



2020 Direct Certification Memo

Governor's Office of Student Achievement

Nov. 2, 2020

Direct certification (DC) is used to measure poverty levels of students in Georgia.¹ Directly certified students include students living in a family unit receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food stamp benefits, students living in a family unit receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, and students identified as homeless, unaccompanied youth, foster or migrant. The DC rate for each district and school is calculated by dividing the number of directly certified students by the total school enrollment from the October Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) count. The analysis below includes a summary of 2020 DC rates for Georgia school districts and schools.

District Direct Certification Summary Statistics & Analysis

In general, the DC rates for school districts show a slight decrease from 2019 to 2020, with the mean rate falling by 1.6 percentage points.² As shown in Table 1 below, the lowest DC rate for a district fell by 0.9 percentage points, and the highest DC rate for a district fell by 1.1 percentage points. The average difference between 2019 and 2020 DC rates for each district is -1.5 percentage points, with the greatest decrease being Montgomery County (-5.9) and the greatest increase being Mitchell County (+15.0). Out of all 180 districts, 146 (81.1%) have a 2020 DC rate that is within three percentage points of the previous year.

Table 1: District Direct Certification Summary Statistics

	MEAN %	MEDIAN %	MIN %	MAX %
2020	37.4	37.4	5.0	81.0
2019	39.0	39.4	5.9	82.1
Difference	-1.6	-2.0	-0.9	-1.1

As shown in Figure 1 below, the distribution of district DC rates for 2019 and 2020 is very similar. The number of districts in the lowest two categories, with rates up to 20.0%, increased. The most common district DC rate in both years is between 40.1% and 50.0%. In both years, the only rate above 80.0% is Clay County. Table 2 below displays the top and bottom five districts for direct certification in 2020. Three of the bottom five districts are city districts. Notably, city districts have a mean DC rate of 29.4%, compared to a mean rate of 38.5% for county districts.

¹ GOSA used eligibility for free/reduced price lunch (FRL) as a measure of student poverty through 2015. Schools that qualify for the National School Lunch Program's Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) may provide FRL for all students and are no longer required to collect FRL parent or guardian applications reporting family income. Due to this provision, GOSA no longer considers FRL to be an accurate measure of student poverty.

² Although State Charter schools are considered individual school districts, they are excluded from the district analysis due to their small size compared to traditional school districts. State schools and Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) schools are also excluded due to their small populations and lack of comparability to traditional school districts. These schools are included in the school-level analysis below.



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Figure 1: Frequency of District Direct Certification Rates, 2019 and 2020

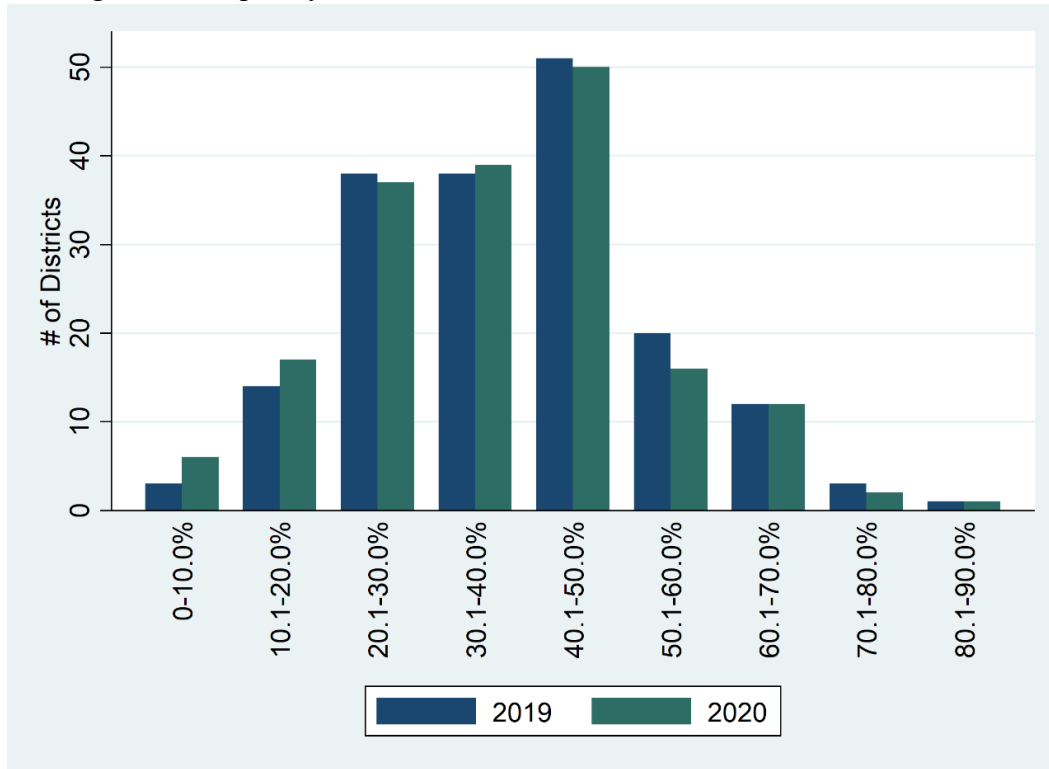


Table 2: Highest and Lowest Direct Certification Districts in FY2020

Five Highest Districts	DC %	Five Lowest Districts	DC %
Clay County	81.0	Forsyth County	5.0
Terrell County	74.0	Oconee County	7.1
Randolph County	71.6	City Schools of Decatur	7.6
Calhoun County	68.6	Chickamauga City	8.3
Mitchell County	68.0	Jefferson City	8.9

The five districts with the highest DC rates are all located in southwest Georgia. Figure 2 below, mapping 2020 district DC rates, shows there is a concentration of districts with high rates in that region of the state. All but three of the 15 districts with DC rates over 60% are in Southwest Georgia. There is a concentration of districts with lower DC rates in the suburban area to the north of Atlanta.

The five districts with the highest DC rates also all have student populations that are over 80% Black, indicating a link between regional and racial trends in DC rates.³ The 20 districts with the highest DC rates all have student populations that are over 50% Black, and all but two have student populations that are over 70% Black. Conversely, the five districts with the lowest DC

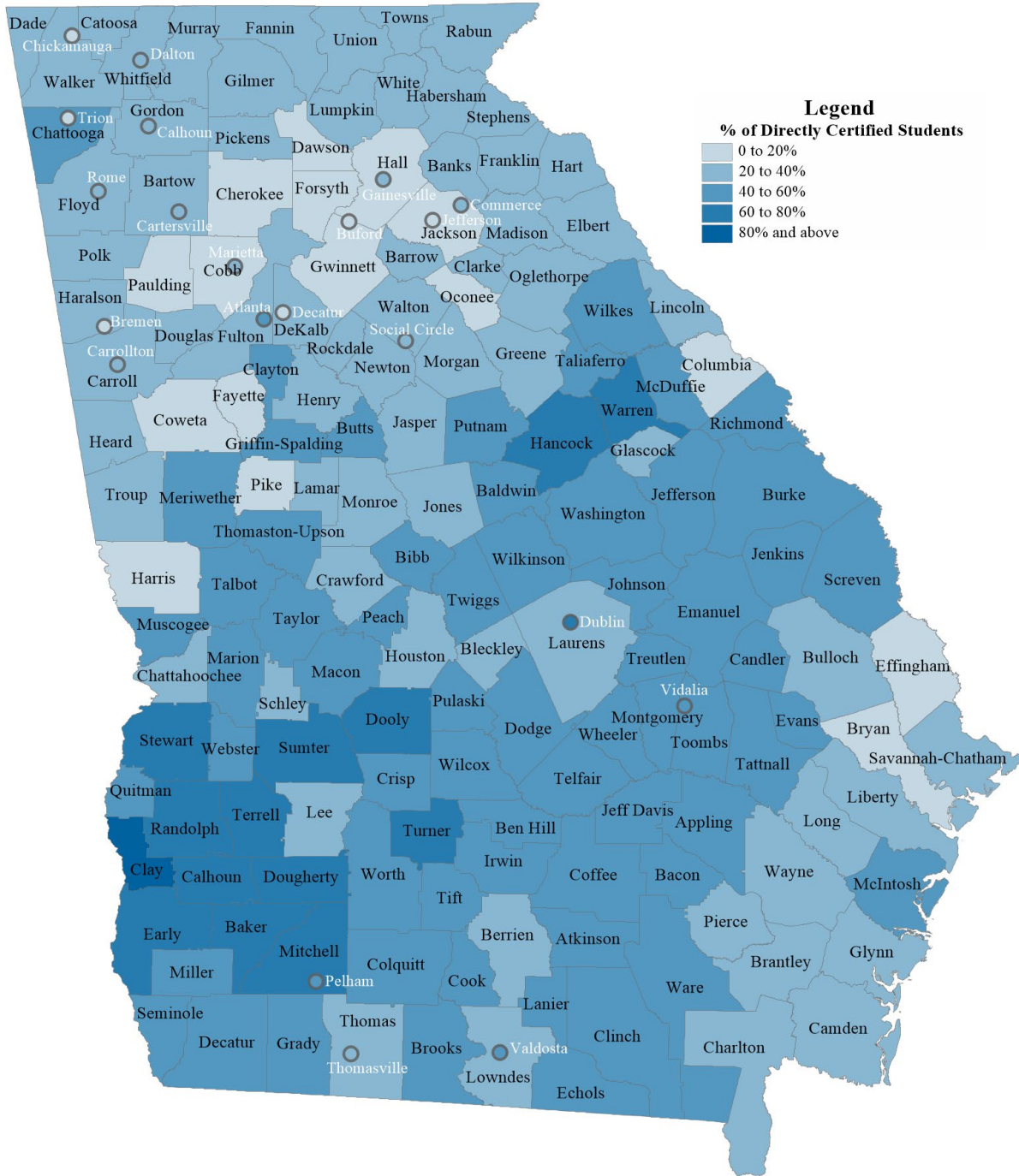
³ The 2019-2020 “Enrollment by Subgroup Programs” data was used for demographic analysis. This dataset is available from Georgia’s Academic and Workforce Analysis and Research Data System’s (GA-AWARDS) [downloadable data](#) and includes FTE enrollment counts for schools disaggregated by subgroups.



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rates all have student populations that are over 50% white. Sixteen of the 20 districts with the lowest DC rates have student populations that are over 50% white.

Figure 2: Map of 2020 District Direct Certification Rates⁴



⁴ City districts are labeled in white, while county districts are labeled in black.



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School Direct Certification Summary Statistics & Analysis

Similar to the trends in district DC rates, there is also a slight decrease in the school DC rate from 2019 to 2020, with the mean rate falling by 1.6 percentage points. As shown in Table 3 below, the lowest DC rate for a school rose by 0.3 percentage points, while the highest DC rate for a school remained at 100%. The average difference between 2019 and 2020 for each school is -1.5 percentage points, with the greatest decrease being Haralson County Rebel Academy (-55.1) and the greatest increase being KidsPeace (+62.2), a residential treatment center (RTC). At the school level, RTCs and Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities made up most of the top 10 decreases and increases from 2019 to 2020. These facilities typically have small student populations and high rates of student mobility, which explains the volatility in their data. Of the 2,270 schools with data available for both years, 1,554 (68.5%) have a 2020 direct certification percentage that is within three percentage points of the previous year.

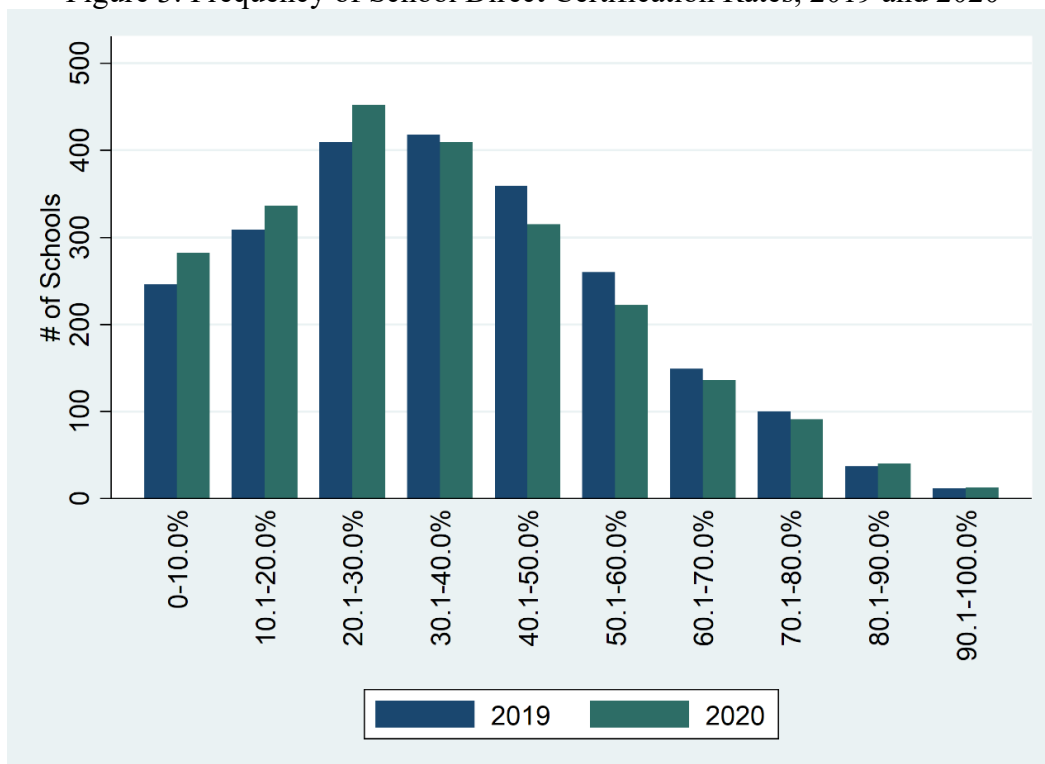
Table 3: School Direct Certification Summary Statistics

	MEAN %	MEDIAN %	MIN %	MAX %
2020	34.3	31.6	0.3	100.0
2019	35.9	33.8	0.0	100.0
Difference	-1.6	-2.2	+0.3	0.0

*Out of 2,299 observations in 2019 and 2,296 observations in 2020, 2,270 matched.

As shown in Figure 3 below, the distribution of district DC rates for 2019 and 2020 is very similar. Like the district trend, the number of schools in the lowest two categories, with rates up to 20.0%, increased.

Figure 3: Frequency of School Direct Certification Rates, 2019 and 2020





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Tables 4 and 5 show the schools with the lowest and highest DC rates, respectively. The 15 schools with the lowest DC rates are all in the metro Atlanta area. Ten of the 15 schools with the lowest DC rates have student populations that are over 50% white, and two have student populations that are over 50% Asian. The 12 schools with the highest DC rates are all RTCs; every school with a 100.0% DC rate is an RTC. The mean DC rate for RTCs is 93.1, compared to the overall mean rate of 34.3. Table 6 shows the 15 schools with the highest DC rates excluding RTCs. Of the schools in Table 6, all have student populations that are over 70% Black, and all but two have student populations that are over 90% Black.

Table 4: Fifteen Lowest Direct Certification Schools in FY2020

School	District	DC %
Austin Elementary School	DeKalb County	0.3
Mount Bethel Elementary School	Cobb County	0.3
Vanderlyn Elementary School	DeKalb County	0.4
Walton High School	Cobb County	0.8
Lambert High School	Forsyth County	0.9
Timber Ridge Elementary School	Cobb County	0.9
Birmingham Falls Elementary School	Fulton County	1.0
Piney Grove Middle School	Forsyth County	1.0
Crabapple Crossing Elementary School	Fulton County	1.1
Braelinn Elementary School	Fayette County	1.2
Daves Creek Elementary School	Forsyth County	1.2
Dodgen Middle School	Cobb County	1.2
South Forsyth High School	Forsyth County	1.2
Brookwood Elementary School	Forsyth County	1.2
Big Creek Elementary School	Forsyth County	1.2

Table 5: Fifteen Highest Direct Certification Schools in FY2020

School	District	DC %
Bradfield Center – Ault Academy	Troup County	100.0
Devereux Ackerman Academy	Cobb County	100.0
George W. Hartmann Center	Marietta City	100.0
Georgia Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries	Fulton County	100.0
Georgia Center for Youth	Taylor County	100.0
Hillside Conant School	Atlanta Public Schools	100.0
Morningstar Treatment Services, Inc. Youth Estates	Glynn County	100.0
Price Academy	Bibb County	100.0
UHS of Savannah Coastal Harbor Treatment Center	Savannah-Chatham County	100.0
Wellspring Living	Fulton County	100.0



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KidsPeace	Carroll County	98.3
Harpst Academy	Polk County	98.0
Thomasville Heights Elementary	Atlanta Public Schools	91.5
Dooly County Prep Academy	Dooly County	90.0
Ingram/Pye Elementary School	Bibb County	89.4

Table 6: Fifteen Highest Direct Certification Schools, Excluding Residential Treatment Centers, in FY2020

School	District	DC %
Thomasville Heights Elementary	Atlanta Public Schools	91.5
Dooly County Prep Academy	Dooly County	90.0
Ingram/Pye Elementary School	Bibb County	89.4
Morningside Elementary School	Dougherty County	89.1
Davis Elementary School	Muscogee County	88.4
Fox Elementary School	Muscogee County	87.1
Dorothy Heights Elementary School	Muscogee County	86.7
Dunbar Elementary School	Atlanta Public Schools	86.5
Gadsden Elementary School	Savannah-Chatham County	86.0
W.S. Hornsby Elementary School	Richmond County	86.0
Alice Coachman Elementary School	Dougherty County	86.0
Robert H. Harvey Elementary School	Dougherty County	85.9
Bruce Elementary School	Bibb County	85.3
Boyd Elementary School	Atlanta Public Schools	85.2
Williams Elementary School	Bibb County	84.4