2018-2019 Governor's School Leadership Academy End-of-Year Evaluation Report

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Governor's Office of
Student Achievement

Executive Summary

The Governor's School Leadership Academy (GSLA) is a leadership preparation and support program for school leaders, administered through the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA). The program aims to support principals in turnaround schools and create a leadership pipeline of aspiring principals to fill school leadership vacancies in turnaround schools. The major goals of GSLA are:

- To provide coaching and support for school leaders,
- To establish a statewide network of school leaders,
- To create a pipeline for school leadership vacancies in turnaround schools, and
- To ultimately have effective leadership in all Georgia schools.

GSLA completed its inaugural year during the 2018-2019 school year, supporting one cohort of principals and one cohort of aspiring principals. The program will expand to include three cohorts of principals and two cohorts of aspiring principals in the 2019-2020 school year. GSLA will also partner with Georgia's 16 Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs) to launch the GSLA Teacher Academy, which will provide support for induction-level teachers and teacher leaders.

This program evaluation considers data from perception surveys and individual interviews, as well as other indicators, such as the number of aspiring principal participants gaining roles as principals. The evaluation focuses on the following areas:

- *Program Implementation & Participant Buy-In*,
- *Participant Satisfaction*, and
- *Program Effectiveness & Impact on Schools*.

Principal Cohort

The Principal Cohort included principals from all 19 schools actively working with the Chief Turnaround Office (CTO) for the 2018-2019 school year, along with seven additional Turnaround Eligible Schools. The structure of the Principal Cohort includes in-person trainings and coaching. Major findings from the evaluation include:

- 96 percent of participants would be likely or very likely to recommend the program to others;
- 96 percent of participants agreed that the in-person trainings were a good use of their time;
- 88 percent of participants agreed that contact with their coach was a good use of their time;
- 100 percent of participants agreed that interacting with other members of the cohort and education experts was valuable, and 92 percent suggested that this interaction was the most beneficial aspect of GSLA;
- 100 percent of participants were able to provide concrete examples of times they used content learned at GSLA in their roles; and
- At least 64 percent of participants reported using skills learned from each major topic of the GSLA curriculum frequently in their roles.

Aspiring Principal Cohort

The Aspiring Principal Cohort included 19 assistant principals, instructional coaches, and teachers from districts with at least one school on the Turnaround Eligible List. The structure of the Aspiring Principal Cohort includes in-person trainings, coaching and a data-focused Capstone project. Major findings from the evaluation include:

- 100 percent of participants would be very likely to recommend the program to others;
- 100 percent of participants agreed that the in-person trainings were a good use of their time;
- 100 percent of participants agreed that contact with their coach was a good use of their time;
- 100 percent of participants agreed that interacting with other members of the cohort and education experts was valuable, and 74 percent suggested that it was the most beneficial aspect of GSLA;
- 100 percent of participants agreed that the opportunity to work on the Capstone project was valuable;
- 100 percent of participants were able to provide concrete examples of times they used content learned at GSLA in their roles; and
- At least 74 percent of participants reported using skills learned from each major topic of the GSLA curriculum frequently in their roles.

Recommendations

Results from the evaluation show participants responded positively to all aspects of the GSLA program and the design of the program shows a positive impact on participants' practices as school leaders. Participants' responses show the greatest strength of GSLA is the cohort model, which allows participants to interact and collaborate with other school leaders facing similar problems around the state. Responses also indicate another strength of the program is that it allows participants to hear from and interact with a variety of education experts, including successful principals and superintendents.

Recommendations for future years of the program include continuing to embed opportunities for participants to interact with one another and education experts. A small number of participants in the Principal Cohort suggested they felt overwhelmed with support from both GSLA and CTO, so the program may consider limiting participation to those not actively involved with another support or professional development program.

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Title Page Pictures (Clockwise from top left corner): Members of the Aspiring Principal Cohort at an in-person training; Members of the Principal Cohort at an in-person training; A member of the Principal Cohort giving her final presentation; Members of the Aspiring Principal Cohort at an in-person training

Back Cover Pictures (Clockwise from top left corner): A presenter talking to members of the Principal Cohort at an in-person training; A member of the Aspiring Principal Cohort addressing the other members of the cohort at an in-person training; A presenter addressing the Principal Cohort at an in-person training

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CCRPI	College and Career Ready Performance Index
CSI	Comprehensive Support and Improvement
CTO	Chief Turnaround Office
GOSA	Governor's Office of Student Achievement
GSLA	Governor's School Leadership Academy
PBIS	Positive Behavior Intervention and Support
RTI	Response to Intervention
SIG	School Improvement Grant
TSI	Targeted Support and Improvement

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Introduction

The Governor's School Leadership Academy (GSLA) provides high-quality leadership preparation and support designed to develop high-capacity school leaders across Georgia. The program is administered by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) and aims to ensure that every Georgia school is led by a transformational leader capable of maximizing student achievement.

In May 2018, GOSA initiated GSLA in partnership with Gwinnett County Public Schools and the Chief Turnaround Office (CTO). House Bill 338, passed during the 2017-2018 session of the Georgia General Assembly and signed by Governor Nathan Deal in April 2017, created the Joint Study Committee on the Establishment of a Leadership Academy. The Joint Study Committee, chaired by Gwinnett County Public Schools Superintendent and Chief Executive Officer J. Alvin Wilbanks, recommended the establishment of GSLA in its final report in November 2017.[1] In May 2018, GOSA hired the Director of GSLA, who subsequently hired the Assistant Director and three regional coaches in the summer of 2018.

Stacey Lutz, the Director of GSLA, awarding a GSLA pin to Glenn Pethel, Assistant Superintendent of Leadership Development at Gwinnett County Public Schools.

The design of the GSLA program draws on the Joint Study Committee's recommendations, the Rand Corporation study *Principal Pipelines*,[2] and the Gwinnett County Public Schools' nationally recognized Quality-Plus Leader Academy.[3] The program also draws on the Leader Assessment on Performance Standards, Georgia's standards for school leaders,[4] and focuses on the principalship in the context of turnaround schools, both in supporting current principals and creating a pipeline of future leaders.

The GSLA program supports two types of cohorts, one for principals of turnaround schools, and the other for aspiring principals from districts with at least one turnaround school.[5] The major goals of GSLA are:

- To provide coaching and support for school leaders,
- To establish a statewide network of school leaders,
- To create a pipeline for school leadership vacancies in turnaround schools, and
- To ultimately have effective leadership in all Georgia schools.

This report offers an overview of GSLA's inaugural year, including information on the demographics of cohort participants, the structure of the program, the evaluation methodology, and the major findings of the evaluation. The report concludes with program recommendations and updates of the 2019-2020 cohorts.

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[1] See the full text of House Bill 338 and the 2017 Final Recommendations to Governor Nathan Deal from the Joint Study Committee on the Establishment of a Leadership Academy.

[2] See the 2019 study *Principal Pipelines* from the Rand Corporation.

[3] Gwinnett County Public Schools' Quality-Plus Leader Academy includes leadership development programs for aspiring and current leaders.

[4] The Leadership Assessment on Performance Standards are part of the Leader Keys Effectiveness System, Georgia's common effectiveness system for school leaders.

[5] See the list of participants for the 2018-2019 Principal Cohort and the 2018-2019 Aspiring Principal Cohort.

Profile of Participants and Cohort Goals

The 2018-2019 GSLA cohorts included principals and aspiring principals from all grade clusters and with a variety of experience levels. The GSLA team focused on districts south of the Metro Atlanta area to create cohesive regional cohorts.

Principal Cohort

The 2018-2019 Principal Cohort included principals from all 19 schools actively working with the CTO during the 2018-2019 school year, along with seven additional Turnaround Eligible Schools identified for participation by the Chief Turnaround Officer.[6] Participants represented eight districts, shown in Figure 1: Bibb County School District, Clay County School System, Dooly County School System, Dougherty County School System, Randolph County School System, Richmond County School System, Savannah-Chatham County Public School System, and Terrell County Charter School System.

Figure 1: Map of Principal Cohort Participants
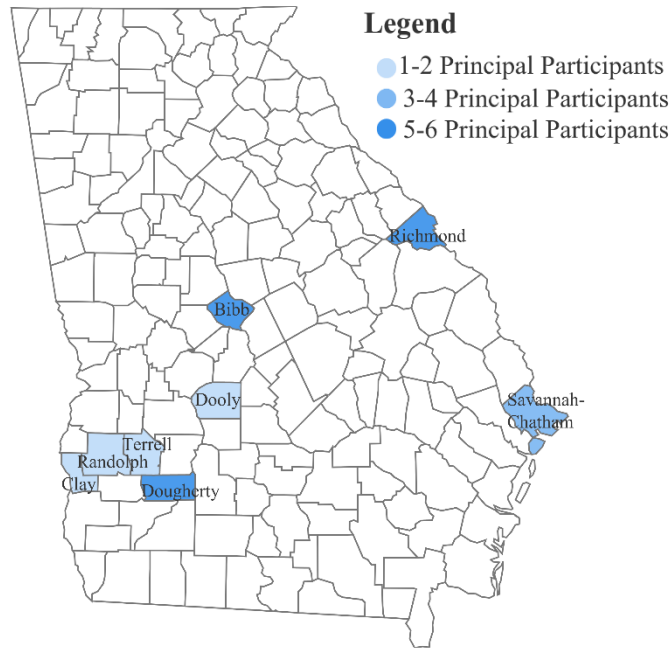
The participants had varying levels of experience in educational leadership and time in their current principal roles, as shown in Figure 2. The majority of participants (72 percent) had been in a leadership role for eight or more years, while 12 percent of participants had been in a leadership role for four or fewer years.[7] Most participants (89 percent) had been in their current principal role for four or fewer years, with only 4 percent having been in their current role for eight or more years.

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[6] GOSA produces the list of Turnaround Eligible Schools in Georgia each year. Identified schools have a three-year average College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) score that is in the bottom five percent of the state, excluding non-traditional schools and state special schools.

[7] One participant did not report his/her level of educational leadership experience. Percentages are calculated out of 25 total respondents.

The largest group of participants (46 percent) were principals of elementary schools serving kindergarten through grade five, 35 percent were principals of middle schools serving grades six through eight, 8 percent were principals of high schools serving grades nine through 12, and 12 percent were principals of schools serving other grade configurations. The majority of participants (81 percent) were from urban or suburban districts, and 19 percent were from rural districts.[8]

Figure 2: Demographics of Principal Cohort Participants[9]

Years in Current Role	<2 years 46%		2-4 years 42%	5-7 years 8%	8+ years 4%

Years in Leadership	<2 years 8%	2-4 years 4%	5-7 years 16%	8+ years 72%	

Grade Cluster	Elementary (K-5) 46%		Middle (6-8) 35%	High (9-12) 8%	Other 12%

Rural vs. Urban	Rural 19%	Urban/Suburban 81%			
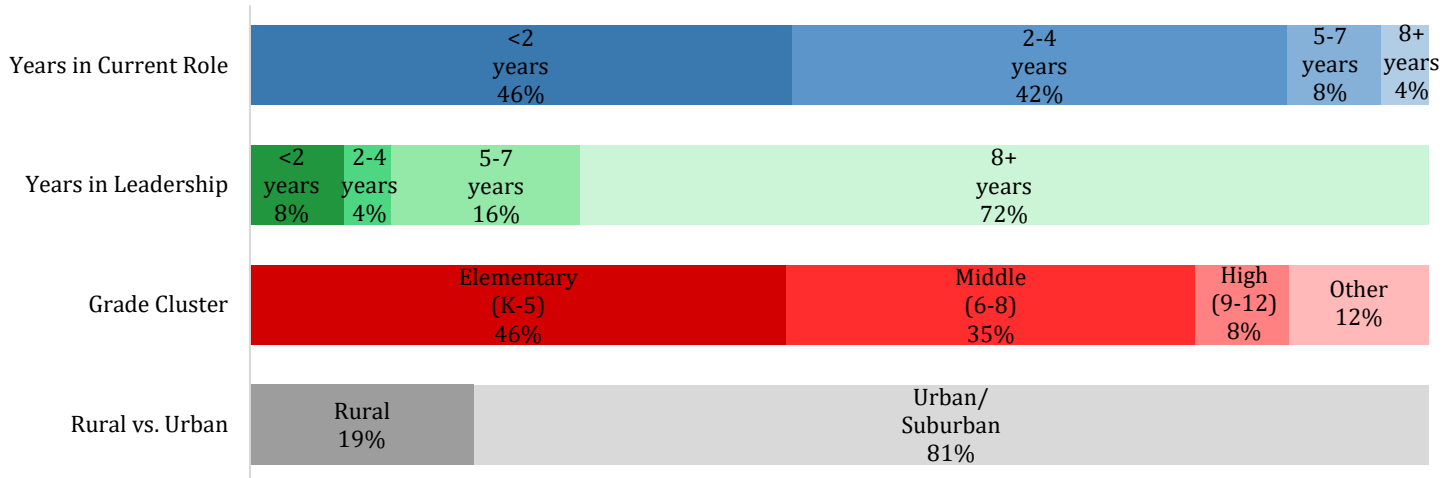
Goals for the Principal Cohort program are:

- For principals to receive coaching to help them successfully lead school improvement efforts at their schools,
- For principals to use skills and tools from GSLA training in their roles, and
- To establish a statewide network among participants.

Aspiring Principal Cohort

The Aspiring Principal Cohort included assistant principals, instructional coaches, and teachers who were recommended by superintendents in districts with at least one Turnaround Eligible School. Participants represented six districts, shown in Figure 3: Bibb County School District, Mitchell County Schools, Richmond County School System, Savannah-Chatham County Public School System, Thomasville City Schools and Valdosta City Schools.

The GSLA team solicited nominations for participants from superintendents of districts with at least one Turnaround Eligible School, and ultimately selected 19 participants who completed the application and interview process. As shown in Figure 4, the majority of participants (84 percent) were assistant principals, one participant (5 percent) was an instructional coach, and two participants (11 percent) were teachers.

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[8] A school district is considered rural if it serves fewer than 25 students per square mile.

[9] Percentages for Years in Leadership are calculated out of 25 total participants. All other categories are calculated out of 26 total participants and include all members of the Principal Cohort. For Grade Cluster, "Other" refers to schools serving grade configurations that do not fit into the other categories, such as K-8 or 6-12. Rural vs. Urban is based on school districts; a district is considered "Rural" if it serves fewer than 25 students per square mile.

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Figure 3: Map of Aspiring Principal Cohort Participants

Legend
- 1-2 Aspiring Principal Participants
- 3-4 Aspiring Principal Participants
- 5-6 Aspiring Principal Participants
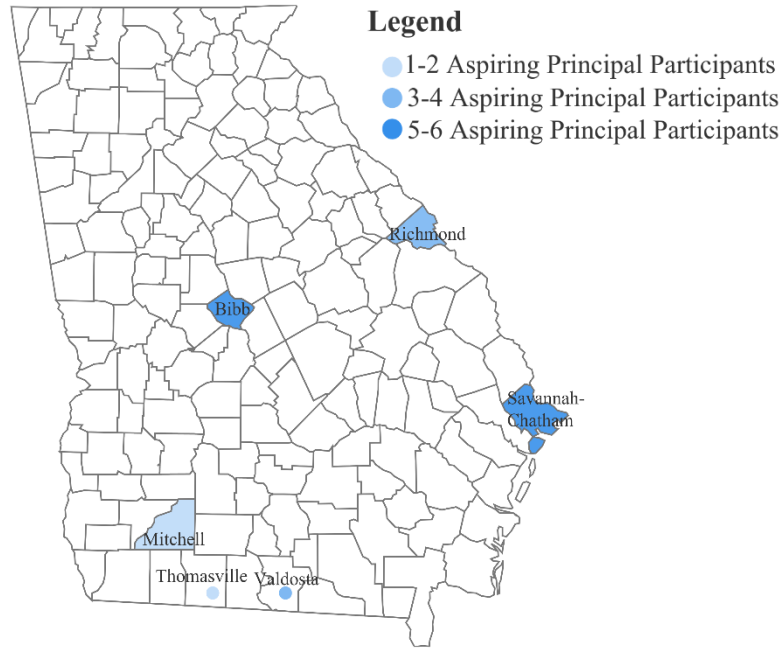
The largest group of participants (42 percent) worked in high schools serving grades nine through 12, 16 percent worked in elementary schools serving kindergarten through grade five, 21 percent worked in middle schools serving grades six through eight, and 21 percent worked in schools serving other grade configurations. Most participants (95 percent) were from urban or suburban districts, and one participant (5 percent) was from a rural district.

Figure 4: Demographics of Aspiring Principal Cohort Participants[10]

Years in Current Role	<2 years 16%	2-4 years 74%		5-7 years 5%	8+ years 5%
Current Role	Assistant Principal 84%			Instructional Coach 11%	Teacher 5%
Grade Cluster	Elementary (K-5) 16%	Middle (6-8) 21%	High (9-12) 42%	Other 21%	
Rural vs. Urban	Rural 5%	Urban/ Suburban 95%			

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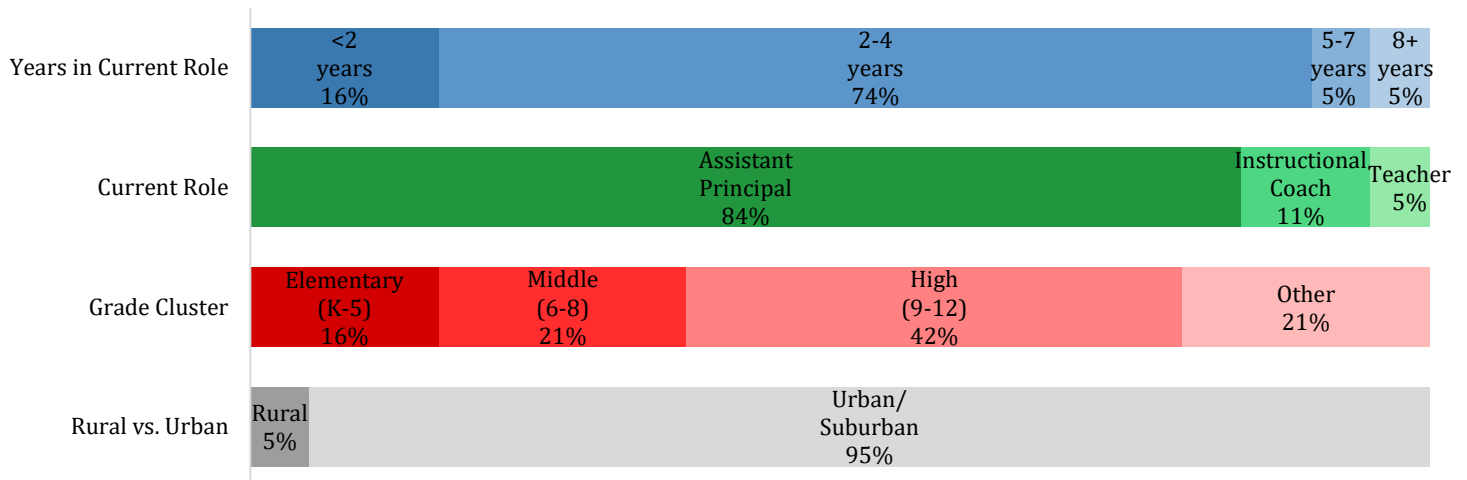
[10] All categories are calculated out of 19 total participants and include all members of the Aspiring Principal Cohort. For Grade Cluster, "Other" refers to schools serving grade configurations that do not fit onto the other categories, such as K-8 or 6-12. Rural vs. Urban is based on school districts; a district is considered "Rural" if it serves fewer than 25 students per square mile.

Goals for the Aspiring Principal Cohort program are:

- For school leaders to receive coaching to help them lead school improvement efforts at their schools,
- For school leaders to use skills and tools from GSLA training in their roles, and
- For participants to complete a successful Capstone project impacting their schools,
- For participants to gain principal roles within three years of completing the program,
- To establish a statewide network among participants,
- To establish a pipeline for school leadership vacancies in turnaround schools across Georgia, and
- To create opportunities for participants to gain Educational Leadership Tier I Certification.[11]

Evaluation Methodology

GOSA collected data for this evaluation throughout the year-long program. The collected data aims to measure success in three different focus areas for both cohorts:

- *Program Implementation & Participant Buy-In*,
- *Participant Satisfaction*, and
- *Program Effectiveness & Impact on Schools*.

Principal Cohort

Program Implementation & Participant Buy-In was measured using attendance at in-person trainings, logged completion of coaching calls and site visits, logged participation in the CliftonStrengths program,[12] and logged completion of High Reliability Schools Level 1 certification.[13] Participation in coaching, CliftonStrengths, and High Reliability Schools certification was optional for the Principal Cohort as all members of the cohort were also receiving coaching from the CTO.

Participant Satisfaction was measured using perception surveys, including eight post-training surveys, a mid-year survey, and an end-of-year survey, as well as individual interviews with a small sample of randomly selected participants.[14]

Program Effectiveness & Impact on Schools was measured using information from the individual interviews and surveys. The evaluation also examined retention of participants in a principal role or district-level support role. In the future, GOSA will examine the longitudinal impact of GSLA through analyzing data on how many participants' schools exited the Turnaround Eligible List or improved their College & Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) Single Score.

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[11] The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) recognizes two tiers of Educational Leadership Certification.

[12] CliftonStrengths, a program from Gallup, provides a strengths assessment and coaching calls.

[13] High Reliability Schools, an initiative from Marzano Resources, provides a framework for schools to be highly effective in promoting student learning. Schools can be certified on five levels of reliability, with Level 1 being Safe, Supportive, and Collaborative Culture.

[14] A copy of survey and interview questions can be made available upon request.

Aspiring Principal Cohort

Program Implementation & Participant Buy-In was measured using attendance at in-person trainings, logged completion of coaching calls and site visits, and logged participation in the CliftonStrengths program.

Participant Satisfaction was measured using perception surveys, including eight post-training surveys, a mid-year survey, and an end-of-year survey, as well as individual interviews with a small sample of randomly selected participants.

Program Effectiveness & Impact on Schools was measured using information from the individual interviews and surveys, information from participants' Capstone projects, and the number of cohort members obtaining principal roles. As one of GSLA's goals is for Aspiring Principals to gain a Principal role within three years of completing the program, full data for this area will be examined in later years.

Major Findings: Principal Cohort

The structure of the GSLA Principal Cohort allows participants to collaborate with one another, learn from education experts, and receive individualized feedback and support. Participants attend monthly in-person trainings and have the opportunity to receive individualized coaching and pursue HRS Level 1 Certification.

In-Person Training

One of the major components of GSLA is in-person training designed to build knowledge of research and best practices in school leadership. In-person training also allows for interaction and collaboration between members of the cohort. In July 2018, participants attended a three-day kickoff training at Gwinnett County's J. Alvin Wilbanks Instructional Support Center. This was followed by additional one- to two-day trainings held on a monthly basis, at rotating locations around the state including Macon, Augusta and Savannah. These in-person trainings featured sessions facilitated by GSLA and CTO staff as well as by guest speakers, including successful principals, superintendents and other education experts. In May 2019, participants also gave Capstone presentations on their work to other members of the cohort.

Kanti Chalasani, Business Intelligence Architect at GOSA, showing Principal Cohort participants how to use GOSA's data dashboards at an in-person training.

Program Implementation & Participant Buy-In in this area was measured by attendance. Average attendance for each training was 92 percent, with at least 19 participants (73 percent) attending each training.[15]

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[15] Many members of the Principal Cohort were unable to attend the October in-person training due to the aftermath of Hurricane Michael.

Participant Satisfaction in this area was measured using perception surveys and individual interviews. As shown in Table 1, 96 percent of participants agreed that the monthly trainings were a good use of their time on the end-of-year survey. Ninety-six percent of participants also agreed that the information covered at the trainings was applicable to their roles. Ninety-two percent of participants found the handouts and resources provided during and after the in-person trainings to be valuable or somewhat valuable, as shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Principal Survey Responses on Perception of GSLA[16]

	Combined "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" Responses	
	Mid-Year Survey	End-of-Year Survey
The in-person monthly trainings are a good use of my time.	85%	96%
Contact with my regional coach is a good use of my time.	85%	88%
I have learned new skills from participating in GSLA.	92%	96%
The information covered at GSLA trainings is applicable to my role.	88%	96%

Table 2: Principal Survey Responses on Value of GSLA Components

|	Combined "Somewhat Valuable" and "Very Valuable" Responses	
	Mid-Year Survey	End-of-Year Survey
Content provided at in-person trainings	92%	92%
Handouts and resources provided during and after trainings	92%	92%
Opportunity to interact with other cohort members	96%	100%
Opportunity to hear from and interact with successful principals and field experts	100%	100%
Opportunity to interact with GSLA coaches at participant's school	85%	80%

Participants also answered survey questions about which aspects of the in-person trainings were most applicable and useful in their roles. One hundred percent of participants found the opportunity to interact with other members of the cohort, successful principals, and education experts at the trainings to be valuable or somewhat valuable, as shown in Table 2. When asked what the most beneficial aspect of GSLA was, 92 percent of participants specifically mentioned interacting and collaborating with other members of the cohort and education experts. Of the major topics covered at the trainings, shown in Table 3, participants rated sessions on Teacher Development as the most applicable to their roles (96 percent of participants rated Teacher Development as applicable and 4 percent rated it as somewhat applicable). At least 96 percent of participants found each session topic to be applicable or somewhat applicable to their roles.

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[16] Areas shaded in green in tables of survey responses indicate growth from the mid-year to the end-of-year survey.

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Table 3: Principal Survey Responses on Session Topics at In-Person Trainings

	Combined "Somewhat Applicable" and "Applicable" Responses	Combined "Frequently" and "Very Frequently" Responses
CliftonStrengths	96%	68%
Personal Leadership	100%	71%
High Reliability Schools	96%	64%
Curriculum Alignment	100%	80%
Teacher Development	100%	80%
Budgeting	100%	60%
Human Resource Management	100%	80%
Vision Communication	100%	88%
Principal & Superintendent Guest Speakers	100%	80%

Program Effectiveness & Impact on Schools in this area was measured using perception surveys, qualitative survey responses and individual interviews. One hundred percent of participants were able to provide concrete examples of times they used content learned at GSLA in their roles, with examples ranging from budgeting for the next school year to engaging teachers in goal setting. Participants were surveyed on how frequently they used information learned at GSLA trainings in their roles. As shown in Table 3, participants reported using the information learned from sessions on Personal Leadership and Vision Communication the most frequently in their roles (44 percent of participants reported using the information in these areas very frequently). At least 64 percent of participants reported using information learned from each major topic frequently or very frequently. When giving concrete examples of times they used the information

A presenter addressing the Principal Cohort at an in-person training.

learned in their roles, the largest number of participants specifically referred to CliftonStrengths sessions and leveraging their own strengths, as well as those of their staff members. Many participants reported redelivering information learned at GSLA to staff members at their school.
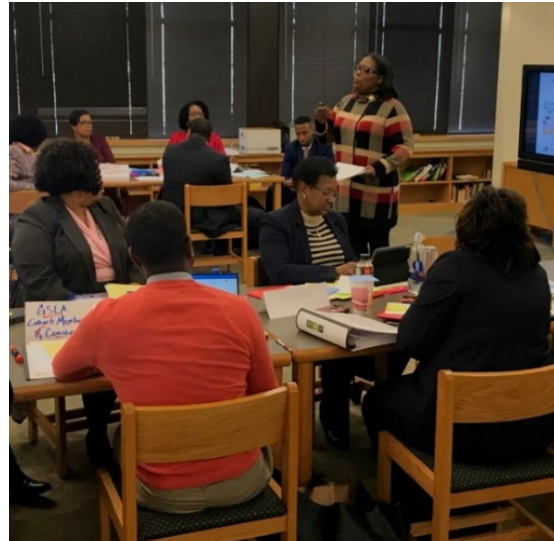
Coaching

The second major component of GSLA is personalized coaching. Participants had the option to receive support from a GSLA regional coach, including both calls and site visits, as well as less formal communication, such as emails or text messages. Coaching was optional for the Principal Cohort, as all participants also received coaching through the CTO. Calls and visits could be initiated by either the coach or the GSLA cohort member.

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Program Implementation & Participant Buy-In in this area was measured by logged completion of coaching calls and site visits. On the mid-year survey, participants selected which forms of coaching they wanted to continue receiving, with 62 percent opting to continue site visits, 46 percent opting to continue coaching calls, 62 percent opting to continue email correspondence, and 8 percent opting not to continue with any form of coaching. Throughout the year, regional coaches logged 44 coaching calls and 53 site visits.[17]

Participant Satisfaction in this area was measured using perception surveys and individual interviews. On the end-of-year survey, 88 percent of participants agreed that contact with their regional coach was a good use of their time, as shown in Table 1. Eighty percent of participants agreed that the opportunity to interact with GSLA coaches at their schools was valuable, as shown in Table 2. Ninety-six percent of participants agreed that they were satisfied with the overall level of support that they received from their coaches, that they were satisfied with the level of contact received from their coaches, and that they received valuable feedback from their coaches. Some participants who were also receiving coaching from the CTO noted that they felt overwhelmed by multiple sources of support. Eighty percent of participants expressed interest in continuing to receive coaching after the end of the year-long program.

Program Effectiveness & Impact on Schools was measured in this area using qualitative survey responses and individual interviews. One participant reported that their coach shared resources and helped them find ways around barriers in their role. Another participant reported that their coach helped them to build problem-solving skills relevant to their role.

Other Coaching and Certification Opportunities

GSLA provided additional opportunities for cohort members to participate in the CliftonStrengths program as well as opportunities to receive training and certification from High Reliability Schools. All members of the cohort had the chance to take the CliftonStrengths assessment and participate in strengths-focused coaching calls. The GSLA curriculum incorporated elements of High Reliability Schools, and members of the High Reliability Schools team delivered content at the monthly in-person trainings. All cohort members conducted High Reliability Schools Level 1 Surveys at their schools, measuring staff, student, and parent attitudes toward school climate and culture. Cohort members also had the opportunity to pursue High Reliability Schools Level 1 Certification, certifying a school as having a safe, supportive and collaborative culture.

Program Implementation & Participant Buy-In in this area was measured by logged completion of CliftonStrengths assessments and coaching sessions and High Reliability Schools Level 1 Certification. All cohort members completed the CliftonStrengths assessment, and seven participants completed CliftonStrengths coaching calls. Seven participants completed High Reliability Schools Level 1 Certification for their schools, with additional participants in the process of completing certification.

Participant Satisfaction in this area was measured using perception surveys and individual interviews. As shown in Table 3, 96 percent of applicants reported that the CliftonStrengths content applicable or somewhat applicable to their roles, and 68 percent of participants reported using the content in their roles frequently or very frequently. Eighty-one percent of participants reported that the opportunity to complete

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[17] An average of the number of coaching calls and visits per participant was not calculated because not all participants chose to continue receiving all forms of coaching.

High Reliability Schools Level 1 Surveys at their school was valuable, and 73 percent of participants reported that the opportunity to pursue High Reliability Schools Level 1 Certification was valuable.
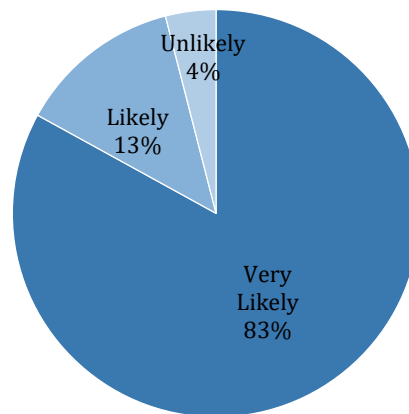
Program Effectiveness & Impact on Schools was measured in this area by logged completion of High Reliability Schools Level 1 Certification, as well as through qualitative survey responses and individual interviews. One participant noted that the High Reliability Schools Level 1 survey data was instrumental in helping to understand how students perceived the school. As stated above, seven participants completed High Reliability Schools Level 1 Certification. One participant reported that earning High Reliability Schools Level 1 Certification validated the work that the staff had done in changing the school's climate and culture of the school and that it was an opportunity to gain positive press attention for the school. Another participant reported beginning the process because the accolade would help the community view the school in a new light. Several participants also gave specific examples of using the content from CliftonStrengths in their roles.

Overall Program

Participants also reported on their satisfaction with the program overall and its impact on their practice as a school leader.

Participant Satisfaction for the overall program, was measured through perception surveys and individual interviews. As shown in Table 1, 96 percent of participants agreed they learned new skills from participating in GSLA. Ninety-six percent of principals said they were likely or very likely to recommend the program to other principals, and 4 percent (one participant) said they were unlikely to recommend the program, as shown in Figure 5. As discussed above, when asked what the most beneficial aspect of GSLA was, 92 percent of participants referred to interacting and collaborating with other members of the cohort and education experts. When asked what the least beneficial aspect of GSLA was, 16 percent referred to High Reliability Schools components, and 16 percent referred to time spent traveling to sessions and being absent from their schools. Two participants suggested incorporating site visits to turnaround schools into the program. One participant noted the program was unique because it focused specifically on the role a principal can play in school improvement.

Figure 5: How Likely Participants Are to Recommend the Program to Other Principals

Program Effectiveness & Impact on Schools for the program overall was measured through perception surveys, individual interviews and principal retention. A common theme in participant responses was that they would have benefited from participating in the program earlier in their careers as school leaders. One participant stated, "I only wish I could have experienced this type of professional learning as I began my first year as a principal; my impact would have been greatly improved over my first two years." Another participant reported the program helped them in developing new leadership skills, and another reported the program helped them in communicating differently with teachers.

Principal retention was also examined, with the goal that all principals will either stay in a principalship or a district-level support role. For the coming school year, two participants (8 percent) reported moving into district-level support roles, and four participants (15 percent) reported moving to principal roles at different schools. One participant (4 percent) reported leaving principalship. All other participants (19 participants, or 73 percent) reported remaining in their current roles. Retention will continue to be examined in future years. Exits from the Turnaround Eligible List and improvements in CCRPI scores will also be examined to determine the long-term impact of program participation.[18]

Major Findings: Aspiring Principal Cohort

The structure of the GSLA Aspiring Principal Cohort allows participants to develop professionally in their current roles while also preparing for a future principalship. Participants attend monthly in-person trainings, receive individualized coaching, and complete a Capstone project at their schools.

In-Person Training

One of the major components of GSLA is in-person training designed to build knowledge of research and best practices in school leadership. In-person training also allows for interaction and collaboration between members of the cohort. In August 2018, participants attended a three-day kickoff training at Gwinnett County's J. Alvin Wilbanks Instructional Support Center. This was followed by additional one- to two-day held on a monthly basis in Macon. The trainings featured sessions facilitated by GSLA staff as well as by guest speakers, such as successful principals, superintendents and other education experts. Participants also met to present on their Capstone projects in May 2019 at the J. Alvin Wilbanks Instructional Support Center.

Program Implementation & Participant Buy-In in this area was measured by attendance. Average attendance for each training was 96 percent, with at least 17 participants (89 percent) attending each training.

Aspiring Principal Cohort collaborating during an activity at an in-person training.

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[18] Future evaluations of the program will consider CCRPI scores of schools where the participating principal has remained in their role for three or more years.

Participant Satisfaction in this area was measured using perception surveys and individual interviews. As shown in Table 4, 100 percent of participants strongly agreed that the monthly trainings were a good use of their time on the end-of-year survey. One hundred percent of participants also agreed that the information covered at the trainings was applicable to their roles. Ninety-five percent of participants found the handouts and resources provided during and after the in-person trainings to be valuable or somewhat valuable, as shown in Table 5. Two participants suggested including more sessions on budgeting.

Table 4: Aspiring Principal Survey Responses on Perception of GSLA

	Combined "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" Responses	
	Mid-Year Survey	End-of-Year Survey
The in-person monthly trainings are a good use of my time.	100%	100%
Contact with my regional coach is a good use of my time.	95%	100%
I have learned new skills from participating in GSLA.	100%	100%
The information covered at GSLA trainings is applicable to my role.	100%	100%
I feel more equipped to step into a Principal role now than before participating in GSLA.	95%	100%

Table 5: Aspiring Principal Survey Responses on Value of GSLA Components

	Combined "Somewhat Valuable" and "Very Valuable" Responses	
	Mid-Year Survey	End-of-Year Survey
Content provided at in-person trainings	100%	100%
Handouts and resources provided during and after trainings	100%	95%
Opportunity to interact with other cohort members	100%	100%
Opportunity to hear from and interact with successful principals and field experts	100%	100%
Opportunity to interact with GSLA coaches at participant's school	95%	100%
Opportunity to work on Capstone project	100%	100%

Participants were also surveyed on which aspects of the in-person trainings were most applicable and useful in their roles. One hundred percent of participants found the opportunity to interact with other members of the cohort, successful principals, and education experts at the trainings to be valuable, as shown in Table 5. When asked what the most beneficial aspect of GSLA was, 74 percent of participants specifically mentioned interacting and collaborating with other members of the cohort and education experts. Of the major topics covered, shown in Table 6, participants rated sessions on Human Resources as the most applicable to their roles (100 percent of participants rated Human Resources as applicable). One hundred percent of participants found each session topic to be valuable or somewhat valuable.

Table 6: Aspiring Principal Survey Responses on Session Topics at In-Person Trainings

	Combined "Somewhat Applicable" and "Applicable" Responses	Combined "Frequently" and "Very Frequently" Responses
CliftonStrengths	100%	95%
School Improvement Plan	100%	74%
Curriculum Alignment	100%	84%
Teacher & Staff Evaluation	100%	84%
Human Resource Management	100%	74%
90-Day Planning	100%	79%
Principal & Superintendent Guest Speakers	100%	79%

Program Effectiveness & Impact on Schools in this area was measured using perception surveys, qualitative survey responses and individual interviews. One hundred percent of participants were able to provide concrete examples of times they used content learned at GSLA in their roles, with common examples including using personal strengths as a leader, coaching and evaluating teachers, and implementing school improvement plans. Participants were surveyed on how frequently they used information learned at GSLA trainings in their roles. As shown in Table 6, participants reported using the information learned from sessions on Teacher and Staff Evaluation and CliftonStrengths the most frequently in their roles (63 percent of participants reported using the information in the area of Teacher and Staff Evaluation very frequently, while 53 percent reported using the information in the area of CliftonStrengths very frequently). At least 74 percent of participants reported using information they learned from each major topic frequently or very frequently. When asked for concrete examples of times they used the information learned in their roles, the largest number of participants specifically referred to sessions on CliftonStrengths and Teacher and Staff Evaluation. Many participants reported redelivering information learned at GSLA to staff members at their school.

Aspiring Principal Cohort participants collaborating at an in-person training.

Coaching

The second major component of GSLA's program for aspiring principals is personalized coaching. GSLA regional coaches provided coaching to all participants through calls and site visits, as well as less formal communication, such as emails or text messages. The coach or GSLA cohort member could initiate calls and visits.

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Program Implementation & Participant Buy-In in this area was measured by logged completion of coaching calls and site visits. Throughout the year, regional coaches logged 88 coaching calls and 62 site visits, an average of five calls and three site visits per participant.

Participant Satisfaction in this area was measured using perception surveys and individual interviews. On the end-of-year survey, 100 percent of participants strongly agreed that contact with their regional coach was a good use of their time, as shown in Table 4. One hundred percent of participants agreed the opportunity to interact with GSLA coaches at their schools was very valuable, as shown in Table 5. One hundred percent of participants strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the overall level of support that they received from their coaches, that they were satisfied with the level of contact received from their coaches, and that they received valuable feedback from their coaches. Several participants noted they appreciated being able to discuss concerns and ideas with their coach.

Program Effectiveness & Impact on Schools was measured in this area using qualitative survey responses and individual interviews. One participant reported the coaching component helped them to think about issues at their school in new ways. Another participant reported implementing practical advice from their coach when managing staff members.

Other Coaching Opportunities

The Aspiring Principal Cohort also had the opportunity to take the CliftonStrengths assessment and participate in strengths-focused coaching calls.

Program Implementation & Participant Buy-In in this area was measured by logged completion of CliftonStrengths assessments and coaching sessions. All cohort members completed the CliftonStrengths assessment, and 17 participants completed CliftonStrengths coaching calls.

Participant Satisfaction in this area was measured using perception surveys and individual interviews. As shown in Table 6, 100 percent of applicants found the CliftonStrengths content applicable or somewhat applicable to their roles, and 95 percent of participants reported using the content in their roles frequently or very frequently. Several participants mentioned CliftonStrengths when asked what the most beneficial aspect of GSLA was.

Program Effectiveness & Impact on Schools was measured in this area using qualitative survey responses and individual interviews. Several participants noted using the information learned through the CliftonStrengths process while interacting with other school leaders. One participant noted leveraging staff members' individual strengths when forming teams at their school.

Capstone Project

The third major component of GSLA's program for aspiring principals is the Capstone project, a year-long data-based project focused on one issue at the participant's school. Participants designed and implemented their projects at their schools under the guidance of their regional coaches throughout the year, and each participant gave a presentation on their project at a final cohort gathering in May.

Program Implementation & Participant Buy-In in this area was measured by completion of Capstone projects and presentations. All members of the cohort completed a Capstone project and presentation.

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Participant Satisfaction in this area was measured using perception surveys and individual interviews. One hundred percent of applicants found the opportunity to work on a Capstone project to be somewhat or very valuable, as shown in Table 5.

Program Effectiveness & Impact on Schools was measured in this area using individual interviews. One participant expressed the Capstone project was one of the most impactful components of GSLA, and it was an important part of leadership development. Another participant suggested that he or she will approach the new school year differently after completing the Capstone project, constantly reevaluating data to see if progress is being made. All participants who were interviewed felt their Capstone project had an impact on their schools.

Case Studies: Capstone Projects

The case studies presented below offer an overview of three participants' Capstone projects and demonstrate the impact GSLA participants had on their schools. Participants identified an area of improvement at their school, created a plan to address the issue, and collected data to monitor the progress and success of the plan.

Kizzie Lott, Assistant Principal
Southwest Magnet High School and Law Academy, Bibb County School District

Kizzie Lott, Assistant Principal at Southwest Magnet High School and Law Academy in Bibb County, focused her Capstone project on Response to Intervention (RTI), a process aiming to identify and support students with learning and behavior needs using a multitiered approach.

Goals

The goal of the project was to decrease the rate of office discipline referrals for ninth-grade students from 49 percent to 47 percent by focusing on the RTI process for students with three or more referrals. Part of the goal was focused on maintaining the school's Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) designation of Operational,[19] which requires that the number of office discipline referrals is stabilized or declining.

Development, Implementation & Monitoring

In October, Lott created an RTI team, which included two assistant principals and the ninth-grade counselor. After reviewing student data, the team identified a focus group of students to target, developed Tier 2 and Tier 3 RTI plans, and began meeting with parents. By November, the team implemented their targeted interventions. Throughout the school year, the RTI team monitored the plans and held follow-up meetings with parents.

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[19] GaDOE recognizes schools and districts implementing PBIS with four designations: Installing, Emerging, Operational, and Distinguished. See GaDOE's PBIS recognition criteria.

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Data Analysis, Results & Next Steps

The final results showed that the percentage of office discipline referrals for ninth-grade students increased, but the overall number of referrals for the school decreased. The school was able to apply for a Distinguished PBIS designation. Lott plans to continue implementing RTI for ninth-grade students for the 2020 school year, identifying students based on test scores and attendance data. She will also implement professional development on RTI and PBIS for both new teachers and returning faculty for the 2019-2020 school year.

Johnnie Marshall, Assistant Principal
Valdosta Early College Academy, Valdosta City Schools

Johnnie Marshall, Assistant Principal at Valdosta Early College Academy in Valdosta, focused his Capstone project on dual enrollment for 10th-grade students. Part of the school's mission is for students to earn 60 hours of college credit, the equivalent of an associate degree, by the time they graduate high school.

Goals

The project aimed to begin college matriculation in the 10th grade in order for students to meet the goal of graduating with 60 credit hours. The goals of the project were that 70 percent of 10th-grade students enrolled in the Valdosta State University dual enrollment Geology and English courses would receive an A or a B in each respective course.

Development, Implementation & Monitoring

Marshall created a plan of action for the first semester, which included reviewing data, implementing support classes, and registering students for spring classes. In the second semester, he held an event for students to celebrate their Fall academic performance and continued to implement support classes and review data. He also administered a survey on dual enrollment to 10th-grade students.

Data Analysis, Results & Next Steps

The final results showed 93 percent of students received an A or B in the Geology dual enrollment course and that 84 percent of students received an A or B in the English dual enrollment course. Marshall, along with his school's Dual Enrollment Committee, plans to create different dual enrollment tracks for students in the 2019-2020 school year. School administration, along with Valdosta State University, will hold an orientation for dual enrollment students on how to use the college's library and Academic Support Center at the start of the school year.

Chris Nabahe, Assistant Principal
Butler High School, Richmond County School System

Chris Nabahe, Assistant Principal at Butler High School in Richmond County, focused his Capstone project on students at risk of dropping out of school based on poor attendance. He aimed to build positive relationships with at-risk students in order to help improve the school's graduation rate.

Goals

The goal of the project was to decrease the school's absence rate by five percentage points and to reduce the number of classes that target students were

failing from four to two by the end of the spring 2019 semester. Nabahe aimed to reach these goals through purposeful interactions with target students.

Development, Implementation & Monitoring

Nabahe identified students who missed more than six days of school or failed four or more courses during the fall 2018 semester. He met with target students and created "success monitoring" sheets for students to track data and create action plans. He also regularly contacted the students' parents. Throughout the project, Nabahe encouraged eligible students to take advantage of two district opportunities, Reaching Potential Through Manufacturing, a partnership with Textron Specialized Vehicles allowing students to work in a manufacturing setting while also receiving classroom instruction, and the Performance Learning Center, an alternative high school setting. At the end of the school year, he administered a survey to the target students.

Data Analysis, Results & Next Steps

The final results showed that 19 out of 25 students increased the number of courses they were passing. The average number of courses target students were passing rose from 2.5 in the fall semester to 3.6 in the spring semester. The results did not show a strong overall impact on student attendance, although some individual students made significant gains in this area. The 20 surveyed students rated the importance of the success monitoring meetings with Nabahe as 8.25 out of 10. Nabahe plans to continue implementing the project at the start of the 2019-2020 school year.

Overall Program

Participants also reported on their satisfaction with the program overall and its impact on their practice as a school leader.

Participant Satisfaction for the program overall was measured through perception surveys and individual interviews. One hundred percent of participants strongly agreed that they learned new skills from participating in GSLA. One hundred percent of participants said they would be very likely to recommend the program to other aspiring principals. As discussed above, when asked about the most beneficial aspect of GSLA, 74 percent of participants referred to interacting and collaborating with other members of the cohort and education experts. When asked about the least beneficial aspect of GSLA, most participants reported that all aspects of the program were valuable.

Program Effectiveness & Impact on Schools for the program overall was measured through perception surveys, individual interviews and principal roles gained. A common theme in participant responses is that they felt more confident and prepared for pursuing a principalship than before participating in the program, with 100 percent of participants agreeing they felt more equipped to step into a principal role after participating in the program, as shown in Table 4. One participant stated the program taught them how to address the challenges of running a school. Another participant stated the program helped them to see the big picture when evaluating problems at their school.

The number of participants acquiring principal roles was also examined, with the goal all aspiring principals will be in a principal role within three years of completing the program. One participant moved into a principal role during the year-long program. For the coming school year, two participants (11 percent) reported moving into principalships. GOSA will continue to examine the number of participants moving into principal roles in future years.

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Conclusion

GSLA represents one of the state of Georgia's efforts to support leaders of turnaround schools and create a leadership pipeline across Georgia. In its inaugural year, GSLA supported 26 principals of turnaround schools and 19 aspiring principals. Data from GSLA's first year shows participants were satisfied with the program and that it had a positive impact on participants' practice in their school leadership roles. Ninety-six percent of principals and 100 percent of aspiring principals reported they would be likely to recommend the program to others.

Survey results show participants responded positively to all aspects of the program and frequently use information learned through its different components. Survey and interview results demonstrate the biggest strength of GSLA is the cohort model, which allows participants to interact and collaborate with other school leaders facing similar problems around the state. Another strength of the program is it allows participants to hear from and interact with successful principals, superintendents and education experts.

Recommendations for future years of the program include continuing to create opportunities for participants to collaborate with one another and learn from experts. The program should ensure participants who have competing sources of support and development, such as support from CTO, do not feel overwhelmed. To avoid this issue, the GSLA team could consider limiting participation to principals and aspiring principals who are not actively participating in another comprehensive professional development program. Overall, participants responded positively to all aspects of the program, and the design of the program shows a positive impact on participants' practices as school leaders.

Future Cohorts

For the 2019-2020 school year, GSLA will make several notable expansions, increasing the number of principals and aspiring principals supported and launching a new program supporting teachers. GSLA will also partner with the Georgia Department of Education's Office of School Improvement, Division of School and District Effectiveness, to support federally designated schools.[20] To facilitate this expansion, the Director of GSLA hired a second Assistant Director, with one Assistant Director overseeing the Principal Cohorts and one overseeing the Aspiring Principal Cohorts.

The Principal Cohorts will include principals from schools designated as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) Schools, Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) Schools, Promise Schools and School Improvement Grant (SIG) Schools.[21] Principals from these schools could apply to participate, with priority given to principals of CSI Schools. There will be three Principal Cohorts, each with 25 to 30 participants, for different areas of the state: North, Metro and South.

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[20] The Georgia Department of Education's Office of School Improvement, Division of School and District Effectiveness provides a statewide system of support and process for school improvement.

[21] CSI and TSI are federal designations for schools. Under Georgia's state Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan, CSI Schools represent the lowest five percent of Title I schools ranked according to three-year average CCRPI score as well as all high schools with a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate of 67 percent or lower. TSI Schools have at least one subgroup that is performing in the lowest five percent of all schools in at least 50 percent of CCRPI components. Promise Schools are Title I schools with a three-year average CCRPI from five to ten percent and receive support to prevent them falling into the CSI category. SIG Schools are schools currently receiving a School Improvement Grant from GaDOE.

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The Aspiring Principal Cohort will include aspiring principals from districts that have at least one CSI School, TSI School, Promise School or SIG School. There will be two Aspiring Principal Cohorts with 49 participants overall. GSLA will partner with the College of Education at Georgia Southern University to provide a pathway for aspiring principals to earn Educational Leadership Tier 1 Certification.

GSLA will also begin the GSLA Teacher Academy, a new program partnering with Georgia's 16 Regional Educational Services Agencies to offer professional development and coaching support for induction-level teachers and teachers looking to take on leadership roles.