

The Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy

SANDRA DUNAGAN DEAL CENTER FOR EARLY LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

AT GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY

Preliminary Results of District Survey on Progress toward Implementation of The Georgia

Early Literacy Act (HB538)

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Introduction

In 2023, the Georgia Legislature passed the Georgia Early Literacy Act (HB 538), which represents a sweeping reform effort to improve the quality of early reading instruction in the state. HB 538 requires that the Georgia State Board of Education (SBOE) approve universal reading screeners which can: 1) provide relevant information to target instruction, 2) measure foundational literacy skills, 3) identify students who are struggling to acquire reading skills, and 4) be used to monitor progress. Relatedly, schools will be required to screen children in kindergarten through third grade three times each school year. Tiered reading intervention plans will be required for students with significant reading deficiencies. HB 538 also requires that the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) develop or procure training for educators from kindergarten to third grade on the science of reading, structured literacy, and foundational literacy skills. All public-school educators from kindergarten through third grade will be required to complete the training. Finally, local boards of education will be required to approve high quality instructional materials for these grades.

The Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy (Deal Center) partnered with the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) and GaDOE to create a district inventory to assess progress toward implementation of HB 538. This inventory enables us to analyze our state's readiness and advise on the allocation of resources to better support districts to meet these requirements. This is not an accountability survey; it is not the expectation that every district had met the requirements of HB 538 at the time of inventory completion. This report contains baseline information on district implementation of HB538 that is vital to inform statewide literacy initiatives and allocation of resources.

Method

In December 2023, representatives from the Deal Center, GOSA, and GaDOE determined the need for information and context regarding district's status with HB 538 response and implementation. We designed a comprehensive inventory to evaluate district progress toward implementation of the key elements of HB538. Four major components of HB 538 were selected for analysis, including: 1) universal reading screeners, 2) high quality instructional materials (HQIM), 3) tiered interventions, and 4) professional learning. The purpose of this report is to provide Georgia stakeholders, including state agencies, the General Assembly, and the Georgia Council on Literacy with a baseline summary and context to inform further decision-making.

Participants

The state of Georgia has 181 school districts containing over 2,200 schools and over 113,000 teachers. In addition, there are 52 charter schools which, for the purposes of this inventory, are also considered districts. In sum, there are 221 school districts serving at least one grade from K-3. Leaders from each district were invited to complete the inventory with one response from each district requested. A survey link was sent from GaDOE to school superintendents, and superintendents were asked to designate a curriculum leader in their district to complete the survey. Districts had from January 31, 2024, to March 1, 2024, to complete the inventory.

The inventory was divided into four sections with a combination of multiple choice and short answer responses. Short answer responses provide contextual, qualitative information on barriers to implementation. **Because this report represents a preliminary analysis of the**

quantitative data only, a final report is forthcoming which will incorporate analysis of qualitative data collected.

Universal Reading Screeners

The first section of the inventory was designed to gather information about screener selection, whether screening is a new undertaking for each district, and which grades from K-3 were screened in the past. It also gathered information on whether screener administration training is provided by each district, whether that training is mandatory for teachers and for administrators, and what proportion of teachers and administrators have already been trained.

High Quality Instructional Materials

The second section of the survey was designed to gather information on progress toward selection of HQIM. Details on whether training in the use of instructional materials is mandatory, how many teachers and administrators have been trained up to this point, how training is provided, and whether supplemental programs are being bundled to create a core reading program are collected in this section.

Tiered Interventions

The third section of the survey was to determine whether districts currently have a tiered reading intervention plan, whether those plans are tied to the core reading program, what interventions are used, and who oversees intervention in the schools. Information about the mode and context for intervention delivery was also reported.

Professional Learning

The final section of the survey was designed to gather information on the number of administrators and teachers trained in structured literacy, what training programs are being used, and whether programs are approved by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA). Other information gathered in this section includes the number of district literacy coaches, the number of coaches trained in structured literacy, and plans to train all coaches in structured literacy.

Results

Out of 221 districts invited to participate, 114 survey responses were received translating to a 52% response rate. One survey response was excluded due to partial completion, resulting in a sample size of 113. For a comprehensive list of survey questions, including the proportion of respondents, please see Appendix A.

Demographics

Of the 113 inventory responses, 78 districts were categorized as small, 24 were medium, and 11 were large districts. District size was defined as follows: 1) small = 1-3 schools; medium 4 -15 schools; and 3) large districts 16 + (see Table 1).

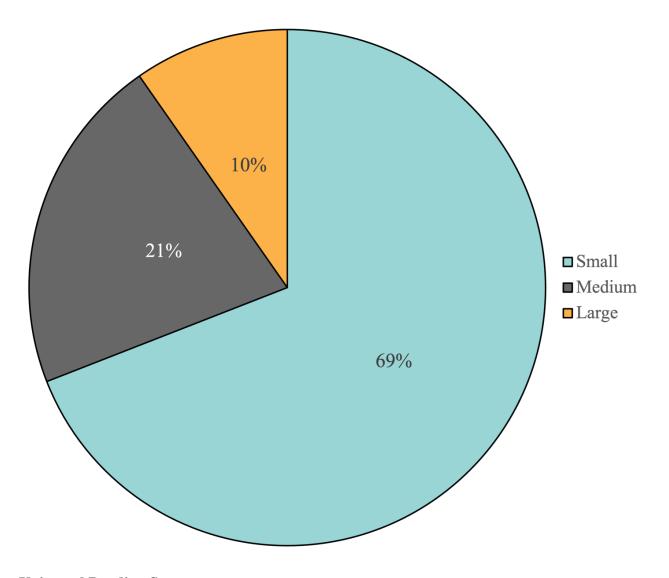
Table 1

District Size	Frequ	Frequency	
	n	%	
Small Districts	N = 78		
1 School	39	50	
2 Schools	27	34.6	
3 Schools	12	15.4	
Medium Districts	N = 24		
4 Schools	4	16.7	
5 Schools	2 7	8.3	
6 Schools	7	29.2	
7 Schools	3	12.5	
8 Schools	3	12.5	
9 Schools	2	8.3	
10 Schools	2	8.3	
14 Schools	1	4.2	
Large Districts	N =	: 11	
17 Schools	1	9.1	
19 Schools	1	9.1	
20 Schools	2	18.2	
23 Schools	1	9.1	
25 Schools	1	9.1	
30 Schools	1	9.1	
32 Schools	2	18.2	
60 Schools	1	9.1	
84 Schools	1	9.1	

Number of Schools Characterized by District Size

Although all district sizes were represented, most respondents (69%) represented small districts, followed by medium districts and large districts (21% and 10% respectively; see Figure 1). Conversely, 55% of the schools represented in our responses are in large districts, 25% in medium districts, and 20% in small districts. With regard to K-3 teachers in the districts, medium districts were the most represented (72%) followed by small districts and large districts (20% and 8% respectively); for a comprehensive list of frequencies and ranges for K-3 teachers within the districts, please see Appendix B.

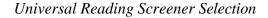
Proportion of Respondents by District Size

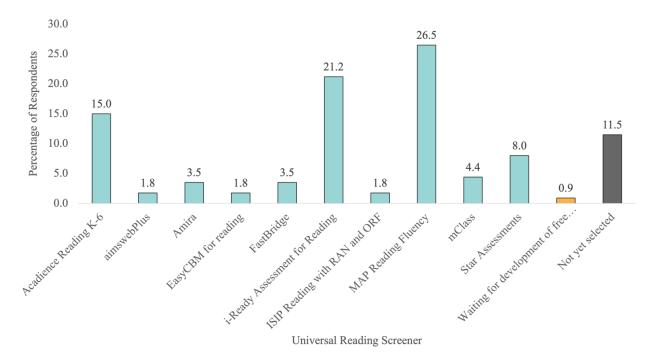


Universal Reading Screeners

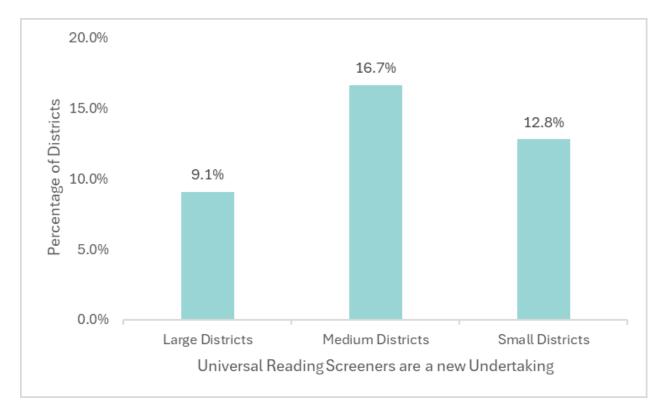
Beginning August 1, 2024, public and local school systems in Georgia will be required to administer a universal reading screener three times each school year to all students in K-3. This follows the requirement that the SBOE approve a list of universal reading screeners for use by public schools and local school districts. The SBOE published an approved <u>list of Universal</u> <u>Reading Screener Providers</u> on July 19, 2023, which was <u>updated</u> on February 22, 2024. Of all districts responding, 87.7% (n = 100) reported that they had already selected a screener; 0.9% of districts (n = 1) reported waiting for the development of a free screener, and 11.4% of districts (n = 13) reported that they had not yet selected a universal reading screener (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



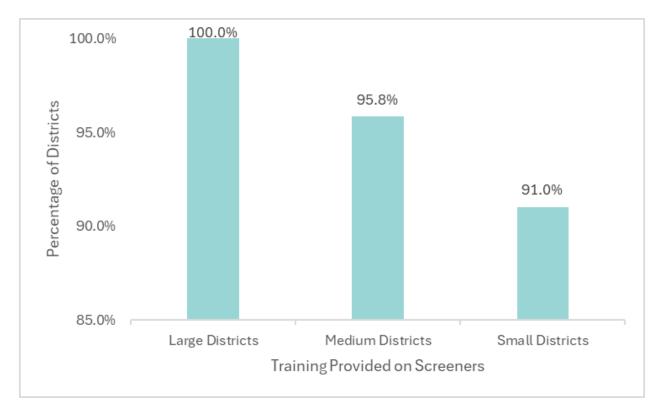


Overall, 89% of districts (n = 99) indicated that administration of universal reading screeners was not a new undertaking for their district, with at least 94.9% of districts (n = 94) reporting that screeners were utilized for grades K-3. However, prior to the implementation of HB 538, 12.8% of small districts (n = 10), 16.7% of medium districts (n = 4), and 9.1% of large districts (n = 1) reported not implementing and/or utilizing a universal reading screener (see Figure 3).



Districts Reporting No Previous Screening Prior to HB 538

Regarding universal reading screener administration training, 92.9% of districts (N = 105) reported that training on the administration of the chosen universal reading screener is provided. When explored by district size, Figure 4 indicates that 91% of small districts (n = 71), 95.8% of medium districts (n = 23), and 100% of large districts (n = 11) provide training.



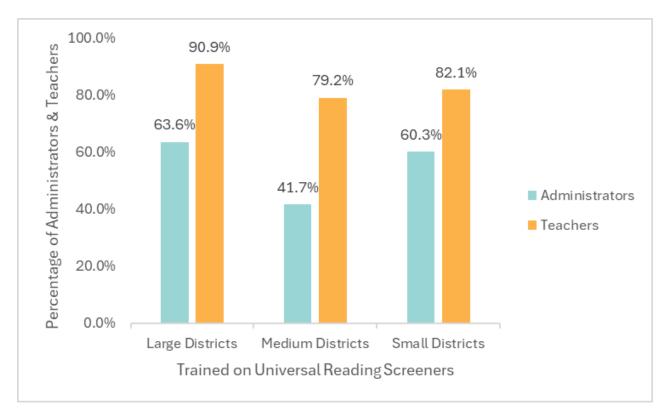
Percentage of Districts with Training on Screeners by District Size

Examination of training for administrators versus teachers reveals group differences.

Specifically, out of 105 respondents, 87.6% of districts (n = 92) reported mandatory training for teachers, but only 61.0% of districts (n = 64) reported mandatory training for administrators (see Figure 5). This trend maintained when data were analyzed by district size (see Figure 6).

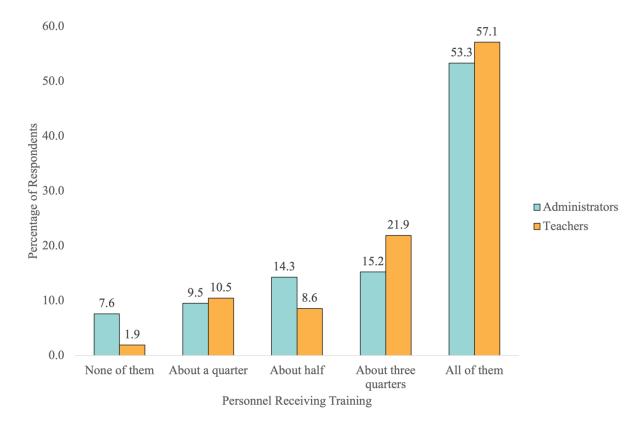


Mandatory Screener Training for Teachers and Administrators



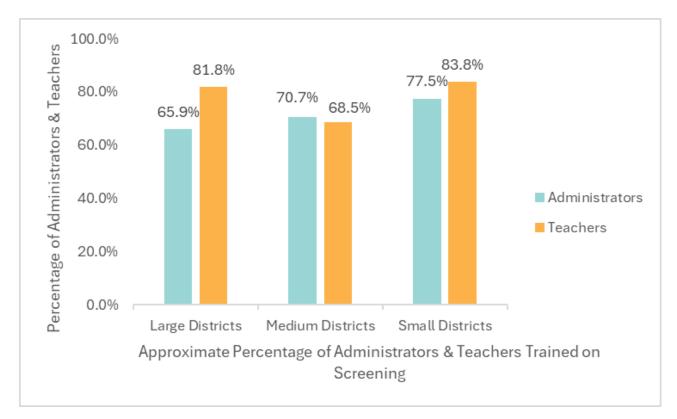
Mandatory Screener Training for Teachers and Administrators by District Size

In examining the training status of personnel, similarities can be observed in reporting. When queried about the proportion of personnel in their districts who have undergone screener training, 56 out of the 105 responding districts (53.3%) indicated that administrators were already fully trained, while 60 districts (57.1%) reported completion of training for teachers (see Figure 7); a similar trend was observed when data were analyzed by district size (see Figure 8).



Proportion of Personnel Receiving Screener Training

Approximate Percentage of Teachers and Administrators Trained on Universal Reading

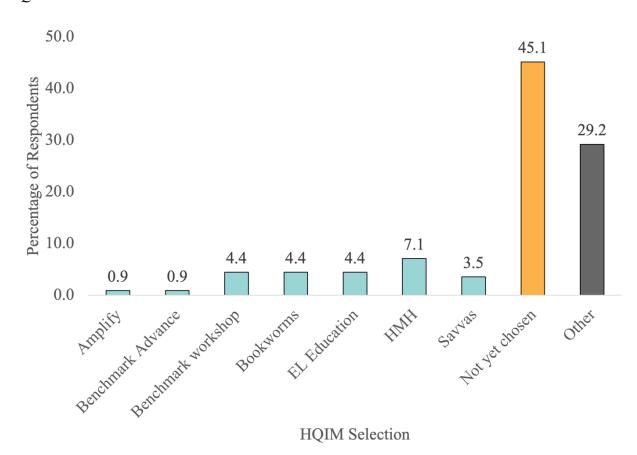


Screeners by District Size

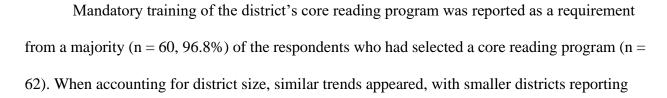
High Quality Instructional Materials

HB538 required the State Board of Education to approve HQIM to be used for teaching students in K-3. The State Board of Education evaluated a list of core reading programs by eight components of foundational literacy skills and structured literacy to create <u>their list</u> of eight approved core reading programs. Additionally, it requires that by December 1, 2024, local boards of education and governing bodies shall approve HQIM, and each year thereafter by August 1st, certify to GaDOE that its locally approved instructional materials and content constitute HQIM. Out of 113 respondents, 25.7% of districts (n = 29) reported selecting a specific HQIM and 29.2% of districts (n = 33) reported selecting "other" (which will be discussed in the forthcoming full report); however, 45.1% of districts (n = 51) reported not yet choosing HQIM (see Figure 9). Only one of the SBOE approved core reading programs, *Collaborative Classrooms: Being a Reader*, was not selected by any district in our sample

Figure 9



HQIM Selection



more instances of mandatory training requirements compared to medium or large districts (see

Figure 10).

Figure 10

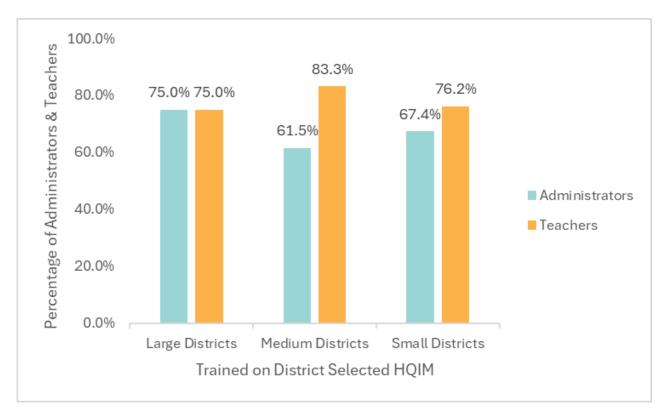
Percentage of Districts with Mandatory HQIM Training



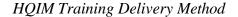
Out of 62 districts that had selected HQIM, 43 districts (69.4%) indicated that administrators received selected core reading program training, while 48 districts (77.4%) reported teachers received training (see Figure 11); when district size was examined, these trends maintained (see Figure 12). Training was reported as being delivered via multiple methods, including through the vendor/publisher, in-house by district staff, and in-house by school staff. See Figure 13.

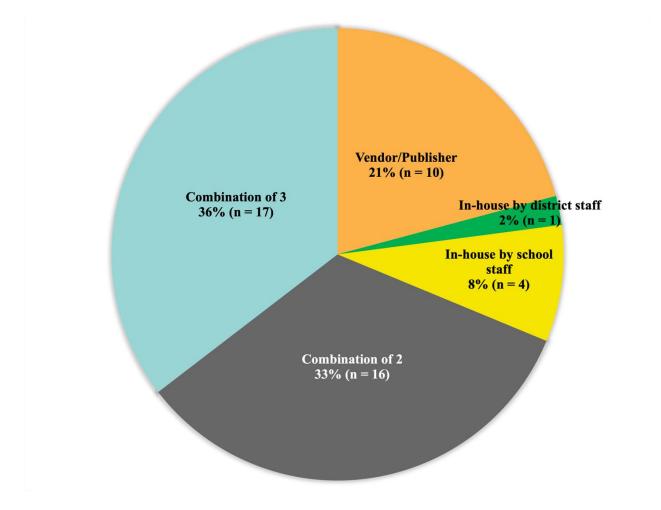


Mandatory Training on Selected Core Reading Program for Teachers and Administrators

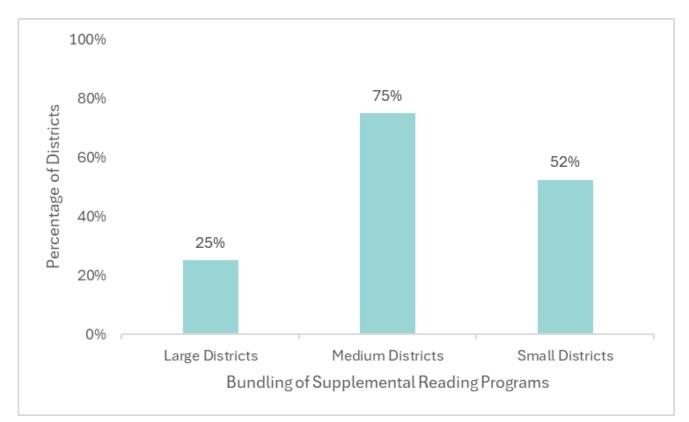


Percentage of K-3 Personnel Trained on HQIM by District Size





Out of 52 responding districts, 53.2% of districts (n = 33) reported bundling their own supplemental programs to create a core reading program, whereas 46.8% of districts (n = 29) reported no bundling. When broken down by district size, differences in bundling appeared, whereby most medium districts (75%) reported bundling their supplemental programs, followed by small districts (52%) and then large districts (25%; see Figure 14).



Percentage of Districts Bundling Supplemental Reading Programs by Size

Tiered Interventions

HB538 requires, beginning August 1, 2024, public schools and local school systems shall implement tiered reading intervention plans for public school students in K-3 who at any time during the school year exhibit a significant reading deficiency, as measured by performance on the universal reading screener approved by the SBOE.

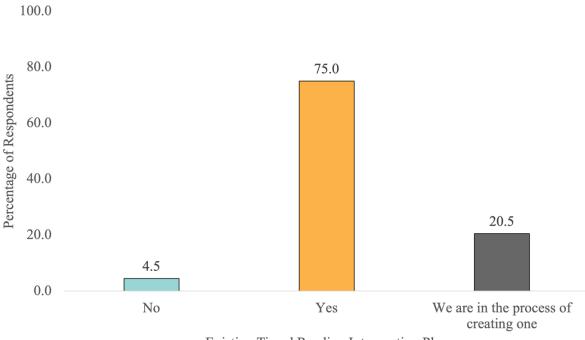
Out of 112 respondents, 75% of districts (n = 84) reported having an existing tiered reading intervention program, with only 4.5% reporting not having one (n = 5); it is important to note that 20.5% of districts (n = 23) reported being in the process of creating a tiered reading intervention plan. Further, 58% of districts (n = 65) reported that their reading interventions were tied directly to their core reading program; 42% of districts reported reading interventions not

being tied to their core reading program. When accounting for district size, similar trends

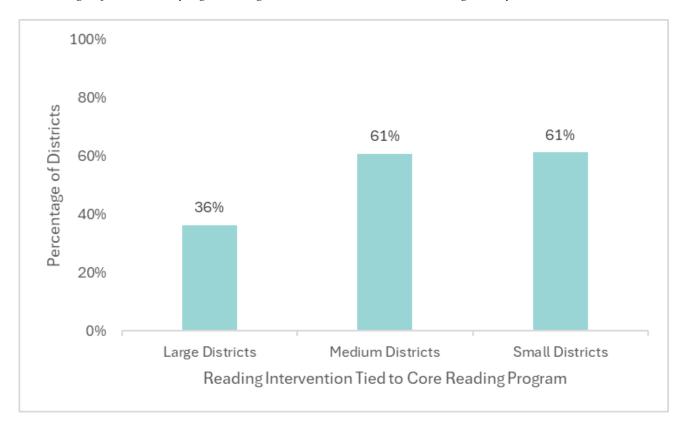
appeared (see Figure 16).

Figure 15

Existence of Tiered Reading Intervention Plan



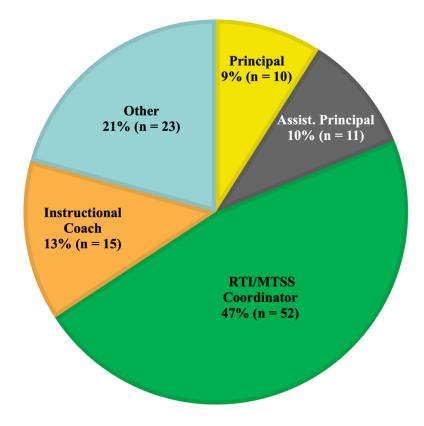
Existing Tiered Reading Intervention Plan

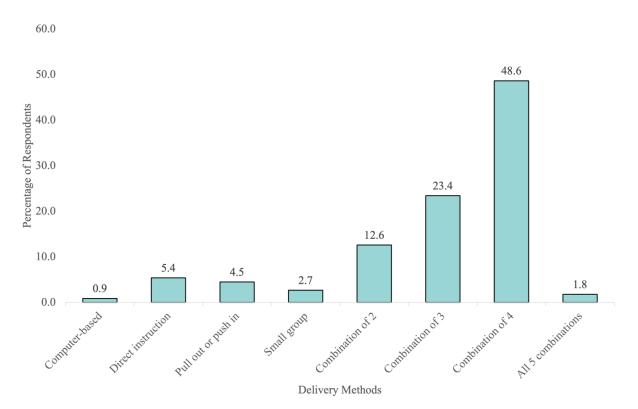


Percentage of Districts Tying Reading Intervention Plan to Core Program by District Size

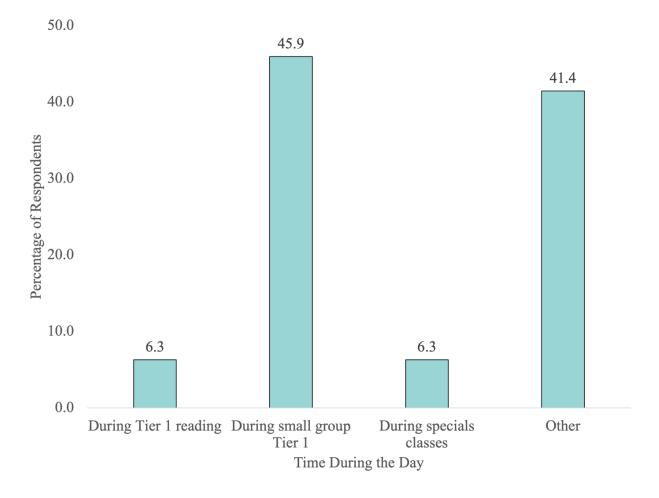
Figure 17 showcases personnel who oversee reading intervention services, including the principal (9%), assistant principal (10%), Response to Intervention (RTI) / Multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) Coordinator (47%), or an instructional coach (14%). Some districts (21%) reported "other," which will be explored in further qualitative analyses. Figure 18 highlights methods utilized to deliver reading interventions to students such as computer-based (n = 1), district instruction (n = 6), pull out or push in (n = 5), small group (n = 3), and various combinations of approaches (n = 96). Last, Figure 19 indicates the context that students receive reading intervention, including during Tier 1 reading (6.3%, n = 7), during small group Tier 1 (45.9%, n = 51), during specials classes (6.3%, n = 7), and "other" (41.4%, n = 46) which will be reported in further qualitative analyses.

Who Oversees Reading Intervention Services





Mode of Reading Intervention Delivery



Context of Reading Intervention Delivery

Professional Learning

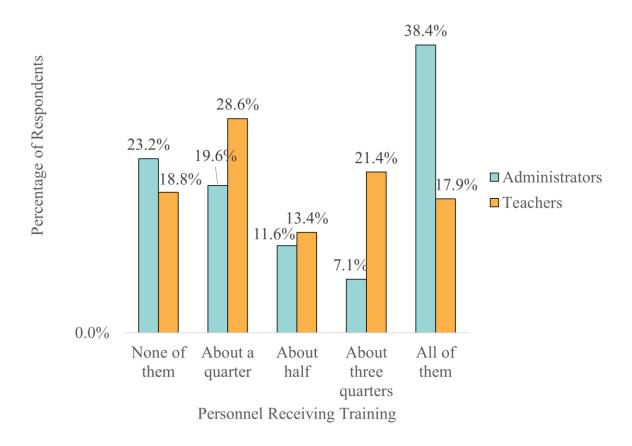
HB538 requires by July 1, 2025, all K-3 teachers shall complete a training program in the science of reading, structured literacy, and foundational literacy skills that enable students to develop reading skills required to meet state standards in literacy. Out of 112 responding districts, 43 districts (38.4%) indicated that all administrators had received structured literacy training and 20 districts (17.9%) reported that all teachers received the same training (see Figure 20 for all proportions); when district size was examined, these trends maintained, whereby

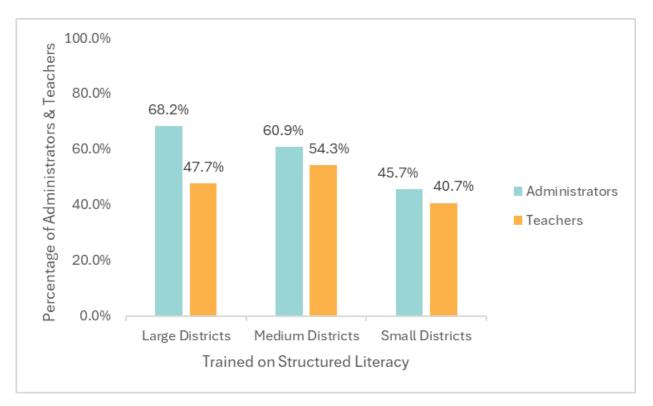
higher percentages of administrators receiving the training were observed compared to

percentages of teachers receiving the training (see Figure 21).

Figure 20

Proportion of Personnel Receiving Structured Literacy Training

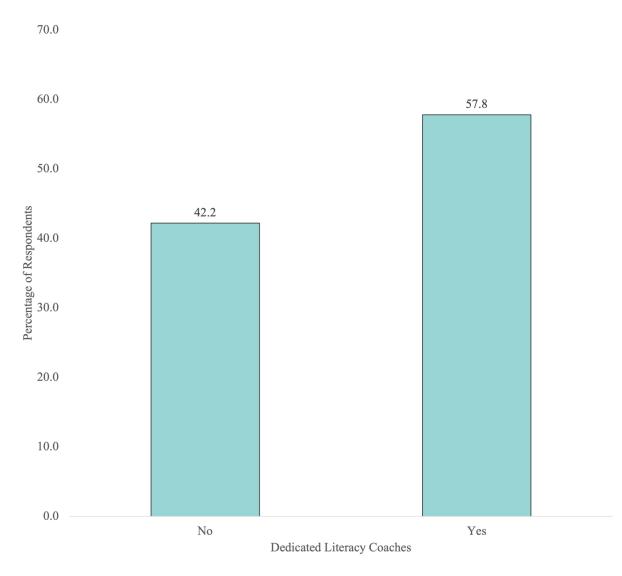


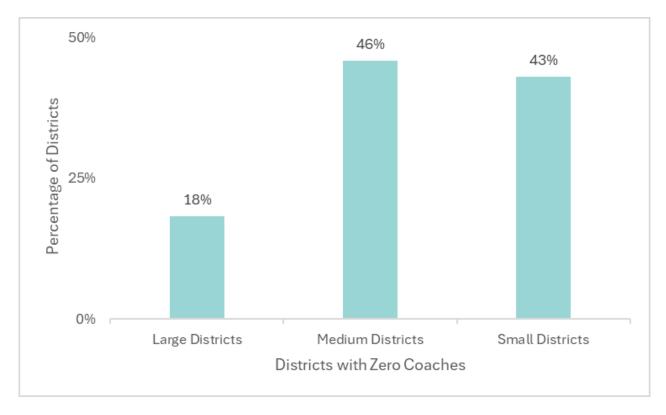


Percentage of K-3 Teachers and Administrators who Received Structured Literacy Training

Among the 112 respondents, 55.8% of districts (n = 63) reported that their district had a dedicated reading/literacy coach, whereas 40.7% of districts (n = 46) reported not having a dedicated reading/literacy coach (see Figure 22); for district size differences, review Figure 23. Reporting ranged from 0 to 89 dedicated reading/literacy coaches per district.

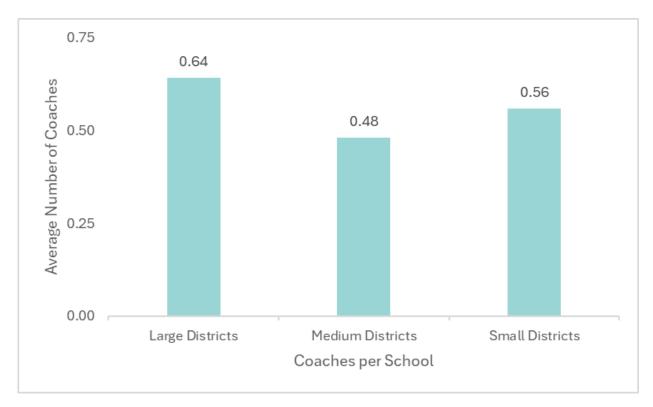






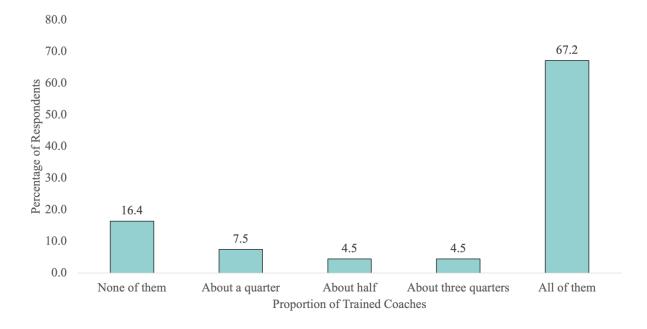
Percent of Districts with No Dedicated Reading/Literacy Coaches

For districts having literacy coaches, Figure 24 illustrates the average number of dedicated reading/literacy coaches per school. Large districts reported the highest number of coaches at 0.64 per school compared to medium districts reporting with 0.48 coaches per school and small districts reporting 0.56 coaches per school.

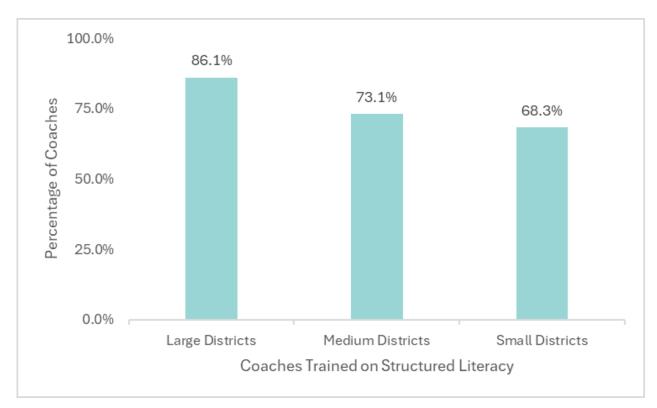


Average Number of Reading/Literacy Coaches per School by District Size

Although only 65 respondents addressed how many dedicated reading/literacy coaches had been trained in structured literacy, a majority of these districts (67.2%, n = 45) reported that all of their coaches had been trained. See Figure 25. In our sample, 43% of all districts (n = 48) had 0 coaches in their schools. When separated by district size, 18% of large districts reported having no coaches, but small and medium districts reported that 44% and 50% of their districts respectively had no coaches. Eight districts, about 7% of the sample, reported that although they have coaches who are trained in structured literacy, these coaches are not dedicated to reading/literacy and must also coach other subjects. Only full-time dedicated reading/literacy coaches were included in Figure 26.

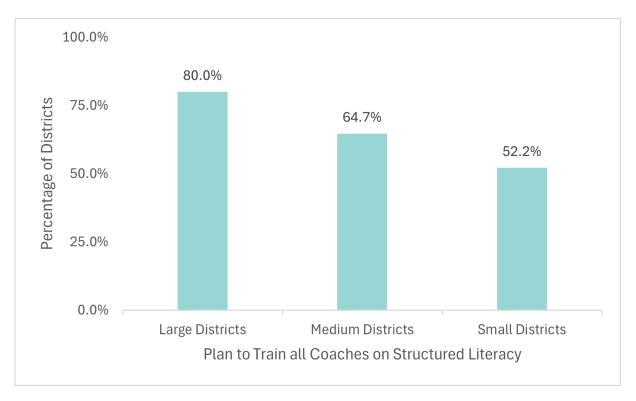


Proportion of Coaches Trained in Structured Literacy



Percentage of Active, Dedicated Reading/Literacy Coaches Trained in Structured Literacy

Out of 67 districts in which not all coaches are currently trained on structured literacy, a majority (56.7%, n = 38) reported that there was a plan in place to train all reading/literacy coaches on structured literacy in the next year, whereas 43.3% of districts (n = 29) reported no plan in place. Taking into account district size, a higher proportion of large districts (80%, n = 4) reported having plans to train reading/literacy coaches compared to medium districts (64.7%, n = 11) or small districts (52.2%, n = 24) as indicated in Figure 27.



Percentage of Districts Planning to Train all Reading/Literacy Coaches on Structured Literacy

Discussion

Considering the number of districts in Georgia, it important to note a 52% response rate to this inventory– signifying the active participation of 113 districts, including 19 charter schools. The majority of districts represented were small, followed by medium districts then large districts; however, this changed slightly when accounting for representation based the total amount of K-3 teachers, whereby a majority of districts represented were medium, followed by small districts then large districts.

While most districts reported selection of universal reading screeners, some still had not finalized their selection at the time of the survey. When it came to training, differences existed between whether training was mandatory for administrators or teachers. Specifically, districts reported higher rates of mandatory training for administrators than teachers. However, when it came to personnel fully receiving the training, a similar percentage appeared for both teachers and administrators. These findings suggest that even though districts may have different personnel requirements for training, personnel are still likely to fully complete training.

A majority of districts had not yet reached a decision in selecting HQIM. Some districts specified a particular HQIM and a number of districts selected the "other" category. A majority of districts indicated that training for their core reading program was mandatory; similar rates of reporting were also noted for administrators and teachers that received the training, suggesting that regardless of role, personnel are likely to meet training requirements.

Most districts reported having an established tiered intervention program, with at least half of respondents directly integrating interventions with the core reading program. The responsibility of intervention oversight mainly fell to RTI/MTSS Coordinators. These findings highlight the oversight of reading interventions by trained specialists.

Differences in provision of professional learning were apparent with the percentage of districts that reported structured literacy training for administrators compared to training for teachers; this is the first notable difference with regard to training between administrators and teachers, indicating there is likely a need for more structured literacy training among all personnel. Further, only 50% of district respondents indicated the presence of a dedicated reading/literacy coach, with notable variations in coach numbers. These results suggest clear differences in the capacity that districts have to address their specific needs and may further highlight why there are differences in structured literacy training.

Conclusion

The results obtained through the Deal Center's district inventory provide a comprehensive overview of districts' current implementation status of HB538, along with their

practices and characteristics regarding universal reading screeners, HQIM, tiered interventions, and professional learning. These observations are vital to inform statewide literacy initiatives and allocation of resources.

Appendix A

Table 2

District Inventory Survey Questions

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Is Training Mandatory for Teachers? N = 105 No 13 12.4				
No 13 12.4		64		
Yes 92 87.6				
	Yes	92	87.6	

Approx What Proportion of		N – 105	
Approx. What Proportion of Administrations Have Received		N = 105	
Training?			
None of them	8	7.6	
About a quarter of them	10	9.5	
About half of them	15	14.3	
About three quarters of them	16	15.2	
All of them	56	53.3	
Approx. What Proportion of	N = 105		
Administrations Have Received		11 - 105	
Training?			
None of them	2	1.9	
About a quarter of them	11	10.5	
About half of them	9	8.6	
About three quarters of them	23	21.9	
All of them	60	57.1	
Which HQIM has your District	00	N = 113	
Chosen?		11 - 115	
Amplify	1	0.9	
Benchmark Advance	1	0.9	
Benchmark workshop	5	4.4	
Bookworms	5	4.4	
EL Education	5	4.4	
HMH	8	7.1	
Savvas	4	3.5	
Not yet chosen	51	45.1	
Other	33	29.2	
Is Training Mandatory for K-3	$\frac{1}{N} = 62$		
Personnel?			
No	2	3.2	
Yes	60	96.8	
Have Administrators Received Selected		N = 52	
Core Reading Training?		1, 02	
No	19	30.7	
Yes	43	69.4	
Have Teachers Received Selected Core		N = 52	
Reading Training?			
No	14	22.6	
Yes	48	77.4	
How is Selected Core Reading Training		N = 48	
Delivered?			
Vendor/Publisher	10	20.8	
In-house by district staff	1	2.1	
In-house by school staff	4	8.3	
Combination of 2	16	33.3	
Combination of 3	17	35.4	

Are Supplemental Programs Bundled?		N = 62	
No	29	46.8	
Yes	33	53.2	
Is there an Existing Tiered Reading		N = 112	
Intervention Plan?			
No	5	4.5	
Yes	84	75	
We are in the process of creating one	23	20.5	
Are Reading Interventions Tied to Core		N = 112	
Reading Program?			
No	47	42	
Yes	65	58	
Are Supplemental Programs Bundled?		N = 111	
Principal	10	9	
Assistant Principal	11	10	
RTI/MTSS Coordinator	52	47	
Instructional Coach	15	14	
Other	23	21	
What Method is Used to Deliver	25	N = 111	
Reading Interventions?		N = 111	
Computer-based	1	0.9	
Direct instruction	6	5.4	
Pull out or push in	5	4.5	
Small group	3	2.7	
Combination of 2	14	12.6	
Combination of 3	26	23.4	
Combination of 4	20 54	48.6	
All 5 combinations			
	2	1.8	
What Time do Students Receive		N = 111	
Reading Intervention?	7		
During Tier 1	7	6.3	
During small group Tier 1	51	45.9	
During specials	7	6.3	
Other	46	41.4	
What Proportion of Administrators		N = 112	
Received Structured Literacy			
Training?	•	22.2	
None of them	26	23.2	
About a quarter of them	35	31.3	
About three quarters of them	8	7.1	
All of them	43	38.4	
What Proportion of Teachers Received		N = 112	
Structured Literacy Training?	21	10.0	
None of them	21	18.8	
About a quarter of them	47	42	
About three quarters of them	24	21.4	

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All of them	20	17.9
Does District have Dedicated Literacy	N = 109	
Coaches?		
No	46	42.2
Yes	63	57.8
How Many Coaches are Training in	N = 109	
Structured Literacy?		
0	46	42.2
1	31	28.4
2	10	9.2
3	3	2.8
4	3	2.8
5	1	0.9
6	5	4.6
7	1	0.9
8	1	0.9
9	1	0.9
12	1	0.9
15	1	0.9
19	1	0.9
20	1	0.9
45	1	0.9
71	1	0.9
89	1	0.9
How Many Coaches are Training in	$\frac{1}{N = 67}$	
Structured Literacy?		
None of them	11	16.4
About a quarter of them	5	7.5
About half of them	3	4.5
About three quarters of them	3	4.5
All of them	45	67.2
Is there Plan to Train all Coaches in	N = 67	
Structured Literacy?		2
No	29	43.3
Yes	38	56.7

Appendix B

Table 3

Number of K-3 Teachers Characterized by District Size

District Size	Frequency	
	n	%
Small Districts	N =	= 77
4 Teachers	1	1.3
5 Teachers	1	1.3
8 Teachers	2 2	2.6
9 Teachers	2	2.6
10 Teachers	4	5.2
11 Teachers	3	3.9
12 Teachers	3	3.9
13 Teachers	2 2	2.6
14 Teachers	2	2.6
18 Teachers	1	1.3
20 Teachers	3	3.9
23 Teachers	2	2.6
25 Teachers	2	2.6
27 Teachers	1	1.3
28 Teachers	1	1.3
29 Teachers	1	1.3
30 Teachers	5	6.5
31 Teachers	1	1.3
32 Teachers	3	3.9
33 Teachers	2	2.6
36 Teachers	2	2.6
38 Teachers	2	2.6
40 Teachers	3	3.9
41 Teachers	1	1.3
42 Teachers	1	1.3
43 Teachers	1	1.3
45 Teachers	1	1.3
47 Teachers	1	1.3
50 Teachers	2	2.6
52 Teachers	1	1.3
53 Teachers	1	1.3
56 Teachers	1	1.3
57 Teachers	1	1.3
59 Teachers	1	1.3
60 Teachers	5	6.5
63 Teachers	1	1.3
65 Teachers	1	1.3
68 Teachers	1	1.3

70 Teachers	1	1.3
70 Teachers 74 Teachers	1	1.3
75 Teachers	1	1.3
91 Teachers	1	1.3
93 Teachers	1	1.3
100 Teachers	1	1.3
102 Teachers	l	1.3
121 Teachers	1	1.3
Medium Districts		N = 22
53 Teachers	1	4.5
71 Teachers	1	4.5
75 Teachers	1	4.5
80 Teachers	1	4.5
82 Teachers	1	4.5
85 Teachers	1	4.5
89 Teachers	1	4.5
105 Teachers	1	4.5
110 Teachers	1	4.5
115 Teachers	1	4.5
128 Teachers	1	4.5
132 Teachers	1	4.5
135 Teachers	1	4.5
148 Teachers	2	9.1
155 Teachers	1	4.5
160 Teachers	2	9.1
190 Teachers	1	4.5
223 Teachers	1	4.5
263 Teachers	1	4.5
293 Teachers	1	4.5
Large Districts		N = 8
322 Teachers	1	12.5
360.5 Teachers	1	12.5
444.5 Teachers	1	12.5
446 Teachers	1	12.5
830 Teachers	1	12.5
1150 Teachers	1	12.5
2300 Teachers	1	12.5
3388 Teachers	1	12.5
	±	12.0