELA and math scores. The team used statewide mean scores and standard deviations for students separately by grade level and year, to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. This allowed an examination of how students performed relative to all students in the state each year.

Average standardized English and Algebra I performance (grades 9–12). The study team used grade 9 literature and composition as the end-of-course assessment in English. Georgia administers multiple end-of-course assessments in math. The study team used the most commonly administered of these, the Algebra I end-of-course assessment. Beginning in the 2014/15 school year, Georgia replaced its End of Course Test program with the Georgia Milestones End-of-Course Assessments system. The end-of-course assessments are administered at the completion of the course, regardless of students’ grade level, and serve as the final exam for the course. To facilitate comparisons over time, the study team standardized students’ end-of-course assessment scores, using statewide mean scores and standard deviations separately by grade level and year, to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

Size. The study team aggregated student-level testing data to calculate the number of students testing in a school in each year.

Enrollment. The administrative data included school-level enrollment totals for each school from 2006/07 to 2018/19.

Gender composition. The study team aggregated student-level data on gender to calculate the percentage of students in a school each year who were male.

Racial composition. The study team aggregated student-level data on students' race/ethnicity to the school level to calculate the percentage of all students in a school each year who were in each racial/ethnic category.

Individualized education program (IEP) composition. The study team aggregated student-level data on students' special education status to calculate the percentage of all students in a school each year who qualified for special education services and had an IEP.

English learner student composition. The study team aggregated student-level data on students' English learner status to calculate the percentage of all students in a school each year who were designated as English learner students.

Eligibility for national school lunch program composition. The administrative data included a school-level measure of the percentage of all students in a school who were eligible for the national school lunch program in each year.

Teacher characteristics. The study team calculated the average years of teaching experience, and the average degree type, for each school in each year.

District-level variables used

This study also used district-level data for regression analyses used to answer research question 1. For each year in the dataset, student and school variables were aggregated (that is, averaged) to the district level, thereby representing the compositional makeup and characteristics of districts between 2006/07 and 2018/19. The following variables were used.

Grade level. The study calculated the percentage within the district in each grade level.

Gender composition. The study team aggregated student-level data on gender to calculate the percentage of students in a district each year who were male.

Racial composition. The study team aggregated student-level data on students' race/ethnicity to the school level to calculate the percentage of all students in a district each year who were in each racial/ethnic category.

Individualized education program composition. The study team aggregated student-level data on students' special education status to calculate the percentage of all students in a district each year who qualified for special education services and had an IEP.

English learner student composition. The study team aggregated student-level data on students' English learner status to calculate the percentage of all students in a district each year who were designated as English learner students.

Eligibility for national school lunch program composition. The administrative data included a school-level measure of the percentage of all students in a district who were eligible for the national school lunch program in each year. The study team aggregated this variable to the district level.

Teacher characteristics. The study team calculated the average years of teaching experience, and the average degree type, for each district in each year.

Survey data. GaDOE collected survey data from district leaders using a questionnaire developed and programmed into SurveyGizmo by the REL Southeast study team. GaDOE sent emails to school leaders in all 2,259 schools in the 178 SWSSs and Charter Systems inviting them to complete the online survey using Alchemer (formerly SurveyGizmo).

The goal was to receive responses from at least 85 percent of school leaders. The study team received responses from 353 schools for a 16 percent response rate. GaDOE shared the survey and interview data with REL Southeast for the purpose of conducting this research study. The survey instrument used is shown in appendix E. The key survey variables are the innovations that school leaders identified as their top, second, and third priorities to implement after the start of their district’s performance contract. School leaders were presented with a list of possible priority innovations and were asked to rank their top three priorities. The survey listed possible innovations in random order. Other key questions of interest asked about perceived changes after the implementation of priority innovations and about stakeholders who were involved in making decisions about priority innovations.

Because the survey response rate was only 16 percent, the study team considers all survey responses to be descriptive only. The responses should be interpreted with caution. They should not be interpreted as representative of all schools statewide.

Sample

The sample for the study included all 2,259 schools from the state’s 178 SWSSs and Charter Systems. The sample for analyses of school changes in achievement after implementation of performance contracts included students in grades 3–12 from 2006/07 to 2018/19 in the 2,259 schools (table B2). The sample for the descriptive analyses of district changes in practices included the 353 schools with completed surveys.

Table B2. Number of students and districts included in analyses of changes in achievement

Number of years before or after performance contract began	Grades 3–8		Grades 3–8		Grade 9 English ECA (students)	Grades 9–12		Algebra I ECA (schools/districts)
	Grades 3–8 ELA (students)	ELA (schools/districts)	Grades 3–8 math (students)	math (schools/districts)		Grade 9 English ECA (schools/districts)	Algebra I ECA (students)	
-10	193,601	483/71	194,121	483/71	34,997	119/66	20,535	91/59
-9	448,784	1,111/142	449,645	1,111/142	80,193	263/133	58,287	227/124
-8	513,269	1,242/153	514,353	1,242/153	91,845	296/143	46,261	165/74
-7	525,642	1,287/156	526,698	1,287/156	91,536	312/148	38,078	126/73
-6	576,162	1,408/159	576,505	1,408/159	98,490	346/155	77,920	279/136
-5	595,456	1,463/166	594,536	1,463/166	103,370	364/162	86,987	317/147
-4	606,865	1,504/170	605,452	1,504/170	106,230	380/168	85,139	319/153
-3	628,134	1,546/172	626,607	1,546/172	110,602	385/170	89,129	333/154
-2	715,054	1,675/177	714,540	1,675/177	122,517	416/176	106,654	365/160
-1	728,013	1,693/178	727,539	1,693/178	125,265	427/177	93,247	362/158
0	746,424	1,721/178	738,132	1,721/178	126,781	444/177	78,774	328/143
1	747,658	1,720/178	737,082	1,720/178	125,568	444/177	93,265	361/153
2	741,638	1,706/177	731,902	1,706/177	124,598	441/177	96,828	381/157
3	516,381	1,136/106	507,962	1,136/106	87,624	291/106	75,495	271/101
4	225,086	412/32	221,880	412/32	40,577	97/32	35,633	96/31
5	163,500	294/22	162,361	294/22	28,705	69/22	27,764	66/20
6	159,132	278/19	158,178	278/19	27,770	64/19	25,356	63/18
7	116,746	193/17	112,152	193/17	20,601	44/17	17,329	43/16
8	103,345	164/11	97,757	164/11	18,125	34/11	14,699	33/10
9	94,859	139/6	87,380	139/6	16,365	26/6	11,656	26/6
10	73,694	112/5	67,350	112/5	12,980	21/5	8,379	21/5

ELA is English language arts. ECA is end-of-course assessment.
Source: Authors’ compilation of data from the Georgia Department of Education.

Missing data

The study team received responses from 353 of the 2,259 schools in SWSSs and Charter Systems in Georgia. To test the extent to which the full analytic sample of SWSSs and Charter Systems with survey responses is representative of all SWSSs and Charter Systems, the study team compared the two samples on student demographic and district characteristics. To do so, the team calculated descriptive statistics for each key variable and subtracted the value for all schools from the value for the sample of survey respondent schools. The raw differences between groups were converted to effect sizes reported as standard deviations (effect sizes are reported in table B3). The two samples were similar on several school characteristics, including school achievement; percentage of English learner students; percentage of male students; percentage of students with an individualized education program; percentage of students eligible for the national school lunch program; percentage of Black, Latino, multiracial, and Native American students; and, for high schools, percentage of White and Asian students. The elementary and middle school samples differed by more than 0.05 standard deviations on percentage White and percentage Asian. Survey respondents have larger proportions of White students and smaller proportions of Asian students. Leaders in traditional public schools and magnet schools were more likely to respond to the survey than leaders in charter and other school types. Among high schools, leaders of larger schools were more likely to respond. The two samples also differed based on characteristics of their districts. School leaders from SWSSs were more likely to respond than school leaders from Charter Systems. Furthermore, many of these variables do not correlate strongly with the prioritized innovations. It is possible that the samples may differ in their survey responses based on characteristics that were not observed in the data. If this is the case, then the findings would suffer from additional response bias.

Table B3. Respondents to school survey are generally similar to full population on observed characteristics

Variable	Elementary and middle schools			High schools		
	Survey respondents	All schools	Effect size (Survey respondents —all schools)	Survey respondents	All schools	Effect size (Survey respondents —all schools)
<i>Test scores (student-level means standardized by grade and year)</i>						
Grades 3–8 ELA (elementary and middle schools only)	–0.02	0.00	–0.02	na	na	na
Grades 3–8 math (elementary and middle schools only)	–0.02	0.00	–0.02	na	na	na
English ECA (high schools only)	na	na	na	–0.01	0.00	–0.01
Algebra I ECA (high schools only)	na	na	na	–0.03	0.00	–0.03
<i>Other student covariates (proportions)</i>						
Percentage English learners	0.09	0.09	–0.01	0.06	0.06	0.01
Percentage Black	0.34	0.37	–0.04	0.37	0.39	–0.02
Percentage White	0.47	0.43	0.05	0.45	0.44	0.01
Percentage Asian	0.03	0.04	–0.09	0.03	0.03	–0.03
Percentage Latino	0.13	0.13	0.00	0.12	0.11	0.03
Percentage multiracial	0.03	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.02
Percentage Native American	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	–0.02
Percentage male	0.51	0.51	0.00	0.50	0.50	0.00
Percentage with an individualized education program	0.12	0.12	0.00	0.10	0.09	0.01
Percentage eligible for the national school lunch program	0.63	0.60	0.03	0.55	0.52	0.03

Variable	Elementary and middle schools			High schools		
	Survey respondents	All schools	Effect size (Survey respondents —all schools)	Survey respondents	All schools	Effect size (Survey respondents —all schools)
<i>Other school covariates (school-level means and standard deviations)</i>						
School is in SWSS	0.84	0.81	0.06	0.78	0.81	-0.05
School is in Charter System	0.14	0.18	-0.07	0.21	0.18	0.05
Percentage traditional public schools	0.96	0.94	0.07	0.89	0.87	0.05
Percentage magnet schools	0.02	0.01	0.15	0.08	0.04	0.18
Percentage charter schools	0.02	0.04	-0.18	0.02	0.04	-0.29
Percentage other schools	0.01	0.01	-0.06	0.02	0.04	-0.28
Average student enrollment	474.61	481.71	0.02	1,027.76	998.90	0.10
Total number of test takers (n) for Grades 3–8 ELA /grade 9 English ECA	1,450,251	9,750,850	na	260,262	1,654,898	na
Total number of test takers (n) for Grades 3–8 mathematics/grades 9–12 Algebra I ECA	1,440,242	9,673,648	na	212,040	1,304,409	na

ECA is end-of-course assessments. ELA is English language arts. na is not applicable. SWSS is Strategic Waivers School System.

Note: Test score variables were standardized by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation within each grade and year. Effect sizes for test scores were calculated by subtracting the two test score values, as test scores already were standardized. Effect sizes for other variables were calculated by converting to log odds ratios and using the Cox transformation to the standardized mean difference scale, following What Works Clearinghouse Procedures Handbook, Version 4.1 (What Works Clearinghouse, 2020).

Source: Authors' analysis of administrative data from the Georgia Department of Education and data from the Common Core of Data.

Analysis

Research question 1 analyses. The study team conducted a generalized difference-in-differences analysis, which extends the analysis in the prior district-level study (Williams, Rudo, and Austin, 2020). The analytic models used to estimate overall average school-level change in achievement after districts' performance contract adoption (research question 1) took the following form:

$$Y_{jkt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Post_{kt} + \beta_2 SY_t + \beta_3 S_{jk} + \beta_4 G_{jkt} + \beta_5 Z_{jkt} + \beta_6 W_{kt} + z_{1jk} Post_{kt} + z_{2k} Post_{kt} + e_{jkt},$$

where Y_{jkt} is the average standardized achievement outcome (standardized scaled achievement score in ELA, math, grade 9 English, or Algebra I for school j in district k at time t), $Post_{kt}$ is a binary indicator signifying that schools' district k has access to an approved waiver at time t (that is, it is set to 1 for all years that correspond to districts having an active performance contract that made waivers available to schools, and 0 otherwise), SY_t is a vector of school-year indicators (from 2006/07 to 2018/19) to adjust for natural variation in achievement over time, S_{jk} is a vector of school indicators to adjust for natural variation among schools, G_{jkt} is a vector of aggregate grade indicators (that is, the percentage of students in a grade in a school in a year) that correspond to the student testing groups for outcome Y_{jkt} , and Z_{jkt} is a vector of time-varying school-level aggregates of student characteristics, including gender, race, individualized education program status, limited English proficiency status, eligibility for the national school lunch program, and teacher characteristics, including teacher's highest degree and years of experience. W_{kt} is a vector of time-varying district-level aggregates of the school-level characteristics. The model allows β_1 to vary at the school and district levels (that is, each school and district has its own parameter of relative change in achievement after performance contract adoption; β_{1jk} and β_{1k} , respectively). The model has error terms z_{1jk} and z_{2k} , which reflect school-level deviations in β_{1jk} from the district-specific mean β_{1k} ; district-level deviations from the grand mean β_1 ; and e_{kt} , which is the residual error term. Put a different way, $\beta_{1jk} = \beta_1 + z_{1jk} + z_{2k}$ and $\beta_{1k} = \beta_1 + z_{2k}$. The focal parameters from this model are β_1 ; the standard deviation of z_{1jk} ; τ_1 , which quantifies the school-level variability in changes in achievement after performance

contract adoption; and τ_2 , the standard deviation of z_{2k} , which quantifies the district-level variation in changes in achievement after districts adopted a performance contract. τ_1^2 plus τ_2^2 represent the total variation in changes in achievement after districts adopted a performance contract. This approach is similar to the approach developed by Raudenbush and Bloom (2015) and Bloom et al. (2017) for studying variation in site-level program effects and to the approach used in the district-level study (Williams et al., 2020). Additionally, all analyses were weighted proportionally to school size. Schools with more students contributing outcomes to the aggregate have more influence on the results than schools with fewer students contributing outcomes to the aggregate.

The team used the estimates of τ_1 and τ_2 along with the β_1 estimate to compute the percentage of districts that expected to have true changes of 0.05 standard deviations or more using the a cumulative normal distribution, evaluated at 0.05: $1 - \Phi_{\beta_1, \tau_1 + \tau_2}(0.05)$. Similarly, τ_1 and τ_2 along with the mean β_1 were used to construct 90 percent prediction intervals for the estimated changes in achievement (for example, Borenstein et al., 2011; IntHout et al., 2016). Importantly, the results presented in this report are rounded, but the analyses were based on all significant digits. This may result in minor differences in manual computations of some table results.

The model for research question 1 was expanded to examine the relationship between $Post_{kt}$ and district-level characteristics (research question 1) using:

$$Y_{jkt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Post_{kt} + \beta_2 SY_t + \beta_3 S_{jk} + \beta_4 G_{jkt} + \beta_5 Z_{jkt} + \beta_6 W_{kt} + \beta_7 SC_{jk} Post_{kt} + z_{1jk} Post_{kt} + z_{2k} Post_{kt} + e_{jkt},$$

where $SC_{jk} Post_{kt}$ is a vector of interactions between $Post_{kt}$ and school-level characteristics. For research question 1, $Post_{kt}$ was interacted with school type (regular, magnet, charter, other), baseline (adoption year) measures of the percentage of students who were Black, percentage of students who were classified as English learners, percentage of students who are eligible for the national school lunch program, school size, and achievement. For each of these baseline measures, we categorized schools into three groups: less than or equal to the 50th percentile, between the 51st and 75th percentiles, and the 76th percentile or greater.

When evaluating the results of the analyses, the study team defines meaningful differences in changes in achievement as differences that are statistically significant and larger than 0.05 standard deviation units. The study team defines small differences in changes in achievement as those that are statistically significant and smaller than 0.05 standard deviations. Empirical benchmarks of annual student growth (Hill, Bloom, Black, & Lipsey, 2008) translate 0.05 standard deviations to approximately 5 and 6 weeks' worth of total achievement gain (year over year) in grades 3–8 math and ELA, respectively, assuming 36 weeks of learning time. In grades 9–12, 0.05 standard deviations translates to approximately 11 and 12 weeks' worth of total achievement gain in standardized math and English (Hill et al., 2008).

Research question 2 analyses. To examine school leaders' reported priority innovations, the study team tabulated percentages of survey responses overall and by categories of school-level demographic characteristics, including grades served, whether schools were in SWSSs or Charter Systems, percentage of students ever eligible for the national school lunch program, percentage of Black students, and percentage of students ever designated as English learners. The study team tabulated percentages of school leader respondents who reported each innovation as their top, second, and third priority. The team calculated the sum of these percentages to identify the percentage of school leaders who ranked each innovation as one of their top three innovations. To examine schools' other experiences related to implementing Georgia's district and school flexibility policy, the study team tabulated the overall percentage of school leaders who selected each response option. Because the survey response rate was very low (16 percent), the results of these analyses should be interpreted as representative only of the 353 schools whose leaders completed the survey and not of all schools in Georgia.

Table B4. Cohort and analysis structure for each performance contract adoption year

Cohort	Performance contract adoption year	Achievement change from pre- to post-implementation	Focal cohorts	Years included in preimplementation time period	Comparison cohorts contributing preimplementation data	Comparison cohorts contributing postimplementation data
1	2008/09	Pre years–2009/10	1	2006/07–2008/09	2–9	na
2	2009/10	Pre years–2010/11	1–2	2006/07–2009/10	3–9	1
3	2010/11	Pre years–2011/12	1–3	2006/07–2010/11	4–9	1–2
4	2011/12	Pre years–2012/13	1–4	2006/07–2011/12	5–9	1–3
5	2012/13	Pre years–2013/14	1–5	2006/07–2012/13	6–9	1–4
6	2013/14	Pre years–2014/15	1–6	2006/07–2013/14	7–9	1–5
7	2014/15	Pre years–2015/16	1–7	2006/07–2014/15	8–9	1–6
8	2015/16	Pre years–2016/17	1–8	2006/07–2015/16	9	1–7
9	2016/17	Pre years–2018/19	1–9	2009/10–2016/17	na	1–8

na is not applicable.

Note: Comparison cohorts listed contribute to analyses for focal cohorts other than their own.

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Appendix C. Supporting Analyses

This appendix details additional results and analyses that support the findings addressed in the study.

Table C1. Changes in school academic achievement, 2008/09–2018/19

Subject	Number of schools (school-by-year observations)	Average effect size (standard error)	Changes in academic achievement by school		
			Variation among schools (SD)	Variation among districts (SD)	Probability of an effect size increase of .05 or larger (percent)
ELA (grades 3–8)	1,724 (21,287)	0.02* (0.00)	0.09*	0.09*	42
Math (grades 3–8)	1,724 (21,287)	0.03* (0.00)	0.11*	0.09*	43
Grade 9 English ECA	445 (5,283)	0.01 (0.01)	0.07*	0.10*	39
Algebra I ECA (grades 9–12)	399 (4,273)	0.04 (0.02)	0.10*	0.15*	48

* Significant at $p < .05$.

ECA is end of course assessment. ELA is English language arts. SD is standard deviation.

Note: SD refers to the standard deviation of school changes in achievement, which captures variation among schools within districts and variation among districts. See appendix B for a full description of the methods used to generate these results and table C2 for additional results. Effect sizes are standardized differences expressed in standard deviation units.

a. Using the average and the SD of change for a given outcome, a randomly selected school would be expected to have a 90 percent probability of a true achievement change within this interval.

Source: Authors' analysis using administrative data from Georgia Department of Education.

Table C2. Within-district variation in changes in achievement, 2007/08–2018/19

Subject	Number of districts	Within-district variation in changes in academic achievement by district		
		25th Percentile	50th Percentile	75th Percentile
English language arts (grades 3–8)	171	0.07	0.08	0.09
Math (grades 3–8)	171	0.08	0.10	0.11
Grade 9 English end-of-course assessment	67	0.06	0.07	0.07
Algebra I end-of-course assessment (grades 9–12)	64	0.09	0.10	0.10

Note: Districts with only one school contributing to the analysis were removed from these results. See appendix B for a full description of the methods used to generate these results and table C1 for additional results. Coefficients are standardized differences expressed in standard deviation units.

Source: Authors' analysis using administrative data from Georgia Department of Education, 2006/07–2018/19.

Table C3. Results from final models estimating school-level achievement change in Georgia, 2007/08–2018/19

Covariate/predictor	Grades 3–8		Grades 9–12	
	ELA achievement change	Math achievement change	English achievement change	Algebra I achievement change
Postperformance contract adoption (“pre” is reference)	0.02* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.04 (0.02)
<i>School-level demographic characteristics</i>				
Percentage male (female is reference)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Race/ethnicity (White is reference)				
Percentage of Black students	–0.01* (0.00)	–0.01* (0.00)	–0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Percentage of Latino students	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	–0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)

Covariate/predictor	Grades 3–8		Grades 9–12	
	ELA achievement change	Math achievement change	English achievement change	Algebra I achievement change
Percentage of Asian students	0.00* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Percentage of Native American/ Pacific Islander students	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.02* (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)
Percentage of multiracial students	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Percentage of students who ever had an IEP	-0.01* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Percentage of students ever designated as English learners	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Percentage of students ever eligible for the national school lunch program	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
<i>Grade level (grades 3 and 9 are reference)</i>				
Percentage of students in grade 4	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 5	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 6	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 7	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 8	0.00 (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 10	na	na	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Percentage of students in grade 11	na	na	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)
Percentage of students in grade 12	na	na	0.00 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)
Average years of teaching experience	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)
<i>Teacher degree (no degree is reference)</i>				
Percentage of teachers with a bachelor's degree	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with a one-year vocational degree	0.00 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with a two-year vocational degree	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with a master's degree	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with an education specialist degree	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with a doctoral degree	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)

Covariate/predictor	Grades 3–8		Grades 9–12	
	ELA achievement change	Math achievement change	English achievement change	Algebra I achievement change
<i>District-level demographic characteristics of students and schools</i>				
Percentage male (female is reference)	-0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.03* (0.01)
<i>Race/ethnicity (White is reference)</i>				
Percentage of Black students	0.01* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Percentage of Latino students	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of Asian students	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.02* (0.00)
Percentage of Native American/ Pacific Islander students	-0.02* (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.03)
Percentage of multiracial students	0.01* (0.00)	0.02* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of students who ever had an IEP	0.01* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.03* (0.00)
Percentage of students ever designated as English learners	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Percentage of students ever eligible for the national school lunch program	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
<i>Grade level (grades 3 and 9 are reference)</i>				
Percentage of students in grade 4	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 5	0.01* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 6	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 7	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 8	0.01* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 10	na	na	0.00 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)
Percentage of students in grade 11	na	na	0.00 (0.00)	0.02* (0.00)
Percentage of students in grade 12	na	na	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)
Average years of teaching experience	0.00 (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)
<i>Teacher degree (no degree is reference)</i>				
Percentage of teachers with a bachelor's degree	0.01* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with a one-year vocational degree	0.02* (0.00)	0.02* (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)

Covariate/predictor	Grades 3–8		Grades 9–12	
	ELA achievement change	Math achievement change	English achievement change	Algebra I achievement change
Percentage of teachers with a two-year vocational degree	0.01* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)
Percentage of teachers with a master's degree	0.01* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with an education specialist degree	0.02* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with a doctoral degree	0.02* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)
Intercept	-1.25* (0.23)	-1.59* (0.28)	0.05 (0.47)	1.22 (0.92)
School standard deviation of postperformance contract adoption effect	0.09*	0.11*	0.07*	0.10*
District standard deviation of postperformance contract adoption effect	0.09*	0.09*	0.10*	0.15*
Number of districts	178	178	177	166
Number of schools	1,724	1,724	445	399
School-by-year observations	21,287	21,287	5,283	4,273

* Significant at $p < .05$.

IEP is individualized education program. na is not applicable.

Note: Analyses included school and school year fixed effects. Coefficient estimates are standardized differences expressed in standard deviation units. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Source: Authors' analysis of administrative and survey data from the Georgia Department of Education and data from the Common Core of Data.

Table C4. Results from final models estimating school-level achievement change in Georgia, 2007/08–2018/19

Covariate/predictor	Grades 3–8		Grades 9–12	
	ELA achievement change	Math achievement change	English achievement change	Algebra I achievement change
Postperformance contract adoption ("pre" is reference)	0.02 (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.04)
School-level demographic characteristics				
Percentage male (female is reference)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
<i>Race/ethnicity (White is reference)</i>				
Percentage of Black students	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)
Percentage of Latino students	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)
Percentage of Asian students	0.00* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Percentage of Native American/Pacific Islander students	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.02* (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)
Percentage of multiracial students	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)
Percentage of students who ever had an IEP	-0.01* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.01* (0.00)

Covariate/predictor	Grades 3–8		Grades 9–12	
	ELA achievement change	Math achievement change	English achievement change	Algebra I achievement change
Percentage of students ever designated as English learners	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Percentage of students ever eligible for the national school lunch program	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
<i>Grade level (grades 3 and 9 are reference)</i>				
Percentage of students in grade 4	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 5	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 6	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 7	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 8	0.00 (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 10	na	na	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Percentage of students in grade 11	na	na	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)
Percentage of students in grade 12	na	na	0.00 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)
Average years of teaching experience	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)
<i>Teacher degree (no degree is reference)</i>				
Percentage of teachers with a bachelor's degree	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with a one year vocational degree	0.00 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with a two year vocational degree	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with a master's degree	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with an education specialist degree	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with a doctoral degree	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)
District-level demographic characteristics				
Percentage male (female is reference)	-0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.03* (0.01)
<i>Race/ethnicity (White is reference)</i>				
Percentage of Black students	0.01* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Percentage of Latino students	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	-0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of Asian students	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)
Percentage of Native American/	-0.02* (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)

Covariate/predictor	Grades 3–8		Grades 9–12	
	ELA achievement change	Math achievement change	English achievement change	Algebra I achievement change
Pacific Islander students	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Percentage of multiracial students	0.01* (0.00)	0.02* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of students who ever had an IEP	0.01* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.02* (0.00)
Percentage of students ever designated as English learners	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)
Percentage of students ever eligible for the national school lunch program	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
<i>Grade level (grades 3 and 9 are reference)</i>				
Percentage of students in grade 4	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 5	0.01* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 6	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 7	0.00* (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 8	0.01* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	na	na
Percentage of students in grade 10	na	na	0.00 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)
Percentage of students in grade 11	na	na	0.00 (0.00)	0.02* (0.00)
Percentage of students in grade 12	na	na	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)
Average years of teaching experience	0.00 (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)
<i>Teacher degree (no degree is reference)</i>				
Percentage of teachers with a bachelor's degree	0.01* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with a one-year vocational degree	0.02* (0.00)	0.02* (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)
Percentage of teachers with a two-year vocational degree	0.01* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)
Percentage of teachers with a master's degree	0.01* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with an education specialist degree	0.02* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Percentage of teachers with a doctoral degree	0.02* (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)
School characteristics (interactions with post-performance contract adoption)				
<i>Percentage of Black students (less than or equal to 50th percentile is reference)</i>				
51st to 75th percentile	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.05* (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)

Covariate/predictor	Grades 3–8		Grades 9–12	
	ELA achievement change	Math achievement change	English achievement change	Algebra I achievement change
76th percentile or higher	–0.06* (0.01)	–0.06* (0.01)	0.03 (0.02)	0.06 (0.05)
<i>Percentage of English learner students (less than or equal to 50th percentile is reference)</i>				
51st to 75th percentile	–0.01 (0.01)	–0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	0.04 (0.03)
76th percentile or higher	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)	0.04 (0.03)
<i>Percentage of students eligible for the national school lunch program (less than or equal to 50th percentile is reference)</i>				
51st to 75th percentile	0.00 (0.01)	–0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)	0.00 (0.04)
76th percentile or higher	–0.04* (0.01)	–0.03* (0.01)	0.02 (0.03)	–0.16* (0.05)
<i>Enrollment (less than or equal to 50th percentile is reference)</i>				
51st to 75th percentile	0.00 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)	–0.04 (0.03)
76th percentile or higher	–0.03* (0.01)	–0.01 (0.01)	–0.01 (0.02)	–0.06 (0.04)
<i>Adoption year achievement (less than or equal to 50th percentile is reference)</i>				
51st to 75th percentile	0.04* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	0.03 (0.03)
76th percentile or higher	0.06* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	0.03 (0.04)
<i>School type (regular school is reference)</i>				
Magnet school	0.03 (0.03)	0.05 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	–0.03 (0.04)
Charter school	0.02 (0.02)	0.05* (0.02)	–0.09* (0.04)	–0.01 (0.08)
Other school	0.06 (0.07)	0.17* (0.08)	–0.07 (0.06)	0.03 (0.16)
Intercept	–1.26* (0.23)	–1.60* (0.28)	0.06 (0.47)	1.25 (0.93)
School standard deviation of postperformance contract adoption effect	0.08*	0.10*	0.07*	0.09*
District standard deviation of postperformance contract adoption effect	0.08*	0.08*	0.10*	0.15*
<i>Number of districts</i>	178	178	177	166
<i>Number of schools</i>	1,724	1,724	445	399
<i>School-by-year observations</i>	21,282	21,282	5,279	3,966

* Significant at $p < .05$.

IEP is individualized education program. na is not applicable.

Note: Analyses included school and school year fixed effects. Coefficient estimates are standardized differences expressed in standard deviation units. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Source: Authors' analysis of administrative and survey data from the Georgia Department of Education and data from the Common Core of Data.

Table C5. Percentage of survey respondents who ranked each innovative practice as their school’s first, second, or third priority for implementation

Innovation	First priority	Second priority	Third priority	Total
Use of data to identify early intervention needs	16	13	6	35
Formative assessments used to guide instruction	7	6	7	19
Supplemental programs for low-performing students	5	8	5	18
Personalized learning for students	10	2	4	16
State, local, and federal funds in support of school improvement plans	6	3	5	14
Early identification and intervention system	5	4	4	13
Staff-to-student ratio in classroom	5	4	3	12
Professional learning approach	3	4	5	12
Personalized instruction according to each student's needs	0	6	4	10
Online and/or blended curricula	2	3	4	9
Teacher recruitment practices	2	3	3	8
Instructional spending	3	2	2	7
Classes for specific populations, such as gifted education and English learner students	3	1	3	7
Remedial education programming or student eligibility	2	1	3	6
Instructional delivery model to change class size	3	1	2	6
Staff retention policies and practices	1	3	2	6
Programs focused on improving graduation rates	2	3	1	6
Student discipline policies or procedures	2	1	3	6
Core curricula	2	2	2	6
School counseling services	1	1	3	5
Enrichment or other specialty classes	1	3	0	5
School attendance policies or practices	2	1	1	5
<i>College and career academy</i>	1	1	2	4
Programs focused on improving college and career readiness	2	1	1	4
Summer programs	1	2	1	4
Certification requirements for hiring staff	2	1	1	4
Parent engagement and roles	1	1	2	4
Bullying prevention program	1	1	2	3
Graduation requirements	1	1	1	3
Number of school days, daily school hours, or school year	1	1	1	3
Soft skills for career readiness	0	1	1	3
Additional summer academic programs for students	1	0	2	3
Course scheduling	1	1	0	3
Paraprofessionals in classroom	1	0	2	3
Staff duties or staff assignment practices	1	1	1	3
Student promotion policies or practices	1	1	1	2
Student promotion policies or practices	1	1	1	2
Alternate career pathways and/or industry certifications	1	1	0	2
Certification requirements for allocating staff to provide instruction	1	0	1	2
Number of guidance counselors	0	1	1	2
Dual enrollment	0	1	1	2

Innovation	First priority	Second priority	Third priority	Total
State salary schedule, including beginning salary for hiring	1	0	0	2
Community-based, internship, or work-based learning programs	0	1	1	1
Student placement policies or practices	0	1	1	1
Categorical allotment for facilities or maintenance	0	1	0	1
Curriculum vendors/textbooks	0	1	0	1
Changed the structure, content, or quantity of before- and/or after-school programs	0	0	1	1
Internships or work study opportunities	0	0	1	1
Staff evaluation and reward systems	0	0	1	1
Student retention policies or practices	0	0	1	1
Noninstructional spending	0	0	1	1
Credit requirements and availability	0	0	0	1
Alternative education programming	0	0	0	0
Career ladder	0	0	0	0
Differentiated salary system	0	0	0	0
Instructional categorical allotments for noninstructional expenses	0	0	0	0
Noninstructional categorical allotments for instructional expenses	0	0	0	0
Performance-based systems for staff	0	0	0	0
Quality Basic Education funding for postsecondary programs	0	0	0	0
School transportation availability	0	0	0	0

Note: Sample includes 353 schools. Percentages may not sum exactly across rows due to rounding.

Source: Authors' analysis using survey data from the Georgia Department of Education.

Appendix D. Additional Analyses

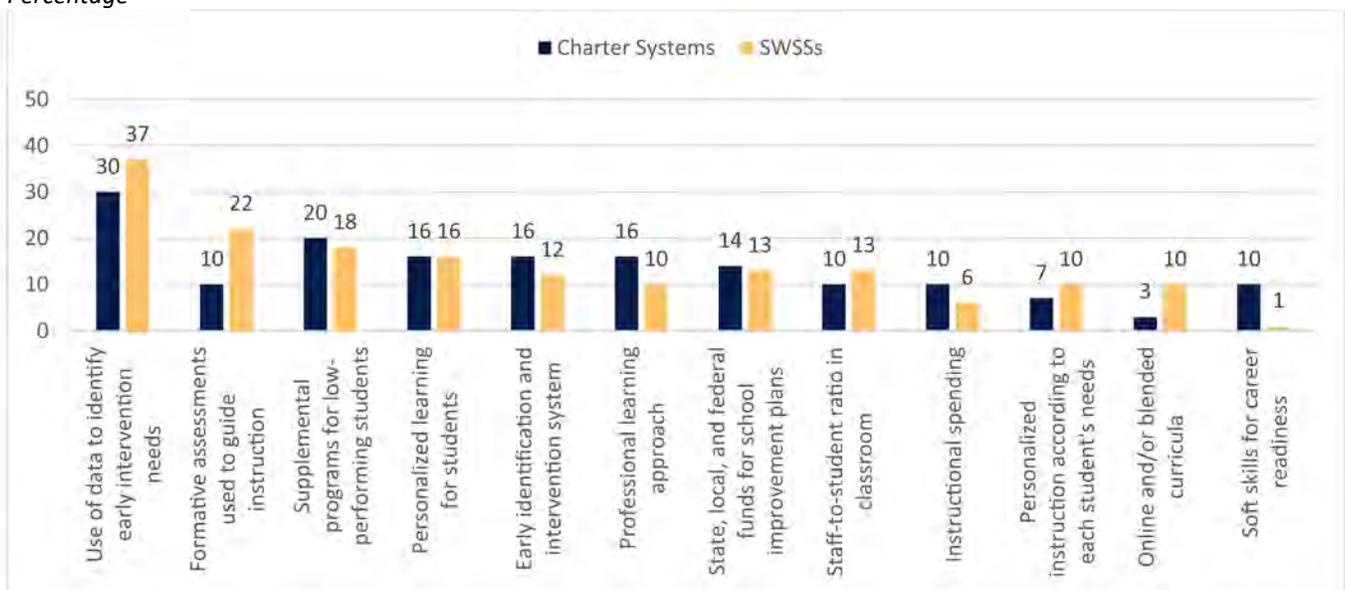
This appendix reports the findings from and implications of additional analyses related to research question 2a, which examined how priority local practice changes varied by school features (grades served, whether the school belonged to a Charter System or SWSS, and school demographic composition).

Leaders of schools in SWSSs reported prioritizing innovations related to use of data to identify early intervention needs, formative assessments, and online and/or blended curricula more frequently than leaders of schools in Charter Systems

Thirty-seven percent of the 281 respondents from schools in SWSSs reported prioritizing use of data to identify early intervention needs, compared with 30 percent of the 72 respondents from schools in Charter Systems (figure D1). Similarly, 22 percent of respondents from schools in SWSSs reported prioritizing innovations related to formative assessments to guide instruction, compared with 10 percent of respondents from schools in Charter Systems. Respondents from schools in SWSSs reported prioritizing innovations related to online and/or blended curricula (10 percent of respondents from schools in SWSSs compared with 1 percent of respondents from schools in Charter Systems). Respondents from schools in Charter Systems more frequently reported prioritizing innovations related to professional learning approaches for teachers (16 percent compared with 10 percent of respondents from schools in SWSSs) and soft skills for career readiness (10 percent compared with 1 percent of respondents from schools in SWSSs).

Figure D1. Leaders of schools in Strategic Waivers School Systems reported prioritizing innovations related to use of data and formative assessments more frequently than leaders of schools in Charter Systems, 2008/09–2016/17

Percentage



SWSS is Strategic Waivers School System.

Note: The sample includes 353 schools: 281 schools in SWSSs and 72 schools in Charter Systems.

Source: Authors' analysis using data from surveys of district leaders administered by the Georgia Department of Education, 2021.

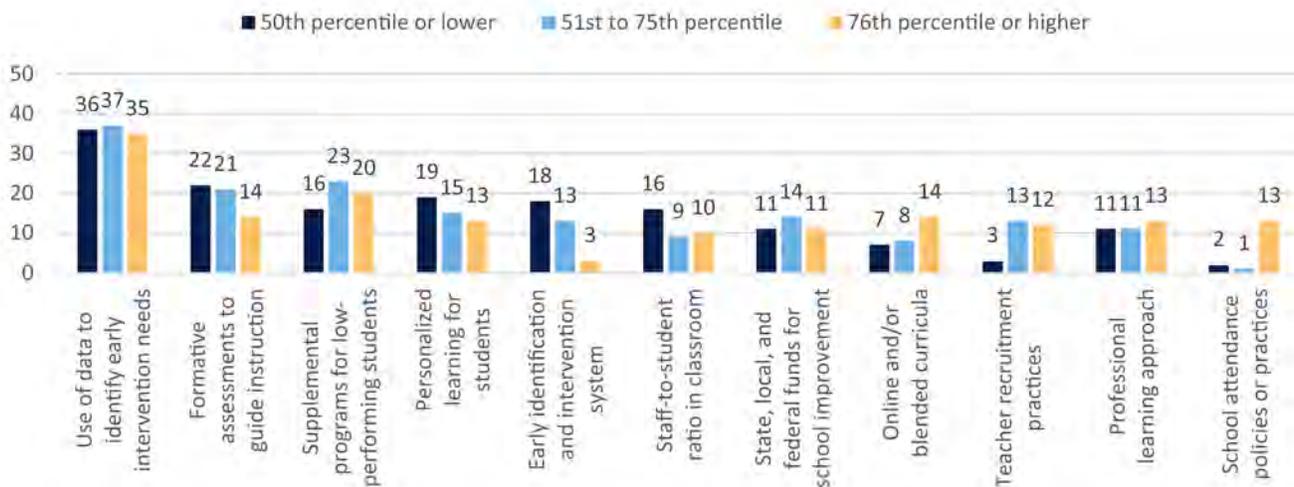
Leaders of schools with larger proportions of Black students reported prioritizing innovations related to online and/or blended curricula, teacher recruitment practices, and school attendance policies or practices more frequently than leaders of schools with smaller proportions of Black students

Like leaders in schools with the most students eligible for the national school lunch program, leaders in schools with larger proportions of Black students prioritized innovations related to online and/or blended curricula and school attendance policies or practices more frequently than leaders in schools with fewer Black students. Leaders also reported prioritizing teacher recruitment practices more frequently than schools with fewer Black students (figure D2). Fourteen percent of leaders in schools with the largest percentages of Black students prioritized innovations related to online and/or blended curricula (compared with 8 and 7 percent of leaders in schools with smaller proportions of Black students), and 13 percent prioritized school attendance policies or practices (compared with 1 and 2 percent of leaders in schools with smaller proportions of Black students). In addition, 12 percent of leaders in schools with the largest proportions of Black students and 13 percent of leaders in schools in the 51st to 75th percentile for proportion of Black students prioritized innovations related to teacher recruitment practices, compared with 3 percent of schools with the smallest proportions of Black students.

Leaders in schools with the largest proportions of Black students less frequently reported prioritizing innovations related to other data-driven strategies including the use of formative assessments to guide instruction (14 percent of schools with the largest proportions of Black students, compared with 21 and 22 percent of schools with smaller proportions), personalized learning for students (13 percent compared with 19 percent of schools in the 50th percentile or lower), and early identification and intervention systems (3 percent, compared with 13 and 18 percent of schools with smaller proportions).

Figure D2. Schools with larger proportions of Black students reported prioritizing online and/or blended curricula and school attendance policies or practices more frequently than schools with smaller proportions of Black students, 2008/09–2016/17

Percentage



Note: The sample includes 353 schools. In the survey sample, the 178 schools at or below the 50th percentile had student populations that included less than 31 percent Black students, the 88 schools between the 51st and 75th percentiles had student populations that included between 31 and 62 percent Black students, and the 87 schools at or above the 76th percentile had student populations that included more than 62 percent Black students (percentiles were rounded to the nearest whole number).

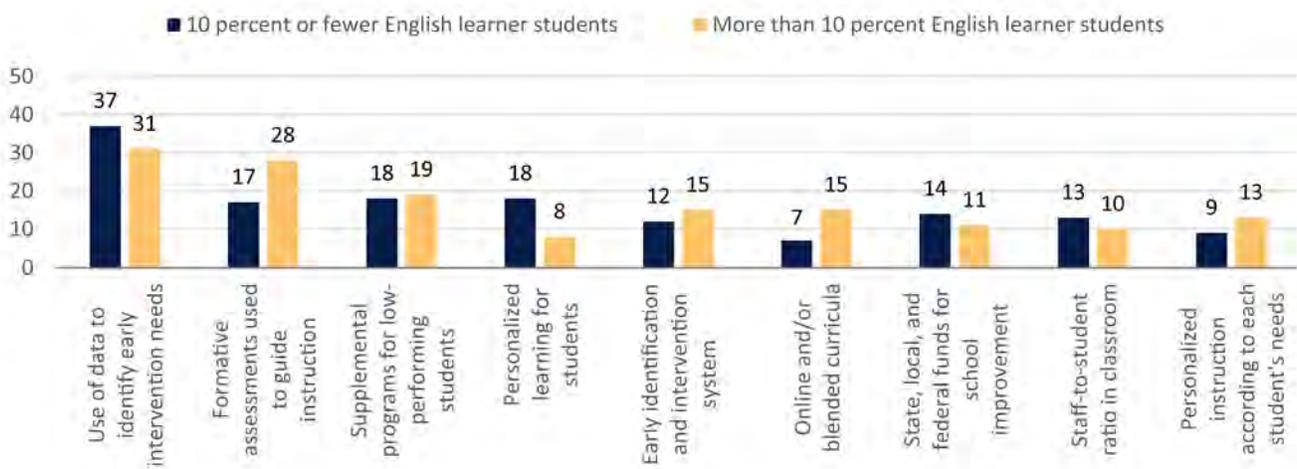
Source: Authors' analysis using data from surveys of district leaders administered by the Georgia Department of Education, 2021.

Leaders of schools with larger proportions of English learner students reported prioritizing formative assessments and online and/or blended curricula more frequently than leaders of schools with smaller proportions of English learner students

Twenty-eight percent of survey respondents in schools with more than 10 percent English learner students reported prioritizing innovations related to formative assessments to guide instruction, compared with 17 percent of leaders in schools with fewer than 10 percent English learner students (figure D3). Fifteen percent of schools with more than 10 percent English learner students reported prioritizing innovations related to online and/or blended curricula, compared with 7 percent of other schools. Schools with fewer than 10 percent English learner students more frequently reported prioritizing innovations related to use of data to identify early intervention needs (37 percent of schools with 10 percent or fewer English learner students compared with 31 percent of schools with more than 10 percent English learner students) and personalized learning for students (18 percent compared with 8 percent).

Figure D3. Schools with larger proportions of English learner students reported prioritizing formative assessments and online and/or blended curricula more frequently than schools with smaller proportions of English learner students, 2008/09–2016/17

Percentage



Note: The sample includes 353 schools: 281 schools whose student populations included 10 percent or fewer English learner students and 72 schools whose student populations included more than 10 percent English learner students.

Source: Authors' analysis using data from surveys of district leaders administered by the Georgia Department of Education, 2021.

GaDOE may want to explore whether the observed differences in prioritized innovations hold for all schools in the state, and examine the reasons schools adopt different approaches. For example, leaders in schools with the most students eligible for the national school lunch program, leaders in schools with the most Black students, and leaders in schools with the most English learner students all prioritized innovations related to online and/or blended curricula more frequently than leaders in schools with smaller proportions of these students. Leaders in schools with the most students eligible for the national school lunch program and the most Black students reported prioritizing innovations related to school attendance policies or practices more frequently than leaders in schools with smaller proportions of these students. Leaders in schools with more than 10 percent English learner students reported prioritizing innovations related to use of data to identify early intervention needs and personalized learning for students less frequently than leaders in schools with fewer English learner students. If GaDOE finds that these differences hold for most or all schools in the state, they may want to examine whether these differences contribute to reducing or increasing inequalities among students who attend schools with different characteristics.

Appendix E. Survey Instrument

This appendix presents the survey instrument GaDOE staff used to collect data from Georgia school leaders.

Thank you for volunteering to respond to this questionnaire. Your responses will provide insight on how Strategic Waivers School Systems (SWSS) or Charter Systems in Georgia use waiver flexibilities to implement innovative strategies. Your responses will be sent directly to the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southeast research team and will be used for program improvement purposes only. All responses that relate to or describe identifiable characteristics of individuals may only be used for statistical purposes and will be kept confidential. No identifiable information will be shared outside of the REL Southeast research team. This questionnaire should take no more than 20 minutes to complete.

Background information

Question 1. Please select your district.*

Question 2. Please select your school.*

Question 3. Please select your position in your school. (If you hold more than one position, please select your main role.)*

- Principal
 - Assistant Principal
 - Other—Write In (Required):
-

Changes in practice

Please share about innovations your school has implemented or may be considering since the approval of your district’s SWSS or Charter System flexibility contract.

For question 4, please follow the steps included with each part of the question.

Innovations

Question 4. Thinking about all the years since approval of your district’s flexibility contract (including before and after COVID-19), your school may have implemented innovations to initiate, expand, or make changes to academic programs, human resources, or financial allocations/practices.

Please read through this list of innovations that your school may have implemented. Please select all innovations your school has partially or fully implemented and, on a sliding scale from 0 to 100, please rate the level of importance your school has placed on each innovation.

If your school implemented other high-priority innovations that are not listed below, you can list and describe them later in the questionnaire.

- Alternate career pathways and/or industry certifications
- Alternative education programming
- Bullying prevention program
- Classes for specific populations, such as gifted education and English learners
- College and career academy
- Community-based, internship, or work-based learning programs
- Core curricula
- Course scheduling
- Credit requirements and availability
- Curriculum vendors or textbooks
- Dual enrollment
- Early identification and intervention system
- Enrichment or other specialty classes
- Formative assessments used to guide instruction
- Graduation requirements
- Internships or work study opportunities
- Online and/or blended curricula
- Personalized instruction according to each student's needs
- Personalized learning for students
- Programs focused on improving college and career readiness
- Programs focused on improving graduation rates
- Remedial education programming or student eligibility
- School attendance policies or practices
- School counseling services
- Soft skills for career readiness
- Student discipline policies or procedures
- Student placement policies or practices
- Student promotion policies or practices
- Student retention policies or practices
- Summer programs
- Use of data to identify early intervention needs
- Additional summer academic programs for students

- Career ladder
- Certification requirements for allocating staff to provide instruction
- Certification requirements for hiring staff
- Changed the structure, content, or quantity of before- and/or after-school programs
- Differentiated salary system
- Instructional delivery model to change class size
- Number of guidance counselors
- Number of school days, daily school hours, or school year
- Paraprofessionals in classroom
- Parent engagement and roles
- Performance-based systems for staff
- Professional learning approach
- School transportation availability
- Staff duties or staff assignment practices
- Staff evaluation and reward systems
- Staff retention policies and practices
- Staff-to-student ratio in classroom
- State salary schedule, including beginning salary for hiring
- Supplemental programs for low-performing students
- Teacher recruitment practices
- Categorical allotment for facilities or maintenance
- Instructional categorical allotments for noninstructional expenses
- Instructional spending
- Method to determine enrollment
- Noninstructional categorical allotments for instructional expenses
- Noninstructional spending
- Quality Basic Education funding for postsecondary programs
- State, local, and federal funds in support of school improvement plans

Question 4, Follow-up #1. In the table below, please indicate whether the innovations you ranked as the most important above were to add new programs, expand existing programs, and/or make other changes to programs.

	New	Expand existing	Other changes
<i>[Most important innovation selected]</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>[Second most important innovation selected]</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>[Third most important innovation selected]</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 4, Follow-up #2. In the table below, please indicate whether the innovations you ranked above are just beginning to be implemented, partially implemented, or fully implemented.

	Beginning to be implemented	Partially implemented	Fully implemented
<i>[Most important innovation selected]</i>			
<i>[Second most important innovation selected]</i>			
<i>[Third most important innovation selected]</i>			

Additional innovations

Question 5. Since your district received approval of its SWSS or Charter System flexibility contract, has your school implemented, expanded, or reduced in any way the use of the following innovations?*

	No change	Implemented	Expanded	Reduced	N/A
Local school councils (for SWSS) or local school governance team (for Charter Systems)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
School choice request procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Question 6. Are there any other high-priority innovations related to academic programs, human resources, finances, or other flexibilities that your school implemented since your district became an SWSS or Charter System? If so, please list those innovations and in one to two sentences describe why they are a priority for your school.

Perceived impact

Thank you for indicating the innovations your school prioritized. In this section, you will have an opportunity to share how those innovations affected your school.

Please think about *only* the innovations you identified at the beginning of the survey (listed below for your reference):

[insert innovations selected above]

Question 7. In your opinion, how have the following outcomes been affected by implementing the high-importance innovations you identified? For each outcome, choose one of the following: (1) improved substantially, (2) improved somewhat, (3) stayed the same, (4) worsened somewhat, (5) worsened substantially, (6) not relevant to our school’s flexibility contract-related changes.

Then, please list which one or more of those innovations you believe most attributed to the change for each outcome.*

Outcome	1	2	3	4	5	6	Innovation(s) affecting the most change
Student outcomes							
Academic achievement							
Attendance							
Grades							
Graduation rates							
Staff outcomes							
Teacher retention							
Principal retention							
Teachers’ instructional practices							
Teachers’ compensation							
Teachers’ opportunities to advance in their teaching profession							
Teachers’ opportunities to collaborate with colleagues at their school							
Teachers’ opportunities for professional development							
Support for new teachers							
Time available for collaboration							
Principals’ instructional leadership skills							
Support for new teachers							
Staff retention							
School budgets							
Ability to hire new teachers							
Maintenance of school buildings and facilities							

Outcome	1	2	3	4	5	6	Innovation(s) affecting the most change
Parental engagement practices							
Parental engagement with their child’s schooling							
Parental engagement with programs aimed at improving students’ academic outcomes							
Parental engagement with developing school curricula							
Parental engagement with school policy decisions							
Parental engagement with planning career pathway for student							
Parental engagement with student supplemental services							
School climate outcomes							
Student behavior							
Perceptions of safety							
Relationships between teachers and students							
Relationships among teachers							
Relationships between school leaders and teachers							
Relationships between school leaders and their peers							

Challenges

Question 8. To what extent is each of the following a challenge to your efforts to implement innovations to meet your performance contract goals?

	Not a challenge	Minor challenge	Moderate challenge	Major challenge
Staff turnover				
Staff recruitment				
Available funding				
Parent support				
Community support				
Lack of understanding of possible innovations				
Insufficient staff to implement innovations				
Changes to state policies or procedures				

Stakeholders

Question 9. To what extent did each of the following stakeholders influence the selection of innovations in your school? For each stakeholder group, please select whether they had (1) a total influence, (2) a great deal of influence, or (3) a moderate amount of influence, or (4) no influence over the selection of innovations.*

- District administrators
- District staff (other than district administrators)
- GaDOE staff
- State Board of Education
- School administrators in my district
- School administrators in my school
- School staff (other than school administrators)
- School governance team
- School staff external to my district
- Parents
- Community members
- Local business community
- Institutions of higher education
- External organizations (e.g., the Charter System Foundation, EMO/CMO, Southeast Comprehensive Center)

Question 9, Follow-up: Please specify the external organization(s) if ranked.

Value

Question 10. What is the most beneficial aspect of your district's performance contract for your school?*

- Having performance targets/goals to meet
- Refocusing on improving student outcomes
- Avoiding consequences
- Making stakeholder involvement transparent
- Facilitating continuous improvement
- Changing culture from one of compliance to innovation
- Other—Write In (Required):
