



GROWING READERS: A K-3 LITERACY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING GRANT

2018-2019 End-of-Year Evaluation Report

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**Governor's Office of
Student Achievement**

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Executive Summary

Overview

The Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) Growing Readers Program 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. Growing Readers 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 and promote high quality literacy instruction throughout the state.

The first iteration of Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers began in the 2017-2018 school year with new schools and teachers and continued the focus on literacy instruction for K-3 students in the same schools through the 2018-2019 school year. During 2017-2018, 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 During 2018-2019, the second year of the program, reading specialists continued to support the same schools and teachers from the previous year. 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 second iteration of Growing Readers, RESAs recruited schools using the 2016 College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) Third Grade Lexile Indicator for schools in each RESA.² RESAs gave priority to schools with Third Grade Lexile Indicators below the state average. Each RESA selected three schools to participate. Schools then selected two teachers per grade level from kindergarten to third grade to participate in Growing Readers. Growing Readers now has 25 reading specialists working with 53 schools in all 16 RESAs.

Program Goals

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

By the end of year one (Spring 2018):

- Observation data will show 75 percent of grant teachers effectively implement conferring.
 - Growing Readers met this goal. Ninety-eight percent of teachers were observed effectively conferring at the end of year one.
- Fifty percent 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.

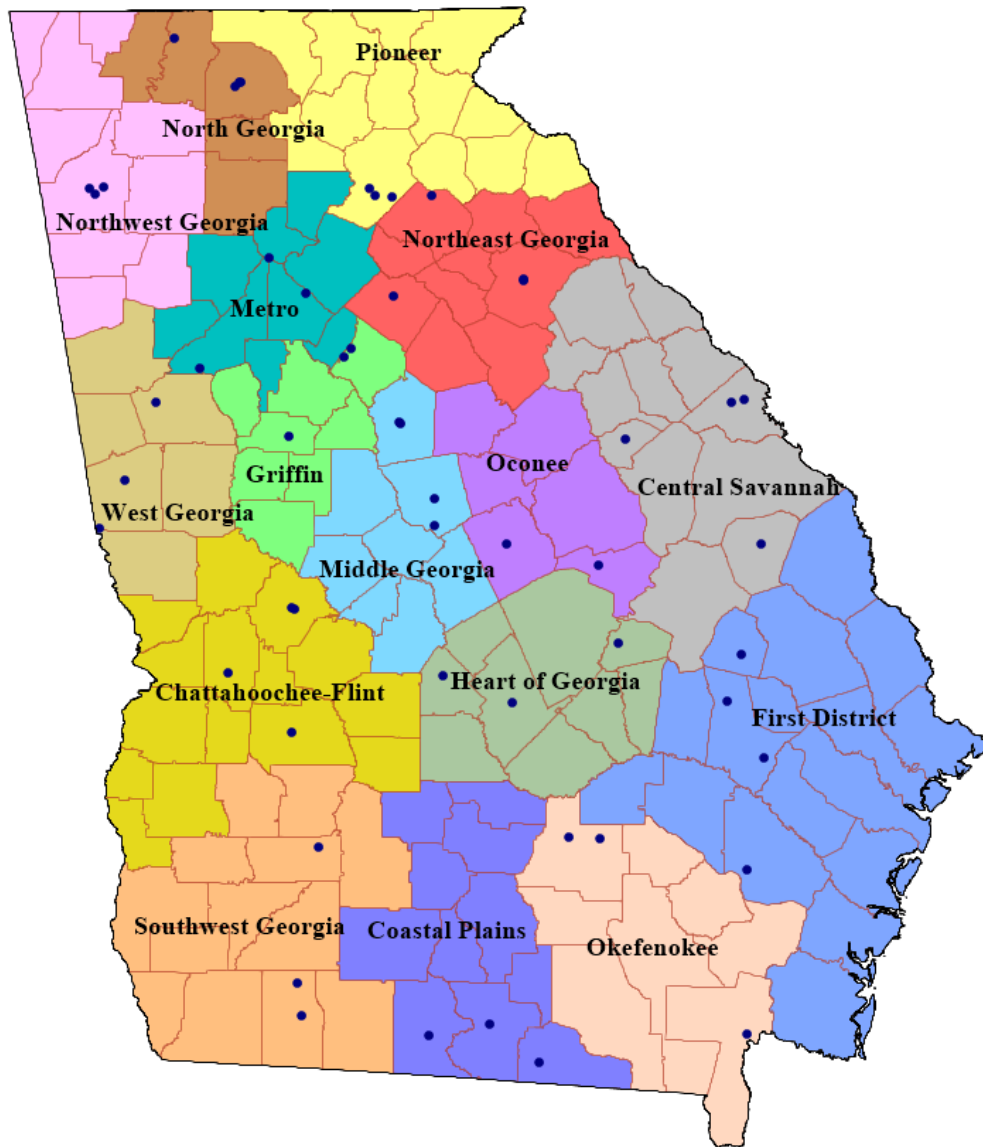
¹ Tiered interventions are part of the Response-to-Intervention (RTI) model in which teachers provide individualized supports in addition to regular classroom instruction to students who are performing below grade level according to the student's specific needs.

² The 2016 CCRPI Third Grade Lexile Indicator was used for school recruitment because the 2017 data were not yet available.

- Growing Readers was close to meeting this goal. Forty-two percent 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 percent of grant teachers effectively implement conferring.
 - Growing Readers met this goal. Ninety-six percent of teachers were observed effectively conferring at the end of year two.
- Observation data will show 75 percent of grant teachers effectively implement strategy groups.
 - Growing Readers met this goal. Ninety-seven percent of teachers were observed effectively implementing strategy groups at the end of year two.
- Fifty percent 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.
 - Growing Readers was close to meeting this goal. Forty-eight percent of students reading below the EOY benchmark on the mid-year assessment were on or above grade level at the EOY—two percentage points below target.
- Eighty-five percent of struggling readers in grant classrooms will increase reading achievement by a minimum of one year's growth.
 - Sixty-five percent of struggling readers in grant classrooms increased their reading achievement by a minimum of one year's growth.



Map of Participating Growing Readers 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 2018-2019 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 Growing Readers during 2018-2019, 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.

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:

- Growing Readers met its goal for at least 90 percent of teachers to conference effectively with students at the end of year two, because 96 percent of teachers were observed effectively conferring at EOY.
- Growing Readers met its goal for at least 75 percent of grant teachers to effectively implement strategy groups, because 97 percent of teachers were observed effectively implementing strategy groups at the end of year two.
- Over 96 percent of teachers, administrators, and coaches felt Growing Readers was valuable to improving literacy instruction and were likely to continue using Growing Readers strategies in the future.
- By the end of the 2018-2019 school year, over 99 percent of teachers believed they were at least proficient in conferencing with students, compared to less than 23 percent at the beginning of the iteration.
- By the end of the 2018-2019 school year, 98 percent of teachers believed they were at least proficient in implementing strategy groups to support struggling students, compared to 19 percent at the beginning of the iteration.
- On average, administrators and coaches observed at least a 35 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 from the beginning to the end of the program.

- All participants recommended increasing the number of participants in Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers using a Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool.³ Key findings include:

- All specialists felt Growing Readers partnership has enabled consistent professional learning for teachers across the state.
- All specialists rated Growing Readers partnership as being excellent in comparison to other professional learning they had facilitated.
- All specialists felt like valued members of the Growing Readers Team.

RESA specialists also provided recommendations for Growing Readers as it moves into its expansion in 2019-2020. Specialists noted that Growing Readers should focus on sustaining the existing Growing Readers model, maintaining their non-evaluative approach, and emphasizing consistent statewide implementation.

Evaluation Focus Area IV: Student Outcomes

GOSA's Research and Evaluation team analyzed student independent reading levels using four different leveling systems at the BOY, middle-of-year (MOY) and EOY. The analysis measured two different student outcomes: (1) The percentage of students who were below EOY benchmark at MOY that met EOY benchmark at EOY, and (2) the percentage of students who were below BOY benchmark at BOY who demonstrated one-year growth at EOY. Key findings include:

- The average percentage of *all* students meeting Growing Readers benchmarks grew by 50 percentage points from 12 percent at the BOY to 62 percent at the EOY.
- The average percentage of *all* students meeting Growing Readers benchmarks grew by 31 percentage points from 31 percent at the MOY to 62 percent at the EOY.
- Kindergarten saw the largest growth from both BOY to EOY (66 percentage points) and MOY to EOY (41 percentage points) in the percentage of students meeting Growing Readers benchmarks at the EOY.
- Forty-eight percent of target students, who were below the EOY benchmark at the mid-year assessment met grade level benchmarks by the EOY (two percentage points under the year two Growing Readers goal).

³ Due to the RESA specialists' consistently positive responses in prior evaluations, the Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool was shortened to five targeted questions to assess the main themes of Growing Readers team's collaboration and provide recommendations on the Growing Readers expansion moving forward.

- Sixty-five percent of struggling readers in grant classrooms increased their reading achievement by a minimum of one year's growth, 20 percentage points below the year two Growing Readers goal.

Recommendations

Based on the major findings and within the context of the new Growing Readers cohort and Growing Readers' 2019-2020 expansion, some of GOSA's key recommendations include:

- Identify potential opportunities for Growing Readers participants to collaborate with other Growing Readers 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.
- Continue to immerse teachers into the goal-setting process for their students and ensure they understand what one-year-growth looks like for each student.
- Apply the results from the 2018-2019 evaluation to inform goals for the 2019-2021 Growing Readers implementation.
- Identify additional opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own practice and growth as a result of Growing Readers to encourage the development of personal and professional goals.
- Encourage teachers to internalize their personal responsibility in sustaining Growing Readers practices after the end of their two-year guidance.
- Utilize Certified Growing Readers Specialists to uphold the mission and unifying beliefs of Growing Readers as it expands to include new schools in 2019-2020.⁴

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 Growing Readers, teachers are changing their reading instructional practices to incorporate new strategies such as conferencing and strategy groups.

Growing Readers will begin its 2019-2021 iteration with an expansion that will impact more Georgia schools, teachers, and students. The expansion also includes the State Certification Project, which aims to implement, support and sustain the Growing Readers Program by certifying district and/or school staff members as Statewide Certified Growing Readers Specialists and increasing the number of administrators, teachers, and students engaged in Growing Readers literacy practices. Growing Readers has also partnered with the Georgia Department of Education to empower administration in select Growing Readers schools through School Improvement Specialist and School Effectiveness Specialist support.

⁴ A full list of [Certified Growing Readers Specialists](#) is available on the GOSA Website.

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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
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 (Growing Readers) 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 Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers began in the 2017-2018 school year with new schools and teachers and continued 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. Growing Readers 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-3)--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, Growing Readers' focus is providing support for struggling readers through conferencing and strategy groups. Growing Readers currently serves 53 schools and works with approximately 390 teachers and 7,600 K-3 students throughout the state. If successful, GOSA hopes that Growing Readers can continue to demonstrate the value of providing consistent, high-quality professional learning statewide through the RESAs to improve student achievement outcomes.

The 2018-2019 Growing Readers End-of-Year Evaluation Report is a comprehensive analysis of Growing Readers' activities during the 2018-2019 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 Growing Readers' 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.

Growing Readers Mission and Goals

The mission of Growing Readers 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. Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers, as identified in the strategic plan, include:

By the end of year one:

- Observation data will show 75 percent of grant teachers effectively implement conferring.
- Fifty percent 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 percent of grant teachers effectively implement conferring.
- Observation data will show 75 percent of grant teachers effectively implement strategy groups.
- Fifty percent 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.
- Eighty-five percent of struggling readers in grant classrooms will increase reading achievement by a minimum of one year's growth.

The 2018-2019 evaluation report focuses on the goals for year two.

Profile of Participating Schools

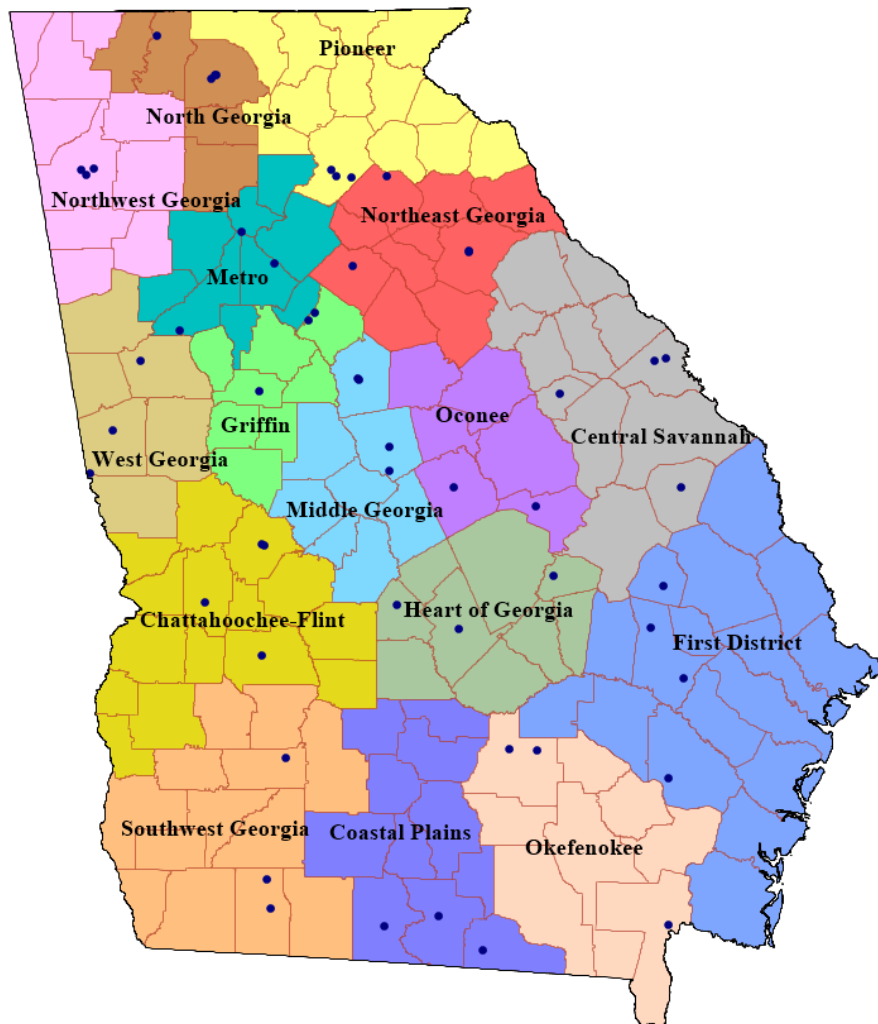


Figure 1: Map of Participating Growing Readers Schools

The 2018-2019 Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers.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.

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 Growing Readers.

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 Growing Readers schools was 37.8, which means 37.8 percent 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 Growing Readers schools' average Third Grade Lexile Indicator was 12 percentage points lower than the state percentage of 49.1 percent 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 Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers student participants with Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) demographic data provided by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE).¹⁰ During the 2018-2019 school year, Growing Readers served approximately 7,600 students. Table 1 shows the approximate racial/ethnic distribution of students in Growing Readers schools and the state. Overall, Growing Readers' racial/ethnic distribution of students is aligned with the state's student population.

Table 1: Demographic Profile Comparison of Growing Readers Students and the State

	Growing Readers Students	All Students in Georgia	Difference in Percentage Points
American Indian	<1%	<1%	0
Asian	1%	4%	+3
Black	36%	37%	+1
Hispanic	19%	16%	-3
Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%	0
Multi-Racial	4%	4%	0
White	40%	39%	-1

Source: GaDOE March 2019 FTE Enrollment by Ethnicity/Race & Gender and GOSA K-12 Public Schools Report Card.

Nineteen percent of students in Growing Readers are Hispanic, which is three percentage points higher than the state's overall percentage (16 percent). Asian students comprise a smaller share of Growing Readers students (1 percent) than the state as a whole (4 percent). The representation of white students in Growing Readers (40 percent) is one percentage point greater than that of Georgia (39 percent). Given these differences, it is important to remember that the demographic

⁸ The 2016 CCRPI Third Grade Lexile Indicator was used for school recruitment because the 2017 data were 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.

profile in Table 1 is simply an overall summary of the racial/ethnic demographics for students in participating Growing Readers schools and does not capture school-level differences within the program.

Twelve percent of Growing Readers students are classified as students with disabilities (SWD), which is the same as the state's share of SWD students during the 2017-2018 school year (12 percent).¹¹ Fifteen percent of Growing Readers students are English Learners, which is five percentage points higher than the eight percent of all Georgia students classified as English Learners in 2018-2019.

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 percent 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 Growing Readers schools during 2018-2019 was 49 percent, and the median percentage was 50 percent, much higher than the state average of 36 percent.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

¹¹ State subgroup data were obtained through GOSA's Annual Report Card available [here](#). GOSA used 2017-2018 data because 2018-2019 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 2017-2018.

¹⁴ Survey instruments can be made available upon request.

Table 2: Summary of GOSA's Growing Readers Evaluation Plan

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

Major Findings

Throughout the 2018-2019 school year, GOSA collected data on Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers, 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 Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers and meet all expectations.

During the 2018-2019 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 Growing Readers' Design Team in addition to their duties as a reading specialist. The Design Team is a group of six highly qualified reading specialists who collaborate to develop the professional learning curricula for Growing Readers. 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. Schools submitted assessment data to GOSA at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. Thus, each RESA is implementing all components of Growing Readers.

Professional Learning Session Feedback Forms

Growing Readers consists of four total professional learning sessions administered over the course of two years. Participants attended Sessions 1 and 2 in year one and Sessions 3 and 4 in year two. GOSA's primary vision for Growing Readers 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 3 occurred from late August through mid-September and Session 4 from late January to mid-February.¹⁵ All sessions consisted of two eight-hour days and focused on the same five 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;
4. Understand and use effective reading assessment practices; and
5. Implement strategy groups based on student needs.

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 Session 3 and Session 4, approximately 9 percent of participants were professional learning only.

¹⁵ The flexibility in professional learning scheduling allowed specialists to accommodate the availability of their teachers and Growing Readers 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 92 percent 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 3 (Percent Agree or Strongly Agree)	Session 4 (Percent Agree or Strongly Agree)
I learned useful literacy intervention strategies that I can apply in the classroom.	95%	95%
I feel more confident in supporting my Tier 2 and Tier 3 students instructionally.	92%	96%
I feel prepared to implement the strategies I learned today in the classroom.	95%	96%
The Professional Learning Session was well organized.	96%	97%
The Professional Learning Session was presented at an appropriate level.	96%	97%
The Professional Learning Session was engaging.	95%	96%
The strategies and resources utilized were appropriate for meeting the stated objectives of the Professional Learning Session.	96%	97%

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;

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

- 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.

“I loved that the training taught me how to effectively teach a strategy in a group. I was so used to doing it one on one, and it is so beneficial to teach a strategy in a group! I am so grateful for this training.”

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 Growing Readers, or a desire for the program to continue.

When asked what participants would like to improve about the sessions, most 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 Growing Readers network, such as collaborative discussions during sessions or observing teachers at other schools. Nevertheless, given that responses to the improvement question were positive overall, Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers’ learning targets. Several teachers also expressed a desire to share what they learned with other teachers. Thus, Growing Readers 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 like the fact that I had an opportunity to meet with other kindergarten teachers and discuss strategies that work for them and build my strategies. I also love that I have grown as a reading teacher.”

Implementation Consistency Recommendations

The major findings from the quarterly status reports and Professional Learning Session Feedback Forms indicate that reading specialists are implementing Growing Readers consistently across all RESAs. All participants are receiving the same professional learning on how to support struggling

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 Growing Readers as a whole rather than by RESA.

readers, and survey results indicate that an overwhelming majority of participants agree that they are learning useful strategies to implement in the classroom.

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 Growing Readers teachers in order to maximize the impact of Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers. Reading specialists submitted observation data for teachers during 2018-2019 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. Growing Readers’ goal for year two is for at least 75 percent of teachers to effectively implement conferring. A copy of the complete Teacher Observation Tool is available in Appendix B.

For Growing Readers teachers, reading specialists observed an entire literacy block to collect baseline data at the BOY (Formal 3) and then conducted observations of each teacher at the MOY (Formal 4) and EOY (Formal 5). GOSA received 202 baseline observations, 223 MOY observations, and 296 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 Teachers Observed Implementing Indicators

Learning Target	Indicator Measured	Percentage of Teachers		
		Formal 3	Formal 4	Formal 5
<i>Framework (Standards and Five Components of Reading)</i>	Aligned to appropriate standard	92%	93%	94%
	Aligned with one of five components of reading	95%	97%	96%
	Effective balance of instructional formats	49%	65%	70%
<i>Conferring</i>	Conferring with students	86%	28%	96%
<i>Assessment</i>	Use of assessment strategies	100%	99%	99%
	Use of assessment data to guide instruction	98%	99%	100%
<i>Interventions</i>	Use of strategy groups	34%	98%	97%

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.

Under Growing Readers model, both the MOY and EOY observations focused on conferencing strategies and strategy groups. Thus, to evaluate Growing Readers' progress towards its teacher practice goal, GOSA examined the percentage of year two teachers implementing specific practices at the BOY, MOY, or EOY. Growing Readers met its goal of at least 90 percent of teachers implementing conferring, with 96 percent of teachers implementing conferring with their students.

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.

Growing Readers established that for year two teachers, 90 percent 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 90 percent of participating teachers received a two or above in the Try (93 percent), Teach (95 percent), Decide (96 percent), and Research (99 percent) phases, thus meeting the year one Growing Readers goal. Overall, specialists observed a comprehensive growth in teacher conferencing ability.²² Full results on Observed Conferencing Protocol Phases are in Appendix C.

After the previous iteration of Growing Readers in 2015-2017, Growing Readers changed its goals to focus on improving teacher conferencing skills in year one and strategy groups in year two. Growing Readers met its goal of 75 percent of teachers utilizing strategy groups, with 97 percent of teachers using strategy groups with their students. At the BOY, only 34 percent of teachers were utilizing strategy groups. From BOY to EOY, there was a 63-percentage point difference in teachers using strategy groups.

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. Growing Readers professional learning sessions and onsite coaching and modeling 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.

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).

Teacher End-of-Year Survey

GOSA administered an EOY survey to all Growing Readers teacher participants to evaluate the impact of Growing Readers on teacher practice and collect feedback on the program. Teachers were asked to complete the survey electronically in May 2019. GOSA received 301 responses for a response rate of about 87 percent.²³ The survey consisted of 17 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 96 percent of respondents felt supported by the reading specialist, applied what they learned from Growing Readers in the classroom, would recommend the program to a colleague, and were likely to continue using Growing Readers 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, 68 percent of respondents felt Growing Readers professional learning sessions were different from traditional professional development at his/her school. Respondents felt Growing Readers 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.

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	
<i>How valuable have the following Growing Readers supports been to your teaching practice?</i>	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	96%
	Observations of your classroom by the RESA Reading Specialist	Percent Very or Extremely Valuable	90%
	One-on-one coaching with the RESA Reading Specialist	Percent Very or Extremely Valuable	93%
<i>How often have you been able to do the following?</i>	Reflect on your reading instructional practice	Percent Often or Always	95%
	Communicate with other teachers about reading instruction	Percent Often or Always	88%
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	68%
How supported do you feel by the reading specialist?		Percent Very or Extremely Supported	98%
How valuable is your participation in Growing Readers to improving your instructional practice?		Percent Very or Extremely Valuable	97%
How often do you apply what you learn from the reading specialist in your classroom?		Percent Often or Always	98%
What is the likelihood that you will continue using the strategies you learned from Growing Readers in the future?		Percent Very or Extremely Likely	97%
Would you recommend Growing Readers to a colleague?		Percent Yes	98%

When asked to rate their interactions with the reading specialist during the year, teachers felt very satisfied. Ninety-nine percent 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 Growing Readers. Respondents were asked to rate their level of knowledge of specific learning targets prior to Growing Readers 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, selecting targeted intervention strategies to support struggling readers and implementing strategy groups to support struggling students, as the percent proficient in these areas increased by at least 75 percentage points. The growth in conferring, selecting targeted interventions, and implementing strategy groups reflects the emphasis on conferring, intervention strategies, and strategy groups during professional learning sessions. Growing Readers 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	23%	99%
Administering reading assessments to monitor student progress	44%	99%
Using formal and informal reading assessment data to make instructional decisions	43%	99%
Selecting targeted reading intervention strategies to support struggling students	24%	98%
Implementing strategy groups to support struggling students	19%	98%

Teachers also provided feedback through open-ended response questions. When asked how Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers, 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 Growing Readers, 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 Growing Readers 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. Growing Readers has had a noticeable impact on teacher practice during the 2018-2019 school year, which

²⁵ All Growing Readers teachers received a copy of Jennifer Serravallo’s, *The Reading Strategies Book* as part of their professional learning.

aligns with the Teacher Observation Tool findings of dramatic growth in using new strategies such as conferring.

Administrator/Coach End-of-Year Survey

GOSA also administered an EOY survey to all Growing Readers participants serving in an administrative or coaching role in a school or district to evaluate the impact of Growing Readers 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 78 responses from administrators and coaches representing 89 percent of Growing Readers schools. The survey consisted of 20 questions, including general background questions, pre/post retrospective questions, open-ended questions, and attitude questions rated on a five-point scale.²⁶ The majority (40 percent) of respondents were coaches, 34 percent were principals, and 19 percent were assistant principals.²⁷

The survey asked respondents to indicate how often they participated in various Growing Readers activities during the school year. Seventy-two percent of respondents often or always attended the professional learning sessions, and 71 percent of respondents frequently had discussions about reading performance with the reading specialist. Respondents were not as involved (30 percent) 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 Growing Readers. Over 97 percent of respondents felt supported by the reading specialist. One hundred percent of respondents planned to continue the use of Growing Readers strategies and would recommend Growing Readers to another school. Over 97 percent of respondents felt the professional learning sessions, materials and resources, and feedback from reading specialist were valuable supports.

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	
<i>How valuable have the following Growing Readers supports been to your teachers?</i>	Professional learning sessions led by the RESA Reading Specialist	Percent Very or Extremely Valuable	100%
	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	97%
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	61%
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	100%
How supported do you feel by the reading specialist?		Percent Very or Extremely Supported	97%
How valuable is your school's participation in Growing Readers in meeting your school's literacy goals?		Percent Very or Extremely Valuable	96%
How has your relationship with your RESA changed after participating in Growing Readers?		Percent Slightly or Much Improved	88%
What is the likelihood that you will continue to encourage the use of strategies learned from Growing Readers in the future?		Percent Very or Extremely Likely	100%
Would you recommend Growing Readers to another school?		Percent Yes	100%
Would you be willing to pay your RESA to continue providing Growing Readers?		Percent Yes	60%

Sixty-one percent of respondents felt Growing Readers professional learning sessions were very or extremely different from traditional professional development at the school, and several respondents indicated that Growing Readers is more focused, sustainable and hands-on than their traditional professional development. Additionally, 60 percent of respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay their RESA to continue providing Growing Readers because they felt it is a worthwhile program.²⁸ Some respondents felt Growing Readers should be implemented statewide and incorporate grades past K-3.

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, was on time and was knowledgeable about reading. Ninety-seven percent of respondents knew when the specialist was going to be in their school, 99 percent felt like they could trust their specialist, and 92 percent said the specialist provided them with aggregate feedback on the reading performance of participating classrooms. Overall, reading specialists developed very strong relationships with administrators and coaches as well.

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

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 Growing Readers. Seventy-five percent of respondents felt they could teach a colleague how to select targeted reading intervention strategies by the EOY, compared to only 36 percent at the BOY. Similarly, 81 percent of respondents felt they could teach a colleague how to use assessment data to drive instruction at the EOY, compared to 39 percent at the BOY. Growing Readers 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 classrooms prior to Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers learning targets as a result of Growing Readers. At the time of the survey, over 91 percent of respondents observed teachers conferencing with struggling readers to assess progress, provide feedback, and set goals, using formal and informal reading assessment data to make instructional decisions, and using a combination of whole group instruction, small group instruction, and independent practice during literacy blocks. Respondents observed the greatest growth (73 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 Growing Readers.

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.	23%	95%
Teachers administering reading assessments frequently to monitor student progress.	28%	81%
Teachers using formal and informal reading assessment data to make instructional decisions.	30%	92%
Teachers implementing targeted reading intervention strategies to struggling students.	23%	89%
Teachers sharing reading instructional strategies with each other.	16%	80%
Teachers using a combination of whole group instruction, small group instruction, and independent practice during literacy blocks.	47%	95%

“It has not only given teachers new strategies to use with their readers, but also showed them how to implement those strategies. Teachers who participated in this program now see the benefits of independent reading, conferring, and strategy grouping.”

Finally, administrators and coaches provided additional feedback in open-ended responses. When asked how Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers, 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 Growing Readers. Finally, when asked what they would improve about Growing Readers, 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 Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers has positively impacted teacher practice during the 2018-2019 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:

- 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.
- Continue to focus on conferencing and implementing strategy groups to keep percentages high.
- Revise the Teacher Observation Tool to focus more on the impact of specific Growing Readers practices and ensure that the tool measures Growing Readers direct and intentional impact, rather than instructional components unrelated to Growing Readers curriculum.

Evaluation Focus Area III: RESA Cohesiveness and Collaboration

GOSA's Research and Evaluation team developed the Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool for Growing Readers to collect qualitative data on the effectiveness of the collaboration among all RESAs as part of this program. The survey was administered in May 2019 to collect data at EOY. Due to consistency of specialist responses in the previous iterations of Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers successful and the components of cohesive inter-team collaboration.

GOSA calculated the percentage 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 Growing Readers as being good or excellent in comparison to other professional learning they have experienced. All respondents also felt Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers partnership were all positive. All reading specialists recognized the growth they have observed in teachers and schools as a result of Growing Readers. Specialists are aware of implementation expectations and operate under the guidance of their shared foundational belief. When asked what could have been done differently to see more results, specialists agreed that there needed to be more calibration for teachers, additional classroom modeling, and potentially working with students beyond third grade.

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

“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.”

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

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 Growing Readers. 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.
- Provide more calibration activities for teachers regarding student assessment for more consistency statewide.
- Continue to utilize reflection and evaluation to improve program components while maintaining consistency.
- Promote Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers' emphasis on conferring and independent reading, Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers schools used. Table 9 shows the distribution of the four different leveling systems. Over 65 percent of Growing Readers schools used Fountas and Pinnell.

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 Systems³¹

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, Growing Readers identified its own independent reading level grade level benchmarks for each leveling system. Growing Readers then used available research-based resources and their knowledge of each leveling system to correlate the reading levels of each system with one another. Growing Readers agreed to use the program-defined grade level benchmarks to assess overall student progress in reading performance. GOSA used Growing Readers 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 percent of assessors demonstrated the ability to accurately assess student independent reading levels according to Growing Readers guidelines.

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 Growing Readers Grade-Level Benchmarks

Schools submitted BOY, MOY, and EOY data for 5,373 K-3 students.³³ The percentage of all students meeting Growing Readers benchmarks grew by 50 percentage points, from 12 percent at the BOY to 63 percent at the EOY. The percentage of all students meeting Growing Readers benchmarks grew by 31 percentage points, from 31 percent at the MOY to 62 percent at the EOY.

Figure 2 shows a breakdown of the percentage of students meeting Growing Readers benchmarks by grade level. The largest growth in performance was in kindergarten (66 percentage points), followed by first grade (40 percentage points).

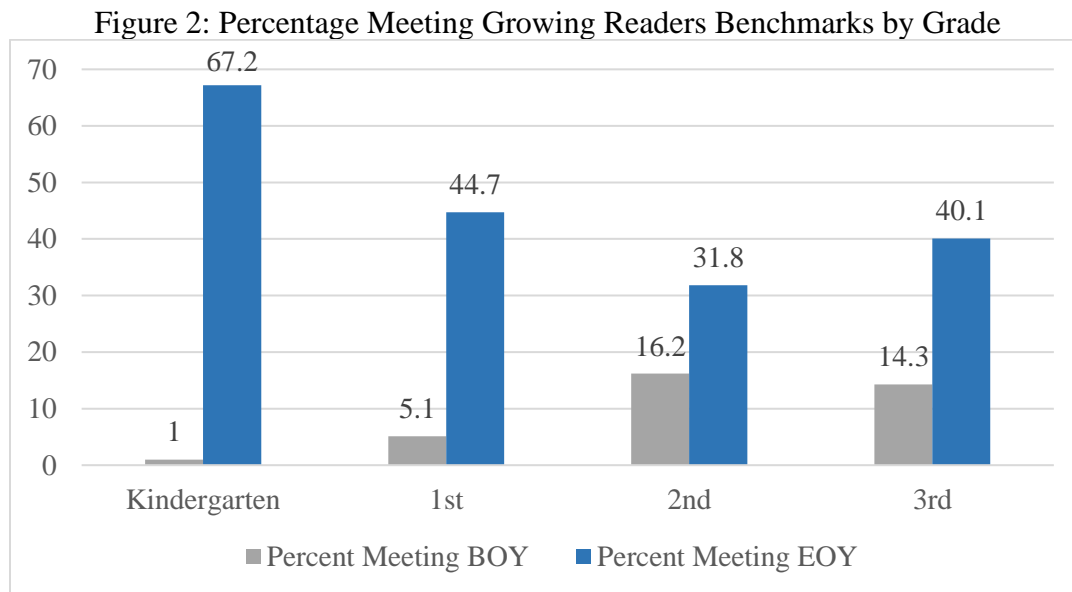
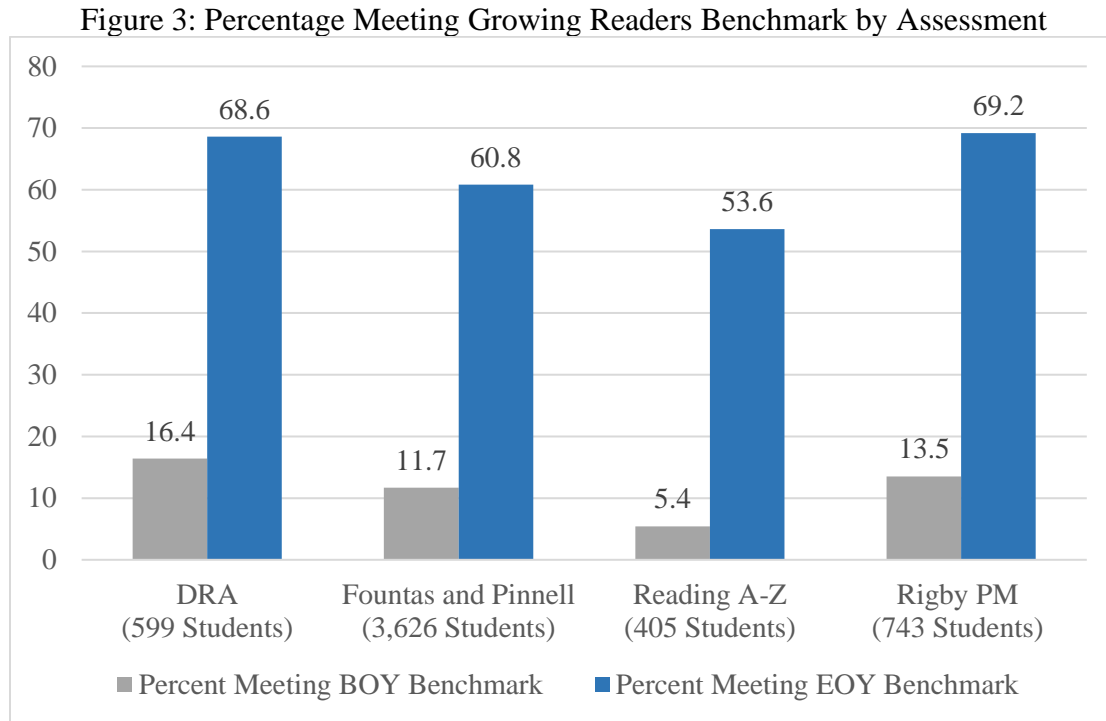


Figure 3 displays the percentage of students meeting Growing Readers benchmarks at the BOY and EOY by leveled reader system. Students using all leveled reader systems saw statistically significant gains from BOY to EOY. Students taking the Rigby PM had the greatest increase (56 percentage points). It is important to consider the number of students taking each assessment, which ranges from 405 to 3,626, 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.

³³ 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 Growing Readers classroom and minimize external factors.



When disaggregated by RESA, all RESAs saw growth in the percentage of students meeting benchmarks, but some RESAs saw greater growth than others. For every RESA, the percentage of students meeting benchmark ranged from 47 percent to 80 percent.

Overall, the percentage of students meeting Growing Readers grade level benchmarks increased significantly during the 2018-2019 school year, from 12 percent to 63 percent of all students.

GOSA does not have any information on the student performance of students who are not in Growing Readers to compare results and draw conclusions on the specific effect of Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers goal for struggling students, GOSA analyzed the percentage of target students meeting grade level benchmarks by the EOY. In year two, Growing Readers defined a target student as any student performing below the grade-level EOY benchmark at the mid-year assessment. Leveling System Correlation Chart with Grade Level Benchmarks can be found in Appendix D.

During the 2018-2019 school year, 3,775 students were identified as target students at MOY. Forty-eight percent of these students met grade level benchmarks by the EOY—just two

percentage points below the year two goal. Table 10 shows the performance of target students by assessment.

Table 10: Target Student Performance by Assessment

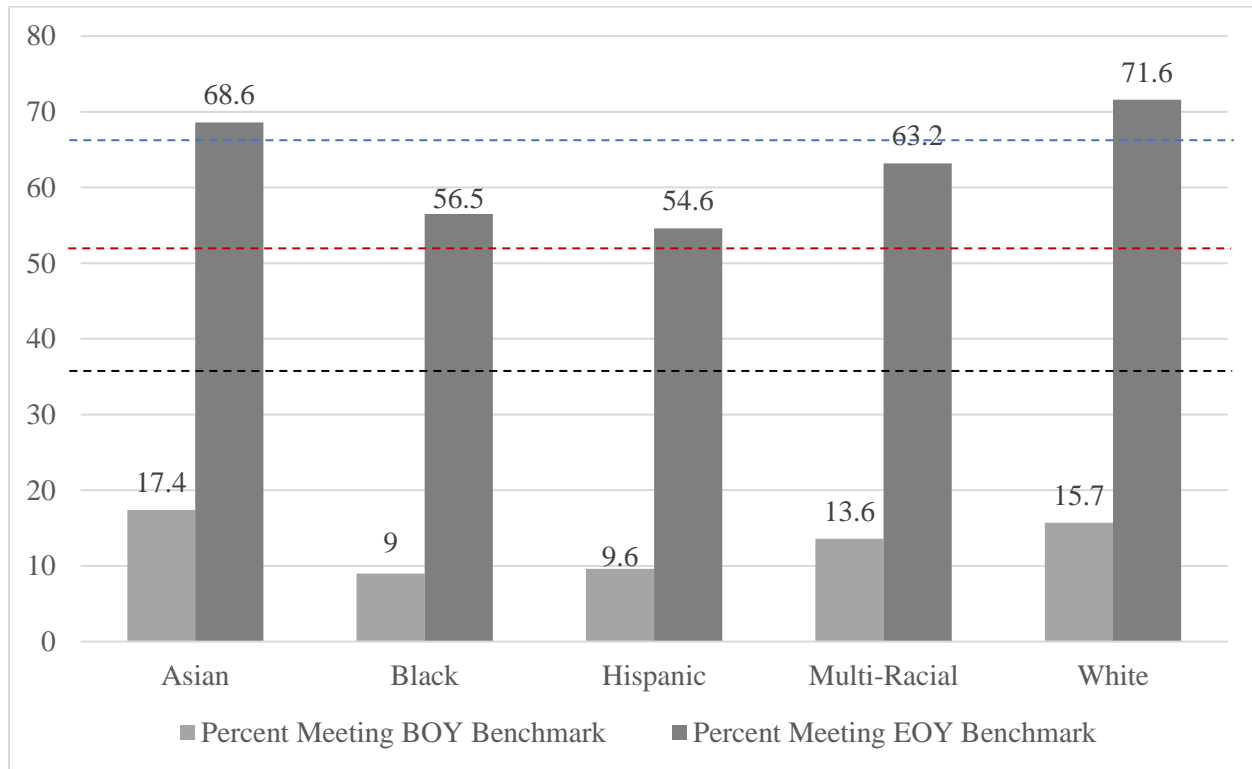
Assessment	Number of Target Students	Percent of Target Students Meeting EOY Benchmarks
Fountas & Pinnell	2,452	45.4
Rigby	643	64.4
Reading A-Z	294	36.4
DRA	386	50.8

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. Many target students advanced in reading levels during 2018-2019 despite still not meeting grade-level benchmarks by the EOY. Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers students and saw greater growth from the BOY to EOY. Hispanic students had a lower percentage of all students (55 percent) meeting benchmarks when compared to other subgroups. All race/ethnicities grew at least 45 percentage points from BOY to EOY.

Figure 4: Percentage Meeting Growing Readers Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity³⁴

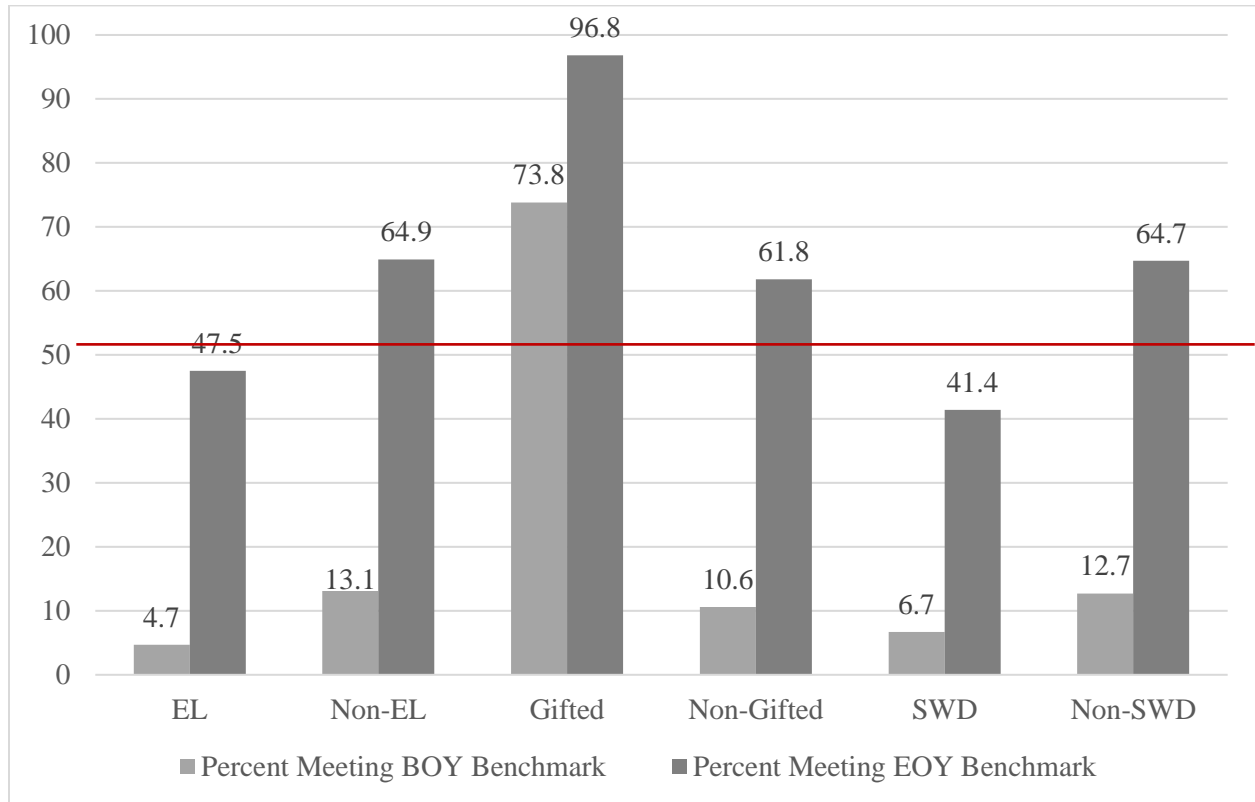


*Note: The black, blue, and red dashed lines represent all students at MOY, EOY, and target meeting EOY benchmark, respectively

Figure 5 displays the differences in student performance by other subgroups, including English Learner (EL), Students with Disabilities (SWD), and gifted. At the EOY, non-EL students achieved greater growth (52 percentage points compared to 43) and performed slightly better than EL students (65 percent compared to 48 percent). Gifted students performed significantly higher (97 percent) than non-gifted students (62 percent) at the EOY, but did not have as much growth (23 percentage points compared to 51 percentage points). Finally, the percentage of SWD meeting EOY benchmarks (41 percent) was 24 percentage points lower than the percentage of non-SWD meeting benchmarks (65 percent).

³⁴ American Indian and Pacific Islander were excluded because GOSA does not report data on subgroups with less than 10 students.

Figure 5: Percentage Meeting Growing Readers Benchmarks by Other Subgroups



Student Outcomes Recommendations

Overall, the percentage of students meeting Growing Readers benchmarks increased significantly from BOY to EOY. Although there is some variability by grade level, leveling system, RESA, and school in reading performance, Growing Readers 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 2018-2019 Growing Readers End-of-Year Evaluation Report is a comprehensive analysis of Growing Readers' activities during the 2018-2019 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 Growing Readers has successfully delivered engaging and valuable professional learning to teachers across the state during the 2018-2019 school year.

Teacher Practice

Data from the Teacher Observation Tool and EOY surveys provide insight on how Growing Readers has impacted teacher practice. Key findings indicate that Growing Readers met its goal for at least 90 percent of year one teachers to effectively conference with students. EOY survey data reveal that over 95 percent of teachers, administrators, and coaches felt Growing Readers was valuable to improving reading instruction and were likely to continue using Growing Readers 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 Growing Readers.

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 Growing Readers cohesiveness to the work of the Design Team, the evidence-based practices, and their shared program focus.

Student Outcomes

Student independent reading level data reveal significant gains in reading achievement during the 2018-2019 school year. The percentage of all students meeting Growing Readers grade level benchmarks grew by 50 percentage points from BOY to EOY. Kindergarten students had the largest increase in the percentage of students meeting EOY benchmarks. Of about 3,775 target students who were below grade level at the MOY, 48 percent 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 Growing Readers. The teacher practice findings reveal that teachers are changing their instructional practice and implementing new strategies learned from Growing Readers 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 new iteration of Growing Readers in 2019-2020.

Appendix A: List of Participating Schools in Growing Readers

RESA	District	School
Central Savannah River Area RESA	Glascocock County	Glascocock 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

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RESA	District	School
Northeast Georgia RESA	Jackson County	Maysville Elementary 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. Note: If a phase was not observed during the observation, do not provide a rating.

	4	3	2	1
Research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Try	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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 percent.
- ☐ 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 percent.
- ☐ 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. Note: If a phase was not observed during the observation, do not provide a rating.

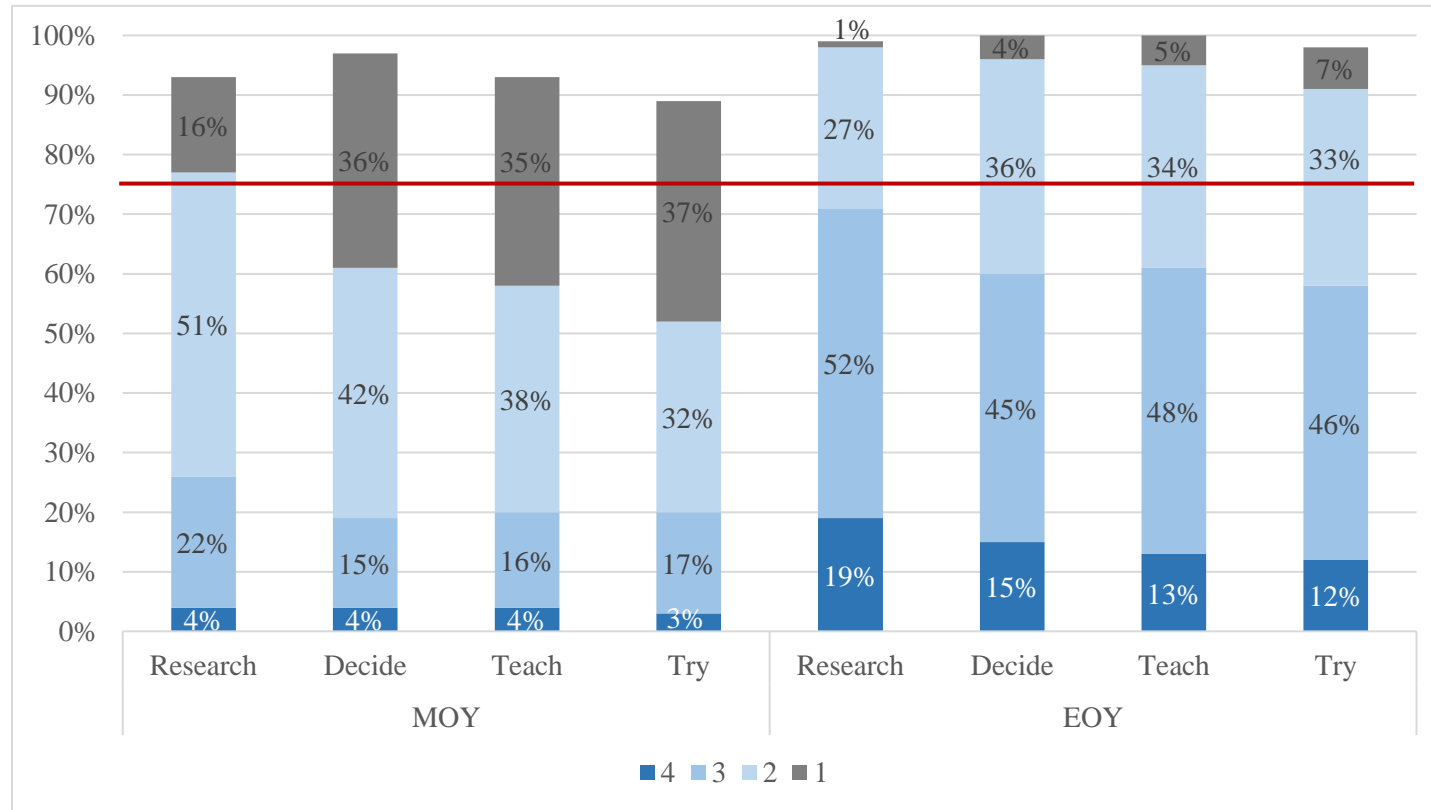
	4	3	2	1
Research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Try	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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 Growing Readers goal that 75 percent 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 percent*

Percentage Meeting Growing Readers Benchmarks by Race/Ethnicity

Appendix D: Growing Readers 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 two goal was evaluated based on mid-year and end-of-year reported independent levels to remain consistent with year one goal measurement. Teachers in year one 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.*

