



**Governor's Office of
Student Achievement**



GROWING READERS: A K-3 LITERACY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING GRANT

**2018-2019 End-of-Year Evaluation
Report Executive Summary**



Growing Readers
Georgia's RESA Network



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

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Overview

The Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) Growing Readers 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.ⁱ 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.ⁱⁱ 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

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.
 - 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.

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.



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. 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).
- 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.

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.

ⁱTiered 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.

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