



2015 Innovation Fund Annual Report

Prepared by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement
December 2015



Georgia's Innovation Fund
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Executive Summary

The Innovation Fund, administered through the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), invests in local education agencies (LEAs), to plan, implement, and scale innovative education programs that advance student achievement throughout Georgia. The Innovation Fund also operates the Innovation in Teaching Competition which recognizes and rewards Georgia’s most innovative K-12 teachers and makes their resources available to other educators.



In 2011, The Innovation Fund began as a \$19.4 million competitive grant competition created under Georgia’s Race to the Top (RT3) Plan. To continue the Innovation Fund’s work beyond RT3, Governor Deal appropriated state funding for Fiscal Years (FY) 2015 and 2016. In 2015, the Innovation Fund Foundation Inc., a nonprofit organization established under § O.C.G.A 20-14.26.1, also received tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) which allows the Innovation Fund Foundation, Inc. to seek contributions from philanthropic organizations and businesses as a continuing source of start-up capital for promising innovations.

Since its inception, the Innovation Fund has invested \$27,233,758.36 of state and federal funding through 54 grants to 39 LEAs, charter schools, postsecondary institutions, and nonprofit organizations to pilot innovative education programs, ranging in focus from teacher and leader induction and development to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) applied learning, blended learning, and birth to age eight language and literacy development. GOSA monitors and evaluates each grantee’s progress in order to determine best practices for developing highly effective teachers and leaders and ensuring that all students are college and career ready.

Since 2013, the Innovation Fund has also selected 32 Innovation in Teaching Competition winners. In partnership with Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB), GOSA has filmed the majority of the winners in their classrooms, and made these videos, along with each teacher’s unit plan and supplementary materials, available on GeorgiaStandards.org. This competition has also

provided \$224,000 directly to Georgia's teachers and schools, as each winner receives a stipend and his or her school receives a grant to support innovative instructional practices.

The 2015 Annual Report summarizes the FY16 grant application and review process, provides a snapshot of the FY16 winners, and analyzes the FY15 grantees' progress. In addition, the report provides an update on the Innovation in Teaching Competition, Innovation Fund partner initiatives, and the RT3 grantees' sustainability and successes.

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Fiscal Year 2016 Grants

Available Grants

GOSA offered the following types of grants during the FY16 funding cycle:

- **Planning grants**, in the amount of \$10,000, provide one year of funding (October 2015 to October 2016), to eligible organizations to plan a program aligned with one or more of the Innovation Fund priority areas.
- **Implementation grants**, ranging from \$200,000 to \$700,000, provide eligible organizations two years of funding (October 2015 to October 2017) to implement a program aligned with one or more of the Innovation Fund priority areas.
- **Scaling grants**, ranging from \$200,000 to \$700,000, provide eligible organizations two years of funding to scale an existing successful program aligned with one or more of the Innovation Fund priority areas. As part of the application, scaling grant applicants were required to provide evidence that the program they wanted to scale had previously generated positive student outcomes, and that, when replicated, the program would yield similar results. Applicants also had to demonstrate that the school(s) and/or district(s) identified as scaling partners had formally committed to replicating the program with fidelity.

Priority Areas

Applicants could apply for grant(s) aligned with one or more of the following priority areas:

- Applied Learning with a Focus on K-12 STEM Education,
- Birth to Age Eight Language and Literacy Development,
- Development and Replication of Blended Learning School Models, and
- Teacher and Leader Development for High-Need Schools.

Application Process

In June 2015, GOSA released details about the FY16 funding cycle – including the available grants, priority areas, comprehensive grant guidelines, scoring rubrics, and information about the Innovation Fund Technical Assistance Days – on GOSA’s website. GOSA also communicated this information directly to Georgia’s LEAs through an email to all district superintendents. In addition, GOSA emailed information to Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) directors, current and former Innovation Fund grantees, and organizations that had signed up to hear about Innovation Fund grant opportunities. GOSA also announced information about the Innovation Fund FY16 funding cycle during a breakout session at the 2015 Georgia Association of Education Leaders (GAEL) conference in Jekyll Island, GA.

Technical Assistance Days

To elevate the quality of grant proposals and ensure applicants had high-quality technical assistance during the application process, GOSA hosted optional Technical Assistance Days on July 8, 2015 in Forsyth, GA and July 9, 2015 in Atlanta, GA. Representatives from 37 school districts, 8 traditional public and charter schools, 5 RESAs, 8 postsecondary institutions, and 10 nonprofit organizations attended the Technical Assistance Days.

The Technical Assistance Days included breakout sessions on the Innovation Fund grant application and grant writing, as well as sessions led by priority area experts, including a blended learning expert from [The Learning Accelerator](#), teacher and leader development experts from [GLISI](#) and [American Institutes for Research](#), birth to age eight language and literacy experts from the [Get Georgia Reading Campaign](#), the Rollins Center, and [Charles R. Drew Charter School](#), and current and former applied learning Innovation Fund grantees. Following the Technical Assistance Days, GOSA made all of the Technical Assistance Day presentations and materials, as well as videos and materials from the 2015 Innovation Fund conference, available in the [Grant Application Toolbox](#).

Based on a survey administered after the Technical Assistance Days, respondents indicated that the Technical Assistance Days provided helpful and useful information for the Innovation Fund grant application process.¹ More specifically:

¹ 51.5% (n=53) of Technical Assistance Day attendees responded to the survey.

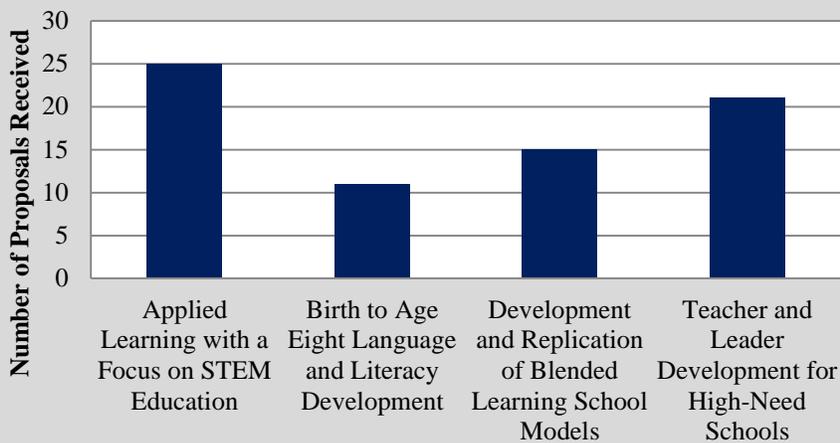
“The Innovation Fund [Technical Assistance Day] workshop format was effective because it allowed for discourse and peer discussion. I appreciated the opportunity to participate in collaborative analysis of past submitted grant applications.”

-Technical Assistance Day Attendee

- 98.1 % of attendees rated their overall experience as good (41.5%) or excellent (56.6%).
- 100% of attendees agreed (34%) or strongly agreed (66%) that the Technical Assistance Day provided helpful information about the grant application and expectations.
- 94.3% of attendees agreed (39.6%) or strongly agreed (54.7%) that, after the Technical Assistance Day, they could clearly determine if their grant proposal was aligned with one of the Innovation Fund priority areas.
- 92.5% of attendees agreed (32.1%) or strongly agreed (60.4%) that, after the Technical Assistance Day, they could clearly determine which type of grant to apply for.
- Attendees indicated that the information presented during the breakout sessions was of excellent quality (4.5 out of 5 point rating).
- Attendees indicated that they were highly likely to use the information presented during the breakout sessions while preparing their grant application (4.6 out of 5 point rating).

Immediately following the Technical Assistance Days, on July 10, 2015, GOSA opened the online application process. Applications were due September 3, 2015.

Figure 1. Number of Grant Applications Received by Priority Area



Applications Received

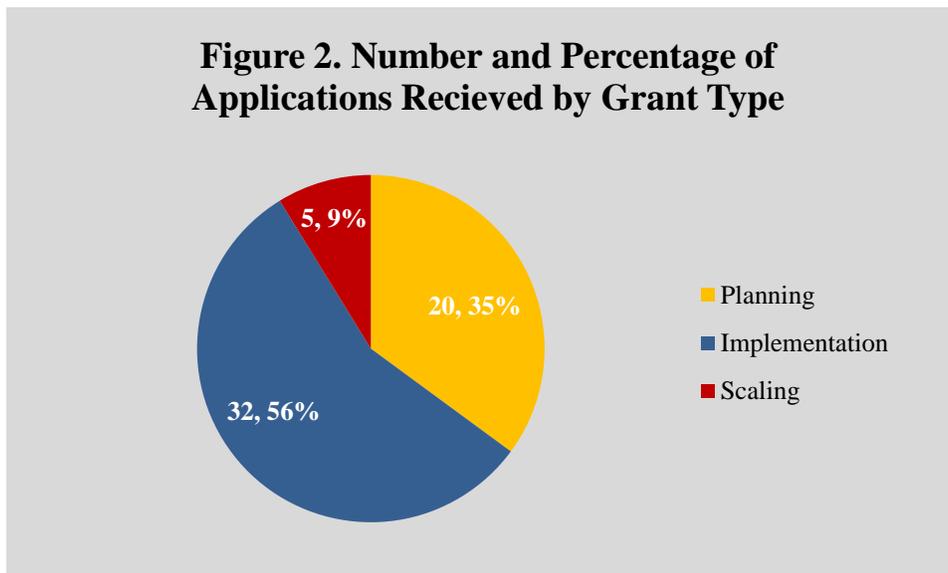
GOSA received 57 applications for a total funding request of \$24,806,202.26. As indicated in Figure 1, the greatest number of applications were aligned with the Applied Learning with a Focus on STEM Education priority area (n=25), followed by Teacher and Leader Development for High-

Need Schools (n=21), Development and Replication of Blended Learning School Models (n=15), and Birth to Age Eight Language and Literacy Development (n=11).²

GOSA received the most implementation grant applications (n = 32, 56%) for a total funding request of \$21,290,161.26, followed by planning grant applications (n = 20, 35%) for a total funding request of \$199,311.00, and scaling grant applications (n=5, 9%), for a total funding

² Several grant applications were aligned with more than one priority area.

request of \$3,316,730.00. Figure 2 shows the number and percentage of applications received by type of grant.



Review Process

A team of 28 reviewers – including GOSA and former Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) staff, priority area experts, and education nonprofit leaders – scored the proposals according to rubrics that had been provided to applicants during the application process. Prior to scoring the proposals, reviewers participated in a norming process where they read the Innovation Fund reviewer manual, viewed a webinar, and scored a practice grant application. If the reviewer’s practice grant proposal score was ten points below or ten points above the average score, GOSA communicated this information to the reviewer and provided them with examples of other proposals.

Two reviewers scored each grant proposal. The average of these two scores served as the applicant’s final score.

FY16 Grant Award Winners

On October 5, 2015, GOSA awarded 12 grants, totaling \$4,181,636.00, to 11 eligible organizations (10 LEAs and 1 charter school). GOSA awarded:

- Six planning grants totaling \$59,981.00,
- Four implementation grants totaling \$2,721,655.00, and
- Two scaling grants totaling \$1,400,000.00.

GOSA awarded the most grants and invested the most funding, \$2,041,637.00 in grants exclusively focused on Applied Learning with a Focus on STEM Education. Figures 3 and 4 show the funding amount by priority area, and the number and percentage of grants awarded by priority area, respectively.

Figure 3. Funding Amount by Priority Area

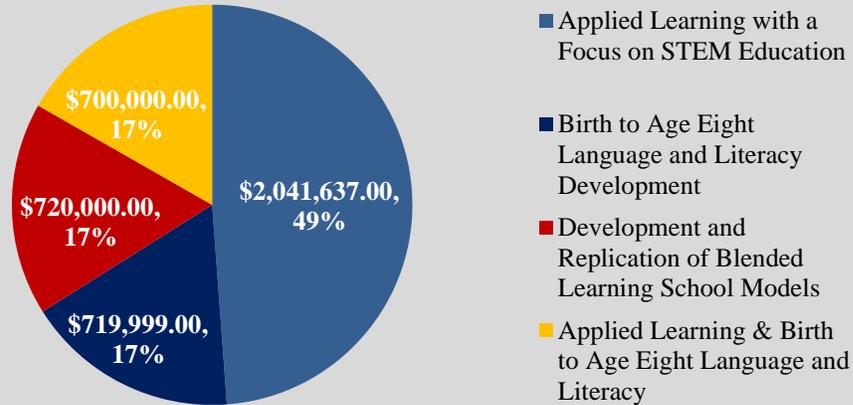
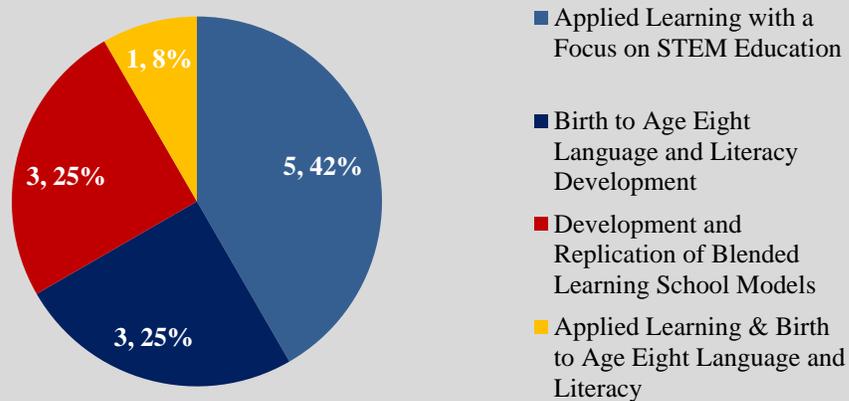


Figure 4. Number and Percentage of Grants Awarded by Priority Area



FY16 Grant Descriptions

Information about each FY 16 grantee, including: (a) the project name, description, and award amount, (b) the priority area(s) addressed, and (c) the geographic area(s) and/or school district(s) the grant will serve is provided below.

Planning Grants

<i>Organization</i>	Baldwin County Schools
<i>Project Name</i>	Read Baldwin County (RBC)
<i>Priority Area(s) Addressed</i>	Birth to Age Eight Language and Literacy Development
<i>Area(s) Served</i>	Baldwin County
<i>Amount Funded</i>	\$9,999.00
<i>Description of Project</i>	Baldwin County Schools will explore potential community partnerships, research early literacy best practices, and compile a resource library in order to plan and pilot language and literacy programs for three age ranges (birth to three, three to five, and five to eight).

<i>Organization</i>	Decatur County Schools
<i>Project Name</i>	Building Personalized Learning Communities in Decatur County
<i>Priority Area(s) Addressed</i>	Development and Replication of Blended Learning School Models
<i>Area(s) Served</i>	Decatur County
<i>Amount Funded</i>	\$10,000.00
<i>Description of Project</i>	Decatur County Schools, in partnership with the Teaching Institute for Excellence in STEM (TIES) and other community partners, will plan a blended learning program for 5 th to 12 th grade students in Decatur County.

<i>Organization</i>	Forsyth County Schools
<i>Project Name</i>	Let's Get Personal: Meeting Learners Where They Are
<i>Priority Area(s) Addressed</i>	Development and Replication of Blended Learning School Models
<i>Area(s) Served</i>	Forsyth County
<i>Amount Funded</i>	\$10,000.00
<i>Description of Project</i>	Forsyth County Schools will research and create an implementation plan for a blended/personalized learning program, including a strategic budget, a comprehensive communication plan, a selection process for the program's teachers and leaders, and a professional development plan for selected staff.

<i>Organization</i>	Rome City Schools – Elm Street Elementary
<i>Project Name</i>	STEM in 3D – Dream, Design, DO!
<i>Priority Area(s) Addressed</i>	Applied Learning with a Focus on STEM Education
<i>Area(s) Served</i>	Rome
<i>Amount Funded</i>	\$9,982.00
<i>Description of Project</i>	Rome City School's Elm Street Elementary will plan and pilot integrated STEM applied learning units that incorporate 3D printing.

<i>Organization</i>	Rome City Schools – North Heights Elementary
<i>Project Name</i>	Growing Up Green
<i>Priority Area(s) Addressed</i>	Applied Learning with a Focus on STEM Education
<i>Area(s) Served</i>	Rome
<i>Amount Funded</i>	\$10,000.00
<i>Description of Project</i>	Rome City School's North Heights Elementary will address the community problem of living in a food desert by planning and piloting STEM-focused, project-based learning units that incorporate a school-based garden and greenhouse.

<i>Organization</i>	Whitfield County Schools
<i>Project Name</i>	Beyond the Classroom
<i>Priority Area(s) Addressed</i>	Birth to Age Eight Language and Literacy Development
<i>Area(s) Served</i>	Whitfield County
<i>Amount Funded</i>	\$10,000.00
<i>Description of Project</i>	Whitfield County Schools, in partnership with community agencies, will research, design, and pilot a literacy program that integrates Learning Academies and Power Lunches for high-need children and their families.

<i>Organization</i>	Carroll County School System
<i>Project Name</i>	Step into STEM
<i>Priority Area(s) Addressed</i>	Applied Learning with a Focus on STEM Education
<i>Area(s) Served</i>	Carroll County
<i>Amount Funded</i>	\$700,000.00
<i>Description of Project</i>	Carroll County School System, in partnership with local industries, will implement Step Into STEM (SiS), a program targeting 15-year-olds from Villa Rica High School who are statistically at the highest risk of dropping out of school. SiS will provide these students with integrated STEM curricula, academic and soft skills supports, and field experiences with the county's leading employers, including Southwire, Tanner Health Systems, Sugar Foods, Carroll Electric Membership Cooperative, and Carroll County Water Authority.

<i>Organization</i>	Charles R. Drew Charter School
<i>Project Name</i>	21 st Century Literacy in the Making (21CLM)
<i>Priority Area(s) Addressed</i>	Applied Learning with a Focus on STEM Education, Birth to Age Eight Language and Literacy Development
<i>Area(s) Served</i>	Atlanta
<i>Amount Funded</i>	\$700,000.00
<i>Description of Project</i>	Charles R. Drew Charter School's 21 st Century Literacy in the Making (21CLM) aims to eliminate summer learning loss, increase teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, support more rigorous and creative project-based learning, and accelerate students' 21 st Century skill development. 21CLM will accomplish these objectives through a Literacy in the Making full-day summer program for targeted rising first through third graders and STEM Makerspace initiatives.

<i>Organization</i>	Lowndes County Schools
<i>Project Name</i>	BLAST – Boosting Learning Through Authentic STEM Teaching
<i>Priority Area(s) Addressed</i>	Applied Learning with a Focus on STEM Education
<i>Area(s) Served</i>	Lowndes County
<i>Amount Funded</i>	\$700,000.00
<i>Description of Project</i>	Lowndes County School’s BLAST program will target teachers and seventh grade non-traditional students at Pine Grove Middle School (PGMS) in Valdosta, GA. During the grant, PGMS will develop hands-on, bioscience-focused STEM units, provide students with onsite and offsite applied learning opportunities – including outdoor classrooms and learning labs – and provide teacher development and support.

<i>Organization</i>	Morgan County Charter School System
<i>Project Name</i>	STEAM N-RG (Network-Resources for Georgia)
<i>Priority Area(s) Addressed</i>	Applied Learning with a Focus on STEM Education
<i>Area(s) Served</i>	Morgan County
<i>Amount Funded</i>	\$621,655.00
<i>Description of Project</i>	Morgan County Charter School System’s STEAM N-RG will leverage a network of diverse partners to develop a K-9 district STEAM program with an energy theme. STEAM N-RG will connect teachers to one another and to professional development, connect schools to community partners, and connect students’ learning to the real-world applications of energy.

Scaling Grants

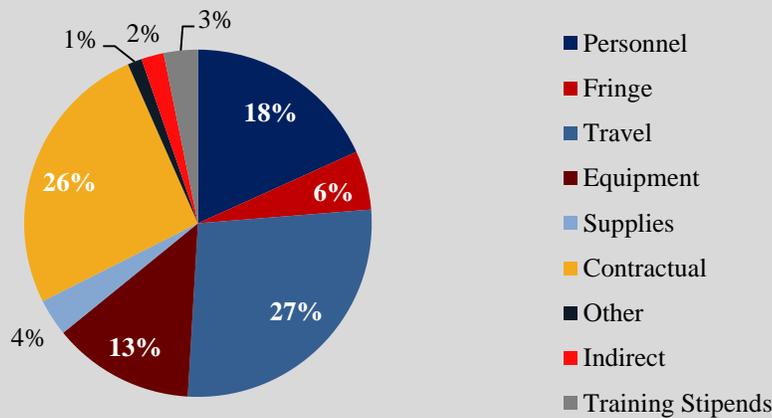
<i>Organization</i>	Atlanta Public Schools
<i>Project Name</i>	Read Right from the Start
<i>Priority Area(s) Addressed</i>	Birth to Age Eight Language and Literacy Development
<i>Area(s) Served</i>	Atlanta
<i>Amount Funded</i>	\$700,000.00
<i>Description of Project</i>	Atlanta Public Schools, in partnership with Atlanta Speech School’s Rollins Center for Language and Literacy and Westside Atlanta Charter School, will scale Read Right from the Start, an intensive language-and- literacy-focused professional development program, to eight elementary schools in the Douglass High School Cluster.

<i>Organization</i>	Bibb County Schools –Westside High School
<i>Project Name</i>	Westside Flexible High School and Modular Scheduling for Personalized Learning
<i>Priority Area(s) Addressed</i>	Development and Replication of Blended Learning School Models
<i>Area(s) Served</i>	Bibb County Schools
<i>Amount Funded</i>	\$700,000.00
<i>Description of Project</i>	Westside High School, in partnership with Bibb County School District’s Hutchings College and Career Academy, Central Georgia Technical College, Mercer University, Middle Georgia Center for Academic Excellence, and other community partners, will incorporate its existing Twilight School model into the school’s master schedule – providing students personalized learning, differentiated instruction, and additional opportunities to prepare for college and career experiences.

Fiscal Year 2015 Grants: Progress and Early Successes

In Fiscal Year 2015, GOSA awarded 19 grants – 10 planning grants, 4 implementation grants, and 5 scaling grants. Planning grantees report on their progress through quarterly reports and biannual planning grant updates.³ Implementation and scaling grantees report on their progress and outcomes through quarterly reports and biannual evaluation reports.⁴ In addition, GOSA conducted site visits for all implementation and scaling grantees in fall 2015. The below sections highlight FY 15 grantees’ progress, early successes, and outcomes.

Figure 5. Planning Grant Expenditures by Budget Category



Planning Grantees

Since December 5, 2014 – the grant award date – the [ten planning grantees](#) have used their grant funding, often in combination with district funds, to strategically plan blended learning and STEM-focused applied learning programs.

Specifically, 27% of funding supported travel and registration costs for site visits and conferences, 26% of funding supported contractual expenses for teacher professional development, and 17% supported equipment and supplies for small program pilots and teacher professional development activities. Figure 5 shows the distribution of planning grant expenditures by budget category.⁵

During the planning grant period, grantees visited 28 local and national applied learning and blended learning programs to research best practices and lessons learned. For example, **Georgia State University**, in partnership with **Atlanta Public School’s M. Agnes Jones Elementary School**, and **Mercer University** visited several of Georgia’s STEM-certified schools, including the Marietta Center for Advanced Mathematics, Rockdale Magnet School for Science and

³ Planning grantees submitted their first planning grant updates on June 30, 2015. These updates focused on activities from December 15, 2014, the grant award date, through June 2015.

⁴ Implementation and scaling grantees submitted their first evaluation reports on August 31, 2015. These reports covered activities and outcomes from December 15, 2014, the grant award date, through August 2015.

⁵ Table 5 analyzes expenditures reimbursed by GOSA as of November 2015. Planning grantees have until December 15, 2015 to obligate their remaining grant funds and will submit their final expense reports by January 31, 2016.

Technology, Henderson Mill Elementary School, Carrollton Elementary School, Hightower Elementary School, and Brookwood Elementary School to observe rigorous and integrated STEM instruction. Similarly, several blended learning grantees visited Impact Academy and Locust Gove Middle School in Henry County – two of Georgia’s blended learning programs. **Paulding County Schools** expanded their research beyond the state by visiting several of Colorado’s blended learning programs, including the Aurora Online High School.

Grantees also utilized funds for contractual expenses to support high-quality professional development. For example, **Tift County Schools** contracted with experts from the [Clayton Christensen Institute](#) to train teachers on blended learning models. Similarly, **Paulding County Schools** contracted with the [Florida Virtual School](#) to train teachers and district staff on blended learning best practices, including digital leadership, recruiting and hiring, and instructional models.

Other grantees purchased equipment and supplies to support miniature program pilots. For example, **Jackson County Schools** utilized both planning grant and district funding for a competitive grant opportunity for teachers. Interested teachers submitted proposals outlining their plans to transform their current classrooms into blended learning classrooms through technology integration, space, and changes in instructional methods. The district selected 18 winners and provided each teacher a mini-grant, between \$5,000 and \$8,000, to implement his/her blended learning plan. The district then hosted a blended learning bus tour for other teachers to visit the model classrooms.

Throughout the grant period, planning grantees have strategically used a combination of planning grant and district funds to research, explore, and plan for the implementation of applied learning and blended learning programs. Based on planning grant updates, these efforts have paid off – 100% of grantees indicate they are highly likely (n =8) or likely (n=2) to implement their programs after the grant ends.

The Paulding Virtual Academy will address several goals in the District strategic plan and the importance of the initiative has been recognized by the Paulding County School District Leadership Team. Work is already being done to publicize the program throughout the District with students and parents. Initial interest in the program has been very high and we believe that this is going to be an exciting new option for success for many high school students in our District.

- *Paulding County, FY 2015
Planning Grantee*

Implementation and Scaling Grantees

In FY 2015, GOSA awarded [four implementation grants](#) ranging from \$549,584.00 to \$1,247,457.64.⁶ Two grants – Bishop Hall Charter School Blended Learning Model for At Risk Students and Fulton County Schools Teach to One (TTO): Math – focused on blended learning, two other grants– Gwinnett County Public Schools Transforming STEM Through Teacher and Leader Development and Hall County Schools/Technical College System of Georgia Career Pathways for At Risk Students –focused on STEM applied learning.



GOSA also awarded [five \\$200,000 scaling grants](#) – Georgia Southern University Real STEM Scale Up, Gwinnett County Public Schools STEP Academy, Replication of Tift County Schools Mechatronics Program to a College and Career Academy, Georgia Tech Research Institute Project ENG2AGES, and Community Guilds STE(A)M Truck – all focused on STEM applied learning.

Since grantees received funding midway through the 2014-15 school year (December 2014), most grantees spent the first portion of the grant period training teachers and leaders, recruiting students, collecting baseline data, and implementing small pilots in preparation for full program implementation during the 2015-16 school year. Due to this timing, grantees are still in the beginning stages of implementation and have not yet reported on student achievement outcomes. The below sections highlight qualitative data from activities that occurred during the initial phases of the grant, as well as quantitative data, where applicable.⁷ Throughout the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years, each grantee will continue to evaluate their progress and collect student achievement data to determine their program's impact.

⁶ Three grants were awarded in December 2014, and one grant was awarded in July 2015.

⁷ Findings include qualitative and quantitative data from the grantee End of Year Reports submitted on August 31, 2015, as well as data collected from the fall 2015 GOSA site visits.



Exposure to Real World Experiences and Hands-on Learning

The applied learning grantees have demonstrated success through the breadth of authentic learning activities they have provided for students since December 2014. These experiences have allowed students to apply STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) classroom content to real-world situations and have provided students heightened levels of academic rigor. For example:

Female students from Benjamin E. Mays High School and KIPP Atlanta Collegiate participated in **Georgia Tech Research Institute's Project Eng2ages** scaling grant. As part of this program, students held six-week summer internships at local industries, including Coca Cola Enterprises, the Technology Association of Georgia, and BK International Education Consultancy. In addition to these internships, students participated in a rigorous biology and engineering summer boot camp and worked in lab placements directly with Georgia Tech researchers, which will continue throughout the 2015-16 school year. These lab placements include a project focused on prototyping new functionality for the United States Army's Family Advocacy System of Records (FASOR information system) which collects and stores medical data, and another project, for the Institute of People and Technology, focused on developing self-harm and self-injury assessments that take into account an individual's online activities. To support their work in the lab, students also took massively open online courses (MOOCs) through Stanford and the University of Washington focused on Computer Science and Scientific Computing, respectively, as well as a course on JavaScript for Web Designers.



Two-hundred and nineteen (219) third, fourth, fifth, and eighth graders from four Title I Metro-Atlanta area schools – Burgess-Peterson Academy, International Community School, KIPP Ways Academy, and The Kindezi School –participated in the **Community Guild’s STE(A)M Truck Program** during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years. During the program, students solved authentic problems with the help of community artists, STEM designers, and maker mentors. For example, Kindezi fifth graders learned about circuits and basic electronics by deconstructing old printers and then using these parts to design and build grade-level aligned arcade games that teach participants about math concepts such as volume and measurement. KIPP Ways Academy eighth graders tackled global warming by creating renewable energy machines, such as solar-

powered Bluetooth speakers and a blender completely powered by students riding a reconstructed bicycle.

To measure student gains from STE(A)M Truck participation, staff members observe students throughout the program and complete pre- and post-survey assessments of each student’s non-cognitive skills (optimism, grit, curiosity, collaboration, gratitude, self-control, and creativity) and applied STEM skills (measurement, design-thinking and process, and use of STEM tools). Based on these assessments, 96% of school year 2014-15 student participants showed improvements in non-cognitive skills, and 88% of school year 2014-15 student participants showed improvements in applied STEM skills.⁸

⁸ Community Guilds STE(A)M Truck, End of Year Report, August 2015

As part of **Hall County and the Technical College System of Georgia's Career Pathways for At-Risk Students** project, 12 Lanier Career Academy students completed a summer welding program, focused on Gas Metal Arc welding, led by Lanier Technical College instructors and local industry supporters. At the end of the program, students earned credentials in skills utilized by local industries, including an American Welding Certification, an Industrial Fork Truck Operator's Certificate, an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 10 Safety Certificate, and a CPR/First Aid certification.

Rigorous and Relevant Teacher and Leader Professional Development

During the 2014-15 school year and summer 2015, grantees provided teachers rigorous and relevant professional development designed to prepare teachers and leaders to implement blended and applied learning programs during the 2015-16 school year. For example:

Fulton County Schools' Bear Creek Middle School (BCMS), in partnership with [New Classrooms](#), strategically led math teachers through a variety of professional development opportunities to prepare them to implement the Teach to One (TTO) blended learning model. First, New Classrooms trained both the school's principal and mathematics director on the TTO model. Following that training, teachers participated in a 10-day simulation of TTO with 83 students. The purpose of this simulation was to introduce teachers to the various TTO modalities – independent practice, teacher-led instruction, virtual instruction, and collaborative groups. Following this simulation, teachers attended 15 hours of summer training designed to further explore the TTO modalities and foster teacher collaboration. Teachers were also able to visit TTO classrooms in Charlotte, NC and Chicago, IL to observe the model and ask questions. BCMS teachers continue to participate in weekly professional development during the 2015-16 school year.

Twenty-seven (27) leaders and 137 teachers participating in **Gwinnett County Public Schools' (GCPS) Transforming STEM Education through Teacher and Leader Development** program received training on STEM Project-Based Learning (PBL) instruction during summer 2015. The [Buck Institute for Education](#), a nonprofit leader in PBL, delivered a four-day intensive workshop where teachers learned about the fundamental components of PBL instruction and how to design, assess, and manage rigorous, relevant, and standards-based projects. Teachers then applied this knowledge by working in small groups to develop PBL units for implementation during the school year. Leaders from the participating schools also attended

“If I were to describe the STE(A)M Truck to a younger kid, I would probably tell them that . . . they are going to have lots of fun. They’re going to learn to just be with other kids . . . it won’t be boring. You’ll learn in a way that you’ve never learned before.”

- 5th Grade STE(A)M Truck Participant

a Leadership Series, led by GCPS, focused on guiding building level principals in developing a clear vision for STEM and PBL instruction at their schools.

Based on survey data, teacher and leader participants were satisfied with these workshops – 87% of teachers and 96% of leaders rated the workshops as above average or excellent. More importantly, survey data indicate that, as a result of the workshop, teachers felt they could more effectively design a problem-based learning activity focused on a challenging problem or question and could better use project-based activities to increase academic rigor in their classrooms.⁹ Leaders felt that, as a result of the workshop, they could more effectively describe how STEM PBL can increase student achievement and were better equipped to support STEM and PBL instruction at their schools.¹⁰

“I will use the concepts I learned [during the summer Project-Based Learning Workshop] to develop a strong sense of community in my classroom, where students feel safe to fail, revise, and try again. I will use project-based learning projects to engage my students in relevant learning.”

- *Gwinnett County Public Schools grant teacher participant*

Teacher participants in the **Georgia Southern Real STEM** program attended a week-long summer workshop focused on the Real STEM model, problem and place-based learning, partnership development, and a variety of STEM skills including computational thinking and the engineering and design process. Following the training, teachers received a Real STEM handbook to guide course implementation during the 2015-16 school year. Real STEM also offered teachers follow-up webinars on different topics covered during the summer workshop, such as authentic teaching pedagogy and complex systems reasoning.

Going Blended: Student Control over Time, Place, and Path

Blended learning combines online and in-school learning through three key components:

- Online learning, in which students have control over “time, place, path, and/or pace,”
- On-site learning at a supervised brick-and-mortar location, and
- Subject-area content connected between online and in-school learning.¹¹

Both **Thomas County Schools’ Bishop Hall Charter High School (BCHS)** and **Fulton County Schools’ Bear Creek Middle School**, the FY 15 blended learning grantees, have fully implemented programs aligned with the above definition of blended learning.

⁹ Sage Fox Consulting Group, *Transforming STEM through Leader and Teacher Development, STEM PBL Workshop*, June 2015.

¹⁰ Sage Fox Consulting Group, *Transforming STEM through Leader and Teacher Development, Leadership Session I*, July 2015.

¹¹ [Blended Learning. Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation.](#)



“What I like best about [Bishop Hall Charter High School] is that you do not have to wait on the rest of your class in order to complete your work. When you get all of your work done, [you can] take the final test, and from there move onto the next grade level.”

- *Bishop Hall Charter High School Student*

Thomas County Schools’ Bishop Hall Charter High School serves nontraditional students who face many personal and academic challenges. To meet their students’ needs, BHCS has implemented an enriched virtual model of blended learning where students take both online courses, often adapted from the Georgia Virtual School and led by BHCS teachers, and in-person courses at the BHCS campus. This model allows students to customize their schedules, learn both on and off campus, and move at their own pace – allowing them control over the time, place, and path of their learning. Based on a survey administered by the program’s evaluator in April 2015, 74% of surveyed BHCS students agreed or strongly agreed that this flexible learning environment allows them to be a better student.¹²

This model also allows students to dually-enroll, participate in work-based learning experiences and community service projects, and receive additional social, emotional, and academic support, without those activities interfering with their school schedules. From January to May 2015, 34 students were dually-enrolled at Southern Regional Technical College, 12 students participated in Workforce Investment Act (WIA) work-based experiences, and 63 BHCS students provided over 1,402 hours of community service.¹³

Fulton County Schools’ Bear Creek Middle School, in partnership with New Classrooms, has implemented the TTO model for math. TTO uses a station-rotation model where students work through an individualized “playlist” of assignments, determined by student data from the previous day. Students rotate through a variety of modalities, or stations, including direct teacher-led instruction, teacher- or tutor-supported online learning, individual online learning,

¹² Thomas County Schools, End of Year Report, August 2015.

¹³ Ibid

2015-16 Innovation in Teaching Competition Winners

Farhat Ahmad

Ninth-tenth grades, World, Multicultural and American Literature
McClarín Success Academy
Fulton County Schools
Blended Learning

Courtney Bryant

Second grade, Engineering
Charles R. Drew Charter School
Atlanta Public Schools
STEAM Applied Learning

Danielle LeePow

Fifth grade, Science
KIPP South Fulton Academy
Fulton County Schools
Blended Learning

Stuart Ogburn

Fourth grade, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies
Norton Park Elementary School
Cobb County School District
STEAM Applied Learning

Tom White

Ninth-12th grades, Audio Video Technology and Film
Rockdale Career Academy
Rockdale County Public Schools
Innovative Practices to Close the Achievement Gap

collaborative learning, independent practice, and task sessions where students apply their knowledge to real-world situations. This model allows for students to learn both online and with teacher support at their own pace.

Both schools began full program implementation this school year. Throughout the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years, these programs will continue to evaluate their progress and collect student achievement data to determine how blended learning impacts student achievement.

Innovation in Teaching Competition

On November 20, 2015, Gov. Deal announced the school year 2015-16 Innovation in Teaching Competition winners. This year's competition rewarded teachers focused on the following priority areas: Applied learning with a Focus on STE(A)M Education, Blended Learning, Language and Literacy, and Innovative Practices to Close the Achievement Gap.

In addition, educators from around the state and nation have accessed the former RT3 winners' materials and unit plans on both GeorgiaStandards.org and iTunes U. Since August 2014, 9,899 individuals have visited the GeorgiaStandards.org site, and since November 2014, 1,560 individuals have visited the iTunes U site.

Several previous Innovation in Teaching Competition winners have also received state and national recognition. Michelle Davis, a 3rd grade teacher at Camden County's Kingsland Elementary School and Dr. Brian Swanagan, an 11th and 12th grade mathematics teacher at the Floyd County College and Career Academy both made the [Honor Roll for the 2015 TNTP Fishman Prize](#). Bynikini Frazier, a first grade teacher at Hodge Elementary, was selected as the 2014 Savannah Chatham County Public School System's teacher of the year and as one of the [University of Georgia's Class of 2014 40 under 40](#). Tori Sinco, a fifth grade teacher at Cherokee County's Avery

Elementary School, received the Atlanta Falcon's [Symetra Heroes in the Classroom award](#).

Innovation Fund Partner Initiatives

The Innovation Fund has also partnered with [Project Lead the Way](#) (PLTW) – a nonprofit organization that provides a transformative STEM learning experience for K-12 students and teachers across the United States – through a \$2 million grant. Through the Innovation Fund grant, 58 schools from the Southwest Georgia, Coastal Plains, and Chattahoochee-Flint RESA districts will implement PLTW's K-12 pathways in computer science, engineering, and biomedical science.

Race to the Top Sustainability

During Race to the Top (RT3), the Innovation Fund provided \$17,974,633.72 through 23 grants to K-12 districts and charter schools, postsecondary institutions, and nonprofit organizations focused on the following priority areas:

- Increasing K-12 Applied Learning Opportunities for Students,
- Creating Teacher and Leader Induction Programs,
- Growing the Teacher and Leader pipeline, and
- Developing or Expanding STEM-Focused Charter Schools.

Since RT3 ended in June 2015, 17 grantees have sustained or scaled their grant-funded programs.¹⁴ Seven grantees are operating either their originally-funded program model or a modified version of the program. Six other grantees effectively built teacher and leader capacity during RT3 – enabling the teacher and leader participants to continue implementing the innovative instructional and leadership practices they learned during grant-funded programming. Lastly, four grantees have utilized additional grant funds, district funds, and donations to scale their programs to serve more students, teachers, and leaders. Specifically:

Tift County Mechatronics, Georgia Southern Real STEM, and the Gwinnett STEP Academy all received scaling grants from the FY15 state-funded Innovation Fund round. Tift County Schools is currently partnering with Grady County Schools to implement a mechatronics program at Cairo High School/College and Career Academy. Real STEM has created a problem-based interdisciplinary STEM middle school/high school pathway in three current partner districts – Bulloch County Schools, Burke County Public Schools, and Bryan County Schools – and has expanded the Real STEM program to Fulton County Schools and the Bibb County School District. Gwinnett County Public Schools is expanding the STEP Academy, now known as Gear Up For Graduation, to Lilburn Middle School.

¹⁴ Grantees reported on their sustainability on the RT3 End of Grant Reports in April 2015 and again on the Innovation Fund Alumni Survey, administered in November 2015.

Race to the Top Grantees: Awards and Recognition

12 For Life, Voices for Georgia’s Children, Big Voice for Children Award, 2015; featured in the Atlanta Journal Constitution, National Public Radio, CBS This Morning, Forbes Magazine, and the Wall Street Journal

Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School, Georgia Charter Schools Association, Charter School of the Year, 2015

Charles R. Drew Charter School, The Education Trust, Dispelling the Myth Award, 201

Fulton County Schools, Charter System Foundation, Charter System of the Year, 2015

Memorial Middle School, Georgia STEM Certification, 2015

The Museum School, Atlanta Families’ Awards for Excellence in Education, Katherine Kelbaugh, 2015 Principal Winner, Lillian Galicia, 2015 Teacher Winner

Tift County Mechatronics, Skills USA Leadership Conference and Competition, 17 gold medals, 3 silver medals, and 1 bronze medal

Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School (ANCS) received an Investing in Innovation Grant (i3) from the US Department of Education to expand the New Teacher Residency Project (NTRP), which began with their RT3 Innovation Fund grant. The i3 grant will expand key components of the NTRP – including mindfulness training and Critical Friends Groups – to Toomer Elementary, a local high-needs traditional public school, and Wesley International Academy, a local charter school.

Race to the Top Grantees: Fueling Innovation

In addition to sustaining and scaling their programs, the RT3 grantees have shared their work with other school districts and teachers both in and outside of Georgia. Collectively, the RT3 grantees have presented at over 50 local, state, and national conferences, including, but not limited to: the Coalition of Essential Schools 2013 and 2015 Conferences in San Francisco, CA and Portland, ME, respectively; the National Alliance of Public Charter Schools Conference; the 2014 Georgia STEM Forum; the 2014 National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Conference in New Orleans, LA; and the 2015 Investing in Innovation Project Directors Conference. Several grantees have also received state and national awards and recognition.¹⁵

Looking Forward

Since 2011, the Innovation Fund has invested in school districts and schools partnering with postsecondary institutions and nonprofit organizations to develop innovative education programs that tackle our state’s most significant education challenges. The Innovation in Teaching Competition has identified and recognized some of Georgia’s best teachers and shared their resources with educators across the state.

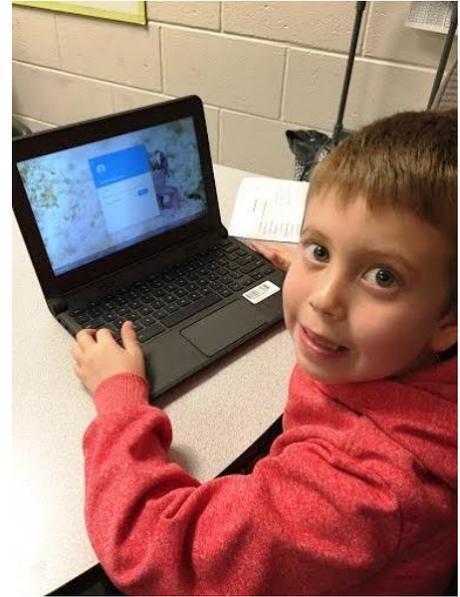
¹⁵ The sidebar on page 21 lists several awards and recognitions received by RT3 grantees. However, this list does not include all of the awards and recognition received.

In the next year, GOSA will continue this work by:

- Monitoring, supporting, and evaluating the progress of the FY16 grantees,
- Pending appropriation from the legislature, administering another round of grants that will serve as proof points for STEM applied learning, blended learning, birth to age eight language and literacy, and teacher and leader development, and
- Holding another round of the Innovation in Teaching Competition.

Through these activities, GOSA intends to reach the following goals by 2018:

- Present about the Innovation Fund at one national conference,
- Ensure that 75% of former implementation and scaling grantees have sustained their funded programs,
- Ensure that 90% of currently funded implementation and scaling grantees can provide evidence of positive student achievement outcomes,
- Scale at least one effective Innovation Fund program per year directly through scaling grant funds,
- Fund the implementation of at least one successful Innovation Fund planning grant program per year directly through implementation grant funds,
- Foster a high-quality network of Innovation in Teaching Competition winners through an annual meeting for teachers, and
- Establish relationships with external donors to raise at least \$10,000 for the Innovation Fund Foundation, Inc.



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