

The FACTS about the Opportunity School District



What is the Opportunity School District?

The Opportunity School District (OSD) is a proposed constitutional amendment which allows the state to take over schools that have scored 60 or below on Georgia's College and Career Readiness Index (CCRPI) for three consecutive years. The OSD would be run by a superintendent answering directly to the governor.

There are four options available to the OSD superintendent:

- Closure
- OSD Superintendent reorganizes staff, firing and hiring teachers and principals
- Transfer to the State Charter Schools Commission
- OSD superintendent can direct local board to make changes at an OSD schools via contract

The OSD is authorized to take up to 20 qualifying schools per school year with no more than 100 schools under its supervision at any time. As stated in the legislation, "the schools selected for inclusion in the OSD should represent geographic diversity, including urban and rural schools."

The facilities of qualifying schools that are transferred to the supervision of the OSD will then be controlled by the OSD. This includes textbooks, technology, media resources, instructional equipment, and all other resources. The OSD will be responsible for maintenance and repair of the building, but the local board is responsible for extensive repairs and capitol expenses.

Why is the OSD Referendum Important?

In the **November 2016 election**, the following proposed state constitutional amendment will appear before voters:

Shall the Constitution of Georgia be amended to allow the state to intervene in chronically failing public schools in order to improve student performance?

Parents, educators, and other stakeholders are concerned about the OSD for many reasons, including:

- Parents lose say in local school and access to locally-elected schools boards. The OSD superintendent is accountable only to the sitting Governor and uses local tax dollars to create a duplicative Atlanta bureaucracy operating in perpetuity.
- The OSD reduces students and schools to a failing number. Data is inconsistent; CCRPI, the measurement used to determine OSD eligibility, has changed several times since its implementation.
- The OSD plan does not address why students and schools are struggling, and transparency is lacking. Reform and rulemaking are subject to the discretion of the OSD superintendent.

The OSD gives the state control over local tax dollars and local facilities. Local communities retain liability for local schools while the state seizes control of the schools.

What Can I Do?

School stakeholders concerned about the OSD plan should use the coming months to educate their local communities about the OSD plan and initiate discussion of the pros and cons. Teachers and school leaders should use CCRPI data to demonstrate upward progress at the local level and encourage open and honest community discussion about resources needed to assist struggling students.

Remember that school email and other public resources should not be used for the distribution of non-educational material which directly advocates for or against the OSD referendum.

When Would the Opportunity School District Take Over Local Schools?

Schools will be eligible for takeover by the OSD on Jan. 1, 2017. A school will remain under the supervision of the OSD for a minimum of five consecutive years or, for OSD charter schools, for the term of the initial charter. If a school earns a rating above 60 on the CCRPI for three consecutive years, it will be released from the OSD. The maximum term a school will remain under the supervision of the OSD is 10 years. If an OSD schools is converted to state charter status, renewal of its charter will remove the schools from the OSD.

The OSD superintendent must identify the schools selected for takeover by April 1st and must specify the intervention method most appropriate for each school by July 1. This information will be published on the website of the OSD.

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