

CENTERING CANDIDATES

In a Changing World

Georgia Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
Annual Conference

November 12 – 14, 2025

Hilton Peachtree City Atlanta
Peachtree City, GA, 30269



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1999-00	Ron Collaruso	Georgia State University



Monday, November 3, 2025

Dear GACTE Colleagues,

It has been my honor to serve you as the President of the Georgia Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (GACTE) over the past year, and I look forward to serving in this role until I pass the gavel to Dr. David Slykhuis at our GACTE Executive Board Meeting in Summer 2026! This year's theme is "Centering Candidates in a Changing World," and I think we can all agree that we are changing at a rapid pace, one that can seem difficult to keep up with at times. Change is not always negative, although it can be hard, and one of the positive changes we have seen more recently is the emphasis on the teacher and leader pipeline. As we have seen with Senate Resolution 237, stakeholders across our state are invested in collaborative efforts that can enhance recruitment and retention of educational professionals. This is one reason why we are excited about this conference—We are pleased to welcome Dr. Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy (President and CEO) and Dr. Jacqueline E. King (Consultant, Research, Policy & Advocacy) from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) and we are eager to hear advocacy updates from our parent organization. Additionally, we are hosting a legislative panel that may aid us in solidifying our own priorities for the coming year. We are happy to welcome back *Prepared to Teach*, who is committed to assisting us in building a foundation for paid internships in the state of Georgia, and we are welcoming back many of our other long-term partners who are helping us to move our work forward. Lastly, with our concurrent sessions, we have provided space for discussions around legislation, dialogues around leadership, a focus on recruitment and retention of educational professionals, and explorations of innovative programs and approaches.

As noted on our website, "GACTE provides leadership on issues to professional education, promotes effective public policy, and enhances and improves professional education programs at member institutions." Indeed, we have a responsibility and an opportunity to address critical issues in our state as a group—and there is power in numbers. Historically, GACTE has been a strong organization, but we are primed to become even stronger in terms of our overall footprint and impact. The AACTE "is the leading voice on educator preparation," and GACTE should be the same for our state. With this in mind, I look forward to continuing to shape and guide these efforts in collaboration with all of you.

We hope that this year's conference will inspire you in terms of educational advocacy: We encourage you to continue the conversations started here, take ideas back to your institutions, and develop connections and opportunities that can expand opportunities for educational professionals across our state. Welcome to GACTE's 51st Annual Conference, and we are glad to have you with us in Peachtree City.

Sincerely,

Sheri C. Hardee

Sheri C. Hardee, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Education
University of North Georgia
GACTE President 2025-2026

Blue Ridge Cumming Dahlonega Gainesville Oconee

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The University of North Georgia is designated as The Military College of Georgia® and as a State Leadership Institution.

GACTE Fall Conference Schedule

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Registration and Check-in

8:00am - 9:45am

> Location: McIntosh Foyer

GACTE Board Meeting (Lunch Served)

10:00am - 11:45am

> Location: Clayton A and B

Luncheon/Visit Vendors

11:00am - 12:00pm

> Location: Terrace Restaurant/McIntosh Foyer

GACTE Welcome Opening Workshop

12:00pm - 2:00pm

> Location: McIntosh Ballroom

Prepared to Teach: Exploring Next Steps for Paid Internships in Georgia



Brigid Brennan

Managing Director, Strategy and Operations



Divya Mansukhani

Managing Director, Programs and Partnership

Break and Visit Vendors

2:00pm - 2:15pm

> Location: McIntosh Foyer

GACTE Fall Conference Schedule

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Concurrent Session I

2:15pm - 3:00pm

 *Various Locations, See Session Descriptions*

Session A: Supporting Candidates through Mutually Beneficial Partnerships Between Traditional and Non-Traditional EPPs

Ms. Enjolia Farrington and Ms. Rene' Mason, Georgia Professional Standards Commission

Education Preparation Providers are transforming partnerships throughout the state through innovative collaborations between traditional and non-traditional programs. They are finding that these partnerships benefit both types of programs; but more importantly, they support candidates and our children. Join us as the Georgia Professional Standards Commission highlights some of these endeavors.

Location: Highland

Session B: Empowering Young Learners Through Culturally Relevant Stories

Ms. Ayniah Payne, Clark Atlanta University & Georgia Association of Educators AE President

Empowering Young Learners Through Culturally Relevant Stories focuses on the importance of representation and empowerment in children's books. When students see themselves and their communities in the stories they read, they build confidence, pride, and a sense of belonging. This session highlights how storytelling can create classroom spaces where every child feels valued and seen. Using Penny and the Magic Piggy Bank as an example, it shows how stories can teach financial lessons while helping children understand who they are. The session ends with a guided activity that helps teachers lead students in writing their own "life lesson" stories—personal stories that connect identity with everyday experiences. By using books that reflect real students and encouraging them to write their own, teachers can help build strong, self-assured learners who know their voices matter.

Location: Clayton A

Session C: Where Preparation Meets Purpose: An HBCU Approach to Strengthening the Special Education Teacher Workforce

Dr. Fanica Young, Dr. Annette Teasdall, and Mr. Carlos Copeland, Clark Atlanta University

This session highlights how the PANTHER and LANEY Projects at one HBCU demonstrate how centering teacher candidates enhances recruitment and retention in special education. Findings provide data-driven insights and strategies for institutions seeking to develop responsive personnel preparation programs that strengthen the special education teacher workforce in the current education climate.

Location: Cobb

Session D: Practical Insights and Reflections from a Higher Education Co-Dean Experience

Dr. Meca Williams-Johnson and Dr. Jeff Garland, Georgia Southern University

Co-leadership, where two or more individuals share executive responsibilities, is emerging as a compelling model for organizational leadership. In this session, the presenters will share their experiences and candid insights as Co-Deans for a College of Education at a regional public university. Critical topics such as joint decision-making, navigating conflict, role clarity, careful planning, and intentional communication will be described for sustained success. The presenters will conclude by sharing how participation in the USG Executive Leadership Institute further enhanced their partnership and support for growing leadership skills. Join us for a conversation that challenges traditional models and explores the promise of co-leadership as a replicable path forward in higher education.

Location: Canterbury

Session E: How May We Help You?: Exploring Tiered Interventions in Support of Preservice Teacher Development

Dr. Sharlonne Smith, Ms. Robyn Baggett, and Ms. Amanda Locke, Dalton State College

The presentation will provide invaluable insight into the support and intervention system used to assist preservice teachers. The presenters aim to describe the significance of providing various support structures to equip preservice teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to become effective and impactful educators.

Location: Clayton B

GACTE Fall Conference Schedule

Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Faculty: Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education

3:10pm - 4:00pm

Mr. Matt Smith and Dr. Dana Rickman

> Location: Canterbury

Candidates: Teacher Contracts and Ethics: Limitations and Expectations

3:10pm - 4:00pm

> Location: Clayton A



Mr. Skylar Nunley
Georgia Association of Educators

Entering the education profession means stepping into a world guided by legal obligations, ethical principles, and a deep duty of care to students and communities. In order to be a transformative teacher, one must understand walking the tightrope of teaching for change and protecting yourself and your job. This session will equip Aspiring Educators with a foundational understanding of teacher contracts, including key terms, professional expectations, and the rights and responsibilities educators hold from signature to service. We will examine ethical scenarios, classroom-related dilemmas, and the importance of professionalism both in and outside the school environment—especially in digital spaces. Participants will leave with a clear understanding of contract components, ethical codes of conduct, and strategies to protect their integrity, advocate for fair treatment, and confidently navigate the transition into a professional educator role.

Closing

4:00pm - 4:30pm

> Location: McIntosh Ballroom

Faculty: Dinner/Night Entertainment

6:00pm

> Location: McIntosh Ballroom



BERRY
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Evening Activity: Candidates

6:00pm

> Location: Cobb



GACTE
Georgia Association of Colleges
for Teacher Education

GACTE Fall Conference Schedule

Thursday, November 13, 2025

Opening Plenary

9:00am - 12:00pm

> Location: McIntosh Ballroom

9:00am - 9:15am

GACTE Business Meeting

9:15am - 11:00am

General Session

11:00am - 12:00pm

Georgia Professional Standards Commission Updates



Dr. Penney McRoy
Director, Educator Preparation Division
Georgia Professional Standards Commission



Dr. Anne Marie Fenton
Director, Rules Management and
Educator Assessment
Interim Co-Director, Educator Ethics Division
Georgia Professional Standards Commission

Luncheon

12:00pm – 1:00pm

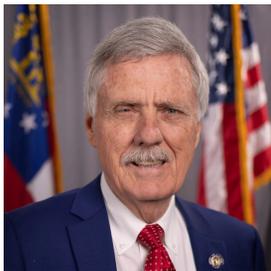
> Location: Terrace Restaurant

Legislative Panel

1:00pm – 3:00pm

> Location: McIntosh Ballroom

*Facilitators: Dr. PaQuita Austin Morgan, Georgia Professional Standards Commission
Dr. David Slykhuis, Valdosta State University*



Billy Hickman, Senator, District 4
Chair Senate Committee on Education and Youth



Lydia Glaize, Representative, District 67
House Committee on Education



Sonya Halpern, Senator, District 39
Senate Committee on Education and Youth



Carmen Rice, Representative, District 139
Vice Chair, House Education Committee

GACTE Fall Conference Schedule

Thursday, November 13, 2025

Break and Visit Vendors

3:00pm – 3:15pm

> Location: McIntosh Foyer

Concurrent Session II

3:15pm – 4:15pm

> Various Locations, See Session Descriptions

Session A: Standard 1 - Outcome Data Sets for Accreditation Success

Dr. Susan Hagood and Dr. Susan Lynn, Thomas University

This presentation explores strategies for integrating data from Anthology Portfolio key assessment instruments—such as work samples, lesson plans, dispositions, and portfolios—into an outcome reporting framework. By aligning GaPSC Standards to key assessment data, institutions can create robust, actionable datasets that track student achievement and strengthen evidence used for accreditation.

Location: Highland

Session B: Harmonizing the Classroom: Strategies for Relationship Building, Effective Management, and De-escalation

Dr. Kiawana Kennedy, Georgia Public Broadcasting

Join GPB Education for an engaging session designed to equip educators with essential tools for establishing positive relationships, implementing effective classroom management techniques, and de-escalation strategies. In this dynamic session, participants will explore the interconnectedness of building strong connections with students, maintaining a well-managed classroom environment, and defusing potential conflicts.

Location: Clayton A

Session C: RESAs: Joining GACTE: Benefits and Partnership

Dr. Sheri Hardee, University of North Georgia

This session is for members who are representatives of Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs). Please stop by so that we can meet you and discuss involvement in the Georgia Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, including participation on committees and ideas for future partnership.

Location: Spalding A & B

Session D: Video Discussions: Supporting Community, Learning, and Teacher Voice!

Dr. Karen Lucas, College of Coastal Georgia

Explore how Teacher Preparation Programs can use video discussions to create a sense of belonging, facilitate authentic learning, and help candidates find their teacher voice! Participants will examine the benefits of video discussions compared to written discussions. Participants will collaboratively develop prompts to implement video discussions in their courses.

Location: Cobb

Session E: Click or Brick: How Modality Shapes Efficacy

Dr. Gayle Ramirez and Dr. Karen Terry, and Dr. Barbie Radcliffe, Valdosta State University

This session explores teacher preparation design implications, for both online and in person teacher preparation programs. This study reviews the strengths and weaknesses of both. Attendees will gain actionable ideas for enhancing teacher efficacy in both modalities, ensuring that all candidates graduate prepared to positively impact student learning.

Location: Clayton B

GACTE Fall Conference Schedule

Thursday, November 13, 2025

Faculty: State Legislative Updates

4:15pm – 5:00pm

➤ Location: Canterbury



Dr. Margaret Ciccarelli
Director of Legislative Services, Professional Association of Georgia Educators

Candidates: Life of a First Year Teacher in Georgia

4:15pm – 5:00pm

➤ Location: Cobb

Mr. Demetrius Dove, First Year Teacher Atlanta SMART Academy

In this candid and compelling presentation, Demetrius Dove chronicles his first year teaching in an Atlanta charter school, illuminating the promises, pitfalls, and persistent inequities that define the early-career experience for many Black male educators in the American South. Grounded in lived experience and informed by the theories of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) Dove offers an unfiltered window into the challenges of teaching amid systemic inequities, standardized testing pressures, and a curriculum often unaligned with students' cultural wealth.

Awards Dinner

6:00pm

➤ Location: McIntosh Ballroom

Recognizing Georgia's Outstanding Mentor Teachers and the Cindi Chance Award Recipient

GACTE Fall Conference Schedule

Friday, November 14, 2025

Concurrent Session III

8:30am – 9:10am

> *Various Locations, See Session Descriptions*

Session A: Partners in Practice: Gaining Authentic Program Data, Providing Support and Building Relationships with Teacher Graduates in the Induction Years

Dr. Aimee Cribbs and Dr. Sharlonne Smith, and Dr. Mellanie Robinson, Dalton State College

Partners in Practice is a research program that measures novice teachers' effectiveness and their impact in local school districts. Participants will learn how the program serves a dual purpose of ensuring support for candidates through the frequent visitation of faculty/staff, and as a data collection tool for program improvement.

Location: Highland

Session B: Thriving Together: Empowering Educators for Student Success in a Changing World

Mrs. Michele Sherman and Dr. Allison Beasley, Georgia Department of Education

Explore strategies for providing differentiated support to teachers and leaders, ensuring educators thrive and students succeed. Facilitate growth among teachers and leaders based on their level of experience in alignment with GALEADS' commitment to leadership development and educational excellence.

Location: Spalding A and B

Session C: Using Evidence-First™ Scoring to Renovate Georgia Teacher Candidate Certification

Dr. Chris Moersch, LoTi Connection

Explore a revolutionary approach to evaluating teacher candidate performance using multiple evidence-based scoring measures to gauge candidate skills. This session examines an Evidence-First™ model that promotes real-time coaching and feedback for teacher candidates while elevating the quality of Educator Preparation Programs and streamlining the EPP accreditation process.

Location: Cobb

Session D: Merging Advocacy with Currere: Toward an Integrated Curriculum Through Dewey and Null's Orientations

Ms. Victoria Stephenson, Mercer University

This presentation explores how advocacy in education can be supported through the Currere model, Dewey's experiential learning, and Null's curriculum orientations. It proposes merging systematic, pragmatic, radical, and existential approaches to design a reflective, student-centered, and socially responsive curriculum that empowers learners and educators.

Location: Clayton A

GACTE Fall Conference Schedule

Friday, November 14, 2025

Concurrent Session IV

9:15am – 9:55am

> *Various Locations, See Session Descriptions*

Session A: Clinical Practice: Centering Candidates for Preparation

Dr. PaQuita Morgan Dr. Bobbi Ford, Georgia Professional Standards Commission

Clinical practice is essential to the preparation of pre-service candidates. The effectiveness of preparation has implications on teacher effectiveness and teacher retention. Clinical practice is the crux of educator preparation. This session will explore policies for assisting EPPs deploy pre-service candidates into the field to fulfill clinical practices.

Location: Highland

Session B: Teaching 411

Dr. Kim Foster, Professional Association of Georgia Educators

More than 40% of new teachers leave the profession in the first five years. Most planned a career in teaching, so what changed? We asked novice teachers what they wish they had known when they started out. We then developed this module covering topics such as tiered certifications, school funding, contracts, the role of the local BOE, impact of state legislation, retirement and benefits. We cover nuts and bolts about how public schools operate and how that impacts teachers. Because sometimes knowing what to expect is half the battle.

Location: Spalding A

Session C: Cultivating Genius through Hip Hop Pedagogy

Mrs. Shanita Ables, Muscogee County Public Schools

Hip Hop isn't just music—it's a classroom revolution. By harnessing rhythm, culture, and student voice, this session demonstrates how to ignite curiosity, engagement, and genius, redefining what it means to teach—and to be taught—in the 21st-century classroom.

Location: Spalding B

Session D: Using Literature Circles to Build Engagement and Integrate Science of Reading Instruction in Major-Related Education Courses

Dr. Aimee Cribbs, Mr. Braden Johnson, and Ms. Amberly Vargas, Dalton State College

In this interactive presentation, attendees will learn how to adapt the K-12 Literature Circle approach for the undergraduate classroom. Literature circles expose future educators to content while building connection, agency, and engagement. Additionally, the strategy is a non-consequential experiential learning opportunity for Science of Reading principles.

Location: Cobb

Session E: Deans Hot Topics

Moderator: Dr. Angie Jasper, Georgia Gwinnett College and Dr. Sheri Hardee, University of North Georgia

Location: McIntosh Ballroom

Session F: Innovation in Clinical Experiences at the University of North Georgia

Dr. Angie Gant, Dr. Carly Womack Wynne, and Dr. Cristina Washell, University of North Georgia

This facilitated panel provides an overview of five innovative practices the University of North Georgia utilizes to prepare teacher candidates while simultaneously meeting district partner needs. Panelists include college leadership, as well as candidates from the programs.

Location: Clayton B

GACTE Fall Conference Schedule

Friday, November 14, 2025

Session G: Rural Initiatives across Georgia

Ms. Heather Finley, Georgia Department of Education

Want to learn more about the Georgia Department of Education's (GaDOE) Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (GaRTAP)? As a Registered Teaching Apprenticeship Program (RTAP) Sponsor, GaDOE will facilitate partnerships between Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and educator preparation programs (EPPs). These partnerships will enable LEAs and EPPs to develop apprenticeships tailored to the needs of their districts and aligned with existing programs. GaRTAP is a strategic response to the critical teacher shortages in Georgia that aims to strengthen the teacher pipeline across the state, addressing the challenges of teacher recruitment and retention that school districts face. Come join us and learn more about how you can participate today.

Location: Stockbridge

Organizational Meetings

10:00am - 12:00pm

 *Location: Various Locations*

Georgia Assessment Directors Association

Location: Cobb

Georgia Field Directors

Location: Clayton A

EdCAT/formerly EdRAC

Location: McIntosh

Candidate Session

10:00am - 12:00pm

 Location: Clayton A

Engaging in Education Policy and Legislative Advocacy as Students

Mr. Skylar Nunley, Georgia Association of Educators

Future educators have the power to shape the systems they are preparing to enter—and impactful advocacy begins long before stepping into the classroom. This session will guide Aspiring Educators in understanding Georgia's education policy landscape, identifying key decision-makers, and navigating legislative processes that influence public schools and the teaching profession. Participants will explore real-world examples of student-led advocacy, learn strategies for building coalitions and mobilizing campus engagement, and practice effective storytelling to elevate their voices in policy discussions. Attendees will leave with practical tools to engage in meaningful advocacy today and become empowered leaders shaping the future of public education in Georgia.

Lunch (*for conference registrants only*)

12:00pm - 1:00pm

 Location: Terrace Restaurant



Don't forget to complete the conference evaluation! We value your feedback and want to improve next year's GACTE conference, so please provide your feedback using the following QR code:



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