**Partnership connecting at-risk students with Georgia employers joins forces with Georgia Department of Education**

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**August X, 2021 –** Great Promise Partnership (GPP), a successful nonprofit that helps at-risk Georgia students complete high school while earning a paycheck, has now joined forces with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). The new partnership means the nonprofit will dissolve and GPP will receive ongoing funding from GaDOE.

Established in 2012, GPP has a proven track record of pairing at-risk high school students with companies so students learn real-world job skills as they finish school, while employers develop their workforce. Students spend part of their day in the classroom and the other at a job location. The jobs are substantive entry-level positions with outcomes and evaluations. Students earn pay increases based on academic progress at school and job performance.

“We are very grateful to be a part of GaDOE,” said **Lori Heemann, State Coordinator of GPP.** “Now we have full access to funding, resources, and expertise that only the state can provide, which means fewer students will drop out and more employers will gain productive employees.”

In the 2019-2020 period, GPP placed more than 300 at-risk students in more than 20 counties statewide. Since the program’s inception, nearly 1,500 students have been employed.

Every high-school dropout costs the state of Georgia more than $200,000 in a lifetime, according to the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education. Based on this figure, GPP graduates saved the state more than $200 million from 2011 to 2020.

“The Great Promise program does so much for our at-risk high school students,” **State School Superintendent Richard Woods said.** “We are pleased the program is now under our umbrella and look forward to more great partnerships between students and Georgia employers.”

Some 97 percent of participating employers say the students they work with learn valuable skills, particularly in professionalism, communication, and work ethic.

“GPP is a great partnership for our local schools and Shaw Industries to better prepare the students to be thriving members of our communities,” said **Jeremy Jones, Plant T-1 Department Manager at Shaw Industries.** “It puts emphasis on the students finishing school before going into the workforce. Once they complete school through the GPP program they have tangible skills that will help them in their next steps.”

**About GPP**

Great Promise Partnership (GPP) is an initiative of the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) in the Office of Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE). GPP works to establish and grow partnerships in communities across the state that empower and equip at-risk students to complete high school while gaining real-world job skills and experience, creating a path to personal success and the workforce of the future*.* Engaging with GPP offers Georgia employers an opportunity to address the critical need of recruiting and developing the next generation of workforce talent. Learn more at <https://gppartnership.org>

**About GaDOE**

Led by State School Superintendent Richard Woods, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) is the state agency serving Georgia’s K-12 public school districts, schools, and students. GaDOE’s strategic plan emphasizes transforming the agency into one that provides meaningful support to schools and districts, with an emphasis on child-focused, classroom-centered education policy. GaDOE staff work to ensure that the 1.7 million students in Georgia’s public schools receive a holistic education that focuses on the whole child, and graduate ready to learn, ready to live, and ready to lead.