Opportunity School District

What is OSD?

Opportunity School District is a proposed constitutional amendment to create a statewide school district, Opportunity School District (OSD). This school district is similar to the city and county school districts that current manage public schools. This new school district will either manage the schools themselves, partner with local school districts to manage them, covert them into charter schools, or close them. The Governor will appoint a superintendent to manage the schools included in the OSD. This superintendent would report directly to the governor instead of the state education department.

Which schools are eligible?

Data from the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) data for the three previous consecutive school years will determine eligibility. Schools eligible for inclusion in OSD have scored below a 60 on the CCRPI. There are currently 119 schools that qualify.[1]

How would the identified schools be managed?

Schools in the OSD will be managed in one of the following ways:

- Direct management: The OSD superintendent directly runs the school reorganizing the staff which includes firing and hiring existing principals, teachers and staff.

- Shared governance: The OSD superintendent enters into a contract with the local school board to operate the school. The OSD determines the changes that must be made at the school.

- Charter: OSD works in collaboration with the State Charter School Commission (SCSC) to convert the school to a charter school by building capacity of the petitioning governing board and writing the charter school application.

- Closure: OSD may close a failing school not enrolled at full capacity and reassign the students to another high achieving school within the district depending on availability at other schools in the district.

How will OSD affect students and achievement?

Nearly 92 percent of students who would attend OSD eligible schools qualify for free or reduced priced school lunch. Additionally, 88 percent are black and 5 percent are Latino. These students have historically received inequitable opportunities resulting from financial, social, and educational issues. OSD legislation does not provide direct recommendations for longstanding issues like school funding allocations, insufficient resources, inadequate social service programming, and school zoning practices that maintain concentrations of poverty.

Families attending schools that have a long history of low academic achievement have historically had few opportunities for alternative education options. OSD provides these students and parents with an alternative option that has the potential to improve student achievement. OSD schools will have the flexibility to implement proven curriculum, school designs, and resources to support high poverty schools and minority students.

What about parents and the community?

OSD will place decision making authority for local school issues in the governor's office. This centralized governance approach will limit opportunities for parents and the community to participate in making decisions about how to address education issues. Additionally, OSD reduces opportunity for direct public accountability considering the local community will not vote for school board officials to govern local schools and oversee local education.

OSD will utilize the existing Georgia law regarding local school governing boards which require that half of members of the local school governing board consist of parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school. Therefore, parents and the community members of OSD schools will continue to be provided with the ability and opportunity to provide advice to the principal regarding school matters.

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[1] https://gov.georgia.gov/sites/gov.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/OSD-Eligible%20Schools%20Updated%2005032016.pdf

What are the pros and cons of Opportunity School District?

Opportunity School District		
	Pros	**Cons**
Funding	• OSD schools will operate utilizing the same per pupil expenditures available to the school prior to OSD. 3% of the funds from the per pupil expenditures will be retained for administrative operations of the school district.	• OSD superintendent will be responsible for the allocation of the school funding that is comprised of local, state and federal funds. • No additional funding is allocated for teacher development and resources for students in high poverty schools.
Governance & Control	• Governance for each school within the OSD will be determined individually, consisting of four options. Options include both OSD, local and charter management. • School level leaders and/or charter school governing boards will make decisions about school finance, human capital and curriculum and instruction.	• There will be centralized decision making at the state level for local schools. This limits local control of schools by local school governing boards, boards of education, or other elected officials. • The OSD Superintendent, not local parents will decide who will comprise the governing board at the schools. • Schools will remain under the control of the OSD for 5 years minimum.
Public vs Privatization	• Not all schools will be privately managed. Some will be managed by the OSD, others by the local school district, and others may be converted to charter schools and managed by charter management organizations.	• OSD schools that are managed by for-profit, education management organizations will result in a transfer of public funding to privately held corporations.
Educational Model	• Between 2011 and 2015 fewer Recover School District schools in New Orleans are in failing status (36% to 19%) and a larger percentage received a grade of A, B or C using the state's grading system (13% to 49%).[2]	• There is little clear evidence of improvements in academic achievement and outcomes • Evaluation of the third year of Tennessee's Achievement School District, found that overall, ASD schools did not gain more or less than other equally low performing schools that were not in the ASD.[3]

[2] http://lrsd.entest.org/2015%20RSD%20Annual%20Report.pdf

[3] http://www.tnconsortium.org/data/files/gallery/ContentGallery/ASD_Impact_Policy_Brief_Final_12.8.15.pdf