

# Leadership Advisor Program Evaluation Report



2022

State Charter  
Schools Commission  
of Georgia



# About the Program

The Leadership Advisor Program (LAP) is a support service offered by the State Charter Schools Commission (SCSC) to leaders of state charter schools in Georgia. The program provides targeted mentoring and leadership development in areas of need specific to participating schools. State charter schools in Georgia not only execute an education model but also function as their own Local Education Agency (LEA). As such, state charter school leaders are responsible for managing the academic achievement and the operational compliance of the school; a responsibility typically managed at the district level in traditional school systems. To support their success in both areas, the SCSC contracts with content-area experts who have a wealth of knowledge and experience in school operations, leadership and educational policy. These individuals are referred to as "leader advisors". Given the relationship between strong school administrators and positive student outcomes,<sup>1</sup> it is critical that state charter school leaders are equipped with the skills and support they need to fulfill operational obligations while ensuring the success of the academic model.

Each leader advisor is partnered with one or more state charter school leaders for the entirety of the school year. At the start of the school year, the leader advisor and school leader work together to develop an individualized growth plan that builds upon the school leader's strengths, mitigates their weaknesses, and cultivates quality leadership practices to increase student achievement and improving operational efficiency.

Throughout the year, the leader advisor observes and assesses academic and operational practices and provides meaningful feedback to promote professional growth. At the conclusion of the school year, both the leader advisor and school leader reassess progress on the goals identified in the growth plan. **The LAP is successful when a school leader is better equipped with the knowledge and resources they need to sustain the ongoing work and carry out new goals related to increasing student achievement and maintaining operational efficiency.**

New schools (schools in their first year of operations or schools in their first year under authorization by the SCSC), schools with a new leader, and schools that have struggled to meet SCSC academic standards as outlined in the SCSC Comprehensive Performance Framework are eligible to participate in the LAP on an annual basis. For the purposes of the LAP, the term "school leader" may refer to an individual school leader (superintendent, principal, etc.) or member of the school leadership team, depending on the leadership model employed at the school. The LAP is flexible to varying leadership models and the needs of individual schools. All services provided by the LAP are covered by the SCSC and offered at no cost to the school.

# 2022 Cohort

The Leader Advisor Program (LAP) was first implemented in the 2017-2018 school year. Each year about 10-13 schools engage in the LAP. In the 2021-2022 school year, 12 state charter schools participated.<sup>2</sup> Two schools were in their first year of operations, five schools were in their second year of school operations, and the remaining five were in their second or subsequent year of operating. Ten of the schools are located in the metro-Atlanta area; the remaining two are located in the southwestern part of the State. They serve students across all grade bands, elementary, middle and high, and employ varying education models including, classical, cultural relevancy, foreign language immersion, service learning STEAM and STEM. In total, the 12 participating schools employed 365 teachers and enrolled over 3,600 students in the 2021-2022 school year.

**12 Schools**



**Over 3,500  
Students Impacted**



**365 Teachers**





# Methodology

For the purposes of the Leader Advisor Program (LAP) evaluation, the SCSC employs a goal-based approach. Four data sources are used to gather information to assess whether the program is fulfilling its goals.



## 01 Surveys

At the end of the school year, all participating school leaders are asked to complete a survey assessing their satisfaction with the LAP. The survey employs a Likert-type scale across eight statements. Generally, respondents are asked to rate each statement as either 5-Strongly Agree, 4- Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-Disagree or 1- Strongly Disagree. There are two open-ended questions that allow for more in-depth feedback. All responses are anonymous.

## 02 Activity Trackers

On a monthly basis, leader advisors submit activity trackers detailing work completed and the status of ongoing work to support their billable hours. The tracker includes the school name, the date work was conducted, work category,<sup>3</sup> task, the status of the task (planned, in progress, complete, removed), number of hours worked, hourly rate and the total amount owed.

### 03 Growth Plans

At the start of the school year, the leader advisor and school leader develop a *growth plan* outlining the main goals to be accomplished. At the conclusion of the school year, the leader advisor and school leader update the growth plan noting which goals were accomplished, which are in progress, and which still require significant attention.

## 04 Performance Data

Annually, the SCSC evaluates state charter school performance in the areas of academic achievement, financial viability and operational compliance through a tool called the Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF).<sup>4</sup> Participating schools' CPF scores before and after program participation will be reviewed. Other performance data is incorporated as needed.

# Logic Model

The Leadership Advisor Program (LAP) logic model is a road map that illustrates the relationships shared among the resources or inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes of the program.

## Inputs

- Funding, for program operations, payment to leader advisors
- Program Staff, to oversee program planning and implementation
- Partnerships, with SCSC schools and leader experts, participants' time and commitment



## Activities

- Recruit, personnel with specific expertise to act as leader advisors
- Collaborate, to create and work towards goals
- Observe, leadership practices and school operations
- Mentor, school leaders to grow professionally



## Outputs

- Number of participating schools
- Number of work, training and mentoring hours provided
- Amount of funds allocated toward each goal
- Number of school leaders satisfied with the program



## Outcomes

- Increased academic performance
- Improved operational compliance and efficiency
- A well-developed landscape of state charter school leaders that are better equipped to meet the needs of their school- student population, staff and faculty, taxpayers, and other stakeholders.

# Findings:

## Goal One

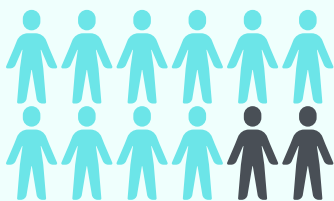


Provide support programming that state charter schools feel is needed and effective.



The SCSC Research and Evaluation team reviewed survey responses submitted by school leaders. A majority of school leaders that submitted responded that they either Agree or Strongly Agree that their leader advisor provided sound and valuable advice that, helped them define and implement a mission focused on school improvement, promoted practices to make higher academic achievement possible, enabled better use of data to inform school improvement and operational procedures, and resulted in better execution of operational practices to comply with the law, among other things.<sup>5</sup>

**80%** of school leaders reported that the Leader Advisor Program helped them better manage the unique demands inherent to leading a state charter school



Hear what school leaders had to say:

*"My LAP Advisor has encouraged me when I faced challenges throughout the year with both staffing, the board, parenting, and even student behavior. Her insight has provided guidance."*

*"There are many ways my LAP Advisor has assisted me, from short to long-range planning, as well as seeing the bigger picture of how to effectively affect organizational changes. It has been so useful and insightful."*

*"When I had several questions and concerns and didn't know who to turn to, my LAP provided valuable and constructive feedback. I have learned a lot over this past year."*

*"The support provided by my LAP Advisor is unique when compared to other resources I have at my disposal by being a person of experience with whom I can be completely transparent and receive full honest advice or just a listening ear. No other resource is available to assist me with this critical need."*

# Findings:

## Goal Two

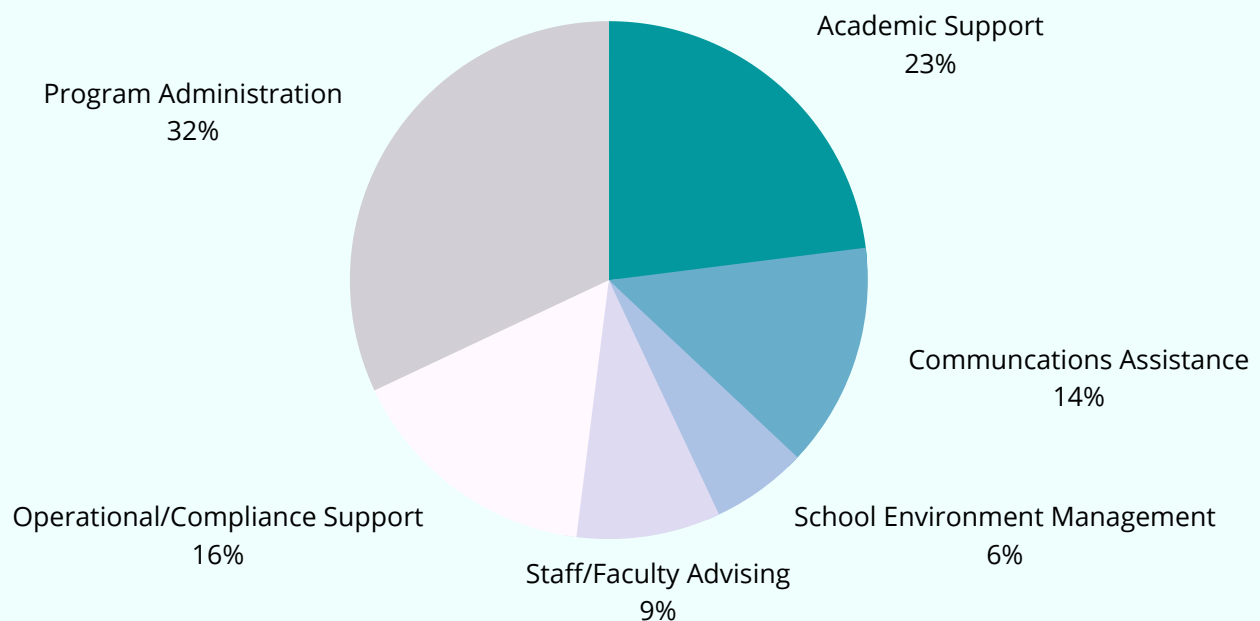


Steward state dollars responsibly by implementing a program that operates efficiently.



According to the Better Business Bureau's (BBB) Standards for Charity Accountability, at least 65% of an organization's total expenses, within a given fiscal year, should be spent directly on program services.<sup>6</sup> Thus, no more than 35% of a program's budget should be spent on overhead and administrative functions. Although the SCSC is a governmental organization, SCSC support programs, like charitable organizations, operate free of charge to participants and with the intent of helping those in need. As such, the SCSC uses the BBB standard as a benchmark for tracking program time and expenses. In the 2021-2022 school year, the SCSC expended just under \$110,550.00 in funds for LAP leader advisor duties. In turn, the leader advisors dedicated 1725 hours of their time and expertise. The pie chart below illustrates the percentage of funds expended per program support category. Leader advisors are paid an hourly rate; thus, the percent of time associated with each program area corresponds directly with the costs displayed in the pie chart. As such, 68% percent of advisors' time was spent on program tasks related directly to supporting school leaders while only 32% percent of their time was spent carrying out administrative functions.

68% of program costs go directly to supporting school leaders

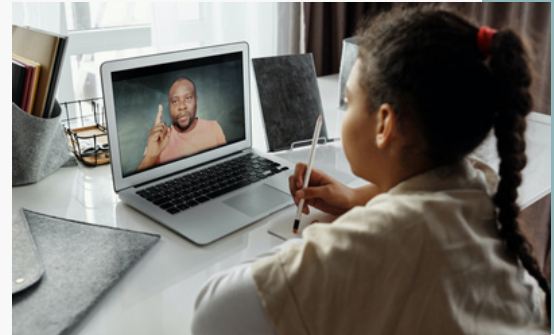


# Findings:

## Goal Three

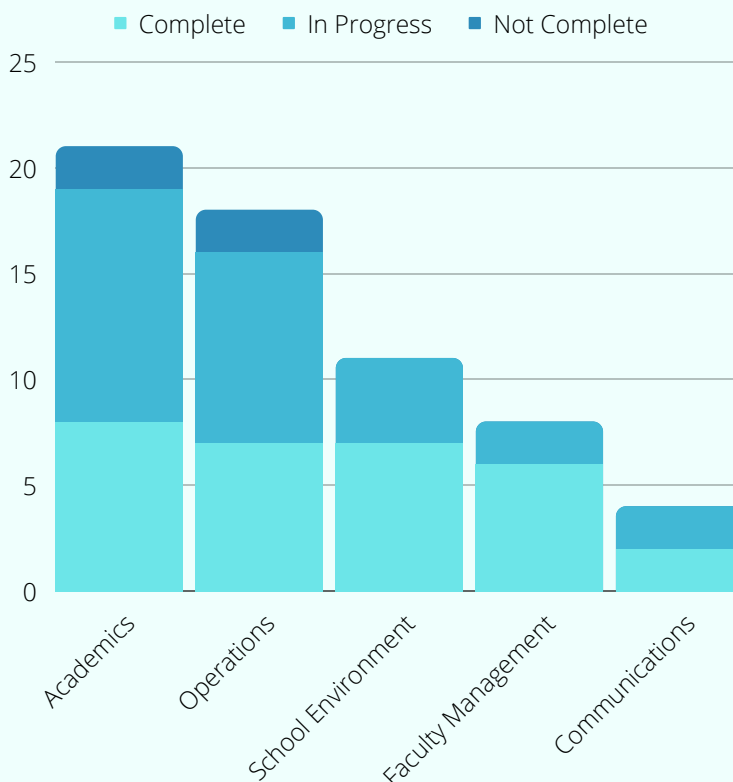


Cultivate quality leadership practices aimed at increasing student achievement and improving operational efficiency.



In alignment with program goals and as illustrated in the bar chart below, LAP schools developed goals primarily focused on academics and operations and had relative success in completing those goals within the school year.<sup>7</sup> However, more work can be done to move tasks from "In Progress" to "Complete."<sup>8</sup> SCSC Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF) data for the relevant (2021-2022) school year were not yet available when this report was published. However, ten of the 12 participating schools also engaged in the LAP services the previous (2020-2021) school year. Nine of those ten schools met academic standards, and six met operational standards in 2020-2021.<sup>9</sup> We expect the performance trend to continue and increase with the release of 2022 data.

### Year-End Goal Status by Category



**50%** of goals initiated at the start of the school year were completed by the end.



**90%** of schools that participated in the program for the past two years met academic standards in 2021.



**60%** of schools that participated in the program for the past two years met operational standards in 2021.





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# Recommendations and Next Steps

- Reengage with current leader advisors for the upcoming school year and recruit new educational experts to serve as leader advisors as needed
- Revise the End-of-Year Leader Survey and feedback process to better understand areas of need and increase response rates
- Identify opportunities to reduce the administrative burden on leader advisors
- Support school leaders and leader advisors in increasing the number of academic and operational goals that are "In Progress" to "Complete" by the end of the school year

## Final Thoughts

The findings indicate that the Leader Advisor Program (LAP) is fulfilling its goals and more schools are meeting SCSC academic and operational standards. Leader advisors are supporting state charter school leaders with the knowledge and resources they need to sustain ongoing work and carry out new goals related to increasing student achievement and maintaining operational efficiency. The SCSC will continue to collect data on leader satisfaction, areas of need, program operations and performance outcomes.

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# Thank you



Thank you to all state charter school leaders who commit their time to school improvement. The SCSC understands this work occurs year-round, beyond normal work hours. Georgia's students benefit from your dedication. Thank you to all the education experts that serve as leader advisors. SCSC schools are more successful because of your commitment.

## Contact Us:



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# End Notes

1. How Principals Affect Students and Schools: A Systematic Synthesis of Two Decades of Research. 2021. Jason A. Grissom, Anna J. Egalite and Constance A. Lindsay. The Wallace Foundation
2. Atlanta Unbound Academy, Atlanta SMART Academy, Brookhaven Innovation Academy, Delta STEAM Academy, Fulton Leadership Academy, Furlow Charter School, Georgia Fugees Academy, International Academy of Smyrna, International Charter Academy of Georgia, Northwest Classical Academy, Southwest Georgia STEM and Yi Hwang Academy for Language Excellence.
3. "Work Categories" are aligned to program growth objectives and tie back to the SCSC CPF. Specifically, the categories include, academics (mission, curriculum and instruction, modeling and data analysis), staff/faculty management (staff recruitment, staff support and staff retention), communications (internal and external), school environment (faculty culture and student environment) and all sections of CPF [academic, finances and operations] (compliance and resource use).
4. The SCSC's official accountability tool is the Comprehensive Performance Framework (CPF) which assesses school performance in three critical areas: academic, finances and operations.  
<https://scsc.georgia.gov/state-charter-school-performance/scsc-comprehensive-performance-framework>
5. Only five out of the 12 participating school leaders responded to the LAP End-of-Year Survey.
6. BBB Standards for Charity Accountability. <https://give.org/charity-landing-page/bbb-standards-for-charity-accountability>
7. Goals that were removed from the Growth Plan during the school year are not included in the analysis. Goals can be removed if both the school leader and leader advisor agree the goal is no longer necessary or feasible. Data reported incorrectly or submitted after the first draft of this report was released are also not included in this analysis.
8. Goals are considered "In Progress" when some but not all work was completed, any amount between 1-99%. Goals are considered "Complete" when they are 100% complete and "Not Complete" when 0% of related tasks were completed.
9. SCSC CPF results for the 2020-2021 school year are available on the SCSC website:  
<https://scsc.georgia.gov/state-charter-school-performance/scsc-comprehensive-performance-framework/2020-2021-state-charter>

