



GAE's Membership and Leadership –

As someone who has spent over 26 years in public education as a veteran teacher and school leader, it has been an honor to advocate on behalf of over 150,000 educators and 1.8 million students. Throughout my tenure as State School Superintendent, the Georgia Association of Educators – as well as other education groups in our state – has had a seat at the table and a meaningful part of the decision-making process. From crafting Georgia's ESSA plan to participating on the Assessment Innovation and Flexibility taskforce to working together to pass Senate Bill 364, reworking House Bill 338, and finally eliminating austerity cuts, I have demonstrated my commitment with working with all education stakeholders to move our public education in a positive direction.

I respect your organization but it was disappointing that an endorsement was made in the primary without all potential candidates for State School Superintendent first having the opportunity to express their positions and vision for public education in our state. Despite this, let me assure GAE that your organization and members will continue to have a seat at the table. I will continue to advocate for and work to strengthen the profession of all of our educators – including the tens of thousands who are members of GAE.

Since my first campaign for this office, I have kept my pledge to not accept special interest, out-of-state or PAC funds. Though this has led to me turning down thousands of dollars in potential campaign contributions, I feel it's been essential in not only being free as a leader to make the decisions that are in the best interest of our students and state, but also for organizations like yours to know – without any doubt – that our relationship is one based on mutual respect and common commitment to education, not a transaction.

No doubt, you'll receive a lot of campaign rhetoric from those who fill out your questionnaire but I offer something with even more substance – a clear record of results.

Together, our work has led to the largest decrease in high-stakes testing in our state's history, across-the-board performance increases for our schools, reforms to the teacher and leader evaluation systems, test scores that are trending upward, the highest graduation rate in our state's history, rising SAT and ACT scores, and expanded opportunities for our children – from fine arts, world language and coding to STEM/STEAM, career technical, and physical education.

Your leadership and membership is made up of educators who – like me – answered a calling to teach and to serve our kids. We've given and sacrificed because of our belief in public education. We know about crowded classes, multiple preps, hungry children, stress of high-stakes testing, attacks on our profession, and the challenges of teaching in a Title I school. My opponent lacks this critical experience.

Judge me by what we've accomplished together. Judge me by the experience I bring to the table. Judge me by my commitment to our teachers and kids.

Instead of working to earn your money, I seek to earn your vote.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Woods". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard Woods
State School Superintendent