

Senate Bill 589

By: Senators Brass of the 6th, Hickman of the 4th, Hatchett of the 50th, Anavitarte of the 31st, McNeel of the 18th and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Part 3 of Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia
2 Annotated, relating to educational programs under the "Quality Basic Education Act," so as
3 to revise the date by which a child must attain a certain age to be eligible for enrollment in
4 kindergarten or first grade; to provide for parents and guardians to elect for their children
5 who have attained the age of four or five to be enrolled in a voluntary pre-kindergarten
6 program provided and operated as part of Georgia's Pre-K Program; to provide for an
7 effective date and applicability; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and
8 for other purposes.

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

10 **SECTION 1.**

11 Part 3 of Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
12 relating to educational programs under the "Quality Basic Education Act," is amended in
13 Code Section 20-2-150, relating to eligibility for enrollment, program assignments for
14 students, and student social security numbers, by revising subsection (a) and adding a new
15 subsection to read as follows:

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16 "(a) Except as otherwise provided by subsection (b) of this Code section, all children and
17 youth who have attained the age of five years by ~~September~~ August 1 shall be eligible for
18 enrollment in the appropriate general education programs authorized in this part unless they
19 attain the age of 20 by ~~September~~ August 1 or they have received high school diplomas or
20 the equivalent. This shall specifically include students who have reenrolled after dropping
21 out and who are married, parents, or pregnant. Special education students shall also be
22 eligible for enrollment in appropriate education programs through age 21 or until they
23 receive high school or special education diplomas or the equivalent; provided, however,
24 they were enrolled during the preceding school year and had an approved Individualized
25 Education Program (IEP) which indicated that a successive year of enrollment was needed.
26 Other students who have not yet attained age 21 by ~~September~~ August 1 or received high
27 school diplomas or the equivalent shall be eligible for enrollment in appropriate education
28 programs, provided they have not dropped out of school for one quarter or more. Each
29 local unit of administration shall have the authority to assign students who are married,
30 parents, or pregnant or who have reenrolled after dropping out one quarter or more to
31 programs of instruction within its regular daytime educational program, provided that a
32 local unit of administration may develop and implement special programs of instruction
33 limited to such students within the regular daytime educational program or, at the option
34 of the student, in an alternative program beyond the regular daytime program; provided,
35 further, that such programs of instruction are designed to enable such students to earn
36 course credit toward receiving high school diplomas. These programs may include
37 instruction in prenatal care and child care. Each local unit of administration shall have the
38 authority to provide alternative programs beyond the regular daytime educational program.
39 Unless otherwise provided by law, the State Board of Education shall have the authority
40 to determine the eligibility of students for enrollment. It is declared to be the policy of this
41 state that general and occupational education be integrated into a comprehensive
42 educational program which will contribute to the total development of the individual."

43 "(b.1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, each child who attains
44 the age of either four or five by August 1 shall be eligible for enrollment in a voluntary
45 pre-kindergarten program provided and operated as part of Georgia's Pre-K Program, and
46 each such child shall be enrolled in such program at the request of his or her parent or
47 guardian; provided, however, that this paragraph shall not be construed or applied to
48 require or permit a child to be enrolled in such a program for more than one year; and,
49 provided, further that children ages four and five shall be treated on the same basis relative
50 to selection for available seats in such programs."

51 **SECTION 2.**

52 Said part is further amended by revising subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-151, relating
53 to general and career education programs and state policies, as follows:

54 "(b) The following general and career education programs are authorized for purposes of
55 funding under this article:

56 (1)(A) All local school systems may offer a full-day kindergarten program. For
57 purposes of this subsection, the term 'full-day kindergarten program' means a student
58 is provided classroom instruction for a minimum of four and one-half hours daily for
59 a 180 day school year, or the equivalent thereof as determined in accordance with State
60 Board of Education guidelines.

61 (B) It is the policy of this state that the purposes of the kindergarten program shall be
62 to provide all children with an equal opportunity to become prepared for a successful
63 first grade experience and to acquire the foundation for academic progress throughout
64 the students' educational careers. To be eligible for enrollment in a state supported
65 kindergarten program, a child must attain the age of five by ~~September~~ August 1,
66 except as otherwise provided by subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-150;

67 (2) It is the policy of this state that the purpose of the primary grades program shall be
68 mastery by enrolled students of the essential basic skills and knowledge which will

69 enable them to achieve more advanced skills and knowledge offered at the higher grade
70 levels. For purposes of funding under this article, the primary grades program shall
71 include grades one, two, and three. To be eligible for enrollment in the first grade of a
72 state supported primary grades program, a child must attain the age of six by ~~September~~
73 August 1, except as otherwise provided by subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-150. The
74 State Board of Education shall adopt an instrument or instruments, procedures, and
75 policies necessary to assess the first grade readiness of children enrolled in Georgia's
76 public school kindergarten programs pursuant to Code Section 20-2-281. Readiness
77 information obtained by the instrument or instruments adopted by the state board shall
78 be used by local school systems in concert with teacher recommendations and other
79 relevant information to make appropriate student grade placement decisions. The
80 Department of Education shall develop guidelines for utilization of the instrument or
81 instruments in grade placement decisions and shall provide such guidelines to local
82 school systems. The guidelines shall include information pertinent to consideration of
83 the placement of students who have been identified as being disabled or
84 limited-English-proficient. Whenever the decision is made not to promote a child to the
85 first grade, the local school system shall document the reasons for the decision not to
86 promote, according to guidelines established by the board. The State School
87 Superintendent may annually provide a report summarizing the results of the readiness
88 of first grade Georgia public school kindergarten children. No student shall remain in
89 kindergarten for more than two years;

90 (3) It is the policy of this state that the primary purposes of the middle grades program
91 shall be assuring the mastery of essential basic skills and knowledge, assisting students
92 in the transition from childhood to adolescence, and preparing students for the selection
93 of programs and courses consistent with their abilities and interests when they enter high
94 school, as well as providing an opportunity for mastery of essential but more advanced

95 skills and knowledge. For purposes of funding under this article, the middle grades
96 program shall include grades four, five, six, seven, and eight; and

97 (4)(A) It is the policy of this state that the primary purposes of the high school
98 programs shall be to prepare students for the continuation of their education beyond
99 high school and for entry into their chosen career fields as well as to prepare them to
100 take their places in society as young adults. The following high school programs for
101 grades nine, ten, 11, and 12 are authorized for purposes of funding under this article:

102 (i) The high school education program; and

103 (ii) The career, technical, and agricultural education laboratory program.

104 (B) As a reflection of the reduced teacher-student ratios and more extensive material
105 and equipment needed for effective laboratory courses compared to courses with no or
106 only limited laboratory experiences, the career, technical, and agricultural education
107 laboratory program shall be funded at a higher level than the high school general
108 education program. The state board shall adopt criteria which courses must meet in
109 order to qualify for the career, technical, and agricultural education laboratory
110 program."

111 **SECTION 3.**

112 This Act shall become effective on July 1, 2026, and shall apply to all school years beginning
113 with the 2026-2027 school year.

114 **SECTION 4.**

115 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.