

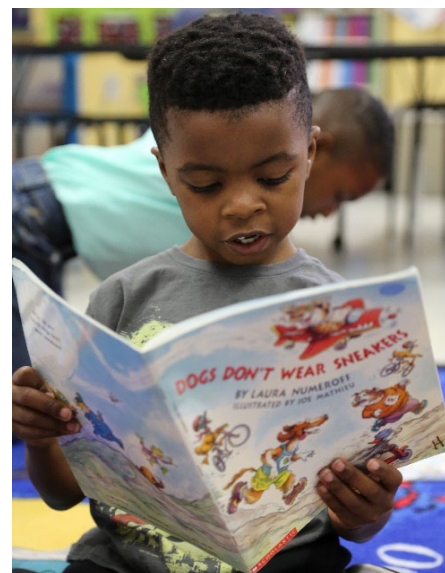


**Governor's Office of
Student Achievement**



GROWING READERS: A K-3 LITERACY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING GRANT

**2019-2020 End-of-Year Evaluation
Report Executive Summary**



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

2019-2020 End-of-Year Evaluation Report Executive Summary

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Overview

Growing Readers is a K-3 literacy professional learning grant designed and implemented through Georgia's Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs) and administered through the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) and the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). Growing Readers works 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 this initiative directly impacts student success in reading in grades K-3.

Growing Readers was first implemented during the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years and was originally designed as a single-year program. Analysis of feedback and data led to its redesign to a two-year program, and the second model was implemented during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. Recommendations received through the evaluation process were used to make additional changes that are reflected in the current two-year cycle. This iteration of Growing Readers began in the 2019-2020 school year with new schools and teachers and continued the focus on literacy instruction for K-3 students in those schools. The current cycle includes the addition of a State Certification Project, which aims to implement, support, and sustain Growing Readers by certifying district and/or school staff members, known as Candidates, as

Statewide Certified Growing Readers Specialists. This addition has the potential to increase the number of administrators, teachers, and students engaged in Growing Readers literacy practices. In order to implement this component and scale Growing Readers, GOSA has partnered with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) to create a path for internal sustainability at the school and district level. Each RESA identified one or more Reading Specialists to provide coaching support to Candidates, teachers, and school leaders on reading instruction and tiered interventions for struggling students.¹ During 2019-2020, the first year of the expansion, Reading Specialists and Candidates worked with new schools and teachers. 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 third cycle of Growing Readers, RESAs recruited schools using the 2018 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, which is 50.65%. Each RESA selected three to five schools to participate.³ Schools then selected two teachers per grade level from kindergarten to third grade to participate in Growing Readers. Growing Readers now has 38 Reading Specialists working with 90 schools and is being successfully implemented in all 16 RESAs.

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 2018 CCRPI Third Grade Lexile Indicator was used for school recruitment because the 2019 data were not yet available.

³ Schools that were participating in the Sandra Dunagen Deal Promise Schools initiative or other competing initiatives were not asked to participate in Growing Readers.

Program Goals

The yearly goals for Growing Readers, as identified in the strategic plan, are provided below:

By the end of year one (Spring 2020):

- Observation data will show 75% of grant teachers effectively implement conferring.
- Fifty percent of students reading below the end-of-year (EOY) benchmark on the midyear assessment will be on or above grade level at the end of the year.

By the end of year two (Spring 2021):

- Observation data will show 90% of grant teachers effectively implement conferring.
- Observation data will show 75% of grant teachers effectively implement strategy groups.
- Fifty percent of students reading below the EOY benchmark on the midyear 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.

Figure 1: Map of Participating Growing Readers Schools



Overview of Methodology

The evaluation of Growing Readers focuses on four areas: implementation consistency, teacher practice, RESA cohesiveness and collaboration, and student outcomes. This report presents major findings for the 2019-2020 school year from multiple evaluation instruments. These instruments include quarterly status reports; the Teacher Observation Tool; professional learning session feedback form; regional meeting feedback session forms; EOY teacher, administration, and candidate surveys, and the Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool for RESA Specialists.

For each of the four evaluation areas, GOSA's Research and Evaluation Team has created monitoring tools and protocols in coordination with the Growing Readers Design Team to ensure that appropriate data are collected, shared, and analyzed. A full description of each instrument, a discussion of collection and analysis methods, and findings related to each focus area are included in the appropriate section of the full report. However, several consistent methodologies are employed as guiding principles for the evaluation.

Collection of Perception Data and Status Reporting:

All surveys and templates used in the Growing Readers evaluation are created by GOSA's Research and Evaluation Team with input from the Design Team. This collaboration ensures alignment between the program goals and evaluation instruments. All surveys are shared with stakeholders electronically and can be completed anonymously, and data from surveys is collected and analyzed by the evaluator and shared with GOSA's program manager and the Design Team. The status report template is updated annually to reflect implementation targets and timelines, and each RESA is required to submit an updated report quarterly. These documents are collected by the Design Team and submitted to GOSA for review.

Student Achievement Data: Each student in a participating Growing Readers classroom is assessed at three points in the year using an approved leveled reading assessment system. Each teacher collects results from his or her students, and data is uploaded to the GOSA evaluator through a secure file transfer protocol site administered by GOSA. Data are analyzed independent of Growing Readers staff and are shared with the Design Team for review.

Summary of Findings

Evaluation Focus Area I: Implementation Consistency

GOSA's Research and Evaluation team reviewed quarterly status reports submitted independently by each RESA, professional learning session feedback forms, and regional meeting feedback forms to evaluate implementation consistency. Key findings include:

- All RESAs implemented all required components of Growing Readers during 2019-2020, including but not limited to the completion of two formal observations, submission of assessment data for BOY and MOY, two professional learning sessions, and two regional meetings for Candidates.
- 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. According to surveys, most teachers felt that their Specialist was available when needed. RESA specialists were expected to visit classrooms for a minimum of 9 in-person visits per year, which was met.
- Two professional learning sessions trained teachers on effective reading instruction, conferencing with students, and utilizing research-based reading assessment practices. All professional learning sessions were presented within a two-week window to ensure consistency among RESA's.
- Two regional meeting sessions trained Candidates on effective coaching practices for their teachers.
- Responses for each professional learning session and regional meeting were consistently positive among all participants.

Evaluation Focus Area II: Teacher Practice

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

- Ninety-eight percent of teachers were conferring with students by the MOY observation.
- Over 93% of teachers, administrators, coaches, and Candidates 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 2019-2020 school year, 90% of teachers believed they were at least proficient in conferring with students, compared to 20% at the beginning of the school year.
- By the end of the 2019-2020 school year, 96% of teachers believed they were at least proficient in implementing independent reading with their students, compared to 35% at the beginning of the school year.
- By the end of the 2019-2020 school year, 99% of administrators and/or coaches stated that the school's participation in Growing Readers has slightly or much improved their school's literacy outcomes.
- One hundred percent of Growing Readers Candidates would recommend Growing Readers to a colleague.
- By the end of the 2019-2020 school year, 99% of Growing Readers Candidates felt that their participation in Growing Readers was valuable to their coaching practice.
- 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.⁴ Key findings include:

- All specialists felt the Growing Readers partnership has enabled consistent professional learning for teachers and Candidates across the state.
- All specialists felt that Candidates were doing quality work and added to Growing Readers in a positive way.
- All specialists felt like valued members of the Growing Readers Team.

Evaluation Focus Area IV: Student Outcomes

Due to COVID-19, schools in Georgia closed for a short period of time at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. Following school closures, many students and teachers returned to school virtually through the end of the school year, but teachers were unable to assess students for their EOY reading levels because of inconsistency in instructional formats and delivery models. Teachers continued to virtually conference with students as time allowed, and Candidates and Reading Specialists continued to work with teachers and provide virtual coaching through the end of the school year. Teachers submitted BOY and MOY data for their students, but without EOY assessment data, student outcomes relative to reading levels could not be evaluated for the 2019-2020 school year.

⁴ Due to the RESA specialists' consistently positive responses in prior evaluations, the Collaboration Self-Assessment Tool was shortened from previous versions to five targeted questions to assess

General Recommendations

Based on the findings outlined in this report, GOSA recommends the following changes in 2020-2021:

- Identify potential opportunities for Growing Readers participants to collaborate across RESAs.
- Conduct formal calibration exercises with Candidates and 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 for each assessment.
- Continue to provide consistent professional development for Candidates.
- Continue to work with Candidates to ensure they are providing effective coaching to teachers.
- Encourage the training and support of more Candidates involved to continue to scale Growing Readers and increase positive impact on students.
- Ensure that districts are aware of Candidates' duties when selecting staff members to fill this role.
- Apply the results from the 2019-2020 evaluation to inform goals for the second year of this iteration.
- Identify additional opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own practice and growth because 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.
- Encourage administrators and coaches to become more involved with Growing Readers and to participate in more observations and modeling strategies.
- Utilize Certified Growing Readers Specialists to further the mission and unifying beliefs of Growing Readers.

specialists' perceptions of collaboration relative to main themes of Growing Readers and to provide recommendations on possible Growing Readers expansion moving forward.

Next Steps

The findings outlined in this evaluation indicate that the RESAs are successfully collaborating and delivering consistent, effective professional learning in K-3 literacy instruction to teachers and Candidates. The data also indicate that the RESA Certification Specialists have effectively trained the new Candidates to deliver the same caliber of coaching to their teachers. As a result of Growing Readers, teachers are changing their reading instructional practices to incorporate new strategies such as conferencing with students.

Growing Readers will continue its State Certification Project expansion during the 2020-2021 school year with the same schools and teachers. Candidates will continue to receive extensive training on coaching to increase students' literacy levels. RESA specialists will work with school districts in the fall and provide either face-to-face, virtual, or hybrid professional learning sessions to teachers and Candidates.