

Georgia's Public School Principals and Assistant Principals

Summary of Leadership Experience, Age, and Retirement Status

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Overview

In spring 2017, the General Assembly created a Joint Study Committee on the Establishment of a Leadership Academy to study the possibility of establishing a leadership academy to support public school principals and other school leaders. The committee requested the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) provide a report on the current status of public school building-level leaders.

The following report summarizes the leadership experience, age, and retirement status of current principals and assistant principals. It examines statewide patterns, as well as by Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) and district size, combining data from the Professional Standards Commission (PSC) and the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS) for the 2016-2017 school year.¹

For the district size comparison, districts are placed into the following four groups of districts:²

- **Small** (76 districts with fewer than 10 principals and assistant principals)
- **Midsized** (79 districts with 11-50 principals and assistant principals)
- **Large** (11 districts with 51-100 principals and assistant principals)
- **Very Large** (13 districts with more than 100 principals and assistant principals)

Key Findings for Principals

- The average principal has nine years of building-level experience and five years of experience as a principal.
- Principals in small districts generally have much less building-level experience compared to large or very large districts.
- 41% have three or fewer years of experience as a principal. Only 12% have more than ten years of principal experience.
- The average age of a principal is 48 years old. Most are 54 or younger.
- One-fourth of principals are currently eligible for retirement, and another 29% will become eligible within five years.
- In districts with 100 or fewer leaders, roughly 6 in 10 leaders are either eligible now or will be eligible to retire within five years.

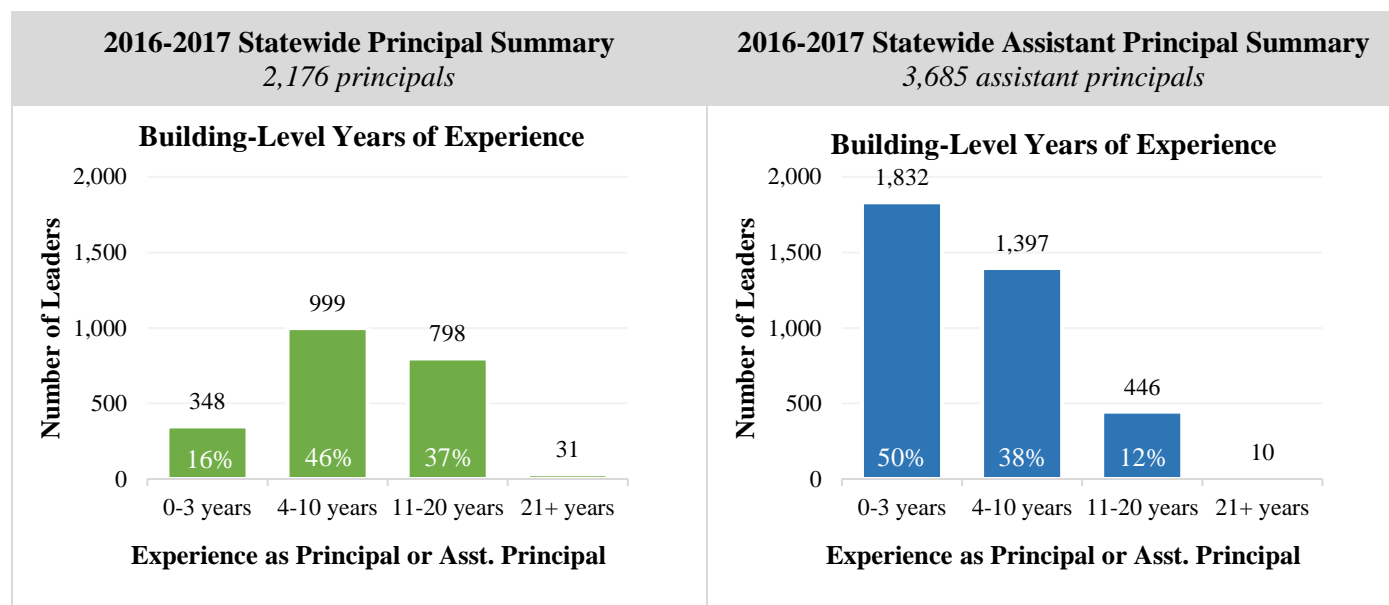
Key Findings for Assistant Principals

- The average assistant principal has five years of building-level leadership experience, but half have three or fewer years of building-level experience.
- As above, assistant principals in small districts tend to have less experience compared to large and very large districts, but the difference is not as wide.
- The average age of an assistant principal is 45 years old. Only 3% are 60 or older.
- One-third of assistant principals are either eligible for retirement now or within five years.
- In small districts, 46% are either eligible now or within five years.

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Building-Level Leadership Experience



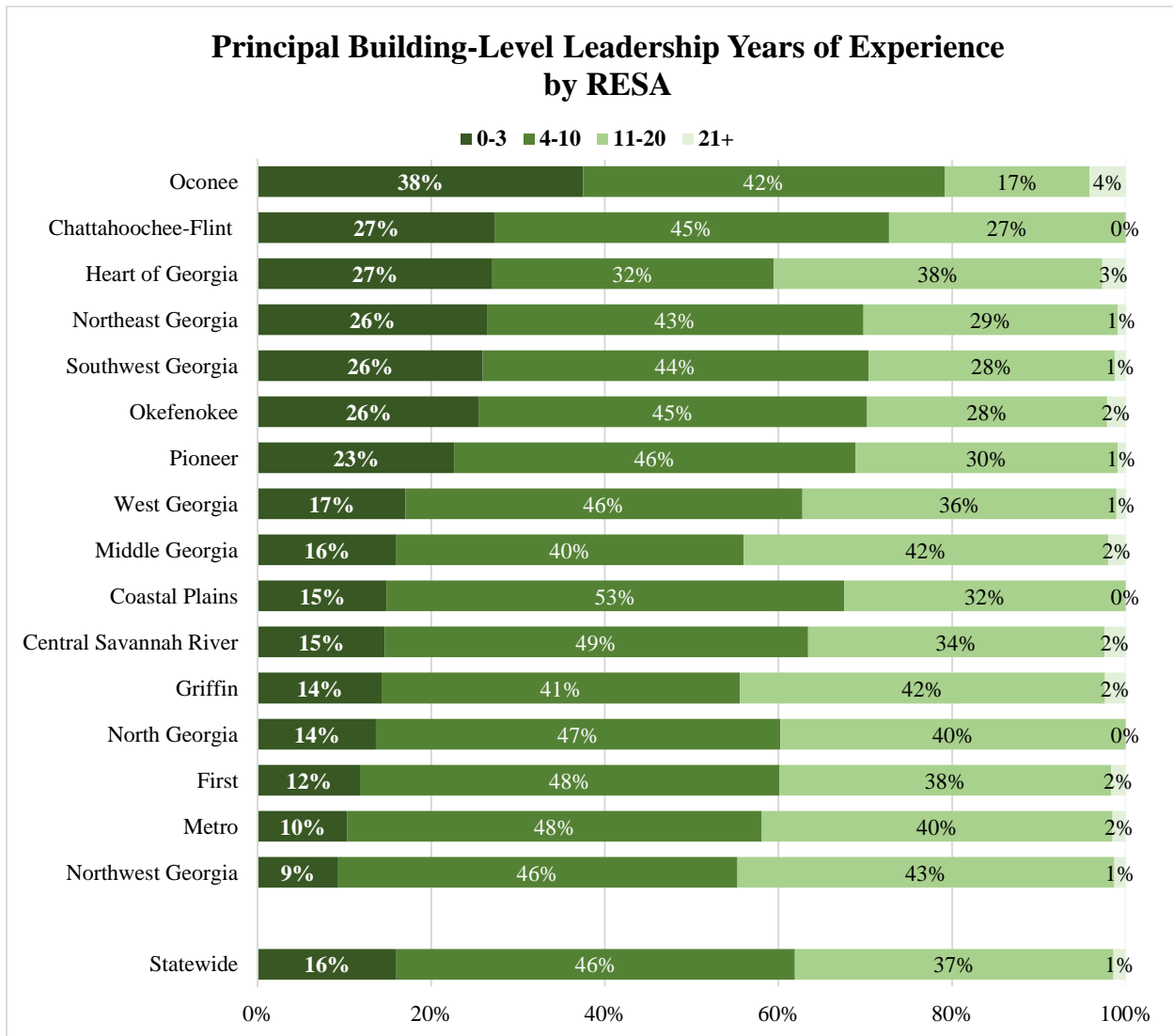
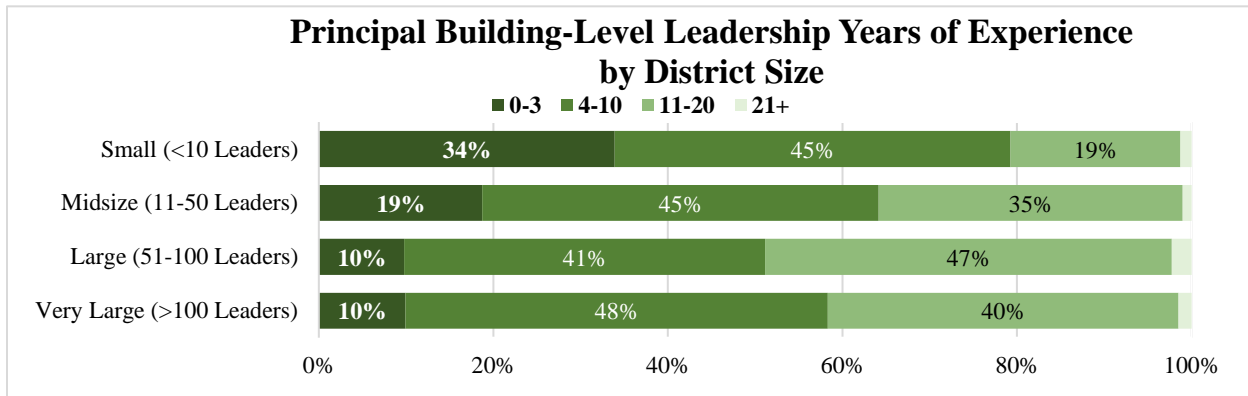
RESA and district size charts are on the following two pages. A map of RESAs is available in the report appendix for reference.

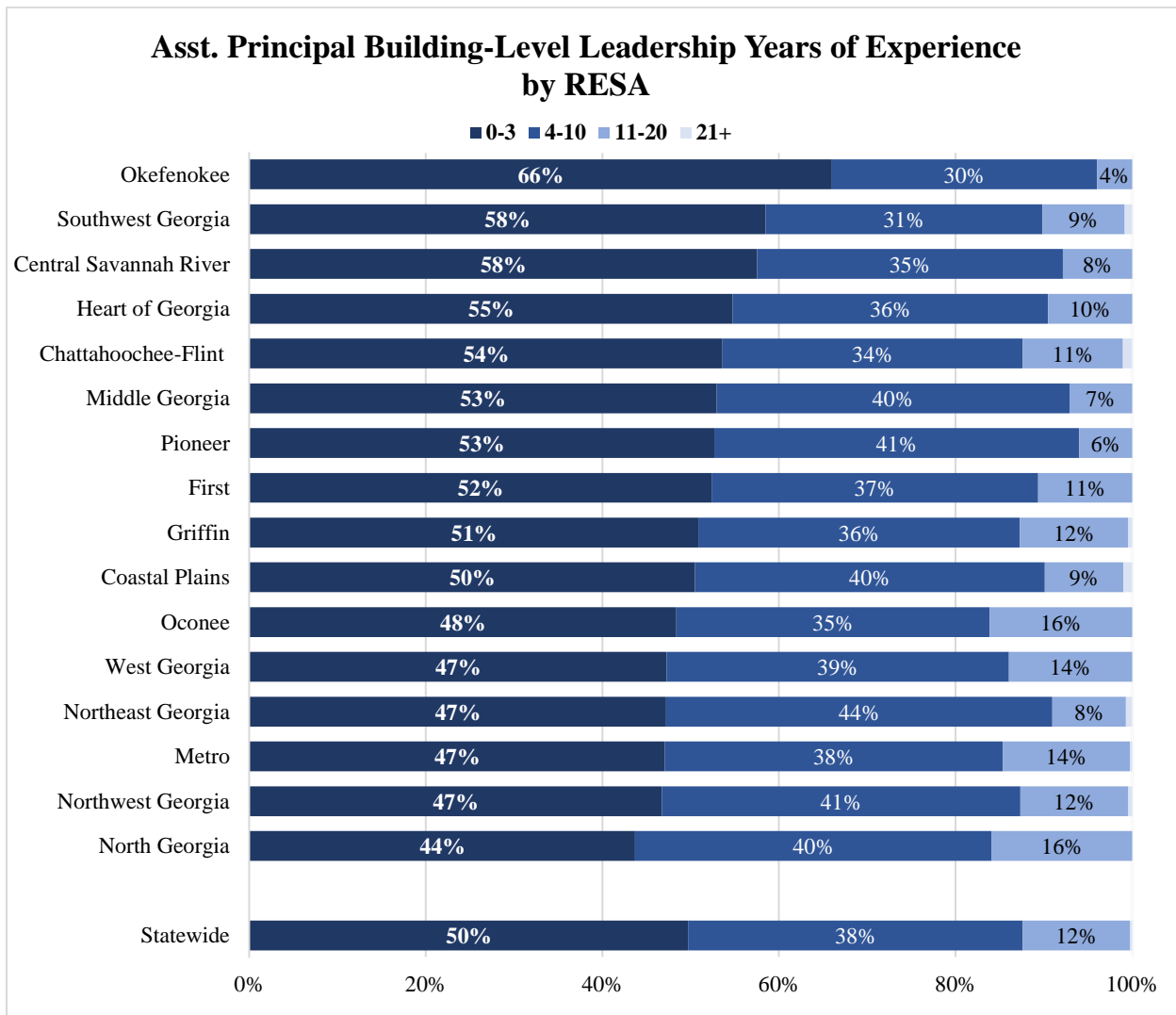
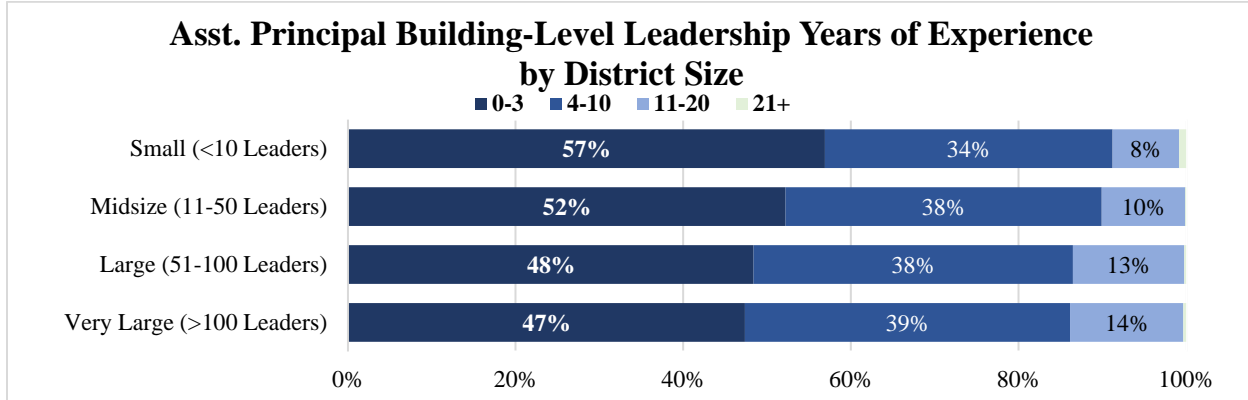
Summary Findings for Principals

- The average principal has nine years of building-level experience.
- 16% have three or fewer years of experience, while nearly half have four to ten years of experience.
- Principals in small districts generally have much less building-level experience compared to large or very large districts.
- Oconee RESA has the largest percentage of principals with three or fewer years of experience (38%). Metro and Northwest Georgia RESA have the smallest percentages (10% and 9%).

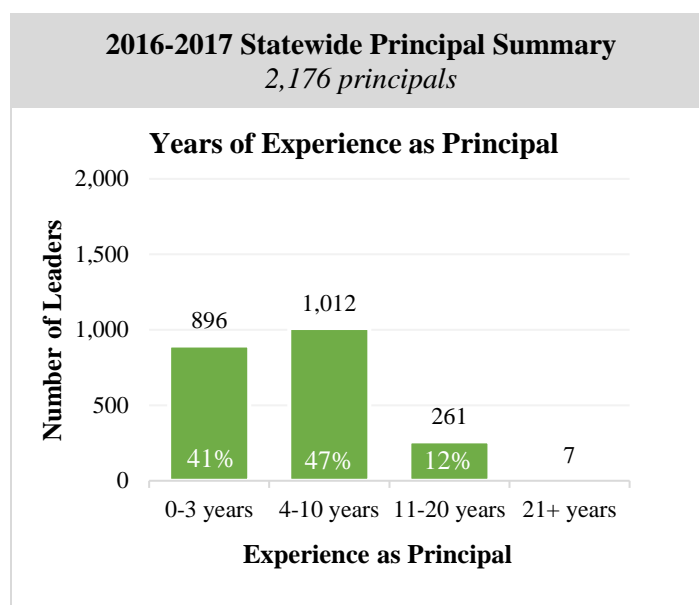
Summary Findings for Assistant Principals

- The average assistant principal has five years of building-level leadership experience, but half have three or fewer years of building-level experience.
- As above, assistant principals in small districts tend to have less experience compared to large and very large districts, but the difference is not as wide.
- Two-thirds of assistant principals in Okefenokee RESA have three or fewer years of experience.
- Ten of 16 RESAs have 50% or more assistant principals with three or fewer years of experience.





Building-Level Principal Years of Experience

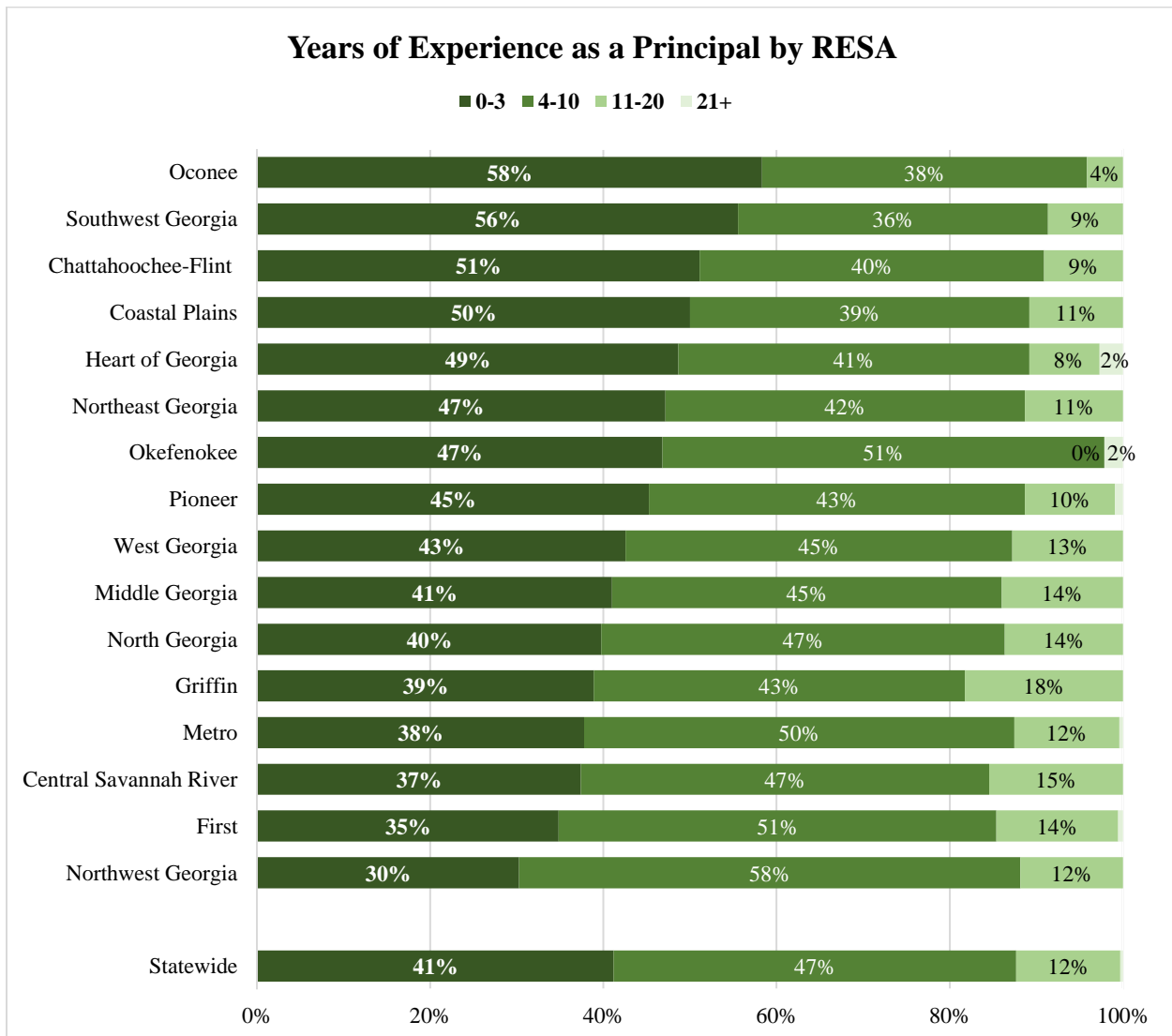
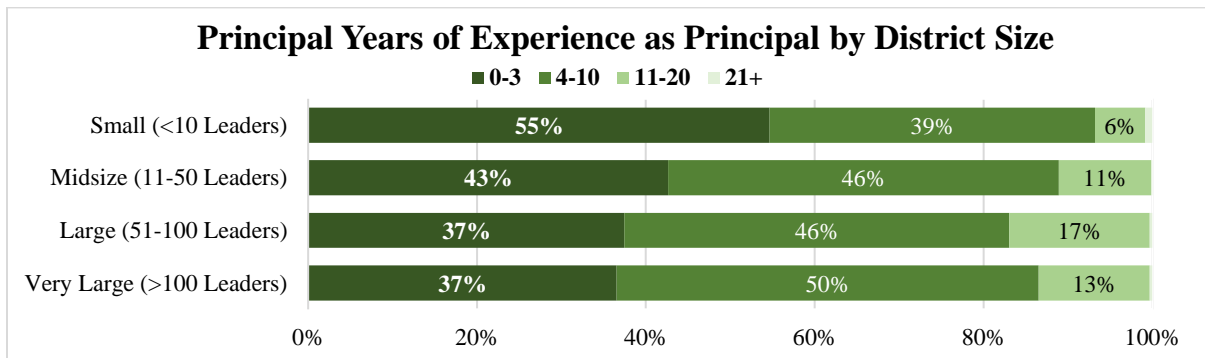


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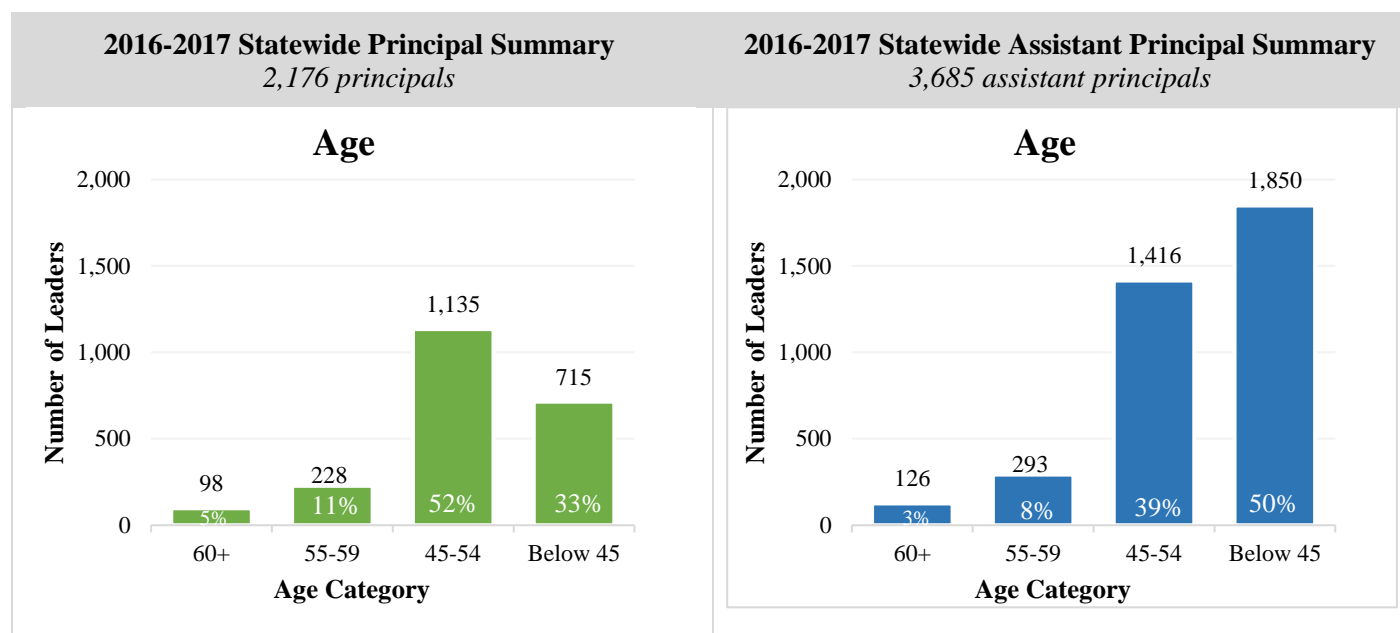
Summary Findings for Principals

- The average principal has five years of experience as a principal.
- 41% have three or fewer years of experience. Only 12% have more than ten years of principal experience.
- More than half of small district principals have three or fewer years of experience as a principal, compared to 37% in large and very large districts.
- Four of 16 RESAs have more than half of principals with three or fewer years of experience as a principal (Oconee, Southwest Georgia, Chattahoochee-Flint, and Coastal Plains). Another seven RESAs have 40% or more with fewer than three years of principal experience.

Most assistant principals do not have experience as a principal. However, 110 assistant principals (3%) have at least one year of experience as a principal.



Age of Building-Level Leaders



RESA and district size charts are on the following two pages. A map of RESAs is available in the report appendix for reference.

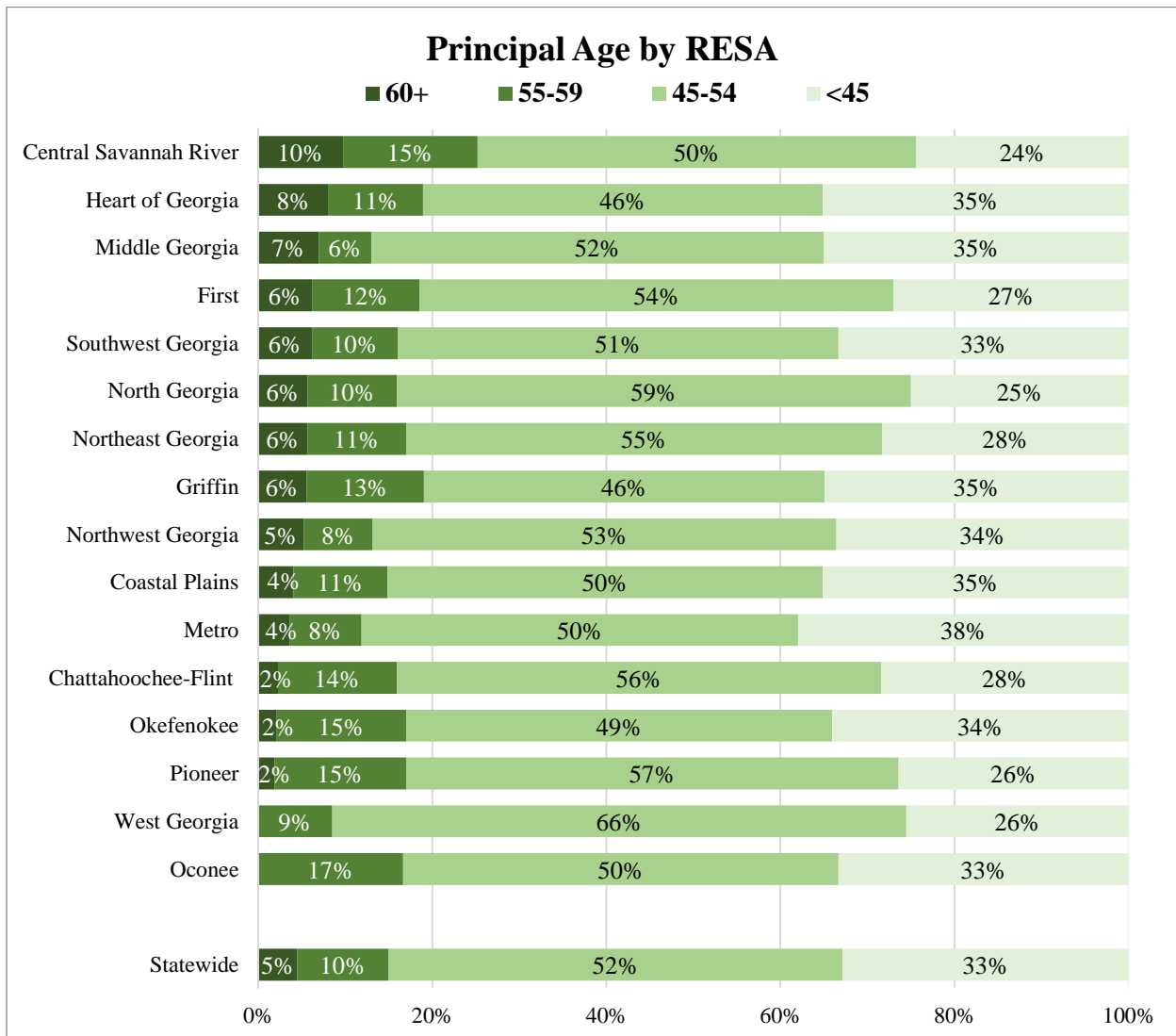
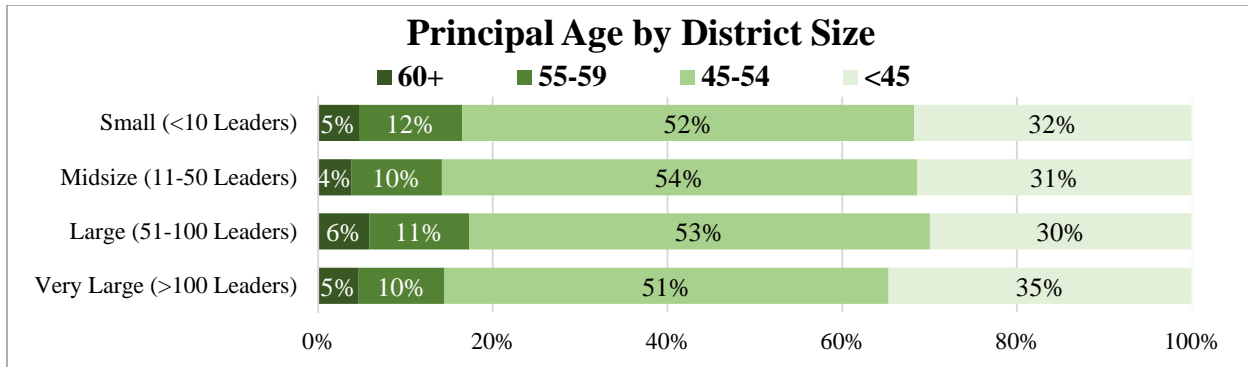
Summary Findings for Principals

- The average age of a principal is 48 years old. Most are 54 or younger.
- Principal age is generally consistent across various sizes of districts.
- Most principals in all RESAs are below 55 years old.
- 1 in 10 principals in Central Savannah River RESA are 60 or older. 25% are 55 or older.
- West Georgia RESA has no principals who are 60 or older, and only 9% who are 55 or older.

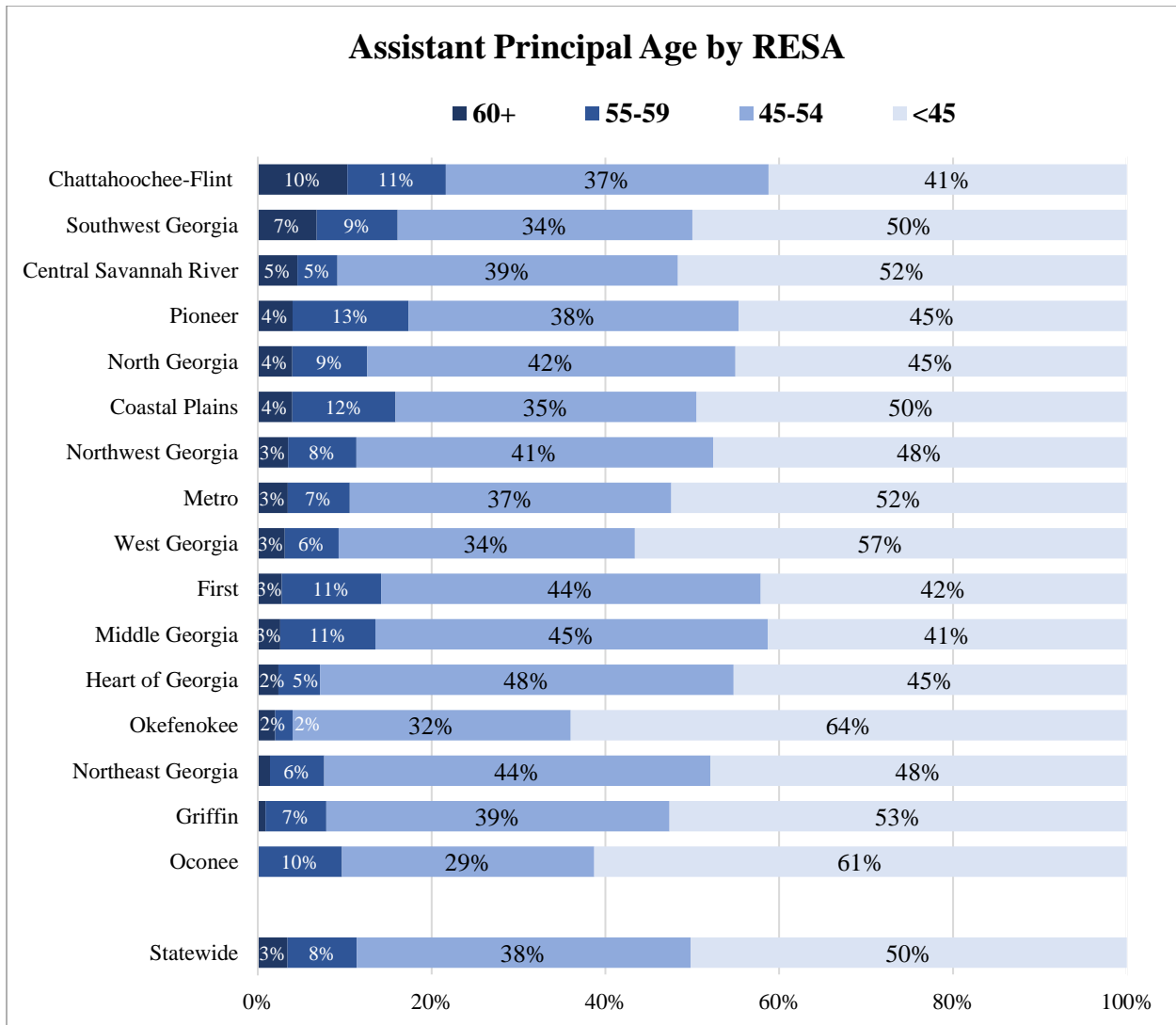
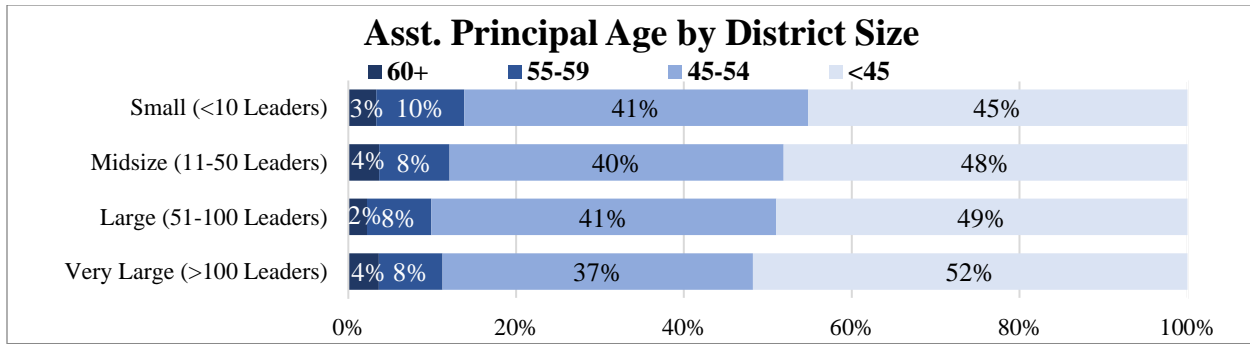
Summary Findings for Assistant Principals

- The average age of an assistant principal is 45 years old. Only 3% are 60 or older.
- Assistant principal age is similar across various district sizes. However, small district assistant principals tend to be slightly older.
- As with principals, most assistant principals in all RESAs are below 55 years old.
- One in five assistant principals in Chattahoochee-Flint RESA are at least 55 years old.
- Half of RESAs have 50% or more assistant principals who are younger than 45 years old.

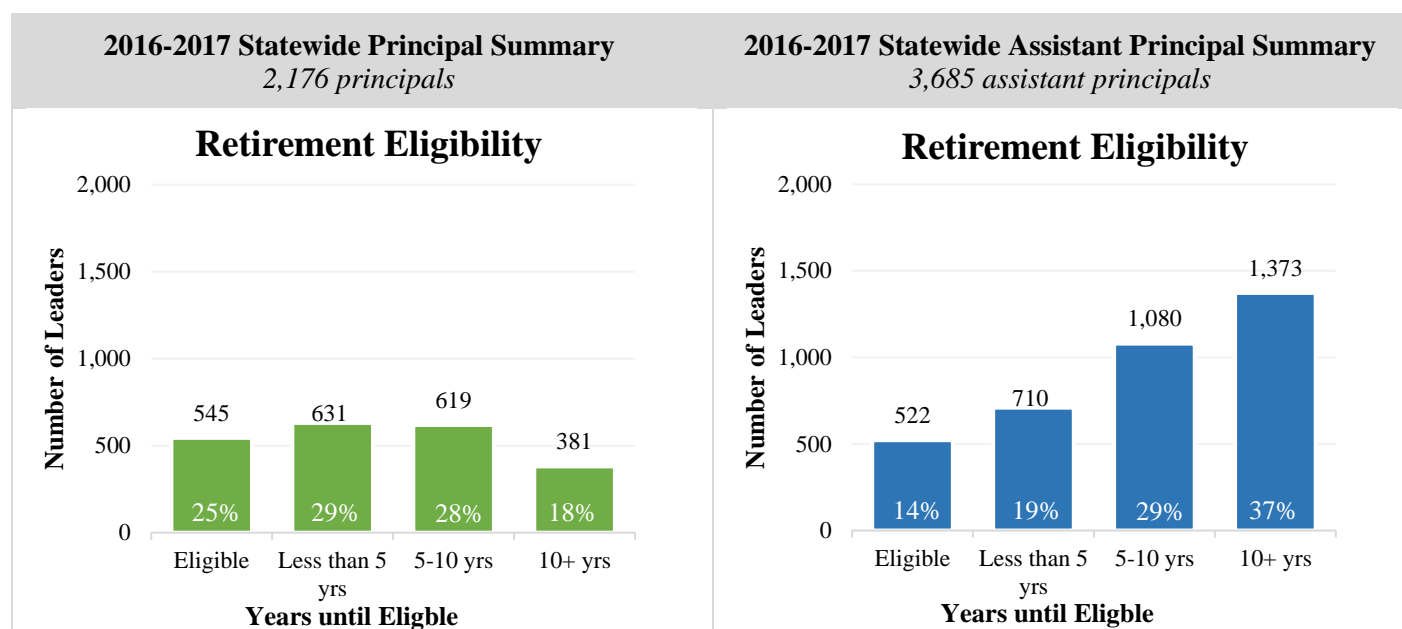
Georgia's Public School Principals and Assistant Principals



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Retirement Eligibility



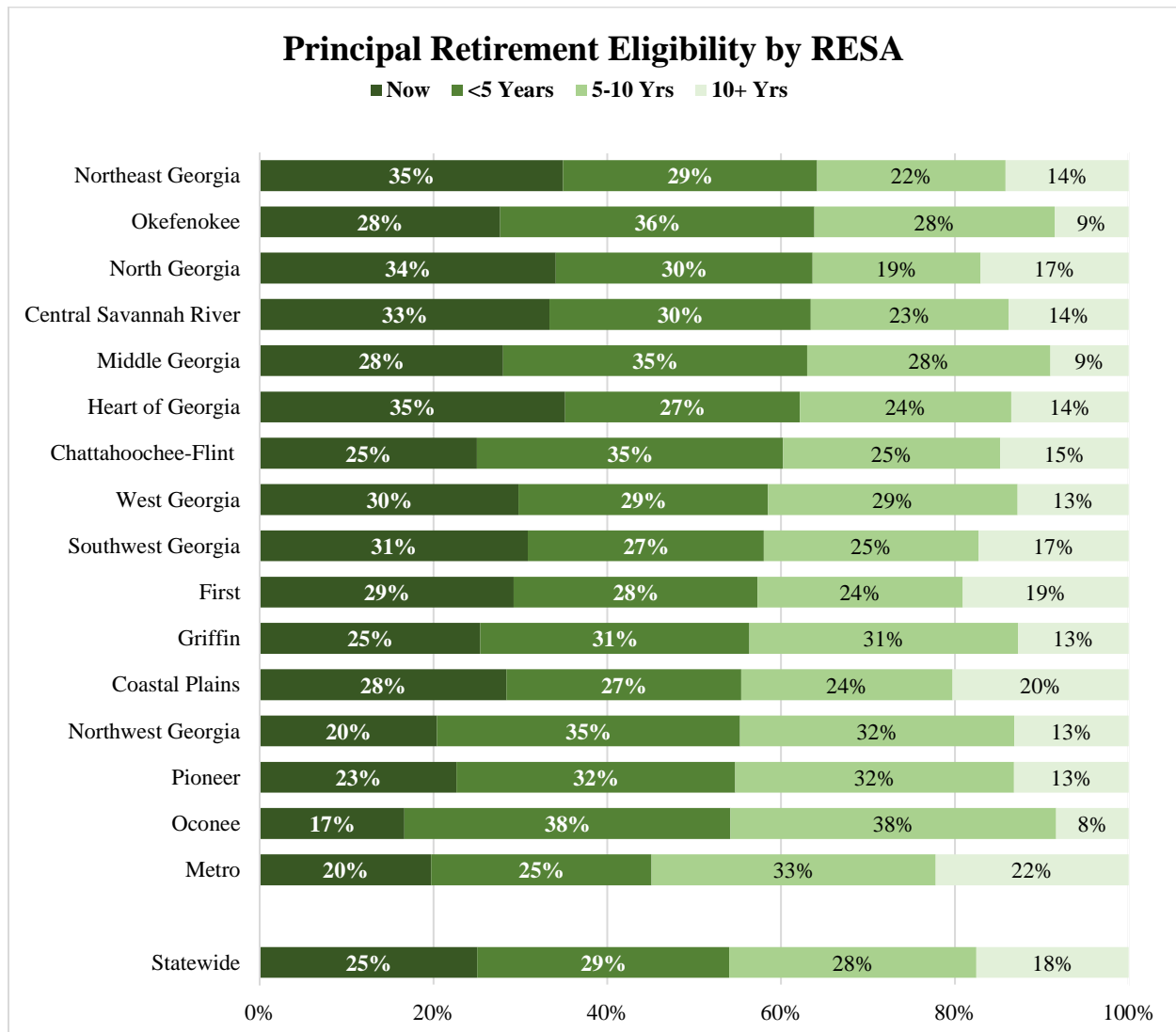
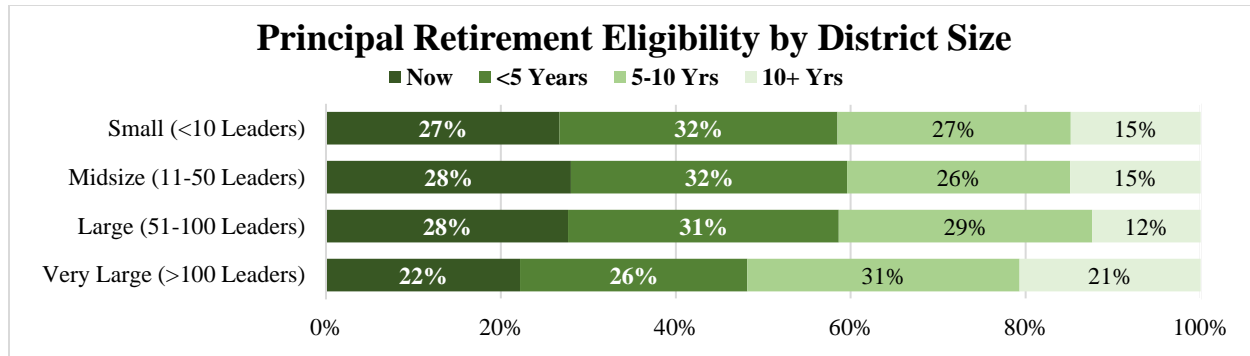
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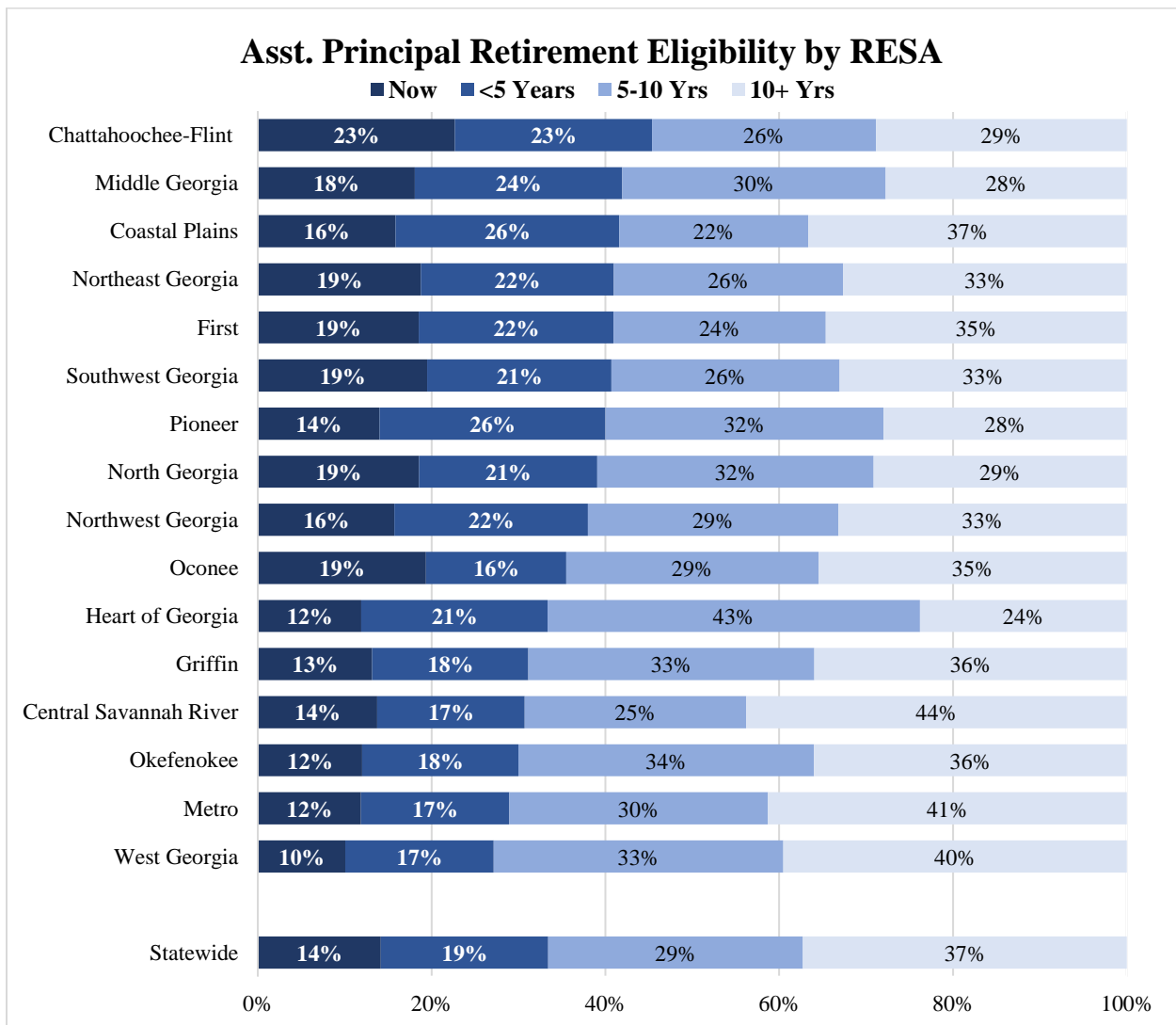
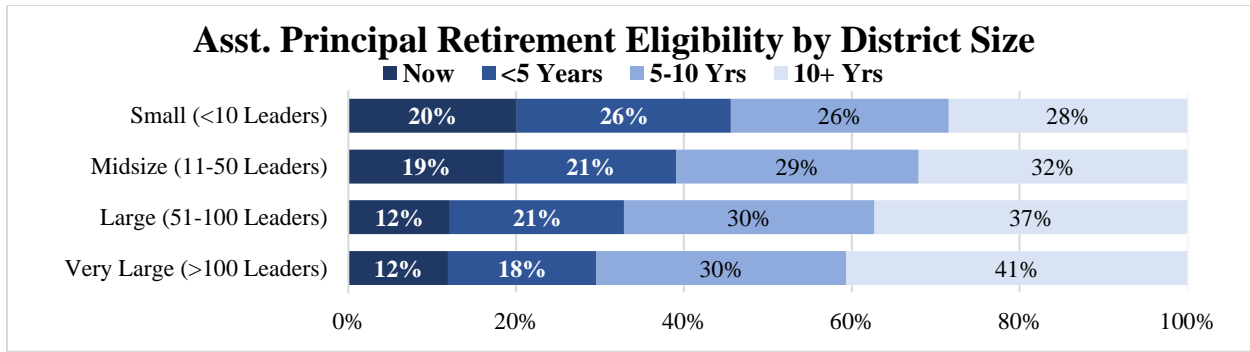
Summary Findings for Principals

- One-fourth of principals are currently eligible for retirement, and another 29% will become eligible within five years.
- In districts with 100 or fewer leaders, roughly 6 in 10 leaders are either eligible now or will be eligible to retire within five years.
- In four RESAs, 33% or more principals are currently eligible for retirement (Northeast Georgia, North Georgia, Central Savannah River, and Heart of Georgia).
- Metro RESA has fewer principals who are eligible for retirement now or within five years than other RESAs.

Summary Findings for Assistant Principals

- One-third of assistant principals are either eligible for retirement now or within five years.
- In small districts, 46% are either eligible now or within five years.
- Seven of 16 RESAs have 40% or more assistant principals who are eligible now or within five years.
- While Metro RESA has the second fewest assistant principals who are eligible now or within five years, the difference from other RESAs is not as large as with principals.





Appendix I: Leader Counts by District Size and RESA

| Count of Building-Level Leaders by District Size | | | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| District Size | Number of Principals | Number of Asst. Principals | Total |
| Very Large (>100 Leaders) | 928 | 1,922 | 2,850 |
| Large (51-100 Leaders) | 307 | 496 | 803 |
| Midsized (11-50 Leaders) | 678 | 1,002 | 1,680 |
| Small (<10 Leaders) | 236 | 239 | 475 |
| No Category* | 27 | 26 | 53 |
| Statewide | 2,176 | 3,685 | 5,861 |

*State Charter School, State School, and Department of Juvenile Justice leaders are excluded from the district size analysis.

| Count of Building-Level Leaders by RESA | | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| RESA | Number of Principals | Number of Asst. Principals | Total |
| Central Savannah River | 123 | 153 | 276 |
| Chattahoochee-Flint | 88 | 97 | 185 |
| Coastal Plains | 74 | 101 | 175 |
| First | 178 | 254 | 432 |
| Griffin | 126 | 228 | 354 |
| Heart of Georgia | 37 | 42 | 79 |
| Metro | 725 | 1,627 | 2,352 |
| Middle Georgia | 100 | 155 | 255 |
| North Georgia | 88 | 151 | 239 |
| Northeast Georgia | 106 | 144 | 250 |
| Northwest Georgia | 152 | 229 | 381 |
| Oconee | 24 | 31 | 55 |
| Okefenokee | 47 | 50 | 97 |
| Pioneer | 106 | 150 | 256 |
| Southwest Georgia | 81 | 118 | 199 |
| West Georgia | 94 | 129 | 223 |
| No RESA* | 27 | 26 | 53 |
| Statewide | 2,176 | 3,685 | 5,861 |

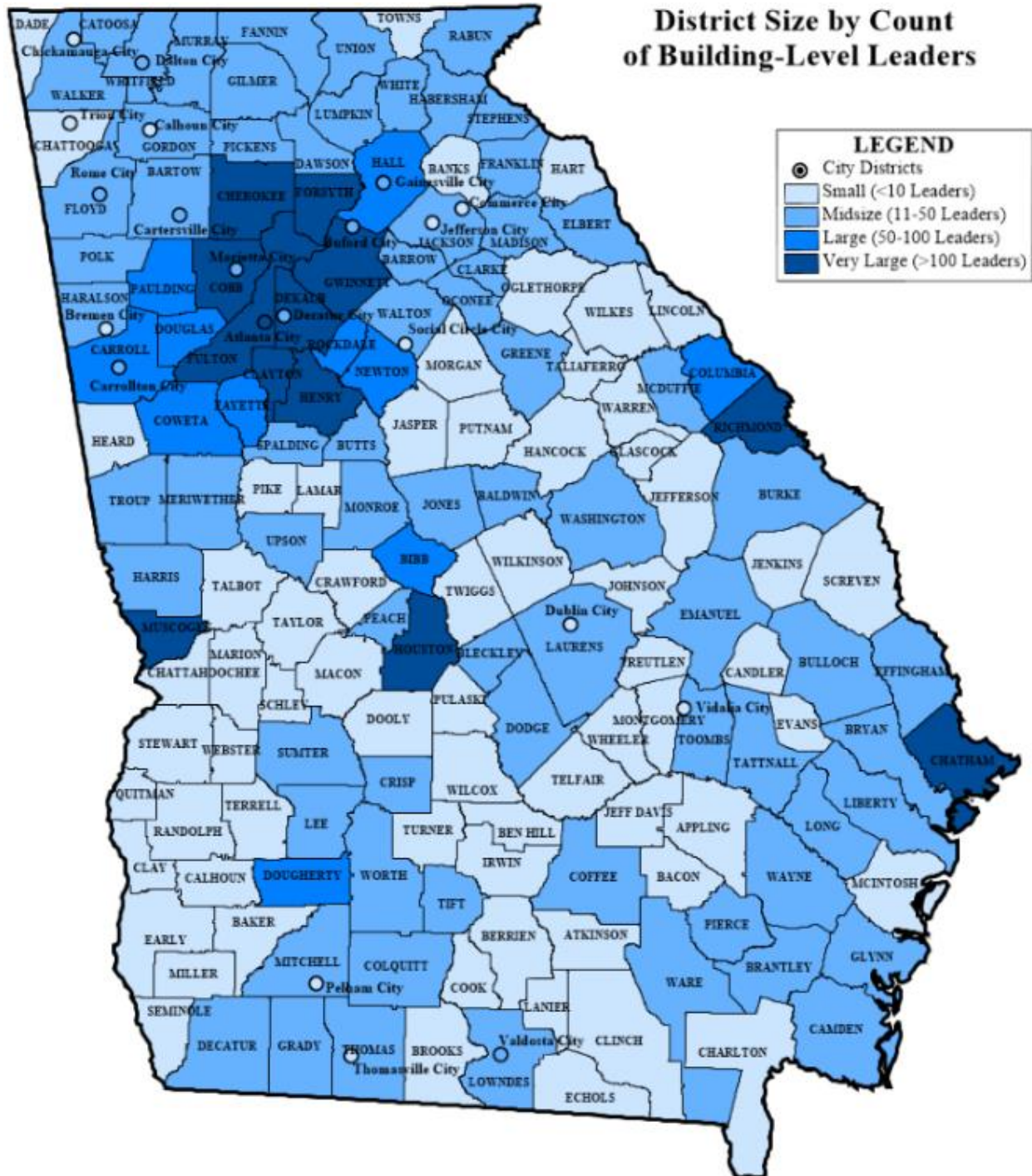
*State Charter School, State School, and Department of Juvenile Justice leaders are excluded from the RESA analysis.

Appendix II: Geographical Information for Context

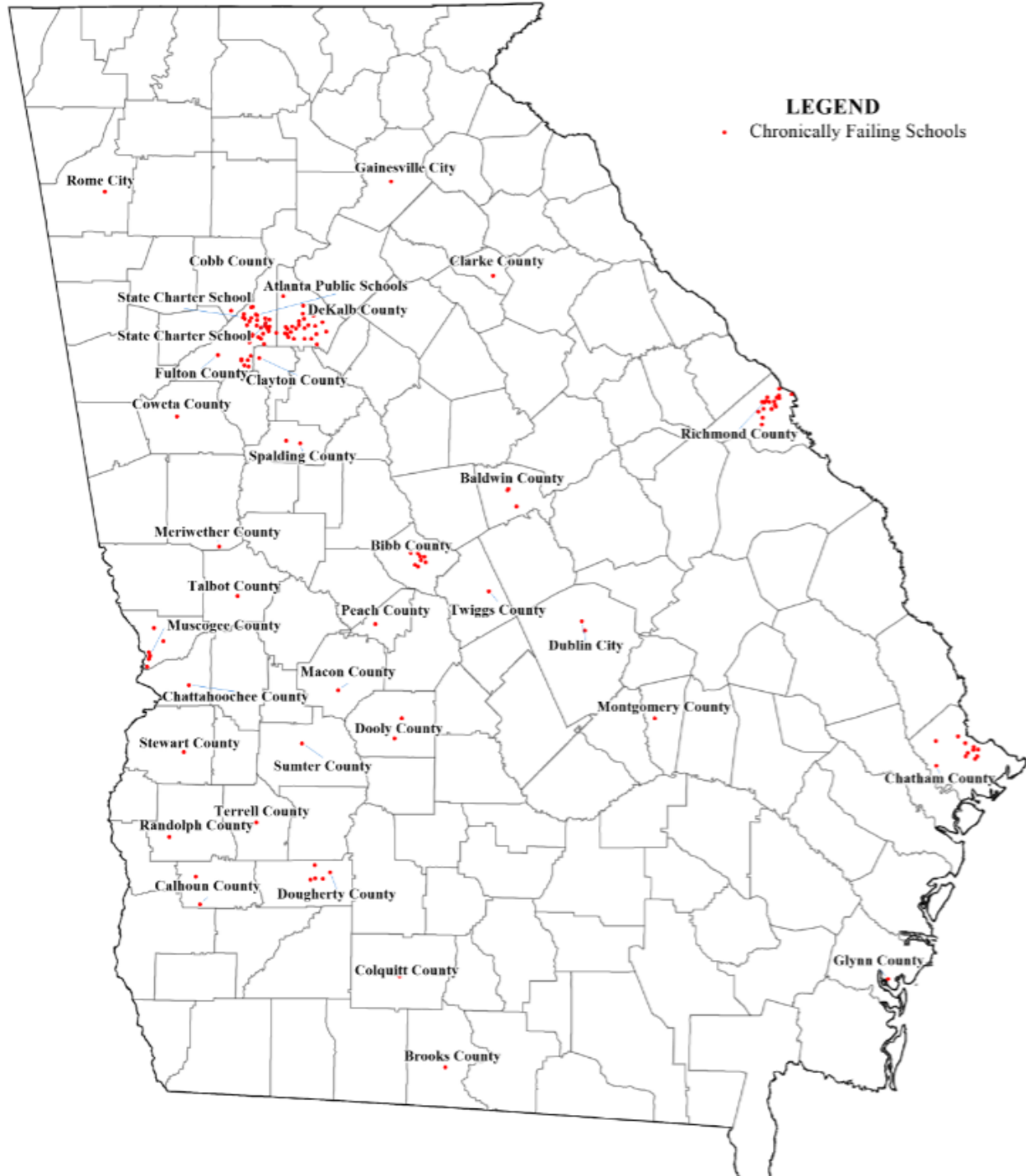
Map of Regional Educational Service Agencies (RESAs)



Map of Districts by Count of Building-Level Leaders



Map of 2016 Chronically Failing Schools (as published by GOSA in January 2017)



Notes

¹ The report includes all Principals (610) and Assistant Principals (615) reported in the March 2017 Certified/Classified Personnel Information (CPI) Data Collection as provided by the Professional Standards Commission (PSC) who were still active in the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia as of June 30, 2017. 334 leaders from the 2016-2017 file were either already retired, refunded, or not in the system as of June 30, 2017. The report does not take into account employment changes between March and September 2017. For data matching, the PSC developed an individual-level file from the March 2017 CPI data collection that included years of experience and age and provided it to TRS. TRS then matched its retirement records and removed all identifying information before providing GOSA with an individual-level data file. For the purposes of this report, PSC is the source of leadership experience information, and TRS is the source for age and retirement eligibility.

² State charter schools, state schools, and the Department of Juvenile Justice schools were excluded from the district size analysis.