Growing Readers Program:
A K-3 Literacy Professional Learning Grant

2017-2018 End-of-Year Evaluation Report

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October 2018

THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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Executive Summary

Overview

The Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) Growing Readers Program (GRP) is a K-3 literacy professional learning grant administered through the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA). The program aims to provide consistent and high-quality professional learning to teachers on effective reading instruction to help more children read at grade level by the end of third grade. The GRP is part of GOSA's goal to invest in universal RESA initiatives that ensure all regions in Georgia are receiving high-quality, replicable professional learning.

The first iteration of the GRP was implemented during the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years, and the recommendations it received through the evaluation process were used to improve the current program. The second iteration of the GRP began in the 2017-2018 school year with new schools and teachers and will continue the focus on literacy instruction for K-3 students in the same schools through the 2018-2019 school year. During the first year of the current program, each RESA identified one or more reading specialists to provide coaching support to teachers and school leaders on reading instruction and tiered interventions for struggling students.[1] Reading specialists are educators with a background in literacy instruction who were either already working for or hired by a RESA for this program.

For the 2017-2018 school year, RESAs recruited schools using the 2016 College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) Third Grade Lexile Indicator for schools in each RESA.[2] Schools with Third Grade Lexile Indicators below the state average were given priority. Each RESA selected three schools to participate. Schools then selected two teachers per grade level from kindergarten to third grade to participate in the GRP. The GRP has 25 reading specialists working with 53 schools in all 16 RESAs. The second year of the current GRP will commence in 2018-2019.

Program Goals

The yearly goals for the GRP, as identified in the strategic plan, include:

By the end of year one (Spring 2018):
- Observation data will show 75% of grant teachers effectively implement conferring.
  - The GRP met this goal. 98% of teachers were observed effectively conferring at the end of year one.
- 50% of students reading below the end-of-year (EOY) benchmark on the mid-year assessment will be on or above grade level at the end of the year.
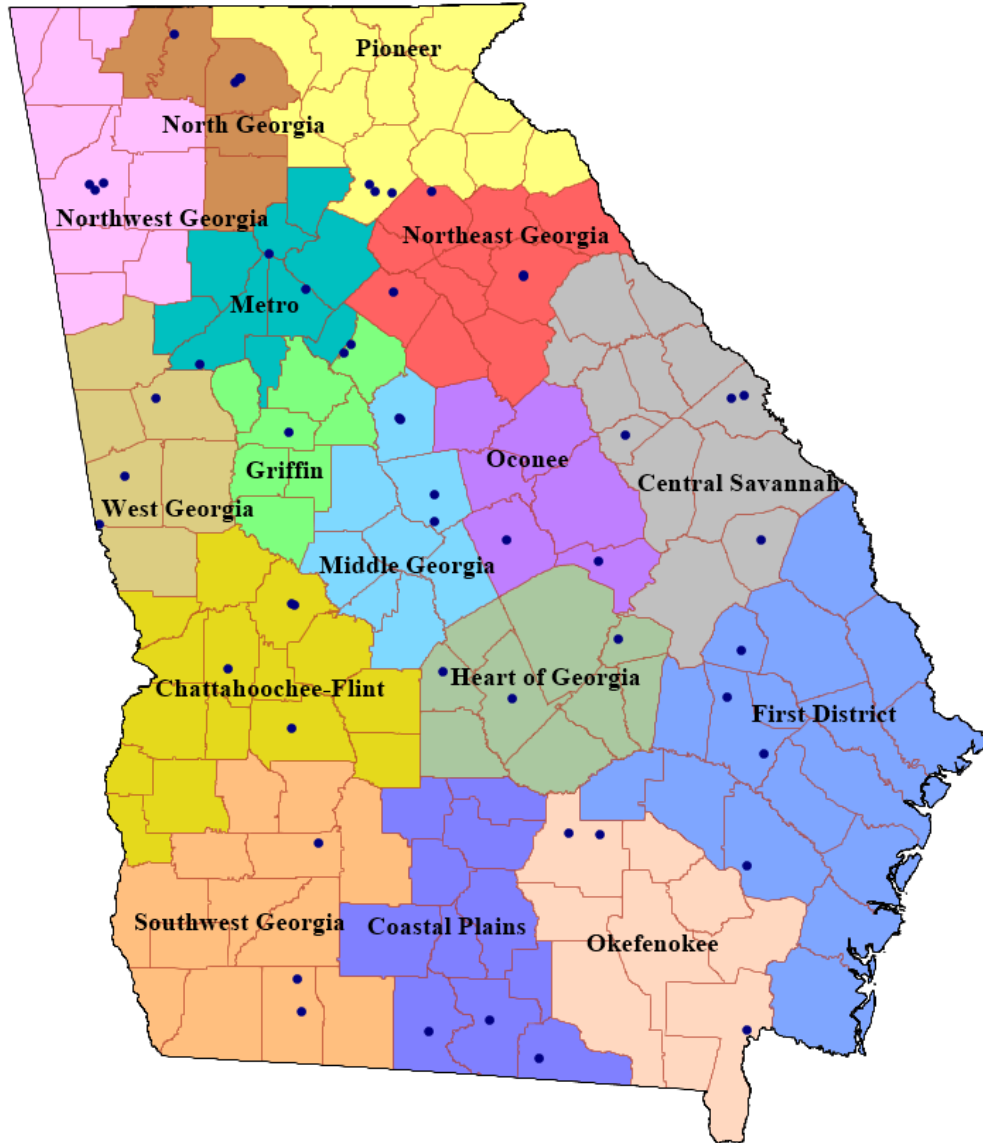
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[1] Tiered interventions are part of the Response-to-Intervention (RTI) model in which teachers provide individualized supports in addition to regular classroom instruction to students who are performing below grade level according to the student's specific needs.
[2] The 2016 CCRPI Third Grade Lexile Indicator was used for school recruitment because the 2017 data was not yet available.

- o The GRP was close to meeting this goal. 42% of students reading below the EOY benchmark on the mid-year assessment were on or above grade level at the EOY— only eight percentage points below target.

By the end of year two (Spring 2019):
- Observation data will show 90% of grant teachers effectively implement conferring.
  - o The GRP is on track to meet this goal. The conferring strategies teachers were taught are sustained throughout year two.
- Observation data will show 75% of grant teachers effectively implement strategy groups.
  - o Teachers will be taught to effectively utilize strategy groups during year two.
- 50% of students reading below the EOY benchmark on the mid-year assessment will be on or above grade level at the end of the year.
  - o Teachers will continue to learn, teach, and reinforce additional reading strategies to grow student literacy.
- 85% of struggling readers in grant classrooms will increase reading achievement by a minimum of one year's growth.
  - o RESA Specialists will instruct teachers on what one year's growth means for each student.

Map of Participating GRP Schools

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation focuses on four areas: implementation consistency, teacher practice, RESA cohesiveness and collaboration, and student outcomes. This report presents major findings for the 2017-2018 school year from multiple evaluation instruments, including quarterly status reports, professional learning session feedback forms, EOY surveys, the Teacher Observation Tool, the Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool, and student performance measures.

Major Findings

Evaluation Focus Area I: Implementation Consistency

GOSA's Research and Evaluation team reviewed quarterly status reports and professional learning session feedback forms to evaluate implementation consistency. Key findings include:

- All RESAs implemented all components of the GRP during 2017-2018, including but not limited to the completion of three formal observations, submission of assessment data, and two professional learning sessions.
- Although the amount of contact time between participants and reading specialists varied among RESAs, the accessibility and support from each specialist was consistent across all regions.
- The two professional learning sessions trained teachers on effective reading instruction, conferencing with students, and utilizing research-based reading assessment practices.
- Responses for each professional learning session were consistently positive among all participants.
- An overwhelming number of participants stated that video examples of teachers conferencing with students would strengthen the professional learning sessions.

Evaluation Focus Area II: Teacher Practice

To assess this focus area, GOSA's Research and Evaluation team analyzed the Teacher Observation Tool for teachers and EOY surveys for teachers, coaches, and administrators. Key findings include:

- The GRP met its goal for at least 75% of teachers to conference effectively with students because 98% of teachers were observed effectively conferring at EOY.
- Teachers need additional support in establishing an effective balance of whole group instruction, small group instruction, and independent practice.
- Over 90% of teachers, administrators, and coaches felt the GRP was valuable to improving literacy instruction and were likely to continue using GRP strategies in the future.
- By the EOY, over 94% of teachers believed they were at least proficient in conferencing with students and selecting targeted interventions, compared to less than 33% at the BOY.
- On average, administrators and coaches observed a 20 percentage point increase in the percentage of teachers selecting targeted reading intervention strategies to support struggling students and using formal and informal reading assessment data to make instructional decisions.
- All participants recommended increasing the number of participants in the GRP to scale the program's impact schoolwide and proposed encouraging teachers within the program to collaborate with each other outside of professional learning sessions.

Evaluation Focus Area III: RESA Cohesiveness and Collaboration

GOSA's Research and Evaluation team examined the cohesiveness and collaboration of RESAs through the GRP using a Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool.[3] Key findings include:

- All specialists felt the GRP partnership has enabled consistent professional learning for teachers across the state.
- All specialists rated the GRP partnership as being better than other professional learning they have experienced.
- All specialists recognized that the partnership has strengthened over the three years and the shared purpose and focus among all RESAs is unique and impactful for schools.
- Specialists believe that Growing Readers is successful due to the focused work and evidence-based practices of the specialists, the off-site and on-site support they provide teachers, and the guidance and dedication of the Design Team.

"Growing Readers is successful because it is simple, practical and easy to implement. Teachers are supported throughout the two-year period and are empowered as they constantly grow as observers of readers and reading instructors. Once the participants see the value and progress of the readers in the GRP, their mindset shifts and there is no going back."

Evaluation Focus Area IV: Student Outcomes

GOSA's Research and Evaluation team analyzed student independent reading levels using four different leveling systems at the middle-of-year (MOY) and EOY. Although beginning-of-year (BOY) reading levels were also recorded, MOY levels were utilized as the baseline to ensure accurate reporting.[4] The analysis focused on the percentage of all students and target students who are meeting grade level benchmarks that the GRP team uniquely defined for each leveling system. Target students made up 62% of the population and were identified if they were below EOY grade-level benchmarks at the MOY assessment. For the purposes of the evaluation, target students represent students who were struggling readers and needed additional support. Key findings include:

- The percentage of all students meeting GRP benchmarks grew by 29 percentage points from 29% at the MOY to 58% at the EOY.
- Kindergarten saw the largest growth (47 percentage points) in the percentage of students meeting GRP benchmarks at the EOY.
- 42% of target students, who were below grade level at the MOY, met grade level benchmarks by the EOY (eight percentage points under the year one GRP goal).

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[3] Due to the RESA specialists' consistently positive responses in prior evaluations, the Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool was shortened to four targeted questions to assess the main themes of the GRP team's collaboration.
[4] Teachers did not receive professional learning or coaching on leveling students prior to BOY benchmarking, so the GRP Design Team decided to use MOY scores for more accurate reporting.

- Histograms displaying changes in reading levels throughout the year indicate that, although the majority of target students were still below grade level at the EOY, many target students advanced their reading level in 2017-2018.

Recommendations

Based on the major findings, some of GOSA's key recommendations include:

- Identify potential opportunities for GRP participants to collaborate with other GRP teachers within RESAs and across the state.
- Conduct formal calibration exercises with teachers to determine a student's independent reading level to improve inter-rater reliability and the validity of assessment data.
- Immerse teachers into the goal-setting process for their students and ensure they understand what one-year-growth looks like for each student.
- Develop additional communication pathways between GRP participants and RESAs, such as sharing personal contact information, to maximize the GRP's effectiveness with participating teachers and schools.
- Revise the Teacher Observation Tool to focus on the impact of specific GRP practices and ensure that the tool measures GRP's direct and intentional impact, rather than instructional components unrelated to GRP's curriculum.
- Identify additional opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own practice and growth as a result of the GRP to encourage the development of personal and professional goals.
- Encourage teachers to internalize their personal responsibility in sustaining GRP practices after the two-year program.

Next Steps

The major findings indicate that the RESAs are successfully collaborating and delivering consistent, effective professional learning in K-3 literacy instruction to teachers. As a result of the GRP, teachers are changing their reading instructional practices to incorporate new strategies such as conferencing. The percentage of students meeting GRP benchmarks has increased by 29 percentage points between the MOY and EOY of 2017-2018 to 58%. Additionally, 42% of students below grade level at the MOY met grade level benchmarks at the EOY. GOSA will continue to collect data on implementation consistency, teacher practice, RESA cohesiveness and collaboration, and student outcomes as the GRP begins its second year in 2018-2019.

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Table of Abbreviations

BOY	Beginning-of-Year	CCRPI	College and Career Ready Performance Index
CEP	Community Eligibility Provision	EIP	Early Intervention Program
EL	English Learner	ELA	English Language Arts
EOY	End-of-Year	FAY	Full Academic Year
FRL	Free/Reduced-Price Lunch	FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
GaDOE	Georgia Department of Education	GOSA	Governor's Office of Student Achievement
GRP	Growing Readers Program	GTID	Georgia Test ID
MOY	Middle-of-Year	RESA	Regional Educational Service Agency
RTI	Response-to-Intervention	SWD	Students with Disabilities

Introduction

The Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) Growing Readers Program (GRP) aims to provide consistent and research-based professional learning to teachers on effective reading instructional strategies to help more children read at grade level by the end of third grade. The grant program is administered through the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) and is part of GOSA's mission to invest in universal RESA initiatives designed to ensure that teachers in all regions of the state are receiving high-quality, replicable professional learning that

directly target state-wide goals, such as ensuring all students are reading on grade level by the end of third grade. The first iteration of the GRP was implemented during the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years, and the recommendations it received through the evaluation process were used to improve the current program. The second iteration of the GRP began in the 2017-2018 school year with new schools and teachers and will continue the focus on literacy instruction for K-3 students in the same schools through the 2018-2019 school year.

Georgia's statewide network of 16 RESAs provides support services and professional development to local systems and schools. Historically, each RESA operates, plans, and provides support services to local systems and schools autonomously. The GRP presents an opportunity for RESAs to work together to provide the same content and quality of support and professional learning throughout the state.

All 16 RESAs identified at least one reading specialist to provide professional learning to three schools—eight teachers per school, two teachers per grade level (K-3rd)—in his/her RESA. Reading specialists from all RESAs collaborated to develop consistent professional learning sessions that are delivered to all participating teachers throughout the school year. The reading specialists also provide coaching to teachers and administrators on how to use reading assessments effectively to provide tiered instruction and interventions for students. Though the reading specialists differentiate their coaching to address specific teacher needs, the GRP's main focus is providing support for struggling readers through conferencing and strategy groups. The GRP currently serves 53 schools and works with approximately 390 teachers and 7,600 K-3 students throughout the state. If successful, GOSA hopes that the GRP can continue to demonstrate the value of providing consistent, high-quality professional learning statewide through the RESAs to improve student achievement outcomes.

The 2017-2018 GRP End-of-Year Evaluation Report is a comprehensive analysis of the GRP's activities during the 2017-2018 school year. GOSA's Research and Evaluation team conducted this evaluation. The Research and Evaluation team collaborated with RESA reading specialists to develop the evaluation plan and collect and analyze the data. The report includes:

- A summary of the GRP's mission and goals,
- A profile of participating schools,
- A description of the evaluation methodology,
- A discussion of the findings for each evaluation instrument, and
- Recommendations for future practice.

GRP Mission and Goals

The mission of the GRP is to design and implement high-quality and consistent professional learning sessions, with a focus on instructional strategies for struggling students, for teachers and administrators in each RESA to improve student reading performance. The GRP developed its own thresholds for identifying "target students" in need of additional support based on the leveling systems used by participating schools.

The yearly goals for the GRP, as identified in the strategic plan, include:

By the end of year one:
- Observation data will show 75% of grant teachers effectively implement conferring.
- 50% of students reading below the EOY benchmark on the mid-year assessment will be on or above grade level at the end of the year.

By the end of year two:
- Observation data will show 90% of grant teachers effectively implement conferring.
- Observation data will show 75% of grant teachers effectively implement strategy groups.
- 50% of students reading below the EOY benchmark on the mid-year assessment will be on or above grade level at the end of the year.
- 85% of struggling readers in grant classrooms will increase reading achievement by a minimum of one year's growth.

The 2017-2018 evaluation report focuses on the goals for year one.

Profile of Participating Schools

Figure 1: Map of Participating GRP Schools

The 2017-2018 GRP served 53 schools in 36 districts throughout the state. Each RESA specialist worked with between three to four elementary schools in his/her region.[5] In 2017-2018, the RESA reading specialists reached out to schools with 2016 CCRPI Third Grade Lexile Indicator scores below the state average.[6] If school administrators agreed to program implementation, then the school was selected for participation. Reading specialists continued to recruit schools until a minimum of three schools were selected for each RESA. After approval by GOSA, schools then selected two teachers per grade level for kindergarten through third grade to participate in the GRP.[7] Figure 1 shows the geographic distribution of the 53 participating schools. A full table of participating schools, districts, and respective RESAs is available in Appendix A.

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[5] With the exception of Oconee RESA, which is only working with two schools due to recruitment challenges.

[6] Reading Mentors Program schools were considered ineligible for the GRP.

[7] Some RESAs elected to serve an additional school if the identified participants did not total eight teachers, such as if they selected a primary school that does not serve 3rd grade.

Reading specialists used the 2016 CCRPI Third Grade Lexile Indicator to recruit schools.[8] The average 2016 Third Grade Lexile Indicator for GRP schools was 37.8, which means 37.8% of participating schools' full academic year (FAY) third grade students achieved a Lexile measure of 650 or above, which is considered the grade level target.[9] The GRP schools' average Third Grade Lexile Indicator was 12 percentage points lower than the state percentage of 49.1% in 2016. Even though reading specialists targeted lower performing schools during recruitment, since school selection was dependent on a school's willingness to participate, there is diversity among the participating schools in terms of reading performance. Preference was also given to districts that were engaged in the GRP during the previous iteration in order to build capacity.

Reading specialists only worked with select K-3 classrooms in participating schools. GOSA used student Georgia Test ID (GTID) numbers provided by schools to match GRP student participants with Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) demographic data provided by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE).[10] During the 2017-2018 school year, the GRP served approximately 7,600 students. Table 1 shows the approximate racial/ethnic distribution of students in the GRP schools and the state. Overall, the GRP's racial/ethnic distribution of students is aligned with the state's student population.

Table 1: Demographic Profile Comparison of GRP Students and the State

	GRP Students	**All Students in Georgia**	**Difference in Percentage Points**
American Indian	<1%	<1%	0
Asian	1%	4%	+3
Black	37%	37%	0
Hispanic	18%	15%	-3
Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%	0
Multi-Racial	4%	3%	-1
White	40%	40%	0

Source: GaDOE March 2018 FTE Enrollment by Ethnicity/Race & Gender
and GOSA K-12 Public Schools Report Card.

Eighteen percent of students in the GRP are Hispanic, which is three percentage points higher than the state's overall percentage. Asian students comprise a smaller share of GRP students (1%) than the state as a whole (4%). The representation of multi-racial (18%) students in the GRP is one percentage point greater than that of Georgia. Given these differences, it is important to remember that the demographic profile in Table 1 is simply an overall summary of the racial/ethnic

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[8] The 2016 CCRPI Third Grade Lexile Indicator was used for school recruitment because the 2017 data was not yet available.

[9] To be counted as FAY, a student must be enrolled for at least two-thirds of the school year.

[10] Some students are not accounted for in the FTE data because they were not present during the FTE count, or GTID numbers were not provided or incorrect. GOSA was unable to account for about 1,100 students due to reporting errors. Therefore, the demographic numbers presented here are approximations.

demographics for students in participating GRP schools and does not capture school-level differences within the program.

Nine percent of GRP students are classified as students with disabilities (SWD), which is four percentage points lower than the state's share of SWD students during the 2016-2017 school year (13%).[11] Thirteen percent of GRP students are English Learners, which is five percentage points higher than the 8% of all Georgia students classified as English Learners in 2016-2017. Furthermore, 3% of GRP students are gifted, which is much lower than the state's percentage of gifted students in 2016-2017 (11.5%).

Although Free/Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) status is commonly used as an indicator for poverty, this report does not provide FRL data because schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the National School Lunch Program do not collect student-level FRL data. For reporting purposes, these schools are coded as 100% FRL.[12] As an alternative measure of student poverty, GOSA looked at the percentage of students who are "directly certified," which means students receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, or are identified as homeless, unaccompanied youth, or migrant. The average percentage of students who were directly certified in GRP schools during 2016-2017 was 48%, and the median percentage was 48%, much higher than the state average of 36%.[13]

Evaluation Methodology

GOSA collected and analyzed developmental and summative information in four evaluation focus areas: implementation consistency, teacher practice, RESA cohesiveness and collaboration, and student outcomes. Table 2 lists each evaluation focus area with its respective evaluation question(s) and instruments. The remainder of the report will present major findings from the evaluation instruments, which include quarterly status reports, professional learning session feedback forms, end-of-year surveys, Teacher Observation Tools, Collaboration Self-Assessment tools, and student performance measures.[14]

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[11] State subgroup data was obtained through GOSA's Annual Report Card available here. GOSA used 2016-2017 data because 2017-2018 data are not yet available.

[12] For more information on why FRL is not the most accurate measure of student poverty, please see GOSA's education update here.

[13] GOSA used school-level directly certified data from the Report Card's downloadable data files. The most recent year available is 2016-2017 and does not include data on foster students.

[14] Survey instruments can be made available upon request.

Table 2: Summary of GOSA's GRP Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Focus Area	Evaluation Question(s)	Instruments
Implementation Consistency	Did RESA reading specialists present professional learning opportunities and research-based strategies that provide instructional support for struggling students? Were professional learning opportunities and supports consistent across RESAs? Was the grant program implemented with fidelity?	Quarterly Status Reports Professional Learning Session Feedback Forms
Teacher Practice	Are teachers learning and improving upon strategies to provide instructional reading support for struggling students?	Teacher Observation Tool Teacher and Administrator/Coach End-of-Year Surveys
RESA Cohesiveness and Collaboration	Are the RESAs working cohesively to design and provide teacher support and professional learning opportunities? To what degree are the RESAs collaborating?	Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool
Student Outcomes	Are students benefiting from greater teacher preparation in providing reading interventions for struggling students?	Student reading performance measures (measures will vary depending on school's choice of assessment)

Major Findings

Throughout the 2017-2018 school year, GOSA collected data on the GRP using the evaluation instruments in Table 2. This report includes findings and summative conclusions from quarterly status reports, professional learning session feedback forms, end-of-year surveys, the Teacher Observation Tool, the Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool, and student performance measures. The findings that follow are organized according to the four evaluation focus areas listed in Table 2.

Evaluation Focus Area I: Implementation Consistency

To evaluate implementation consistency, GOSA collected quarterly status reports from each reading specialist that tracked each RESA's overall progress in program implementation. GOSA also analyzed data from the professional learning session feedback forms.

Quarterly Status Reports

Reading specialists submit status reports to GOSA on a quarterly basis. In each status report, reading specialists indicate whether grant milestones set by the GOSA Program Manager are on track or not, allowing GOSA to monitor how the GRP is implemented in each RESA and identify any immediate needs. Reading specialists also record his/her cumulative contact hours with each school in the status reports.

Most RESAs have one reading specialist responsible for implementing the GRP, but some RESAs have more than one part- or full-time reading specialist. In total, there are 25 reading specialists. Reading specialists vary in the amount of time he/she can dedicate to the program; several reading specialists split their time between the GRP and other RESA work. Additionally, reading specialists vary in the number of schools and teachers he/she supports. Nevertheless, in general, each RESA works with three schools and serve a minimum of 24 teachers—two teachers from each grade level (K-3) per school.

Reading specialists provided school administrators with suggested criteria for teacher selection that included qualities such as openness to new methods, willingness to collaborate, and commitment to fully participate in the GRP and meet all expectations.

During the 2017-2018 school year, RESA reading specialists spent roughly 5,400 hours in participating schools. Reading specialists provided on average 72 hours of on-site support to each school in addition to frequent online support and communication and the offsite professional learning sessions. The majority of the on-site support involved conducting observations; assisting with reading assessment administration; and coaching teachers, coaches, and administrators.

Some reading specialists also serve on the GRP's Design Team in addition to their duties as a reading specialist. The Design Team is a group of seven highly-qualified reading specialists who collaborate to develop the professional learning curricula for the GRP. The Design Team members represent several RESAs across the state: First District, Metro, Middle Georgia, Pioneer, and West Georgia. Design Team members meet about once a month to develop professional learning content and resources, produce universal coaching materials, and make executive decisions that address any programmatic questions. The Design Team has been instrumental in ensuring the reading specialists are aligned in their practice.

Regardless of any differences in capacity among RESAs, the status reports indicate that all RESAs are meeting all program implementation milestones. Each RESA delivered both professional learning sessions during the specified time frames. Even though the professional learning sessions were administered separately by RESA, the training content—which is developed by the Design

Team—was consistent throughout each RESA. Reading specialists submitted baseline, mid-year, and end-of-year observations for teachers using a common Teacher Observation Tool. Additionally, all RESAs had a reading specialist present at every program-wide planning meeting. The meetings ensure that the research-based strategies and coaching support provided by the reading specialists are consistent across all RESAs. Almost all schools submitted assessment data to GOSA at the beginning (BOY), middle (MOY), and end of the year (EOY). Thus, each RESA is implementing all components of the GRP.

Professional Learning Session Feedback Forms

The GRP consists of four total professional learning sessions administered over the course of two years. Participants attend Sessions 1 and 2 in year one and will attend Sessions 3 and 4 in year two. GOSA's primary vision for the GRP is to ensure all regions in Georgia are receiving consistent, high-quality professional learning to improve K-3 literacy instruction. The Design Team develops the content for each professional learning session and then trains all reading specialists on how to conduct the professional learning session. This ensures that training for participating teachers is consistent throughout all RESAs.

GOSA also developed a common feedback form for all RESAs to use after each professional learning session. All RESAs delivered each session within a designated time frame. Session 1 occurred from late August through mid-September and Session 2 from late January to mid-February.[15] All sessions consisted of two eight-hour days and focused on the same four learning targets:

1. Establish a common understanding of the reading process and the Georgia Standards of Excellence for Reading;
2. Establish classroom structures that support effective reading instruction and student learning;
3. Engage in teacher-student conferences to assess readers, provide feedback, and set individual goals; and
4. Understand and use effective reading assessment practices.

GOSA sent the feedback forms electronically to all participants after each professional learning session. The feedback forms were the same for each session to establish consistency. The surveys asked respondents for general information including their RESA, their instructional role, what grade they teach, and how many years they have been teaching. Reading specialists welcomed school team members who were not official grant participants to attend the professional learning sessions, so participants at each session included teachers (full grant participation or professional learning only), instructional coaches, and administrators. In all sessions, approximately 12% of participants were professional learning only.

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[15] The flexibility in professional learning scheduling allowed specialists to accommodate the availability of their teachers and GRP participants.

Participants evaluated the professional learning sessions using a five-point Likert scale to determine how much they agree or disagree with seven statements.[16]

Table 3 shows the percentage of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with the survey statements for each professional learning session. In general, responses to all statements from both sessions were very positive. Over 88% of participants in all sessions agreed with the survey statements. Participants overwhelmingly felt they learned useful strategies in each session and that the sessions were well planned and engaging.

Table 3: Professional Learning Session Feedback Form Results

Survey Statements	Session 1	Session 2
I learned useful literacy intervention strategies that I can apply in the classroom.	92%	92%
I feel more confident in supporting my Tier 2 and Tier 3 students instructionally.	88%	**92%**
I feel prepared to implement the strategies I learned today in the classroom.	89%	**92%**
The Professional Learning Session was well organized.	**94%**	93%
The Professional Learning Session was presented at an appropriate level.	93%	93%
The Professional Learning Session was engaging.	**93%**	92%
The strategies and resources utilized were appropriate for meeting the stated objectives of the Professional Learning Session.	**94%**	93%

The consistently positive response after each professional learning session demonstrates that reading specialists are delivering consistent professional learning to teachers across all RESAs. Reading specialists have been successful in meeting the established learning targets of training teachers on effective reading instruction, conferencing with students, administering assessments, and implementing targeted interventions.

Respondents were also given the option to comment on what they liked and disliked about the training and how they planned to implement their learning. When asked what participants liked about the session, participants mentioned the following after both sessions:

- Opportunities for collaboration and networking within and between schools;
- Relevant content that could be implemented immediately in the classroom;
- Useful reading instruction strategies and resources, including conferencing with students and targeted interventions, that can immediately be applied in the classroom; and
- Modeling and hands-on practice with new strategies.

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[16] The response options were Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), or Strongly Agree (5).

"It was well paced. The instructors were sensitive to the knowledge base of the group and adjusted instruction accordingly. They were motivated and obviously believe in what they are teaching. Their passion makes me want to try things I learned."

Furthermore, when given the opportunity to provide any additional comments, of those who responded, almost all expressed praise for the reading specialists, excitement to be a part of the GRP, or a desire for the program to continue.

When asked what participants would like to improve about the sessions, the majority of respondents stated they have no suggestions for improvement for either session. Of those who did list improvements, the most common suggestions were related to the logistics and timing of the sessions, such as condensing them into one day and having them earlier and more frequently in the year. Participants also recommended allowing more opportunities for collaboration within the GRP network, such as collaborative discussions during sessions or observing teachers at other schools. In addition, participants overwhelmingly suggested the increased use of video examples of conferencing strategies and real classroom situations. Nevertheless, given that responses to the improvement question were positive overall, the GRP is meeting its goal to offer high-quality professional learning to teachers on reading instruction across all RESAs.[17]

Finally, when participants were asked about their next steps after each session, the majority of participants stated they would begin implementing the strategies learned in that particular session; prevalent answers included conferencing with students and using targeted intervention strategies with struggling students, both of which are directly linked to the GRP's learning targets. Several teachers also expressed a desire to share what they learned with other teachers. Thus, the GRP was also effective in meeting established learning targets and inspiring teachers to change their reading instructional practice. Overall, the professional learning session feedback forms reveal that throughout the program, reading specialists delivered engaging and valuable professional learning to help teachers support struggling readers.

"I liked the application of the reading strategies. The videos of students reading, using the reading strategies book to identify ways to help a student, and the examples of conference logs were very helpful."

Implementation Consistency Recommendations

All of the major findings from the quarterly status reports and Professional Learning Session Feedback Forms indicate that reading specialists are implementing the GRP consistently across all RESAs. All participants are receiving the same professional learning on how to support struggling readers, and survey results indicate that an overwhelming majority of participants agree that they are learning useful strategies to implement in the classroom.

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[17] GOSA conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test of the survey responses by RESA and found that there were no statistically significant differences between the responses from each RESA for each survey statement. As such, GOSA chose to discuss survey findings for the GRP as a whole rather than by RESA.

Based on findings and feedback from the status reports and Professional Learning Session Feedback Forms, GOSA recommends the following:

- Maintain the accessibility of reading specialists to participants to preserve relationship-building.
- Facilitate improved communication between RESAs and GRP teachers in order to maximize the impact of the GRP professional learning and avoid scheduling conflicts.
- Preserve the current model for developing professional learning content to maintain consistency across RESAs.
- Continue to offer professional learning sessions to non-grant participants to further build capacity in schools.
- Communicate among RESAs to learn about and share successful or innovative strategies for encouraging collaboration across schools and districts.

Evaluation Focus Area II: Teacher Practice

GOSA collected qualitative data using various instruments to evaluate teacher practice. GOSA worked with the RESA reading specialists to develop a common Teacher Observation Tool that was used consistently throughout the school year to track changes in instruction for year one teachers. Additionally, GOSA administered an EOY survey to teachers, administrators, and coaches to collect qualitative data on the impact of the GRP on teacher practice.

Teacher Observation Tool

The Teacher Observation Tool is a comprehensive observation instrument that allows reading specialists to document teacher practices according to four professional learning targets identified by the GRP. Reading specialists submitted observation data for teachers during 2017-2018 in the BOY, MOY, and EOY to demonstrate any changes in teacher practice over time. However, the Teacher Observation Tool is not meant to be evaluative and will not be used as part of a teacher's formal evaluation. Instead, the purpose of the tool is to allow reading specialists to document teacher and student behaviors, identify any strengths and areas for improvement, and determine what coaching support is needed. The four learning targets, which also align with the professional learning session targets, are:

- **Target 1: Framework** – Establish classroom structures that support effective reading instruction and student learning.
- **Target 2: Conferring** – Engage in teacher-student conferences to assess readers, provide feedback, and set individual goals.
- **Target 3: Assessment** – Use informal and formal assessment data to make instructional decisions.

- **Target 4: Interventions** – Implement targeted reading strategies based on relevant data to address one or more of the five essential components of reading.[18]

The targets capture critical teacher practices that must be present to provide quality literacy instruction for all students, especially struggling readers, as identified by the reading specialists. For each target, the reading specialists recorded evidence of successful implementation of various strategies associated with each learning target. The GRP goal for year one is for at least 75% of teachers to effectively implement conferring. A copy of the complete Teacher Observation Tool is available in Appendix B.

For GRP teachers, reading specialists observed an entire literacy block to collect baseline data at the BOY and then conducted observations of each teacher at the MOY and EOY. GOSA received 376 baseline observations, 367 MOY observations, and 355 EOY observations.[19] GOSA tracked the percentage of teachers observed implementing strategies for each learning target throughout the school year to evaluate any changes in teacher practice.[20] Table 4 shows the percentage of teachers meeting specified indicators for each learning target during BOY, MOY, and EOY observations. For the assessment target, reading specialists could mark several different strategies; GOSA calculated the percentage of teachers implementing at least one of the identified strategies. For each learning target, the Teacher Observation Tool included many different observable teacher practices for reading specialists to document that are not all included in Table 4. A full breakdown of the BOY, MOY, and EOY percentages for all practices under each learning target is available in Appendix C.

Table 4: Percentage of Year One Teachers Observed Implementing Indicators

Learning Target	Indicator Measured	Percentage of Teachers		
		BOY	MOY	EOY
Framework (Standards and Five Components of Reading)	Aligned to appropriate standard	81%	89%	91%
	Aligned with one of five components of reading	84%	92%	96%
	Effective balance of instructional formats	22%	44%	50%
Conferring	Conferring with students	12%	99%	98%
Assessment	Use of assessment strategies	67%	99%	100%
	Use of assessment data to guide instruction	59%	95%	99%
Interventions	Use of strategy groups	0%	2%	5%

Under the GRP model, both the MOY and EOY observations focused on conferencing strategies. Thus, to evaluate the GRP's progress towards its teacher practice goal, GOSA examined the percentage of year one teachers implementing specific practices at the BOY, MOY, or EOY. The

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[18] The five essential components of reading include: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

[19] There were no noticeable systematic differences between the observations received during each period. The different number of observations varies due to teachers no longer participating in the program as a result of staff changes or lack of program compliance.

[20] GOSA calculated the percentage of teachers for each collection period using the total number of observations collected in that period, so the n-size for BOY, MOY, and EOY data varies.

GRP met its goal of at least 75% of teachers implementing conferring, and the high percentage of conferring observations at both MOY and EOY suggests that teachers continued to utilize conferring over time.

If conferring was observed, the conferring learning target was further broken down into observations of conference protocol phases. [21]

- **Research** – The teacher knows the child as a reader (strengths and needs) and uses a preponderance of evidence to inform decision-making about trends and patterns of reading behaviors.
- **Decide** – The teacher is able to show and explain how a preponderance of evidence leads to a goal for the child. The teacher is focused clearly on one strategy that supports the child's need based on the reading goal.
- **Teach** – The teaching is goal-based and focused on a strategy. The teacher teaches the actionable steps of the strategy explicitly using varied modes of instruction.
- **Try** – The student demonstrates an understanding of the strategy and verbalized how he/she is applying the strategy. The teacher is observant and flexible and may leave the student with a visual reminder to help with strategy remembrance.

The GRP established that for year one teachers, 75% of each of the four conference protocol phases should be scored at two (coach for refinement) or higher (coach for sustaining or independence) by the EOY. Over 75% of participating teachers received a two or above in the Try (93%), Teach (95%), Decide (96%), and Research (99%) phases, thus meeting the year one GRP goal. Overall, specialists observed a comprehensive growth in teacher conferencing ability.[22] Full results on Observed Conferring Protocol Phases are in Appendix C.

The other learning targets served as a guiding framework for teacher best practices, and while there were no specific goals oriented with them, they still serve as indicators of teacher growth. Within the framework target, 96% of year one teachers had lessons aligned with one of the five components of reading, 91% of teachers had lessons aligned to an appropriate standard, and 50% of teachers used an effective balance of whole group instruction, small group instruction, and independent practice. While the first year of the GRP established the foundation of implementing an effective balance, teachers will continue to develop and grow this skill in year two.

After the previous iteration of the GRP in 2015-2017, the GRP changed its goals to focus on improving teacher conferencing skills in year one and strategy groups in year two, which explains why the interventions learning target saw the least growth, with only 5% of teachers observed utilizing strategy groups. The 2017-2018 baseline for the interventions learning target will continue to serve as the baseline for the 2018-2019 analysis.

Overall, the Teacher Observation Tool results indicate that teachers began conferencing more with students and using assessment data more effectively to group students and provide targeted interventions. The GRP professional learning sessions and onsite coaching and modeling

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[21] The four conference protocol phases were assessed on a scale of four indicators at BOY, MOY, and EOY: 1 (coach for understanding), 2 (coach for refinement), 3 (coach for sustaining) and 4 (coach for independence).

[22] In 2018-2019, the GRP will continue to emphasize conferring in the classroom. By the end of year two, the GRP aims to observe effective conferring in 90% of teachers.

successfully changed teacher practice, specifically by increasing the use of conferring in the classroom. Each of the learning targets saw an increase in the percentage of teachers using the listed strategies effectively by the EOY. Moving forward, teachers could use more support in maintaining an appropriate balance of instructional formats. In the 2018-2019 GRP continuation, the Teacher Observation Tool will also be used to capture the use of strategy groups. By the end of 2018-2019, 90% of teachers should effectively implement conferring and 75% of teachers should effectively implement strategy groups.

Teacher End-of-Year Survey

GOSA administered an EOY survey to all GRP teacher participants to evaluate the impact of the GRP on teacher practice and collect feedback on the program. Teachers were asked to complete the survey electronically in May 2018. GOSA received 322 responses for a response rate of about 87%.[23] The survey consisted of 21 questions, including general background questions, pre/post retrospective questions, open-ended questions, and attitude questions rated on a five-point scale.[24]

Table 5 below summarizes the responses to the attitudinal questions as well as yes or no questions from the survey. The overall results are positive. Over 95% of respondents felt supported by the reading specialist, applied what they learned from the GRP in the classroom, would recommend the program to a colleague, and were likely to continue using GRP strategies in the future. Of the different professional learning supports provided, more respondents felt that materials and/or resources provided by the specialist and the professional learning sessions were valuable as opposed to other supports like classroom observations. Additionally, 58% of respondents felt the GRP professional learning sessions were different from traditional professional development at his/her school. Respondents felt the GRP professional learning was more hands-on and tailored to individual student needs. Respondents also appreciated the onsite support in tandem with the professional learning that ensured follow-up and implementation of strategies.

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[23] GOSA used the number of teachers with EOY assessment data to determine the total number of teacher participants at the end of the school year.

[24] All response scales were designed so that a rating of 1 was the lowest and 5 was the highest.

Table 5: End-of-Year Teacher Survey Attitude Question Results

Survey Question		Percentage of Respondents	
How valuable have the following GRP supports been to your teaching practice?	Professional learning sessions led by the RESA Reading Specialist	Percent Very or Extremely Valuable	93%
	Materials and/or resources provided by the RESA Reading Specialist	Percent Very or Extremely Valuable	95%
	Observations of your classroom by the RESA Reading Specialist	Percent Very or Extremely Valuable	86%
	One-on-one coaching with the RESA Reading Specialist	Percent Very or Extremely Valuable	89%
How often have you been able to do the following?	Reflect on your reading instructional practice	Percent Often or Always	91%
	Communicate with other teachers about reading instruction	Percent Often or Always	85%
How would you compare the professional learning sessions led by the RESA Reading Specialist with professional development opportunities traditionally available at your school?		Percent Very or Extremely Different	58%
How supported do you feel by the reading specialist?		Percent Very or Extremely Supported	96%
How valuable is your participation in the GRP to improving your instructional practice?		Percent Very or Extremely Valuable	94%
How often do you apply what you learn from the reading specialist in your classroom?		Percent Often or Always	95%
What is the likelihood that you will continue using the strategies you learned from the GRP in the future?		Percent Very or Extremely Likely	97%
Would you recommend the GRP to a colleague?		Percent Yes	98%

When asked to rate their interactions with the reading specialist during the year, teachers felt very satisfied. Over 99% of all respondents felt their specialist was prepared for professional development, easily accessible, trustworthy, and provided constructive feedback. Almost all respondents agreed that the classroom support provided by the specialists met their expectations. Specialists were thus successful in establishing strong relationships with teachers.

The EOY survey also included a pre/post retrospective question that analyzed any changes in teacher practice as a result of participating in the GRP. Respondents were asked to rate their level of knowledge of specific learning targets prior to the GRP and at the time of the survey. Table 6 shows that teachers felt their knowledge of reading instructional strategies had significantly increased from the beginning of the program to the time of the survey. Teachers gained the most knowledge in conducting conferences with students and selecting targeted intervention strategies to support struggling readers, as the percent proficient increased by about 70 percentage points. The growth in conferring and selecting targeted interventions reflects the emphasis on conferring and intervention strategies during professional learning sessions. The GRP was successful in equipping teachers with the knowledge to support struggling readers in the classroom.

Table 6: Pre/Post Retrospective Teacher Practice Question Results

Learning Target	Percent Proficient or Above	
	Beginning of Program	Now
Conducting teacher-student conferences with students to assess reading progress, provide feedback, and set goals	25%	96%
Administering reading assessments to monitor student progress	50%	97%
Using formal and informal reading assessment data to make instructional decisions	48%	95%
Selecting targeted reading intervention strategies to support struggling students	33%	94%

Teachers also provided feedback through open-ended response questions. When asked how the GRP has benefited them, the most frequent responses included increased confidence as a reading teacher, better ability to address individual student needs, new instructional strategies like conferencing, and hands-on resources such as the book of reading strategies.[25] When asked what challenges they have faced from participating in the GRP, most teachers listed finding time in the classroom to conference with students. Teachers also mentioned implementing the new strategies learned correctly and having enough leveled books for students as challenges.

"I've learned so many strategies that are so beneficial to my students as individuals. I am able to differentiate more and meet my students on their level. It has not only increased my confidence as a literacy teacher, but has also increased my students' confidence in themselves."

When asked what they would improve about the GRP, many teachers had no improvements. Of those who did list improvements, frequent recommendations included:

- Including more teachers and administrators in the program,
- Creating opportunities to collaborate with and potentially observe other GRP teachers, and
- Providing more examples of effective conferring during sessions or through videos.

Overall, the EOY teacher survey findings reveal that participating teachers felt they have learned valuable and applicable reading instructional strategies to support struggling readers. The GRP has had a noticeable impact on teacher practice during the 2017-2018 school year, which aligns with the Teacher Observation Tool findings of dramatic growth in using new strategies such as conferring.

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[25] All GRP teachers received a copy of Jennifer Serravallo's *The Reading Strategies Book* as part of their professional learning.

Administrator/Coach End-of-Year Survey

GOSA also administered an EOY survey to all GRP participants serving in an administrative or coaching role in a school or district to evaluate the impact of the GRP on teacher practice from a different perspective. Administrators and coaches were asked to complete the survey electronically during a two-week window in May. GOSA received 86 responses from administrators and coaches representing 92% of GRP schools. The survey consisted of 23 questions, including general background questions, pre/post retrospective questions, open-ended questions, and attitude questions rated on a five-point scale.[26] The majority (37%) of respondents were coaches, 36% were principals, and 15% were assistant principals.[27]

The survey asked respondents to indicate how often they participated in various GRP activities during the school year. 77% of respondents often or always attended the professional learning sessions, and 68% of respondents frequently had discussions about reading performance with the reading specialist. Respondents were not as involved (39%) in classroom observations with the reading specialist, but some noted that they would debrief with the reading specialist if they were unable to observe with them. Overall, participating administrators and coaches seem to have actively engaged with the reading specialists.

Table 7 below summarizes the responses to the attitude questions as well as yes or no questions from the survey. Similar to the teacher survey, the responses from administrators and coaches are also positive. All respondents felt the quality of K-3 literacy instruction in their school has improved as a result of the GRP. Over ninety-nine percent of respondents felt supported by the reading specialist, planned to continue the use of GRP strategies, and would recommend the GRP to another school. Over 94% of respondents felt the professional learning sessions, materials and resources, and feedback from reading specialist were valuable supports.

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[26] All response scales were designed so that a rating of 1 was the lowest and 5 was the highest.
[27] Other respondents included counselors and district-level coaches or administrators.

Table 7: End-of-Year Administrator/Coach Survey Attitude Question Results

Survey Question		Percentage of Respondents	
How valuable have the following GRP supports been to your teachers?	Professional learning sessions led by the RESA Reading Specialist	Percent Very or Extremely Valuable	98%
	Materials and/or resources provided by the RESA Reading Specialist	Percent Very or Extremely Valuable	99%
	Feedback on reading instruction from the RESA Reading Specialist	Percent Very or Extremely Valuable	94%
How would you compare the professional learning sessions led by the RESA Reading Specialist with professional development opportunities traditionally available at your school?		Percent Very or Extremely Different	47%
How has the quality of K-3 reading instruction in your school changed as a result of participating in the Growing Readers Program?		Percent Slightly or Much Improved	98%
How supported do you feel by the reading specialist?		Percent Very or Extremely Supported	99%
How valuable is your participation in the GRP in meeting your school's literacy goals?		Percent Very or Extremely Valuable	95%
How has your relationship with your RESA changed after participating in the GRP?		Percent Slightly or Much Improved	86%
What is the likelihood that you will continue to encourage the use of strategies learned from the GRP in the future?		Percent Very or Extremely Likely	100%
Would you recommend the GRP to another school?		Percent Yes	100%
Would you be willing to pay your RESA to continue providing the GRP?		Percent Yes	69%

Forty-seven percent of respondents felt GRP professional learning sessions were very or extremely different from traditional professional development at the school, and several respondents indicated they wanted to replicate the hands-on coaching model of the GRP in their school. Additionally, 69% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay their RESA to continue providing the GRP because they felt it is a worthwhile program.[28] Some respondents felt the GRP should be implemented statewide.

Similar to the teacher survey, when asked to rate their interactions with the reading specialist during the year, administrators and coaches felt positively. All respondents felt the specialist was prepared for professional development, provided adequate onsite support, provided useful feedback on reading performance, was on time, was knowledgeable about reading, and was trustworthy. Ninety-six percent of respondents knew when the specialist was going to be in their school. Overall, reading specialists developed very strong relationships with administrators and coaches as well.

The EOY survey also included two pre/post retrospective questions that analyzed any changes in administrators' or coaches' understanding of reading instruction as well as any observed changes in teacher practice as a result of the GRP. Seventy-seven percent of respondents felt they could

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[28] Some respondents indicated no because they do not have control over financial decisions.

teach a colleague how to select targeted reading intervention strategies by the EOY, compared to only 41% at the BOY. Similarly, 85% of respondents felt they could teach a colleague how to use assessment data to drive instruction at the EOY, compared to 46% at the BOY. The GRP provided support and guidance to administrators and coaches to build their confidence and ability to support reading instruction.

Respondents were then asked to indicate how often particular reading instructional practices were observed in K-3 classroom prior to the GRP and at the time of the survey to determine any changes in teacher practice.
Table 8 shows that administrators and coaches saw significant increases in teachers implementing GRP learning targets as a result of the GRP. At the time of the survey, over 90% of respondents observed teachers administering reading assessments frequently to monitor student progress, using assessment data to make instructional decisions, implementing targeted reading intervention strategies to struggling students, and using a combination of instructional formats during literacy blocks. Respondents observed the greatest growth (78 percentage points) in teachers conferencing with struggling readers to assess progress, provide feedback, and set goals. There was also a significant increase in the percentage of teachers conferencing with struggling readers and sharing reading instructional strategies with each other. Thus, in alignment with the Teacher Observation Tool and the teacher EOY survey, administrators and coaches also observed changes in teacher practice as a result of the GRP.

Table 8: Pre/Post Retrospective Teacher Practice Question Results – Administrator/Coach Survey

Learning Target	Percent Often or Always	
	Beginning of Program	Now
Teachers conferencing with struggling readers to assess progress, provide feedback, and set goals.	10%	88%
Teachers administering reading assessments frequently to monitor student progress.	31%	95%
Teachers using formal and informal reading assessment data to make instructional decisions.	31%	96%
Teachers implementing targeted reading intervention strategies to struggling students.	20%	91%
Teachers sharing reading instructional strategies with each other.	21%	78%
Teachers using a combination of whole group instruction, small group instruction, and independent practice during literacy blocks.	51%	96%

"The program has brought quality instruction and strategies into our classrooms. Our teachers are increasing their knowledge on early literacy."

Finally, administrators and coaches provided additional feedback in open-ended responses. When asked how the GRP has benefited their school, respondents highlighted the new strategies to support struggling readers and the increased knowledge among teachers, administrators, and coaches on the reading process. Some respondents also stated that they are sharing their learning with the rest of the staff or other schools in the district. When asked what challenges they have faced from participating in the GRP, administrators and coaches also cited taking time to attend the professional learning sessions and finding time in classroom schedules to implement strategies. Multiple respondents also expressed a desire to include more teachers in the GRP. Finally, when asked what they would improve about the GRP, some of the recommendations listed were:

- Increase the number of participating teachers and/or train the entire school,
- Condense professional learning days and offer them earlier in the school year, and
- Set clear expectations for administrators, coaches, and districts about the program model at the beginning of the year.

Overall, the findings from the administrator/coach EOY survey align with the findings from the teacher survey and Teacher Observation Tool. Administrators and coaches felt the GRP has been valuable to improving reading instruction in their schools and have noticed changes in teacher practice as a result of the program.

Teacher Practice Recommendations

The findings from the Teacher Observation Tool and EOY surveys all support the conclusion that the GRP has positively impacted teacher practice during the 2017-2018 school year by introducing instructional reading strategies for teachers to support struggling readers. Based on the findings and feedback from the Teacher Observation Tool and EOY surveys, GOSA recommends the following:

- Continue to emphasize the importance of conferring when the focus shifts to strategy groups in 2018-2019 so teachers can attain the goal for 90% of teachers to effectively implement conferring.
- Facilitate increased communication with teachers, such as through personal phone numbers, in order to utilize the specialist's time most effectively and ensure that teachers are anticipating or are available for observations on a given day.
- Revise the Teacher Observation Tool to focus more on the impact of specific GRP practices and ensure that the tool measures GRP's direct and intentional impact, rather than instructional components unrelated to GRP's curriculum.

Evaluation Focus Area III: RESA Cohesiveness and Collaboration

GOSA's Research and Evaluation team developed the Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool for the GRP to collect qualitative data on the effectiveness of the collaboration among all RESAs as part of this program. The survey was administered in May to collect data at EOY. Due to consistency of specialist responses in the previous iterations of the GRP in 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, the RESA Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool was altered to include open-ended questions and fewer scaled items.

The reading specialists were asked to evaluate the RESA collaboration using a five-point Likert scale to determine how much they agree or disagree with two categories of statements assessing the partnership.[29] The two categories of statements measured program quality and consistency. Specialists were also asked to answer two open-ended questions about the qualities that they believe make the GRP successful and the components of cohesive inter-team collaboration.

The EOY Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool response rate was 92%. GOSA calculated the percent of reading specialists who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements in each category at the EOY.

Overall, reading specialists agreed that the RESA collaboration is strong and provides consistent professional learning for teachers across the state. All specialists rated the GRP as being good or excellent in comparison to other professional learning they have experienced. All respondents also felt the GRP has enabled consistent professional learning for teachers across the state. The high percentage of agreement among specialists indicates cohesiveness among the specialists and a strong, collaborative partnership.

The open-ended responses about the GRP partnership were all positive. All reading specialists recognized the growth they have observed in teachers and schools as a result of the GRP. Specialists are aware of implementation expectations and operate under the guidance of their shared foundational belief. Specialists also emphasized the Design Team's role in leading the other specialists in a continuous cycle of evaluation and reflection and adjusting the program to provide more targeted professional learning for both specialists and program participants. The GRP's evidence-based design reinforces the program with informed flexibility that allows specialists to provide targeted support while maintaining program consistency across the state.

> *"The consistency with which the program has been implemented and the guidance of the Design Team make this project unlike any other in which I have participated. Continued professional learning for the RESA specialists and a commitment to the Growing Readers foundational belief are also key factors in the consistency."*

The overall agreement among all reading specialists on the effectiveness and successes of the GRP reflects the cohesiveness throughout the program. Although the GRP can always continue to improve certain aspects of the partnership, these results show that an initiative like the GRP, which

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[29] The response options were Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), or Strongly Agree (5).

aims to enhance collaboration among all RESAs and provide standardized professional learning for educators in Georgia, is both feasible and beneficial to RESAs and the schools, teachers, and students they serve.

RESA Cohesiveness and Collaboration Recommendations

The Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool results demonstrate strong alignment and collaboration between RESAs for the GRP. Given the positive feedback, GOSA recommends the following:

- Continue to use the current collaborative model moving forward, especially the leadership of the Design Team and the program-wide meetings with all specialists, to establish and maintain consistency.
- Continue to utilize reflection and evaluation to improve program components while maintaining consistency.
- Promote the GRP collaboration within each RESA as an exemplar of how RESAs can collaborate more in the future to address other professional learning initiatives.
- Develop a handbook or best practices guide on how to successfully collaborate amongst RESA to deliver effective professional learning.

Evaluation Focus Area IV: Student Outcomes

To analyze student outcomes, GOSA evaluates independent reading levels for students in all participating teachers' classes. To align with the GRP's emphasis on conferring and independent reading, the GRP requested that schools choose one of four leveled reader systems to assess reading and track student growth:

- Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA),
- Fountas and Pinnell,
- Reading A-Z, or
- Rigby PM Benchmark Collection.

Using a leveled reader system, teachers determine a student's independent reading level during an individual conference by assessing the student's fluency, accuracy, and comprehension.[30] The GRP used students' independent reading levels at the BOY, MOY, and EOY to track student growth. Due to the flexibility in the selection of reading assessments, there was some diversity in the types of reading assessments GRP schools used. Table 9 shows the distribution of the four different leveling systems. Over 65% of GRP schools used Fountas and Pinnell.

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[30] A student's independent reading level is a text level that the student can read successfully without any assistance.

Table 9: Distribution of Leveled Reader Systems[31]

Leveled Reader System	Number of Schools
DRA	6
Fountas and Pinnell	34
Reading A-Z	3
Rigby PM	9

There are two challenges with using leveled reader systems to assess students. First, leveled reader system scales are not directly comparable. Some use letter scales, while others use numeric scales. In addition, the systems do not use equal interval scales. Thus, within a single system, progressing from a level A to level C is not the same as progressing from level F to level H, for example. Similarly, progressing from level 1 to 2 in one system is not the same as progressing from level A to B in another. As a result, GOSA cannot compare reading levels across grade levels or leveling systems. The second challenge is that teachers determine a student's independent reading level during an individual conference by evaluating the student's fluency, accuracy, and comprehension while reading. Given the subjective nature of the process, variability in teachers' abilities to accurately and consistently determine a student's independent reading level may impact the data.

To address these challenges, the GRP identified its own independent reading level grade level benchmarks for each leveling system. The GRP then used available research-based resources and their knowledge of each leveling system to correlate the reading levels of each system with one another. The GRP agreed to use the program-defined grade level benchmarks to assess overall student progress in reading performance. GOSA used the GRP benchmarks to evaluate the percentage of all students meeting program benchmarks at the MOY and EOY. The leveling system correlation chart with grade level benchmarks is available in Appendix D.

Furthermore, to minimize the subjective nature of determining a student's independent reading level, reading specialists completed calibration exercises to establish consistency between them. By August, all specialists had demonstrated inter-rater agreement in using fluency, accuracy, and comprehension to identify a student's independent reading level. The specialists then observed each school staff member who assessed student reading levels before MOY and EOY benchmark periods to evaluate inter-rater agreement among school staff.[32] At the MOY, specialists indicated that 100% of assessors demonstrated the ability to accurately assess student independent reading levels according to GRP guidelines.

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[31] Three schools did not submit assessment data due to external circumstances. Two schools used more than one assessment system.

[32] In most cases, the classroom teacher conducted the assessments. However, in some instances where the classroom teacher was not able or qualified to assess students, other school staff members such as coaches conducted the assessments.

Meeting GRP Grade-Level Benchmarks

Schools submitted BOY, MOY, and EOY data for 7,663 K-3 students.[33] The percentage of all students meeting GRP benchmarks grew by 29 percentage points, a statistically significant increase ($p < 0.05$) from 29% at the MOY to 58% at the EOY.[34]

Figure 2 shows a breakdown of the percentage of students meeting GRP benchmarks by grade level. The largest growth in performance was in kindergarten (47 percentage points), followed by first grade (32 percentage points). Using a two-sample t-test of proportions, the growth in the percentage of students meeting GRP benchmarks from MOY to EOY is statistically significant for all grades ($p < 0.05$).

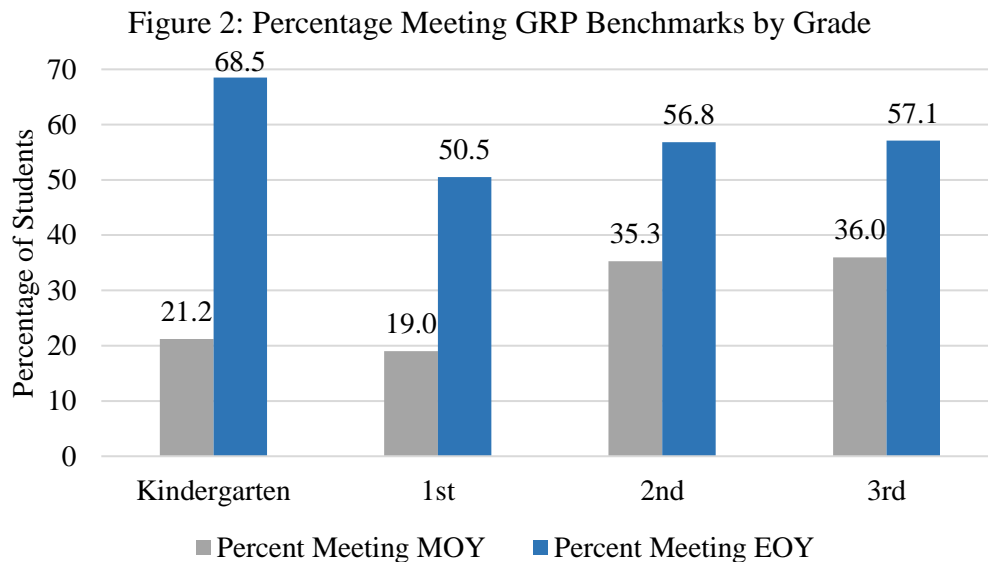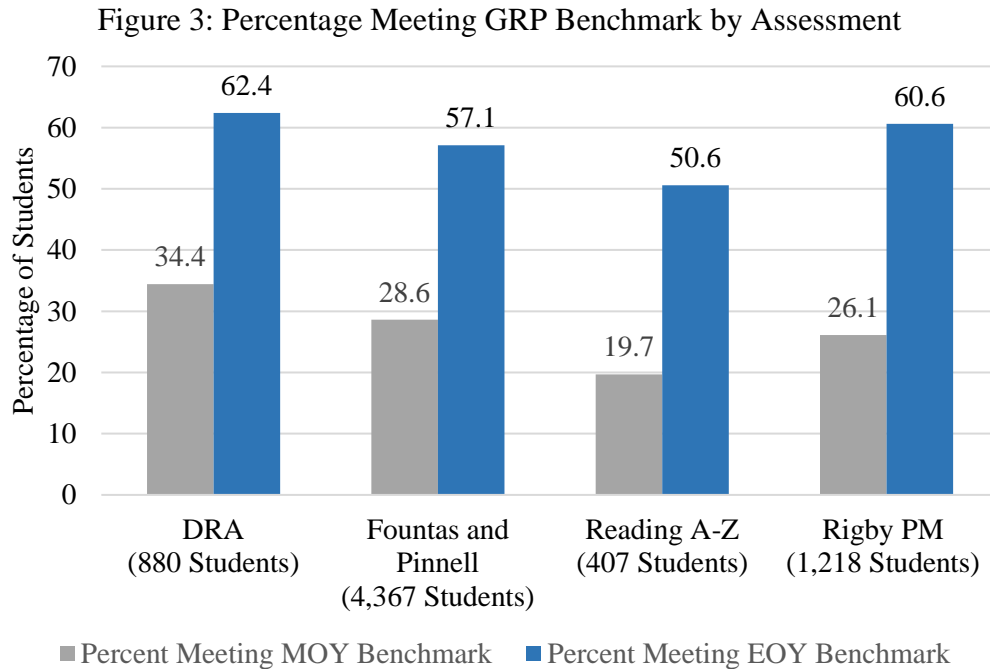Figure 2: Percentage Meeting GRP Benchmarks by Grade

Figure 3 displays the percentage of students meeting GRP benchmarks at the BOY, MOY, and EOY by leveled reader system. Students using all leveled reader systems saw statistically significant gains from MOY to EOY. Students taking the Rigby PM had the greatest increase (35 percentage points). It is important to consider the number of students taking each assessment, which ranges from 407 to 4,367, because the percentages for assessments with a smaller sample size will be affected more by changes in a few students meeting benchmarks than assessments with larger sample sizes. For histograms showing the changes in reading levels by leveling system, see Appendix E.

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[33] Although the GRP goal focused on MOY and EOY results, only students with matched BOY, MOY, and EOY scores were included in the analysis in order to ensure that students spent the entire school year in a GRP classroom and minimalize external factors.

[34] The GRP Design Team decided to use MOY scores for more accurate reporting because teachers did not receive professional learning or coaching on leveling students prior to BOY benchmarking.

Figure 3: Percentage Meeting GRP Benchmark by Assessment

When disaggregated by RESA, all RESAs saw growth in the percentage of students meeting benchmarks, but some RESAs saw greater growth than others. For instance, Okefenokee RESA increased the percentage of students meeting benchmark by 44 percentage points from MOY to EOY. On the other hand, Oconee RESA had a 16-percentage point increase from MOY to EOY.

When disaggregated by school, some schools had more growth than others, even though all schools increased their K-3 reading performance. Broxton Elementary School in Okefenokee RESA increased the percentage of students meeting benchmark by 50 percentage points from 27% at MOY to 77% at EOY. In contrast, Northwest Elementary in North Georgia RESA saw growth, but only by 9 percentage points from 31% at MOY to 40% at EOY. Nevertheless, the fact that all schools and RESAs saw improvements in reading performance from MOY to EOY indicates the GRP has had a positive impact on student reading outcomes.

Overall, the percentage of students meeting GRP grade level benchmarks increased significantly during the 2017-2018 school year, from 29% to 58% of all students.

GOSA does not have any information on the student performance of students who are not in the GRP to compare results and draw conclusions on the specific effect of the GRP on student achievement. Additionally, it is important to remember that student reading levels are dependent on a teacher's assessment of the student's reading ability and thus not standardized.

Growth of Target Students

To determine progress towards the GRP goal for struggling students, GOSA analyzed the percentage of target students meeting grade level benchmarks by the EOY. In year one, the GRP

defined a target student as any student performing below the grade-level benchmark at the MOY assessment. The Leveling System Correlation Chart with Grade Level Benchmarks can be found in Appendix D.

During the 2017-2018 school year, 4,746 students (62% of GRP students) were identified as target students at MOY. 42% of these students met grade level benchmarks by the EOY—just 8 percentage points below the year one goal. Table 10 shows the performance of target students by grade level. Kindergarten had the highest percentage (61%) of target students meeting grade level benchmarks at the EOY. This may be due to the fact that kindergarteners may not begin the school year as far behind in reading as students in upper grade levels; thus, kindergarteners may not have to improve by as many levels to be at grade level by the EOY. Second grade had the lowest percentage (33%) of target students meeting benchmarks by the EOY.

Table 10: Target Student Performance by Grade Level

Grade	Number of Target Students	Percent of Target Students Meeting EOY Benchmarks
Kindergarten	1,159	60.7
1st	1,295	39.1
2nd	1,069	33.0
3rd	1,223	34.2

Examining the percentage of target students meeting benchmarks provides only a partial picture of their growth because many improved their reading performance but still did not meet EOY benchmarks. Additionally, the identification of target students is for the purposes of the evaluation only, so these students may not have necessarily received supplemental supports from teachers. With this in mind, GOSA examined changes in reading levels using histograms for each leveling system, which are available in Appendix E. As a whole, many target students advanced in reading levels during 2017-2018 despite still not meeting grade-level benchmarks by the EOY. The GRP is thus making progress towards helping students, including students who were struggling readers, become better readers at the end of the school year.

Subgroup Analysis

To provide further information for program improvement, GOSA also looked at student performance by subgroups. Figure 4 breaks down the percentage of students meeting GRP benchmarks by race/ethnicity. The table also includes the percentage of target students meeting EOY benchmarks by race/ethnicity. Asian and white students performed better when compared to all GRP students and saw greater growth from the MOY to EOY. Hispanic students had a lower percentage of all students (48%) and target students (36%) meeting benchmarks when compared to the entire GRP (58% and 42%, respectively).
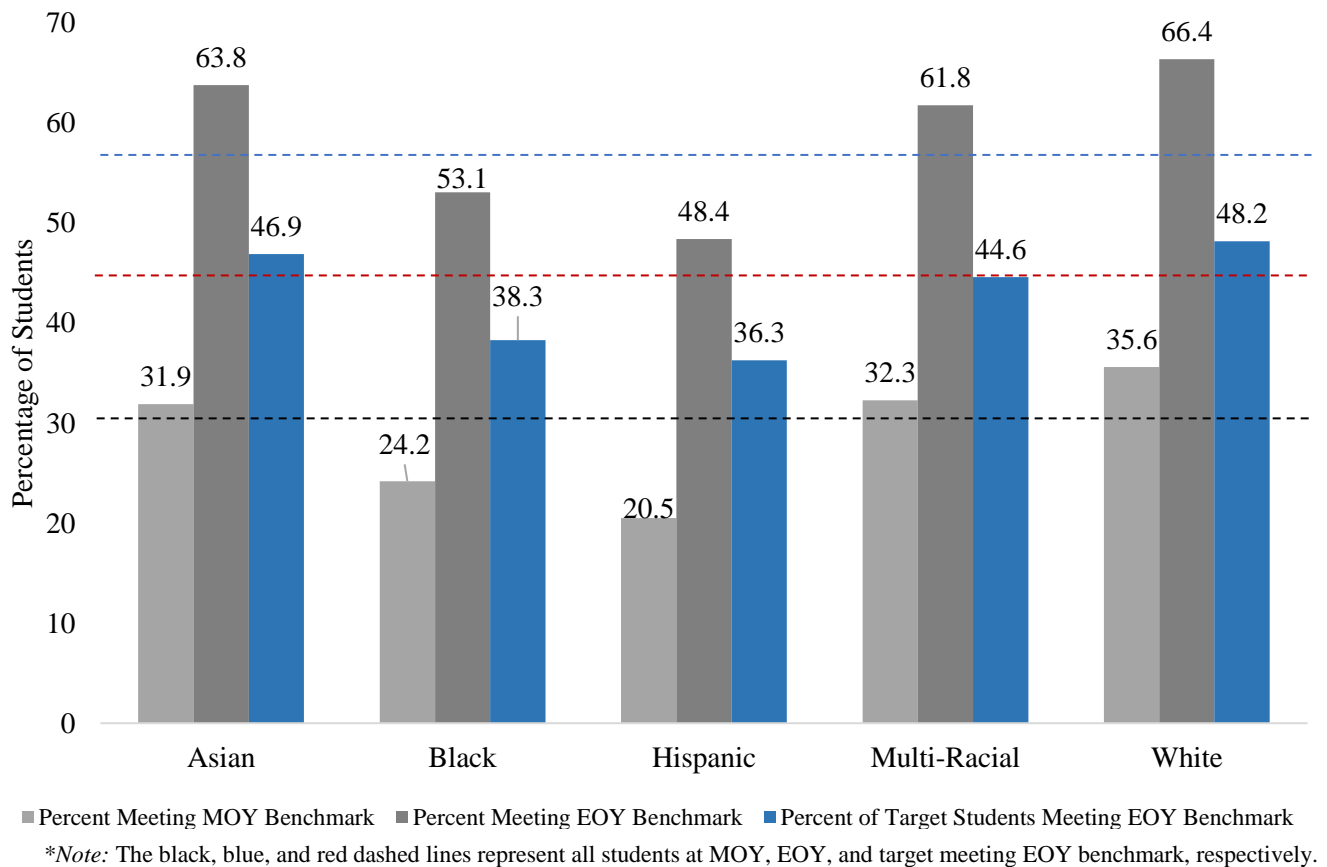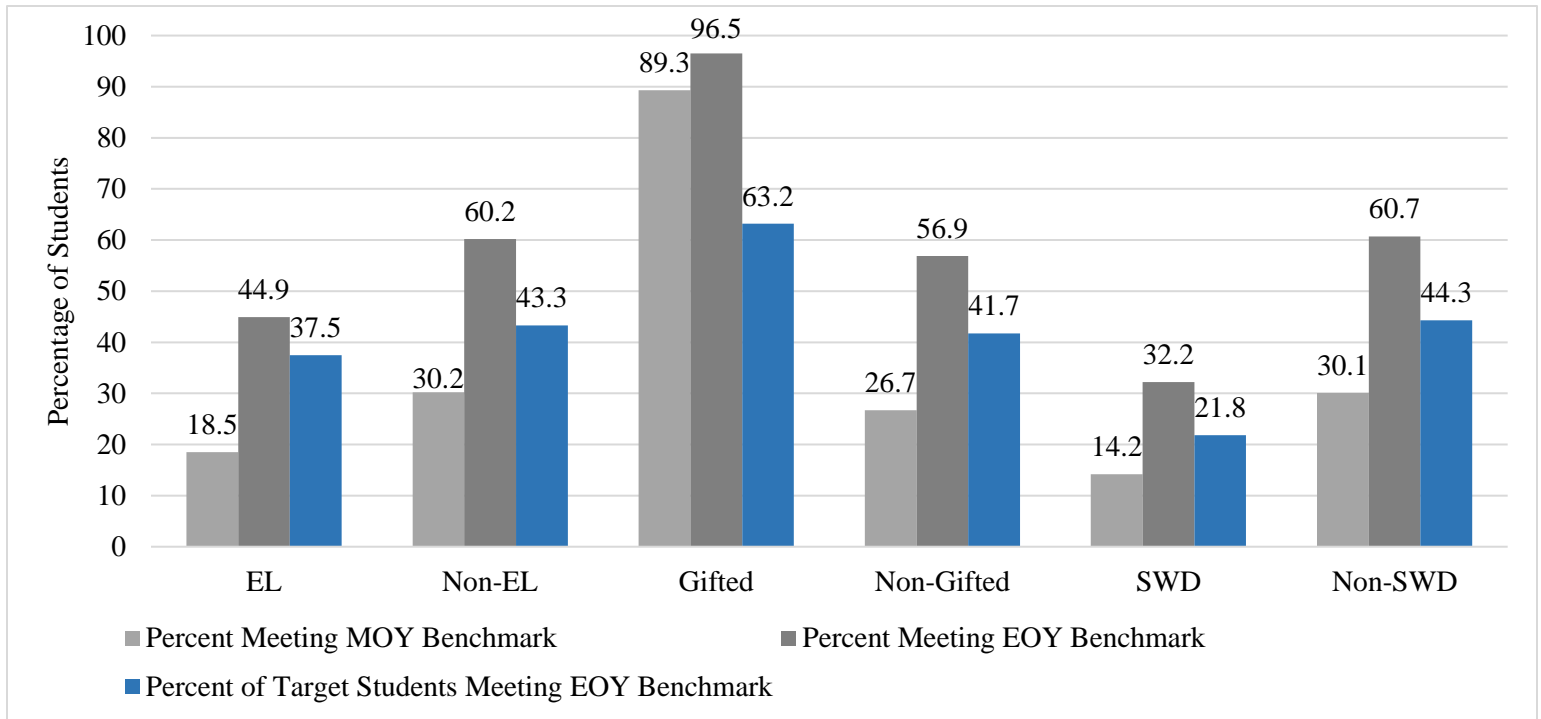
Figure 4: Percentage Meeting GRP Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity[35]

■ Percent Meeting MOY Benchmark ■ Percent Meeting EOY Benchmark ■ Percent of Target Students Meeting EOY Benchmark

Note: The black, blue, and red dashed lines represent all students at MOY, EOY, and target meeting EOY benchmark, respectively.

Figure 5 displays the differences in student performance by other subgroups, including English Learner (EL), Students with Disabilities (SWD), and gifted. EL students comprise 13% of GRP students. At the EOY, non-EL students achieved greater growth (47 percentage points compared to 39) and performed slightly better than EL students (60% compared to 45%). Non-EL students also had a slightly higher percentage of target students (43%) meeting EOY benchmarks compared to EL students (38%). Gifted students performed significantly higher (97%) than non-gifted students (57%) at the EOY, but did not have as much growth (25 percentage points compared to 47 percentage points). Finally, the percentage of SWD meeting EOY benchmarks (32%) was 29 percentage points lower than the percentage of non-SWD meeting benchmarks (61%).

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[35] American Indian and Pacific Islander were excluded because GOSA does not report data on subgroups with less than 10 students.

Figure 5: Percentage Meeting GRP Benchmarks by Other Subgroups

Student Outcomes Recommendations

Overall, the percentage of students meeting GRP benchmarks increased significantly from MOY to EOY. Although there is some variability by grade level, leveling system, RESA, and school in reading performance, GRP students have improved their reading performance in general. Target students also saw growth in the percentage of students meeting EOY benchmarks. However, it is important to remember that student reading levels are dependent on a teacher's assessment of the student's reading ability and thus not standardized.

In accordance with student benchmark data and informal feedback from specialists, GOSA recommends the following:

- Immerse teachers into the goal-setting process for their students and ensure they understand what one-year-growth looks like for each student.
- Conduct formal calibration exercises with teachers on determining a student's independent reading level to improve inter-rater reliability and the validity of assessment data.

Conclusion

The 2017-2018 GRP End-of-Year Evaluation Report is a comprehensive analysis of the GRP's activities during the 2017-2018 school year. This report includes major findings for the four evaluation focus areas: implementation consistency, teacher practice, and RESA cohesiveness and collaboration, and student outcomes.

Implementation Consistency

Data collected from quarterly status reports submitted by the reading specialists reveal that all RESAs completed program implementation milestones. The professional learning sessions, observations, and submission of assessment data were administered consistently, and all schools received similar services across all RESAs. The professional learning sessions received positive feedback overall. The majority of participants agreed that the sessions taught useful strategies, were engaging and organized, and prepared teachers to support struggling students. These findings provide evidence that each RESA is implementing all components of the grant, and the GRP has successfully delivered engaging and valuable professional learning to teachers across the state during the 2017-2018 school year. The GRP will continue to provide professional learning to teachers in year two of the program.

Teacher Practice

Data from the Teacher Observation Tool and EOY surveys provide insight on how the GRP has impacted teacher practice. Key findings indicate that the GRP met its goal for at least 75% of year one teachers to effectively conference with students. EOY survey data reveal that over 90% of teachers, administrators, and coaches felt the GRP was valuable to improving reading instruction and were likely to continue using GRP practices in the future. All stakeholders felt more proficient in and have seen increased use of conferencing and targeted interventions. These data demonstrate that teachers have begun to implement new strategies and change their practices after participating in the GRP.

RESA Cohesiveness and Collaboration

The Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool evaluates how cohesive, successful, and meaningful the RESA collaboration has been to the reading specialists. All specialists felt the partnership has enabled consistent professional learning across the state, allowed for collaboration among RESAs, and is likely to positively impact K-3 literacy instruction. They largely attributed the GRP cohesiveness to the work of the Design Team, the evidence-based practices, and their shared program focus.

Student Outcomes

Student independent reading level data reveals significant gains in reading achievement during the 2017-2018 school year. The percentage of all students meeting GRP grade level benchmarks grew by 29 percentage points to 58% at the EOY. Kindergarten students had the largest increase in the percentage of students meeting EOY benchmarks. Of about 4,746 target students who were below

grade level at the MOY, 42% of target students met grade level benchmarks by the EOY. However, it is important to note that student reading levels are determined by a teacher's assessment of the student's reading ability and are thus not standardized.

Summary

Overall, the major findings for implementation consistency and RESA cohesiveness and collaboration indicate that RESAs are collaborating and delivering consistent and high-quality K-3 literacy professional learning to teachers through the GRP. The teacher practice findings reveal that teachers are changing their instructional practice and implementing new strategies learned from the GRP in their classroom. As a result, student outcome data show that the percentage of students meeting program benchmarks has increased during the school year and target students made significant gains in reading performance. GOSA will continue to look at implementation consistency, teacher practice, RESA cohesiveness and collaboration, and student outcomes during the second year of the GRP in 2018-2019.

Appendix A: List of Participating Schools in the GRP

RESA	District	School
Central Savannah River Area RESA	Glascock County	Glascock County Consolidated School
Central Savannah River Area RESA	Jenkins County	Jenkins County Elementary School
Central Savannah River Area RESA	Richmond County	Jamestown Elementary School
Central Savannah River Area RESA	Richmond County	Rollins Elementary School
Chattahoochee Flint RESA	Marion County	LK Moss Elementary School
Chattahoochee Flint RESA	Sumter County	Furlow Charter School
Chattahoochee Flint RESA	Taylor County	Taylor County Elementary School
Chattahoochee Flint RESA	Taylor County	Taylor County Primary School
Coastal Plains RESA	Brooks County	Quitman Elementary School
Coastal Plains RESA	Echols County	Echols County Elementary School
Coastal Plains RESA	Valdosta City Schools	W. G. Nunn Elementary School
First District RESA	Candler County	Metter Elementary School
First District RESA	Screven County	Screven Elementary School
First District RESA	Tattnall County	Collins Elementary School
First District RESA	Tattnall County	Glennville Elementary School
Griffin RESA	Newton County	Fairview Elementary School
Griffin RESA	Newton County	West Newton Elementary School
Griffin RESA	Spalding County	Jackson Road Elementary School
Heart of Georgia RESA	Dodge County	South Dodge Elementary School
Heart of Georgia RESA	Pulaski County	Pulaski Elementary School
Heart of Georgia RESA	Treutlen County	Treutlen Elementary School
Metro RESA	DeKalb County	Smoke Rise Elementary School
Metro RESA	Fulton County	Dunwoody Springs Elementary School
Metro RESA	Fulton County	Palmetto Elementary School
Middle Georgia RESA	Jasper County	Jasper County Primary School
Middle Georgia RESA	Jasper County	Washington Park Elementary School
Middle Georgia RESA	Jones County	Gray Elementary School
Middle Georgia RESA	Jones County	Wells Elementary School
North Georgia RESA	Gilmer County Schools	Ellijay Elementary School
North Georgia RESA	Gilmer County Schools	Ellijay Primary School
North Georgia RESA	Gilmer County Schools	Mountain View Elementary School
North Georgia RESA	Murray County Schools	Northwest Elementary School
Northeast Georgia RESA	Jackson County	Maysville Elementary School

RESA	District	School
Northeast Georgia RESA	Oglethorpe County	Oglethorpe Elementary School
Northeast Georgia RESA	Oglethorpe County	Oglethorpe Primary School
Northeast Georgia RESA	Walton County	Monroe Elementary School
Northwest Georgia RESA	Rome City Schools	Anna K. Davie Elementary School
Northwest Georgia RESA	Rome City Schools	Elm Street Elementary School
Northwest Georgia RESA	Rome City Schools	North Heights Elementary School
Oconee RESA	Johnson County	Johnson County Elementary School
Oconee RESA	Wilkinson County	Wilkinson Primary School
Okefenokee RESA	Charlton County	Folkston Elementary School
Okefenokee RESA	Coffee County	Broxton-Mary Hayes Elementary School
Okefenokee RESA	Coffee County	West Green Elementary School
Pioneer RESA	Hall County	Chicopee Elementary School
Pioneer RESA	Hall County	Lyman Hall Elementary School
Pioneer RESA	Hall County	Sugar Hill Elementary School
Southwest Georgia RESA	Dougherty County	Turner Elementary School
Southwest Georgia RESA	Grady County	Eastside Elementary School
Southwest Georgia RESA	Grady County	Shiver Elementary School
West Georgia RESA	Coweta County	Western Elementary School
West Georgia RESA	Troup County	Franklin Forest Elementary School
West Georgia RESA	Troup County	West Point Elementary School

Appendix B: Teacher Observation Tool

Learning Target 1: Framework

Indicate whether each of the following statements was true for the lesson that you observed by checking the box.
- ☐ The instructional activities observed were clearly aligned to one or more of the Georgia Standards of Excellence.
- ☐ The instructional activities observed were clearly aligned to one of the five components of reading.

What type(s) of instruction were used during this observation?
- ☐ Whole Group
- ☐ Small Group
- ☐ Independent Practice
- ☐ An effective balance of instructional formats was observed.

Learning Target 2: Conferring

Conferring was observed during this visit:
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

For the instances of conferring you observed during the session, please rate the effectiveness of the practices for each phase that was implemented. <u>Note: If a phase was not observed during the observation, do not provide a rating</u>.
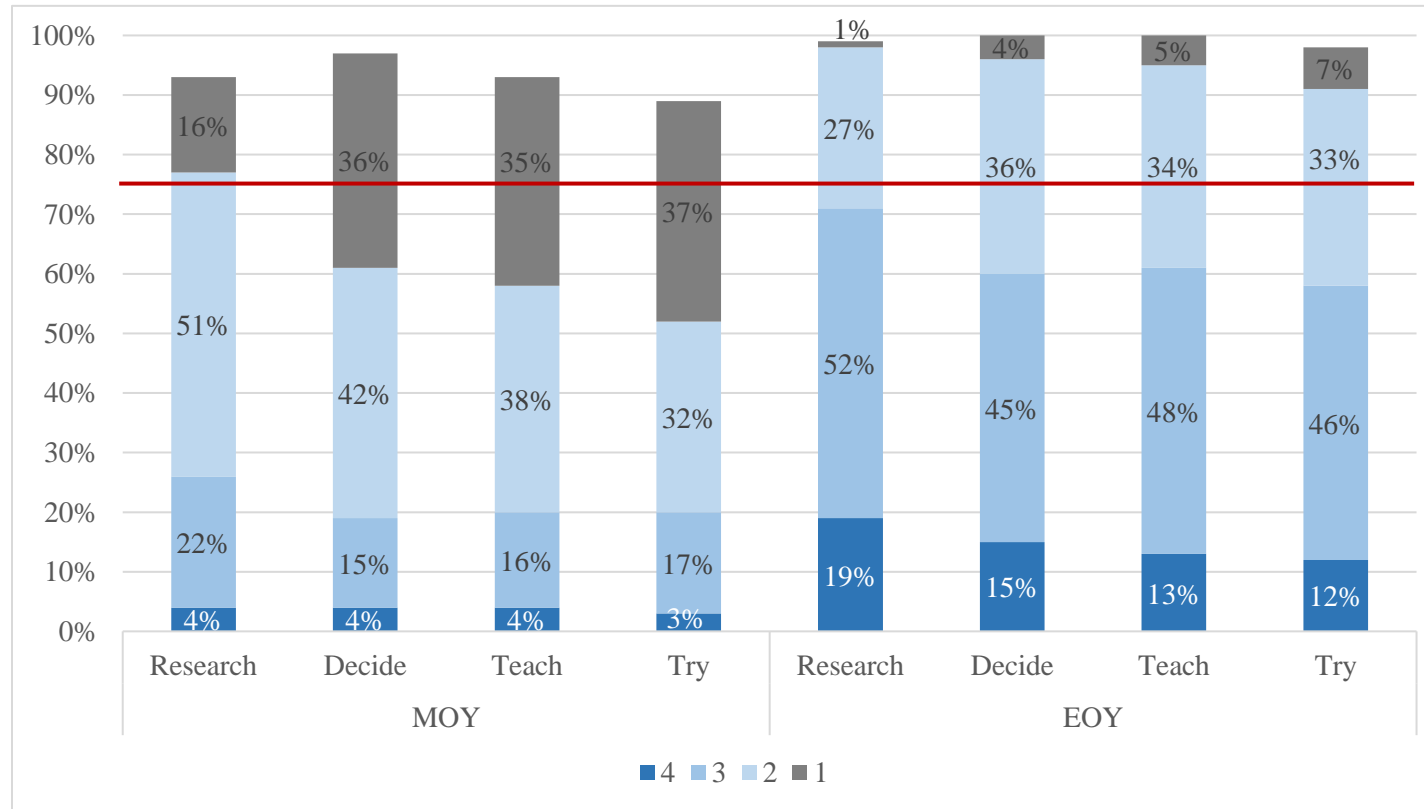
	4	3	2	1
Research	☐	☐	☐	☐
Design	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teach	☐	☐	☐	☐
Try	☐	☐	☐	☐

During the instances of conferring that were observed, the texts that were read by students were best described as being:
- ☐ On the student's independent reading level.
- ☐ Not appropriate for the student's independent reading level.

(If appropriate level) The text read by the student during the observed conferring session was appropriate based on which of the following criteria (select all that apply):
- ☐ The student's accuracy rate was at or above 96%.
- ☐ The student's fluency did not impact his/her understanding of the text.
- ☐ The student could accurately retell major events of the story

(If not appropriate level) The text read by the student during the observed conferring session was not appropriate based on which of the following criteria (select all that apply):
- ☐ The student's accuracy rate was less than 96%.
- ☐ The student's fluency did seem to impact his/her understanding of the story.
- ☐ The student could not accurately retell major events of the story.

Learning Target 3: Assessment

Evidence of Effective Assessment Strategies
- ☐ Observes reading behaviors
- ☐ Confers with students
- ☐ Formally assesses students
- ☐ Involves students in setting goals
- ☐ Diagnoses students' strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills
- ☐ Documents anecdotal notes about students
- ☐ Other

Evidence of Effective Assessment Uses
- ☐ Create flexible groups
- ☐ Provide feedback
- ☐ Engage students in appropriate independent practice
- ☐ Match students to appropriate leveled texts
- ☐ Deliver targeted, focused instruction to students
- ☐ Other

Learning Target 4: Interventions

The use of strategy groups was observed during the visit.
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

For the instances of strategy groups you observed during the session, please rate the effectiveness of the practices for each phase that was implemented. <u>Note: If a phase was not observed during the observation, do not provide a rating</u>.

	4	3	2	1
Research	☐	☐	☐	☐
Design	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teach	☐	☐	☐	☐
Try	☐	☐	☐	☐

Next Steps/Feedback

This section should describe the targeted area for feedback and additional coaching that will occur as a result of this observation.

Ongoing Support/Coaching

Appendix C: Teacher Observation Tool Mid-Year and End-of-Year Observed Conference Protocol Phases

Note: The red bar indicates the GRP goal that 75% of teachers should be observed conferring at a 2 or above by EOY. Some teachers were observed during multiple phases of the conference protocol, so percentages do not add up to 100%
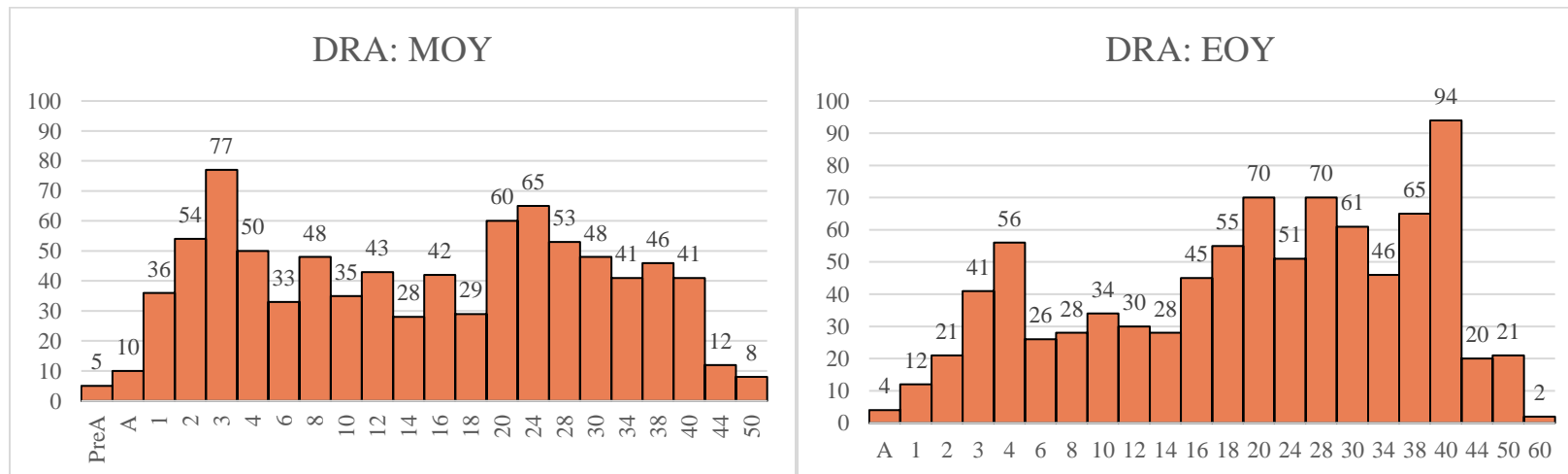
Appendix D: GRP Leveling System Correlation Chart with Grade Level Benchmarks

Grade Level Independent Reading Benchmarks						
Grade Level	Reading Recovery Target	Fountas and Pinnell Guided Reading Target	DRA Target	Rigby PM Benchmark Collection	Reading A-Z	Lucy Calkins Benchmark Assessment System
Kindergarten	3	C	3	3	C	C
First	15	I	16	15	I	I
Second	19	L	24	21	M	L
Third	34	O	34	24	S	O

Note: The year one goal was evaluated based on mid-year and end-of-year reported independent levels since teachers were not calibrated until the middle of the first year of implementation. Students were considered target students if they had a level lower than the benchmark for their grade level.
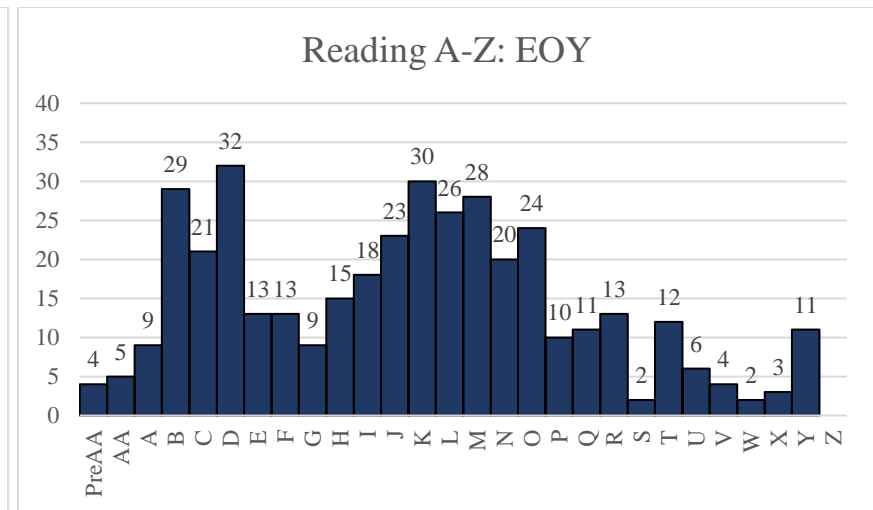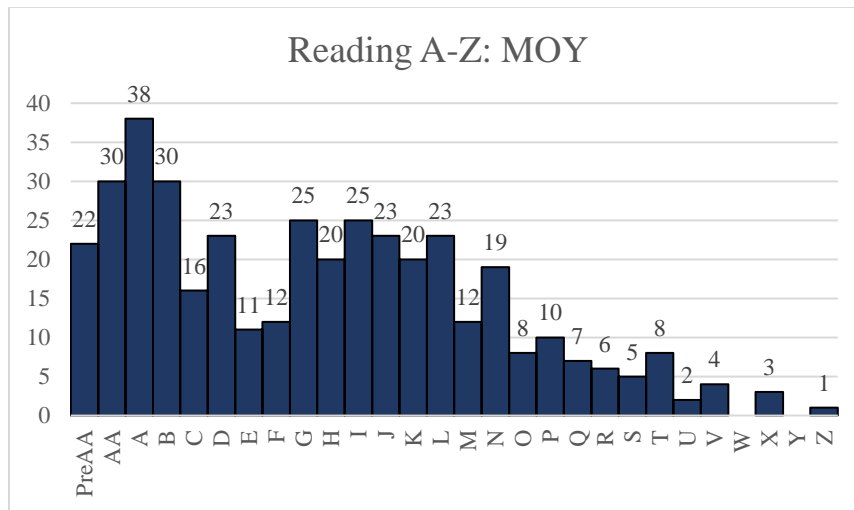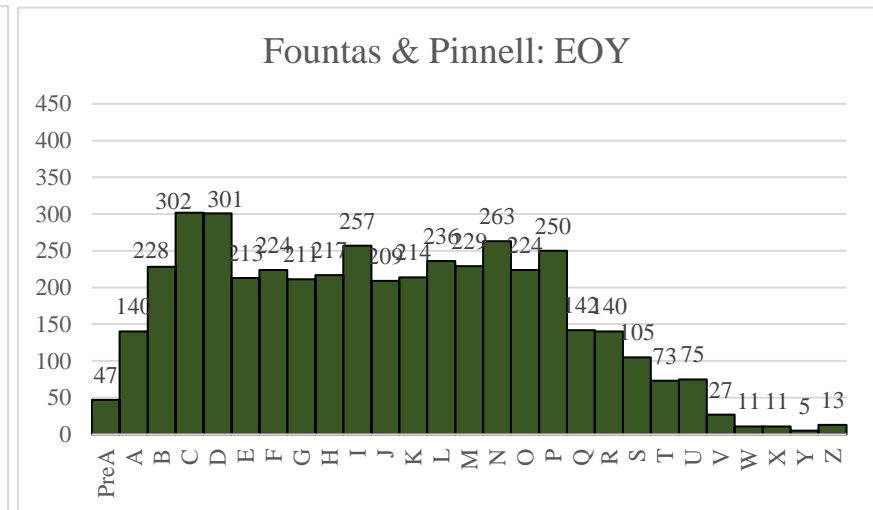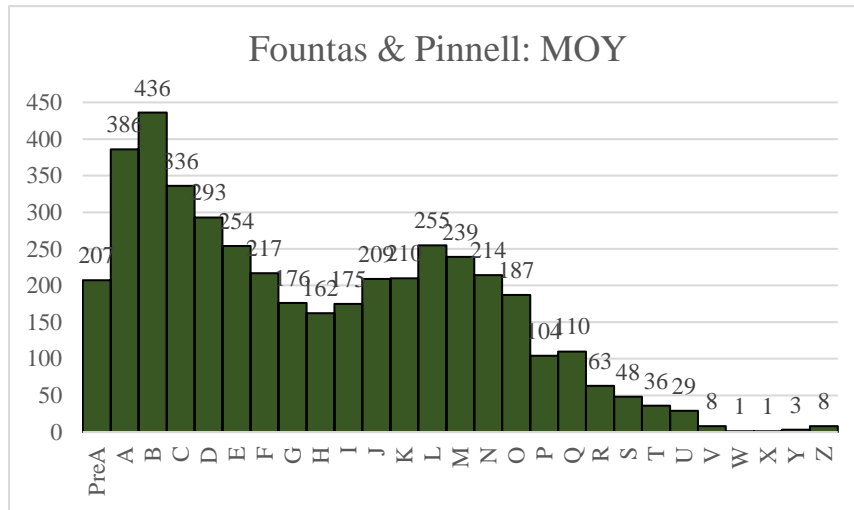
Appendix E: Histograms of Changes in Reading Levels by Leveling System

Each leveled reader system has a different scale of reading levels. Some use letter scales, while others use numeric scales, and the systems do not use equal interval scales. Within a single system, progressing from level A to C is not the same as progressing from level F to H. Similarly, progressing from level 1 to 2 in one system is not the same as progressing from level A to B in another. Thus, the range of levels varies by leveled reader system and grade level. See Appendix D for the typical levels associated with grades K-3 for each system.
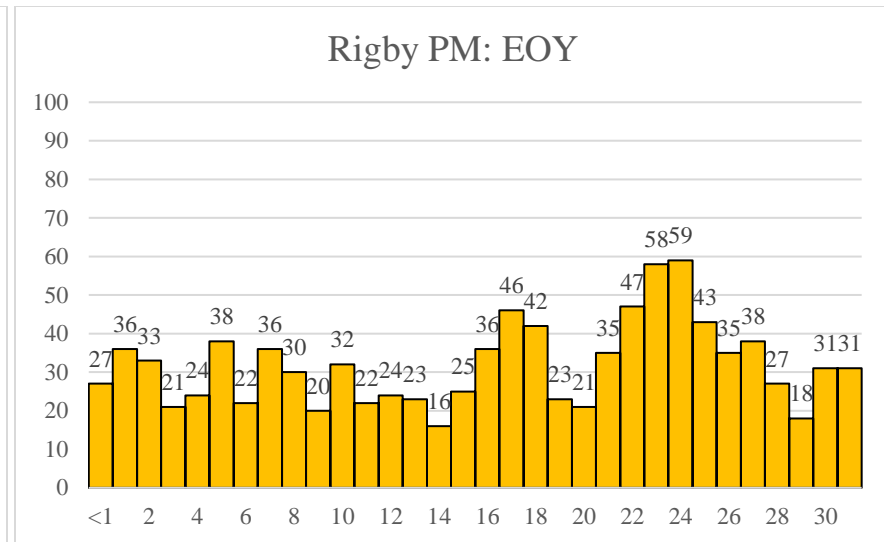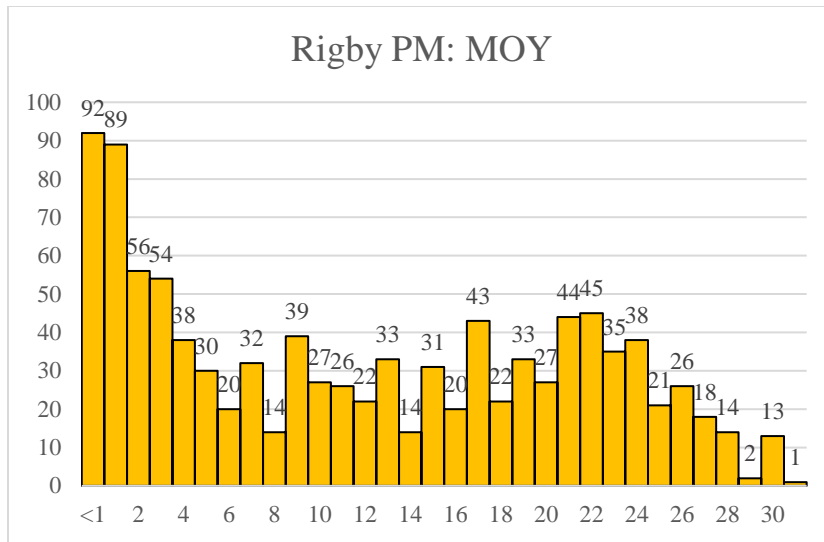

Note: Y-axis represents the count of students.

Fountas & Pinnell: MOY

Fountas & Pinnell: EOY

Reading A-Z: MOY

Reading A-Z: EOY

Note: Y-axis represents the count of students.

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Rigby PM: MOY

Rigby PM: EOY

Note: Y-axis represents the count of students.[36]

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[36] Additional histograms by grade level are available upon request.

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