



The State of Literacy in Georgia

Action Needed for Georgia's Thriving Workforce and Economy
October 2023



The Facts About Low Literacy*

Nearly 800k Georgia adults have low literacy skills. Improving literacy presents an opportunity to enhance outcomes for individuals and families across the state.



1 in 10

Georgian adults have low literacy skills¹

Georgia adults without a high school diploma are

~1.9x

more likely to be unemployed than those with a HS diploma²

Adults with low literacy in Georgia earn about

~\$1M

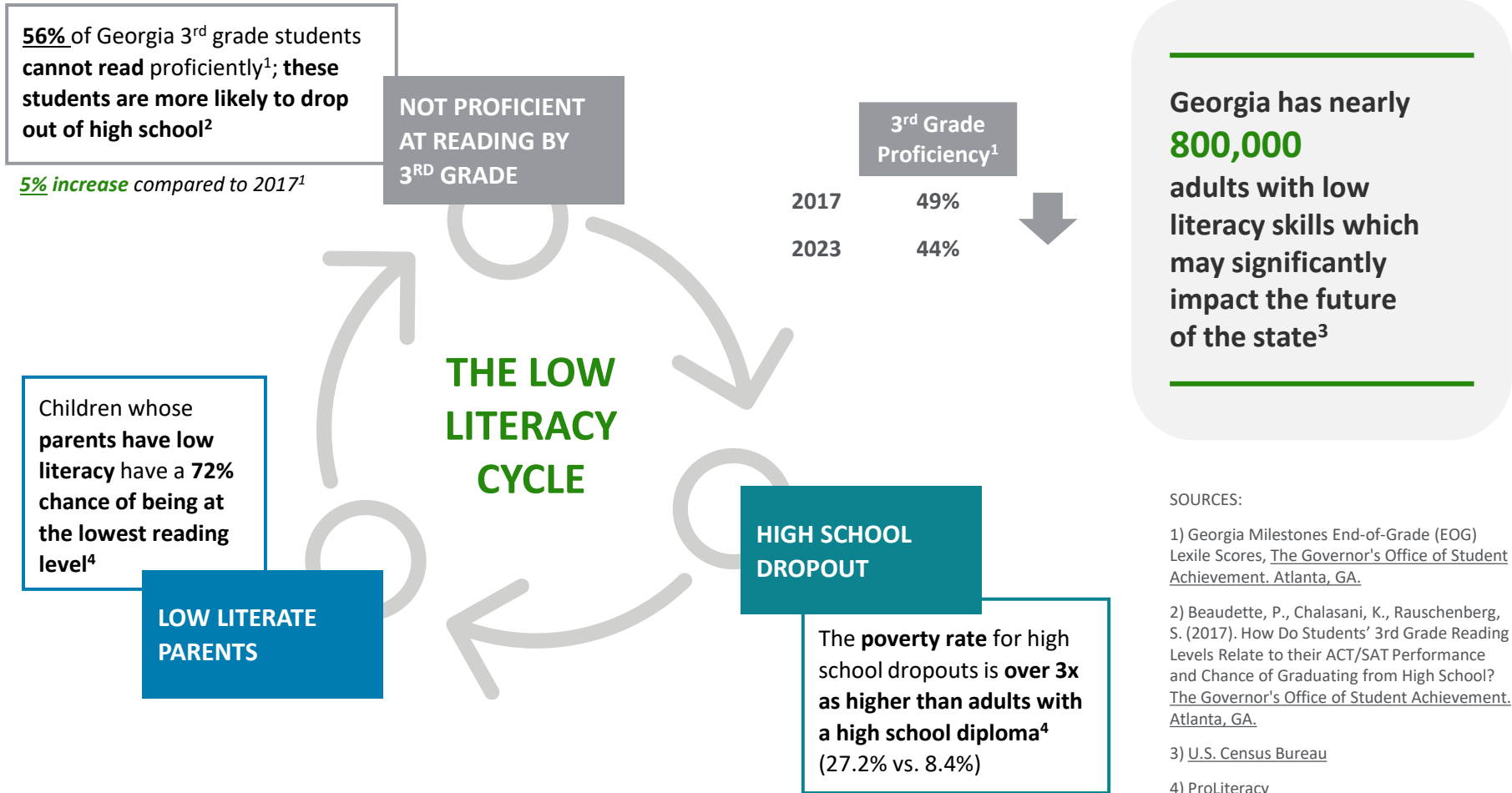
less across their lifetime than adults with a high school degree³

**Note: Failure to earn a high school diploma is a key indicator for low literacy; like many states, Georgia uses high school dropout data as a proxy for adult low literacy*

SOURCES: 1) [U.S. Census Bureau](#), 2022 American Community Survey; 2) [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#); Labor force statistics 3) [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), Median usual weekly earnings

The Low Literacy Cycle

Low literacy is a multi-generational problem. Without intervention, low literacy will have long-term negative impacts on Georgia's workforce and economy.



Workforce and Economic Development

*Understanding the impact of literacy
on Georgia's economy*

Georgia's Low Literate Workforce

Adults with low literacy are generally concentrated in industries which could be impacted by automation. Additionally, low literacy skills may impact an individual's ability to enlist in the military.

58% of Georgia's adults with low literacy are employed in the construction, manufacturing, restaurant and retail industries.

- These jobs are **typically filled by the local workforce**
- As more of these jobs are replaced with automation, **fewer jobs will be available to adults with low literacy**

Currently, no Georgians with low literacy are enlisted in the military.

- In 2016, **Georgia ranked sixth in the nation as having the largest number of active and reserve members in the military. Georgia values service in the military and provides numerous benefits for individuals serving and veterans.**
- **High school is generally required to enlist in the military. While a GED was once allowed for enlistment, the military's more stringent standards now require a GED and several college-level courses** ("New recruiting standards making it more difficult for youngsters to get into the military." Stephanie Chuang reports for NBC, June 11, 2013).
- If Georgia's low literate populations grow, the state's military recruitment efforts will be challenged.

Georgia's Low Literate Workforce

Industry Distribution of Adults with Low Literacy



Industry	Employment Distribution
Construction	18%
Manufacturing	17%
Entertainment (Food Service)	12%
Retail	11%
Professional Services	10%
Service	7%
Agriculture	4%
Medical Services	4%
Transportation	4%
Education	3%
Social and Community Assistance	3%
Wholesale	3%
Financial Services	2%
Administration	1%
Information Services	1%
Military	0%
Total	100%

SOURCES: 1) ACS; 2011-2013, Adults 25+

The State of Georgia's Workforce

Georgia is expected to create over +250k new jobs from between now and 2028. The state will need a workforce with strong literacy skills to meet expected demand.



The Georgia Department of Labor is **projecting that ~261,000 new jobs** will be created in Georgia by 2028

~75%

will require at least a high school diploma¹

Nearly 800,000 Georgia adults **will not qualify for these jobs** due to lack of a high school diploma or GED



Healthcare



Technology



Prof. Services

Majority of the ***fastest growing industries*** require ***higher education and literacy***



Food Service



Construction



Retail

Most opportunities for low literate adults will be ***centralized in low-wage industries***






SOURCES: 1) [Georgia Department of Labor](#), Georgia Workforce Trends


Georgia's Key Industry Focus


Many of Georgia's major industries require an educated workforce. Low-skilled jobs are also expected to be significantly impacted by automation in the near future.



-  Advanced Manufacturing
-  Aerospace
-  Agribusiness
-  Arts
- Automotive
- Contact Centers
-  Data Centers
-  Defense
-  Energy Solutions and Environment Business

- Entertainment
-  Financial Services
- Food Processing
-  Headquarters*
-  Information Technology
-  Life Sciences
- Logistics and Transportation
-  Tourism

 Majority of jobs require a high school diploma

 Predicted significant impact from automation

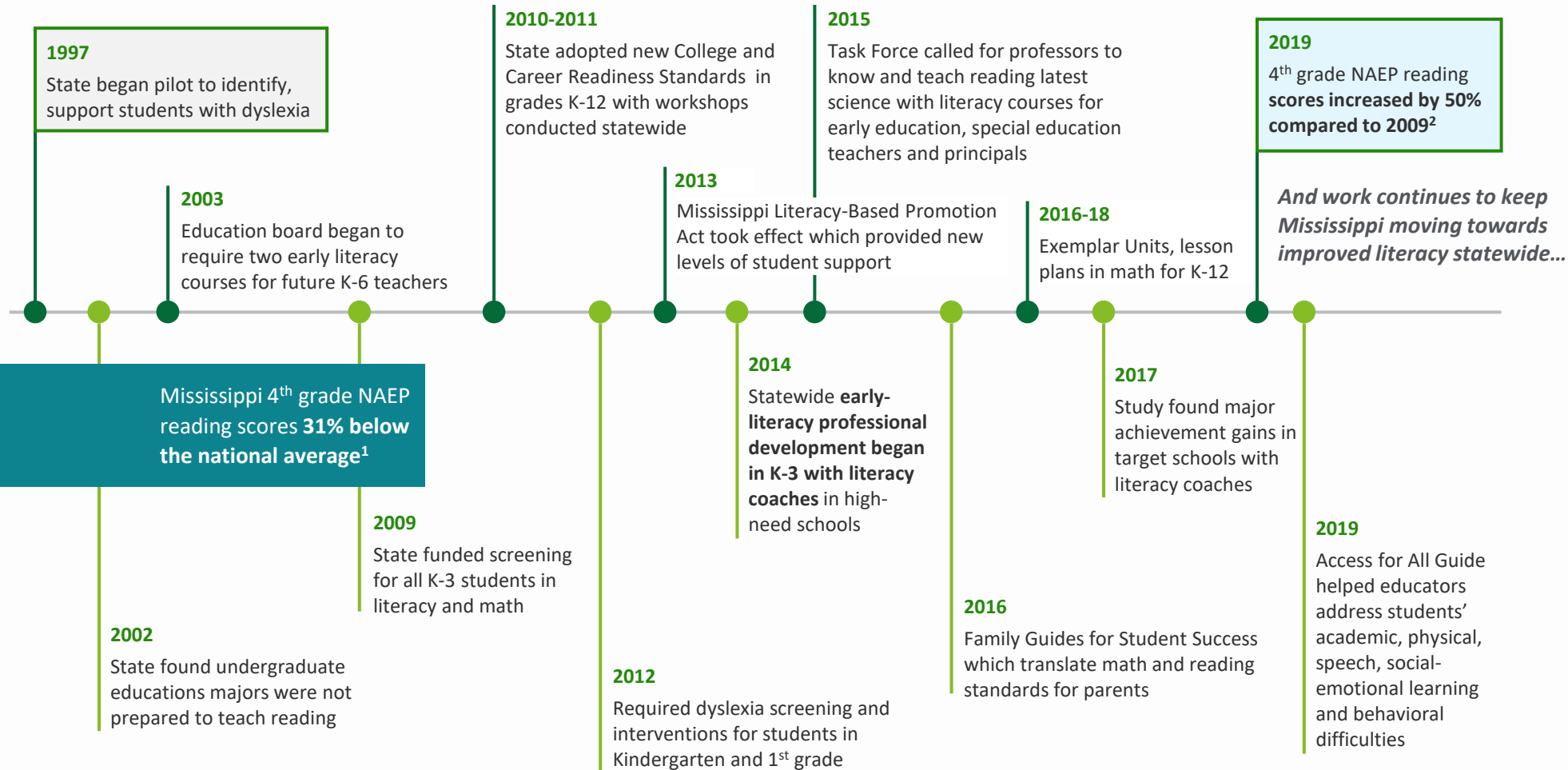
SOURCES: 1) Georgia Dept. of Economic Development, <http://www.georgia.org/>; "Headquarters" refers to the 18 Fortune 500 companies with headquarters in Georgia

Case Studies

The Mississippi Miracle Reading First's Impact in Georgia

Case Study: The Mississippi Miracle

Mississippi began a journey over twenty years ago to improve literacy. Their success can serve as a guide to improving literacy and economic outcomes across Georgia.



SOURCES: 1) SREB, Lessons Learned in Improving Education; 2) National Center for Education Statistics

Case Study: Reading First's Impact in Georgia

Georgia has implemented successful initiatives to improve youth literacy in the past. However, the momentum must be sustained long-term to create a lasting impact.



Background

- Reading First was administered by the Department of Education as part of the No Child Left Behind Act
- Georgia received +\$200M¹ in funding from 2002 – 2008 to help students in the state improve literacy rates
- Funding was used to hire Literacy Coaches which helped contribute to improved reading scores in Georgia
- Once the funding ended, the number of Literacy Coaches (and reading scores) declined across the state

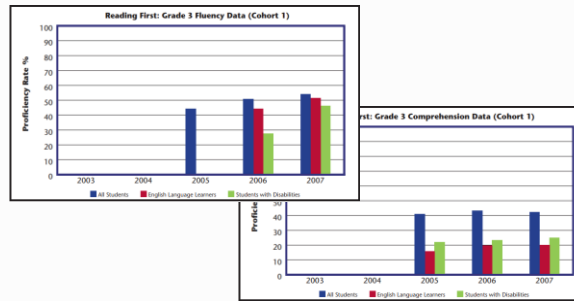
Participation

47,365 students
142 schools
49 districts
as of 2006 -2007

State Funding

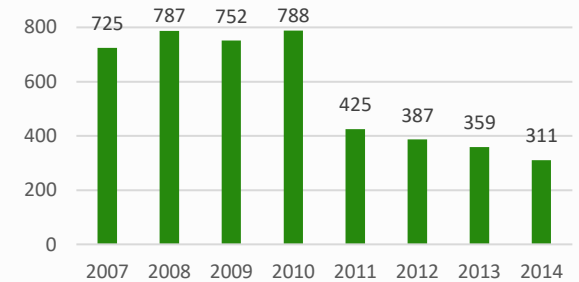
2008	\$12,911,473
2007	\$34,447,349
2006	\$34,035,204
2005	\$33,102,639
2004	\$32,645,642
2003	\$29,362,206
2002	\$28,764,241

Evaluation Findings²



- Nearly all cohorts made positive gains on all measures of DIBELS during the third year of Reading First¹
- 3rd graders showed increases in Word Analysis and Spelling on the ITBS test

Literacy Coaches in Georgia³



- Resources provided through the Reading First program helped Georgia fund +700 literacy coaches across the state
- The number of literacy coaches decreased significantly after the funding expired

SOURCES: 1) U.S. Department of Education Budget Service; 2) [Reading First State Profile, Georgia](#); 3) Georgia Office of Student Achievement

Recent Literacy Legislation in Georgia

Senate Bill 48 --- signed on May 2nd, 2019

Senate Bill 211 --- signed on April 13th, 2023

House Bill 538 --- signed on April 13th, 2023

GA Senate Bill 48 | The Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program (2019)

Similar to legislation introduced early in Mississippi's journey (1997), SB48 requires local school systems to screen Kindergarten through 3rd grade students for dyslexia.



In 2019, the Georgia Assembly passed Senate Bill 48 (S.B. 48) into law. The bill required the State Board of Education, State Superintendent, Georgia Department of Education, and Georgia Professional Standards Commission to:

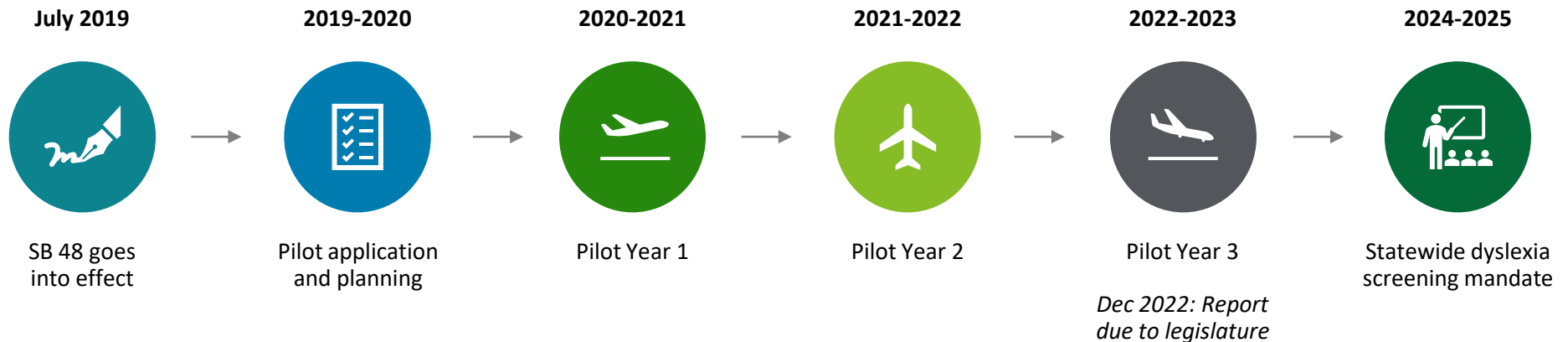
- **Develop policies** for referring certain elementary students for dyslexia screening,
- **Create a dyslexia informational handbook** to assist school districts,
- **Provide professional development** opportunities on dyslexia for teachers
- **Create a dyslexia endorsement** for teachers, and add instruction on dyslexia and response to intervention to existing standards for teacher preparation programs

Recent Funding

FY22 | \$1,630,000

FY23 | \$1,630,000

FY24 | \$3,500,000



SOURCES: 1) Georgia Department of Education, [Dyslexia Update](#)

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GA Senate Bill 211 | Georgia Council on Literacy (2023)

The Georgia Council on Literacy was established to support efforts to improve literacy across the state. The council is currently authorized to December 31, 2026.



Georgia Senate Bill 211 established the Georgia Council on Literacy which consists of 30 members appointed by the Governor, the Lt. Governor, and the Speaker to review best practices, make recommendations and monitor and report on the implementation of the H.B. 538 requirements

- The council will be attached to Governor’s Office of Student Achievement with appointees including literacy and education specialists, local and state board of education members, local superintendents, librarians, and dyslexia specialists
- The Georgia “Literacy Coach” is staff of GOSA and works with the council and Alliance of Education Agency Heads on literacy improvements

Responsibilities of the Council include:

Monitoring and reporting on the implementing the requirements of Georgia House Bill 538

Working with the State Board of Education, in consultation with GOSA and Georgia Department of Education, to establish the state’s literacy metrics

Reviewing literacy needs of disadvantaged students and making recommendations for legislation/budgets to improve literacy outcomes

GA House Bill 538 | Georgia Early Literacy Act (2023)

The Georgia Early Literacy Act provides important guidance for key literacy topics which is meant to improve instructional materials, teacher training and education



Georgia House Bill 538 codifies important definitions (e.g., Foundational Literacy Skills, Reading Intervention, etc.) and establishes timelines to implement specific actions which are targeted at improving youth literacy across the state



Instructional Materials

Universal Screeners

Teacher Literacy Training

Reporting on Teacher Training

Assessments and Intervention

Requires State Board of Education to create grade-appropriate metrics to measure literacy and establish instructional materials for K-3

Requires GA Dept of Education to create process for providers to submit universal reading screeners to be considered for approval by 2024

Requires GA Dept of Education to create training programs for K-3 teachers across literacy topics and provide instructional support by 2025

Requires GA Dept of Education to provide an annual report on the impact of training across a variety of metrics for students in grades 1 – 3

Requires public and local school systems to implement tiered reading intervention plans for K-3 students who have significant reading deficiencies

SOURCES: 1) Georgia Office of Student Achievement

Action Needed

Next steps for the Georgia Council on Literacy



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- 1 → Continue learning about best practices used to improve literacy in Georgia and beyond
 - 2 → Monitor progress, and as effective practices and policies are identified, continue to support these efforts
 - 3 → Develop strategies to effectively deploy literacy coaches across the state of Georgia
 - 4 → Identify funding for literacy coaches starting in fiscal year 2025
 - 5 → Re-authorize the Georgia Council on Literacy beyond 2026 to sustain the journey
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