

Georgia Council on Literacy
The HUB for Community Innovation Augusta
April 21, 2026
10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

WELCOME

Chairman Scott Johnson
First Lady Karen Keen



GEORGIA COUNCIL ON LITERACY

Legislative Update

HB 1193 — Georgia Early Literacy Act of 2026

April 2026



HB 1193

Georgia Early Literacy Act of 2026

HB 1193 — Key Provisions

HB 1193

Literacy Coaches in Every K–3 School

State funds 1,300+ full-time coaches. Schools under 200 students receive part-time coaching support.

Unified District Literacy Plans

School boards must finalize comprehensive unified literacy plans by **January 1, 2027**, developed with parent and community input.

Coaching Endorsement Standard

GaPSC must create a literacy coaching endorsement by **December 30, 2026**, establishing minimum qualifications.

Full-Day Kindergarten Readiness

Family encouragement to start kindergarten; 1st grade-readiness assessment mandatory.

Georgia Literacy Taskforce

Convened by GOEWS to make recommendations on HQIM's, Universal Screeners, and Professional Learning.

Literacy Coordinating Committee

Serves as the central hub responsible for aligning and coordinating all state-wide literacy and reading education efforts across state, regional, and local agencies

State Literacy Director

Primary liaison across multiple state agencies. Leads the development, implementation, and continuous improvement of Georgia's state-wide literacy and reading education strategy.

Statewide Promotional Campaign

GOEWS in collaboration with DOE, Dept. of Early Care and Learning, Dept. of Public Health, University System, Technical College System, RESAs, and local school systems.

Key Collaborative Partners

**Georgia Dept. of Education
(GaDOE)**

**Dept. of Early Care and Learning
(DECAL)**

Dept. of Public Health (DPH)

**University System of Georgia
(USG)**

**Technical College System of
Georgia (TCSG)**

**Regional Education Service
Agencies (RESAs)**

**Local School Districts &
Superintendents**

**Parents & Community
Stakeholders**

**Governor's Office of Education &
Workforce Strategy**

The *Literacy Coordinating Committee* is responsible for aligning and coordinating all state-wide literacy and reading education efforts across state, regional, and local agencies — from developing the state-wide literacy plan to reviewing local unified literacy plans — ensuring that Georgia's literacy initiatives speak with one coherent voice from the classroom to the Capitol.

Literacy Plan Focus: Community Award Highlights



RISE Augusta





Collaboration is not just a strategy—it is the foundation for lasting community change. The very building we sit in today is proof of that power. What began as a bold vision during COVID became reality in April 2021, when the MCG Foundation, the Community Foundation for the CSRA, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Augusta, and the support of Augusta National came together to invest in the revitalization of the historic Harrisburg and Laney Walker neighborhoods. Their shared vision created a space where multiple nonprofits could work side by side—intentionally aligned to deliver innovative, collaborative solutions. Today, this HUB provides access to healthy, locally sourced food, quality healthcare, strong educational support, and safe, structured environments where young people are mentored and engaged. It stands as a powerful reminder of what is possible when a community comes together with purpose.

The mission of the Georgia Council on Literacy is to advance literacy outcomes across the state by fostering **collaboration**, innovation, and community-driven solutions.

RISE Augusta is proud to be part of this statewide ecosystem. We experience daily, the outcomes of real collaboration between businesses, nonprofits, and public partners working together. While our primary focus is literacy improvement, we know this work requires far more than educators alone. It demands a shared commitment from parents, universities, businesses, the medical community, students, funders, and government. Real progress happens when all of these partners are aligned—working together to remove barriers, strengthen support systems, and accelerate outcomes for every child.

I am incredibly proud of the strong literacy programs and meaningful outcomes RISE Augusta delivers, but just as importantly, we are committed community partners and collaborators. As a grassroots organization, we have the privilege of working alongside—and within—our schools, particularly in the highest-need areas of our community. In that role, we often serve as a bridge—connecting schools with local businesses and expanding access not only to academic reinforcement and enrichment, but to critical healthcare and support services for students and families.

Our partnership with this year's Georgia Reads Award recipient, the Harris Literacy Center, continues to grow and strengthen. While we are co-located at the HUB and share many common objectives. Our approaches are actually complementary—each enhancing the other. RISE Augusta benefits from the Center's depth of expertise and thought leadership, and we are grateful to learn and serve alongside them. Under the leadership of Dr. Vandeusen, that spirit of learning is

constant. Together, we are building a seamless continuum of support for children and families.

RISE Augusta believes that every child has the potential for success—but we also know that many face barriers that are difficult to overcome alone. That is why our approach to literacy is holistic.

For example:

A fifth-grade student at one of our partner schools was struggling—not just academically but quietly losing confidence each day. Her teacher knew she was capable, but something wasn't connecting and wondered if it might be her vision. She reached out to RISE Augusta for support. We coordinated a vision screening and the follow-up care she needed.

What a difference.

Within weeks, this student had glasses—and something even more powerful: clarity, confidence, and renewed engagement. Today, she is reading aloud in class, and her teacher is thrilled with her progress.

This story is not unique.

It reflects the hidden barriers many of our children face—and reminds us that literacy is not just about instruction. It is also about perception, access, support, and opportunity.

The RISE Impact – FY 24-25

- 84% of students in RISE Augusta's tutoring program improved their reading levels
- 1,600+ students received vision screenings and follow-up care when needed
- 42,000 books were placed directly into the hands and homes of local children
- 700+ children and families received critical basic-needs support

In addition, **together with the Harris Literacy Center and our fellow HUB partners**, RISE Augusta has extended that impact even further—providing thousands of additional books while engaging hundreds of students and families through free community events, presentations, and interactive learning experiences. Families not only learned and played together, but also gained access to vital resources—including educational support, healthy foods, and medical care.

The HUB is also home to **Get Augusta Reading (GAR)**, our local chapter of the Get Georgia Reading Campaign—a growing coalition now 80 members strong, united around a shared goal – ensuring every child reads proficiently by the end of third grade.

Why This Matters

What is happening in Augusta represents a replicable, scalable model of how community-based organizations can:

- Align education, business, healthcare, government and more...

- Extend the reach of schools and deepen family engagement
- Address non-academic barriers that impact learning
- Improve literacy outcomes through targeted, relational support

RISE Augusta along with the Harris Literacy Center are not just programs—we are part of a solution framework. Our programs are free to those that need them.

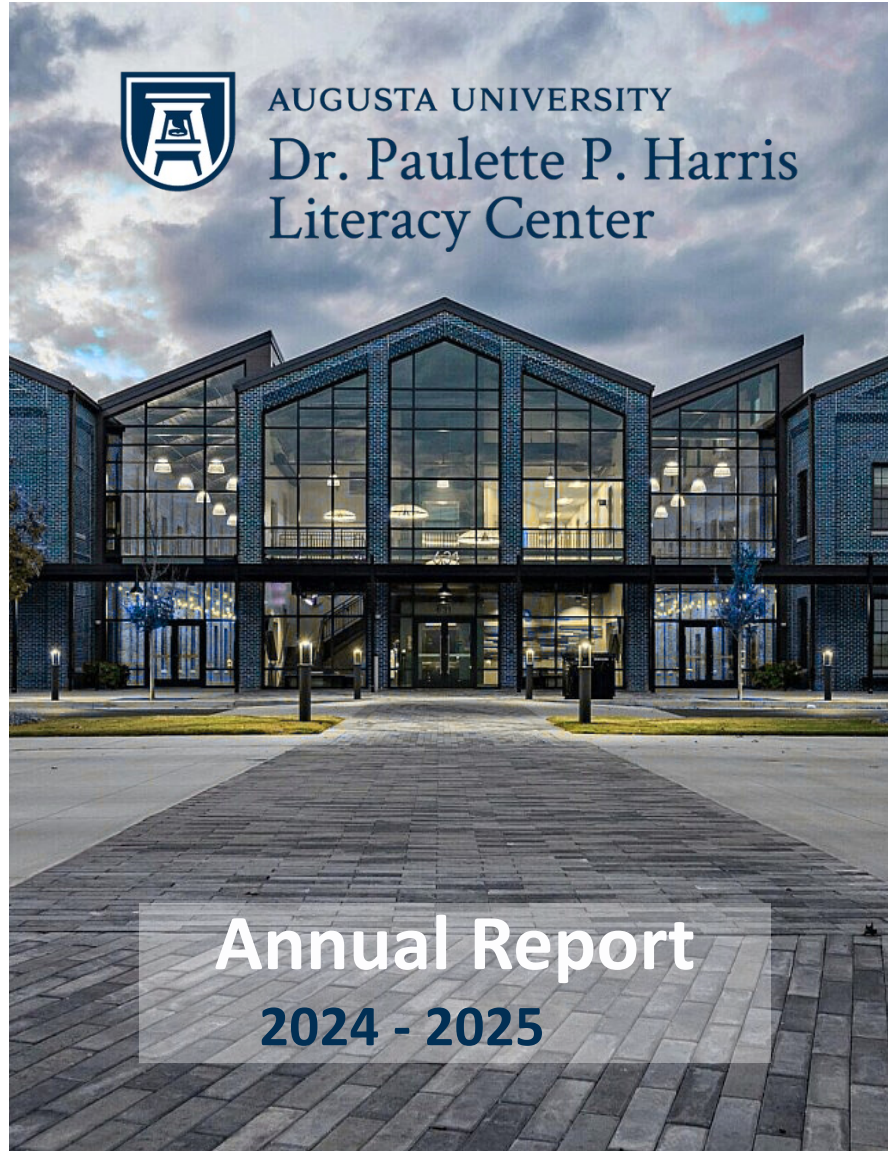
Does what we do matter? Well, I love this time of year—this is when RISE receives notes from children, parents and teachers – it’s like a shot of inspiration to do more!

"I always knew she had potential—but something wasn't working. She was shrinking before my eyes and refused to even try to read. After working with her RISE tutor twice a week, things began to change—slowly at first. Now, not only is she reading, she believes in herself. That confidence has carried into every subject. I truly don't know where she would be without this support."
— 4th Grade Teacher, Richmond County

This is the power of community, agencies, businesses, and education truly working together. It is an opportunity that could be scaled across Georgia – inspired by individual missions and goals, but driven by the same collaborative vision that brought the HUB to life.



AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY
Dr. Paulette P. Harris
Literacy Center



Annual Report
2024 - 2025

1

Meet Our Team



A veteran educator and literacy advocate, Dr. VanDeusen earned her PhD in Reading Education from Oakland University. She spearheads the Harris Literacy Center's mission to make high-quality literacy accessible to all in Augusta and beyond—guiding transformative learning experiences, expanding community impact, and championing evidence-based innovation across generations of learners. She brings her deep expertise to every program, partnership, and success story we create.

Betsy VanDeusen, Ph.D

Director



Sam Klein

Business Operations
Specialist



Kaleb Tucker

HCE Program
Coordinator



Jose Palacios Gonzalez

Research Assistant



Abbie Hill

Poet-In-
Residence

At the heart of our center is an incredible team of dedicated, passionate professionals who make everything we do possible. From our business operations specialist to our graduate assistants, each team member plays a vital role in keeping our programs running smoothly and our mission moving forward. Whether they're coordinating research, partnering with the community on impactful projects, organizing engaging events, or supporting our literacy programs, their commitment and collaboration shape every success story we create together.

Our Mission

Established in 1990, we provide children, adolescents, and adults from the Augusta area with free high-quality literacy-related educational experiences that promote the development of life-long readers and writers. We foster community engagement and showcase the cultural assets of our community through programs and partnerships. Our mission continues to guide every facet of our work as we cultivate partnerships, deliver instruction, and celebrate the cultural assets of our community.



Program Overview

The Harris Literacy Center at Augusta University is a dedicated community resource focused on enhancing literacy and educational opportunities for learners of all ages. Our mission is to empower individuals through literacy, fostering lifelong learning, and promoting academic and personal growth.

- We are committed to serving all learners, including individuals with diverse abilities and learning needs, across all program areas.
 - We offer a range of programs, including K-12 student tutoring, adult literacy classes, GED preparation, family literacy initiatives, and specialized workshops designed to meet the diverse needs of our community.
 - At the HUB for Community Innovation in Augusta, GA, we serve a broad population that includes children, teens, adults, and seniors from varied socioeconomic backgrounds.
 - Our work is centered on creating a supportive, inclusive environment where learners can develop essential literacy skills, pursue educational goals, and engage in cultural enrichment activities.
 - By collaborating with local organizations, schools, and community partners, we strive to bridge educational gaps, enhance community engagement, and contribute to the overall well-being and development of the Augusta community.
 - Our programs are delivered at no-cost to those we serve.
-

K-12 Literacy Program

Over the past year, we provided over **6,800** hours of instruction to more than **120** school-aged learners from across Richmond County and surrounding areas. Children in grades K-12 attended **260** tutoring sessions each week, working with dedicated instructors recruited from Augusta University students, Federal Work Study participants, and community volunteers.



6,800
hours

120
Learners

260
Sessions



Adult Literacy Program

Our commitment to adult literacy remains strong, as adults continue to seek out classes to build foundational reading and writing skills, prepare for to earn their GED, or develop digital literacy competencies. Over **35** adult learners received services this year. GED preparation classes, offered in partnership with Augusta Technical College, helped adult learners pursue their educational goals. As demand for adult literacy grows, our staff have worked diligently to refine our intake and matching process, ensuring each learner receives the tailored support they need. Over the past year, phone calls and online inquiries about GED and adult literacy were among our most frequent requests for information, a reflection of the community's hunger for accessible learning.



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Summer Camp

In June 2025, we partnered again with the Jessye Norman School of the Arts and RISE Augusta to deliver a two-week Summer Literacy Camp. Thirty-five children ages 6–12 spent their days exploring books, writing stories, and creating art inspired by literature. We also introduced literacy and learning stations in the afternoon to provide additional instruction, read books and write poems, and have fun! The camp concluded with a joyful performance of *The Alphabet Thief* attended by families and community members. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and plans are already underway to expand the camp's offerings next summer to serve even more children.



Community Engagement & Events

Throughout the year, the Harris Literacy Center was proud to welcome community members through the doors of the HUB for Community Innovation and to participate in events that celebrated literacy, health, and community togetherness.

Highlights:

Back-to-School Event in July, which brought over 2,000 children and families to the HUB for backpacks, school supplies, literacy activities, health screenings, and performances by local artists.



Our annual **May the 4th Be With You** celebration, where learners and families engaged in Star Wars-themed literacy adventures.



Community Engagement & Events

The **Summer Book Bash** in June, featuring free books, games, and activities that helped families build their home libraries.



Monthly visits from Lady Catherine and Lilibelle, two **therapy dogs** who became beloved reading companions for children throughout the year.

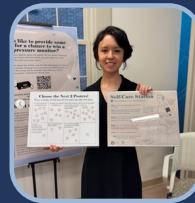


A memorable visit from Former **Governor Nathan Deal**, who shared his children's book, *Veto the Cat*, teaching students about the legislative process through storytelling.



Community Engagement & Events

Hosting the **Love Your Heart Exhibit**, a traveling health literacy display created by Laura Castro, an AU Medical Illustration student, to help community members learn about cardiovascular health.



Ongoing partnerships with **Lamar-Milledge Elementary School**, where staff served as spelling bee judges and guest readers during Read Across America Week.



Community Engagement & Events

Participation in Wellstar MCG's Community Health and Resource Fair, connecting families with free literacy and educational resources.



The Masters Community Outreach Program, which for the third consecutive year invited 30 members of our Literacy Center community to attend the prestigious tournament at Augusta National Golf Club. Participants explored the course, enjoyed the famous concessions, shopped in the gift store, and witnessed world-class golf from iconic locations like Amen Corner. To prepare learners for this unforgettable experience, the Center developed a special book about the tournament, and team leaders visited to share stories and build excitement.



New Partnerships & Projects

Our partnerships continued to grow in both scope and impact:

Get Augusta Reading

This year marked the relaunch of **Get Augusta Reading**, our local chapter of the statewide Get Georgia Reading Campaign. In January 2025, we hosted a Summit that gathered educators, nonprofit leaders, healthcare providers, and civic partners to re-energize early literacy efforts. A virtual meeting in May and our first annual Community Conference in June built momentum for the work ahead. The campaign focuses on four pillars: Language Nutrition, Access, Positive Learning Climate, and Teacher Preparation and Effectiveness. By strengthening these foundations, we aim to ensure every child becomes a confident, capable reader. As of June, all officer positions have been filled, laying the groundwork for sustained action in the years ahead.



New Partnerships & Projects

Nursing Program Collaboration

Graduate students from Augusta University's College of Nursing provided health screenings and health education to children, teaching topics ranging from nutrition to dental hygiene. This partnership underscores the connection between literacy, health literacy, and lifelong well-being.



Healing Centered Engagement Certification

Together with Child Enrichment and the Positive Childhood Alliance of Greater Augusta, we began developing a training and certification program to help organizations create healing-centered, trauma-informed environments. This initiative will launch soon, empowering other community agencies to better serve children and families.



New Partnerships & Projects

Cooper Ridge Farms

In March, we partnered with Cooper Ridge to blend animal-assisted learning with poetry. Children explored the farm, connected with animals, and wrote sensory poems inspired by their surroundings. This collaboration highlights the therapeutic potential of literacy and creative expression.



Cultural Programming

Our commitment to cultural programming and creative literacy continued to flourish. The **Poetry Bridges: Pathways for Community Connections** project launched as a nine-month series of workshops, public events, and writing sessions. Throughout the year, students created kindness poems, haikus, and abecedarius forms, many of which will be featured in our upcoming community anthology.

Monthly Poetry Weeks and a semester-long poetry challenge inspired learners to experiment with new forms and express their voices. Congratulations to Isabella Thomas and Ar'lanna Thomas for completing all eight poetry assignments and setting the stage for future participants!

Meanwhile, the **Golden Blocks Legends Comic Book Series** continued to celebrate Augusta's cultural heritage through engaging, accessible storytelling.



Impact & Outcomes

Our learners continued to demonstrate strong progress. This year:

- 84% of school-aged learners improved their foundational literacy skills through instructional programs.
- 77% of learners advanced on the district's IREADY assessment benchmarks.
- Adult learners made significant gains in digital literacy, literacy skills, and GED preparation.
- Over 3,800 community members engaged with Center programs and events.

Improved Literacy Skills



Advanced IREADY Scores



Community Members



Impact & Outcomes

Impact on the Community



Workforce Development

Digital literacy training prepares adults for today's job market.



Economic Mobility

Supports GED attainment and job readiness for adult learners.



Health and Civic Literacy

Enhances adults' ability to navigate health care, vote, and engage in community life.



Intergenerational Impact

Equips parents and grandparents to support children's education.



Education for All

Increases reading achievement for low-income and marginalized learners.



Impact & Outcomes

Why It Matters

- In Richmond County, **34% of adults read below a basic level** (National Center for Education Statistics, NAAL data)
- National data indicate **37% of 3rd graders** in the county read proficiently, a key predictor of high school graduation, with local data improving to **47% on GA Milestones**.
- Every **\$1** invested in adult literacy returns **\$7.14** in economic benefits (ProLiteracy)



of adults read
below a basic level



of 3rd graders read
proficiently

Every \$1
invested in
literacy =
\$7.14

Looking Ahead

As we plan for the future, our priorities include:



2026 Georgia Reads Community Award Recipient



Thank You Donors & Partners

With Gratitude

Thank you to our funders, partners, volunteers, instructors, and the many learners who make this work possible. Together, we are building a community where literacy, wellness, and hope can flourish.

- HUB for Community Innovation Partners - In addition to our daily collaborations and support for one another,
 - RISE Augusta is our frequent partner in most community events. We also collaborate through our complementary programming and shared goals.
 - Augusta Locally Grown is an active participant in our community events. In addition, they are the lead organization for a collaborative grant we are applying for that includes all HUB West partners.
 - Harrisburg Family Healthcare is an active participant in our community events and agency referrals.
 - Boys & Girls Club of Greater Augusta is an active participant in our community events and is represented on our Steering Committee for the annual stakeholder meeting.
- AT&T Connected Learning Center
- Augusta Junior Players
- Augusta Technical College

21 Thank You Donors & Partners

- Augusta University Faculty, Staff, Students and Student Groups, including:
 - College of Education & Human Development
 - Department of Teaching & Leading
 - Department of Research, Counseling, and Curriculum
 - Department of Kinesiology
 - AU Occupational Therapy Department
 - AU Physical Therapy Department
 - College of Nursing
 - Hull College of Business
 - AU English Department
 - Literacy Research Group
 - Medical College of Georgia Literacy Initiative Student Group
 - School of Public Health
 - Speech and Language
- Child Enrichment
- Community Foundation Literacy Initiative
 - Augusta Partnership for Children
 - Augusta-Richmond County Public Library
 - Augusta Richmond County Public Schools
 - Augusta University
 - Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Augusta
 - Economic Opportunity Authority
 - Family YMCA of Greater Augusta Child Development Academy
 - Heritage Early Learning Academy
 - RISE Augusta
 - Westabou Montessori School
- Cooper Ridge Farm
- Masters Community Outreach Program
- Resourced Network
- Richmond County School System

Support Literacy for All

Your gift helps us provide free tutoring, adult literacy classes, cultural programs, and community events that empower learners of all ages. Together, we will build a more literate, connected Augusta.



hub | *for* **COMMUNITY
INNOVATION**
AUGUSTA



Contact Us

We'd love to hear from you!

Whether you have questions, ideas, or want to learn more about how the Harris Literacy Center is supporting lifelong learning, our team is ready to connect. Reach out today. Together, we're building a stronger, more literate community!

Phone
(706) 729-2245

Email
literacycenter@augusta.edu

Website
www.augusta.edu/education/literacy-center

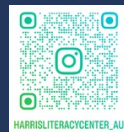
Location
631 Chafee Avenue, Augusta,
Ga, 30904





AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY
Dr. Paulette P. Harris
Literacy Center

EMPOWERING LEARNERS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



FOLLOW US



HURRICANE HELENE
Community Crisis Fund
for the Central Savannah River Area

Thank you for the Hurricane
Relief Donation to help
replenish books in our
community!

Created By Kaleb Tucker, Graduate Assistant, HCE Program Coordinator

GEORGIA★READS

LUNCH



— GEORGIA —
COUNCIL★
LITERACY



A Story on Georgia Reads

GEORGIA★READS

Turn the page to a brighter future



Where we started:

SB 211 & HB 538 (2023)

- The Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Speaker of the House appointed thirty members to the Georgia Council on Literacy, which launched on July 1, 2023.
- The Council is charged with monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the science of reading requirements, including teacher training, reading screeners, and interventions for students with reading difficulties.

2025 Georgia Reads Community Award Winners

- Rise Augusta
- ReadSource/ Purpose Built Schools of Atlanta
- Lamar County School System
- Marietta City Schools
- Ben Hill School District
- Believe Greater Dalton
- Dooly County Schools
- Black Child Development Institute
- Charlton County Board of Education
- Cobb Collaborative, Inc.

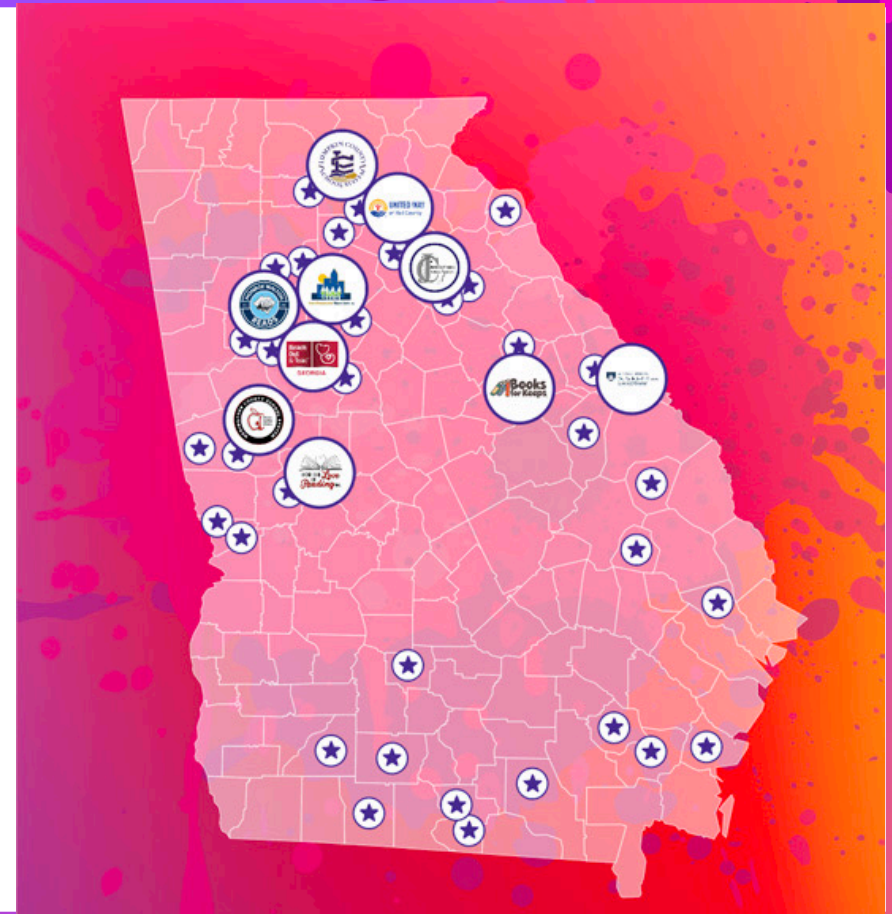
Congratulations to Our
2024 Georgia Reads Community Winners



2025 Application Opens on September 22

2026 Georgia Reads Community Award Winners:

- Books for Keeps
- For the Love of Reading, Inc.
- Harris Literacy Center at Augusta University
- Jackson County Schools
- Lumpkin County Schools
- Mayors Impact Team
- Meriwether County School System
- Portal of Commencement
- Midpoint Shelter, Inc.
- Reach Out and Read Georgia
- United Way of Hall County



GEORGIA★READS

We have identified
over 70
organizations with
a focus on literacy
across the state.



GEORGIA★READS Partners:

Georgia Municipal Association

Get Georgia Reading

Family Connection

Certified Literate Community Program (CLCP) under the
Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG)

Deal Center

Georgia Public Library System

America 250 Collaborators:


Georgia Historical Society

Georgia Humanities

Georgia Public Broadcast



— GEORGIA —
**COUNCIL★
LITERACY**



GEORGIA★**READS**
for
AMERICA
250

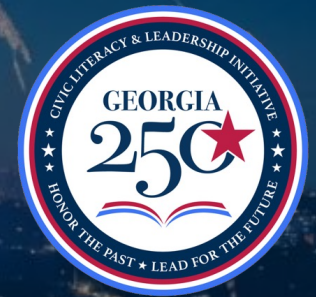
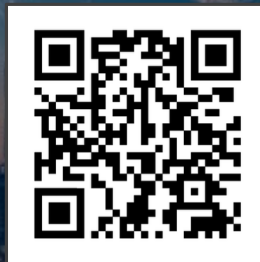
HONOR THE PAST. READ FOR THE FUTURE.



Public Library Reading Challenge

DEMOCRACY DOESN'T
START AT THE BALLOT BOX.
IT STARTS WITH A BOOK!

GEORGIA READS
for
AMERICA
250



America250.GeorgiaReads.org



Impact Snapshot:

- 70+ organizations engaged statewide
- 25+ counties and districts impacted
- 14,000+ books distributed
- 800+ hours of community engagement

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GEORGIA
COUNCIL
LITERACY

2025 Winners

GEORGIA★READS

The Next Chapter



April 24, ©2024 All

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COMMUNITY LITERACY

COLLABORATIVE

▶▶ How?

The GeorgiaForward team along with partners from GOSA and GGR have begun preliminary development of the program structure, timeline, and budget. A workday with additional partners is planned for May 4th at the Interactive Research Methods Lab at KSU to further define the framework. The program will align with the Four Pillars of the Get Georgia Reading Campaign and the Council's Literacy Plan.

▶▶ What?

A 3-year learning experience for communities that consists of two in-person conferences per year to assist participants in developing a locally driven literacy plan and to guide long-term implementation beyond the program term. Each community team will be supported by a trained facilitator throughout the process.

▶▶ When?

We will soon be recruiting program facilitators with the intent to engage in formal training this fall. Conversations with potential pilot communities are underway. A launch of the pilot program is planned for the spring of 2027. The program will then open to all through an application process to join the program.



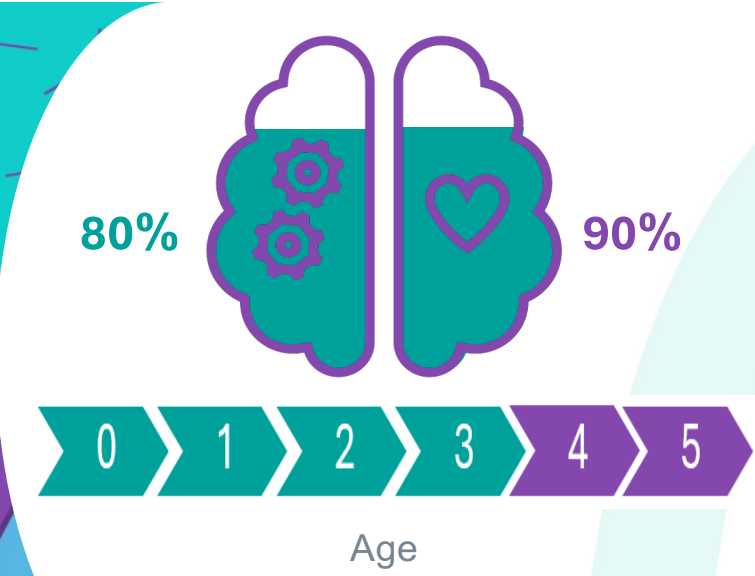
Pediatric Literacy

Comprehensive Healthcare Experience

Lisa Liedke, MA, BCBA – Director



Collaborative Goal: Language & Literacy



Wellstar's Role as a Community-Based Health System



Building the Bridge and Closing the Gap



Healthcare



Community



Education

Care Journey Across the Wellstar Footprint

Small TALK, BIG Impact



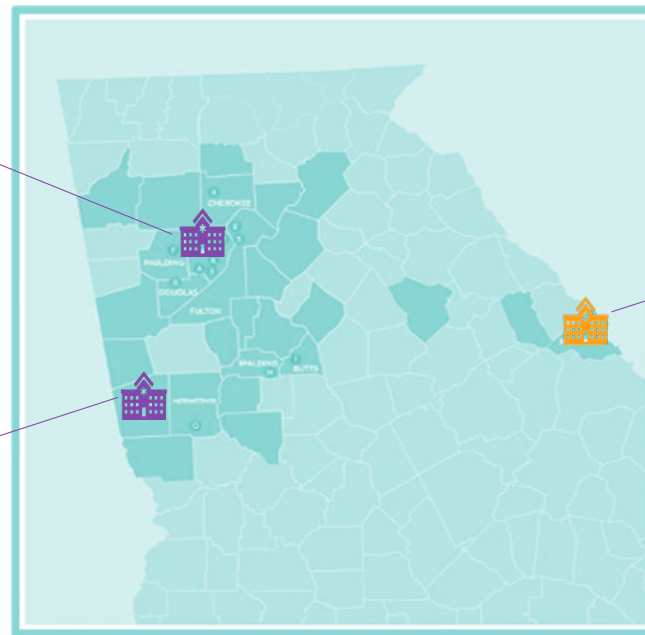
Current Implementation Markets

Kennestone Regional Medical Center

- 6 OBGYN Offices
- Mother Baby Unit
- NICU
- 20 Pediatric Offices

West Georgia Medical Center

- 3 OBGYN Offices
- Mother Baby Unit
- NICU
- 1 Pediatric Office



MCG Health Medical Center & Wellstar Children's Hospital of Georgia



Small TALK, Creating a Cultural Shift

It's not a program families sign up for—it's a change in practice.



Small TALK is embracing the shift from healthcare to **PEOPLECARE** by training all child-facing staff.

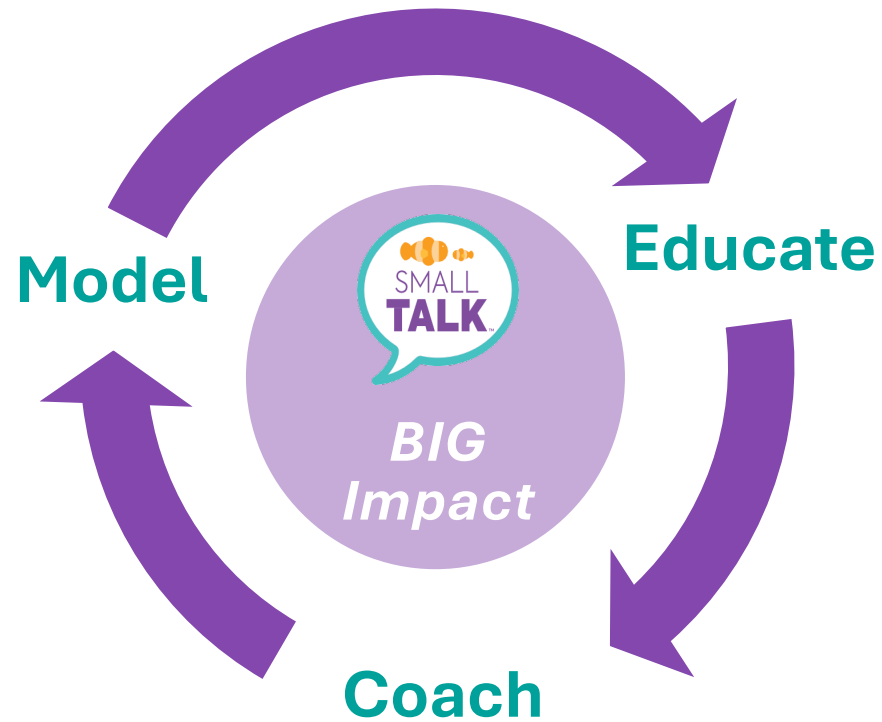
Clinical Staff

Providers

Managers

Administrative Staff

Small TALK Framework



Data Review & Expansion Opportunity



Team Member & Patient Impact

Kennestone & West Georgia Medical Centers

TRAINED TEAM MEMBERS (Since Implementation – Nov 2022)	
OBGYN Offices	255
Mother Baby Unit	266
NICU	204
Pediatrics Offices	455
TOTAL	1,180

TOTAL PATIENT IMPACT (FYTD – July 2025-Feb 2026)	
LOCATION	AFTER VISIT & DISCHARGE SUMMARY
OBGYN Offices	703
Mother Baby Unit	4,732
NICU	510
Pediatrics Offices	50,611

Augusta Market

Service Area and Demographics

Figure 1 | Primary Service Area of Wellstar MCG Health Medical Center



Table 2 | Wellstar Wellstar MCG Health Medical Center Service Area

County	Zip Codes
Burke County, GA	30426, 30434, 30441, 30442, 30456, 30811, 30816, 30830,
Columbia County, GA	30802, 30809, 30813, 30814, 30907
McDuffie County, GA	30808, 30824
Richmond County, GA	30805, 30812, 30815, 30901, 30904, 30905, 30906, 30909, 30912
Aiken County, SC	29006, 29105, 29129, 29137, 29146, 29164, 29801, 29803, 29805, 29809, 29816, 29828, 29829, 29831, 29834, 29841, 29842, 29851, 29853, 29856
Edgefield County, SC	29821, 29824, 29832, 29835, 29838, 29847, 29860

Source: Georgia Department of Community Health.

- 2 affiliated OBGYN offices
- Mother Baby Unit
- Neonatal Intensive Care Unit
- 4 affiliated pediatric offices
- CHOG departments

Number of Patient Encounters in FY25

- OBGYN (3rd trimester) 615
- Mother Baby* 1,281
- NICU* 686
- Pediatrics 7,887

*Nov 2024 – June 2025

Resources



Language & Literacy Milestones

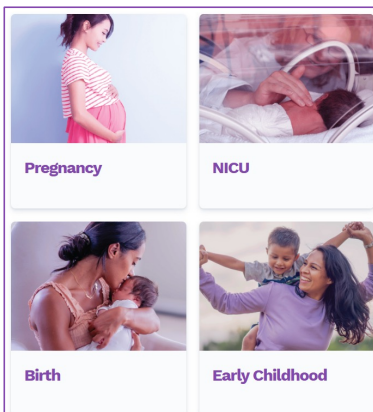
Supporting Child-Facing Adults



wellstar.org/smalltalk

Wellstar.org/smalltalk

- Learn the importance of language nutrition
 - Talk – Read – Sing – Play
- Typical language milestones
 - Correspond with each well-child visit from newborn-age 8
- Track skills and identify delays
 - Conversations with pediatric provider



Early detection is intervention.

In English	English Resources			
En español	0-1 Month	2 Months	4 Months	6 Months
Em português	9 Months	12 Months	15 Months	18 Months
In Korean	24 Months	30 Months	3 Years	4 Years
In Haitian Creole	5 Years	6 Years	7 Years	8 Years

Supporting Language & Literacy

Birth to 1 Month: Your baby was born ready to communicate

Crying, body movement, and eye contact are some of the ways baby expresses what they need, like, or don't like. By interacting with your baby, you have everything you need to help their brain grow strong.

TIPS & ACTIVITIES

- Talk, sing, and play with your baby while feeding, dressing, and bathing.
- Spend time cuddling and holding your baby.
- Speak in the language you are most comfortable using.
- Practice active engagement while reading with baby.
- Intentionally use eye contact with your baby.

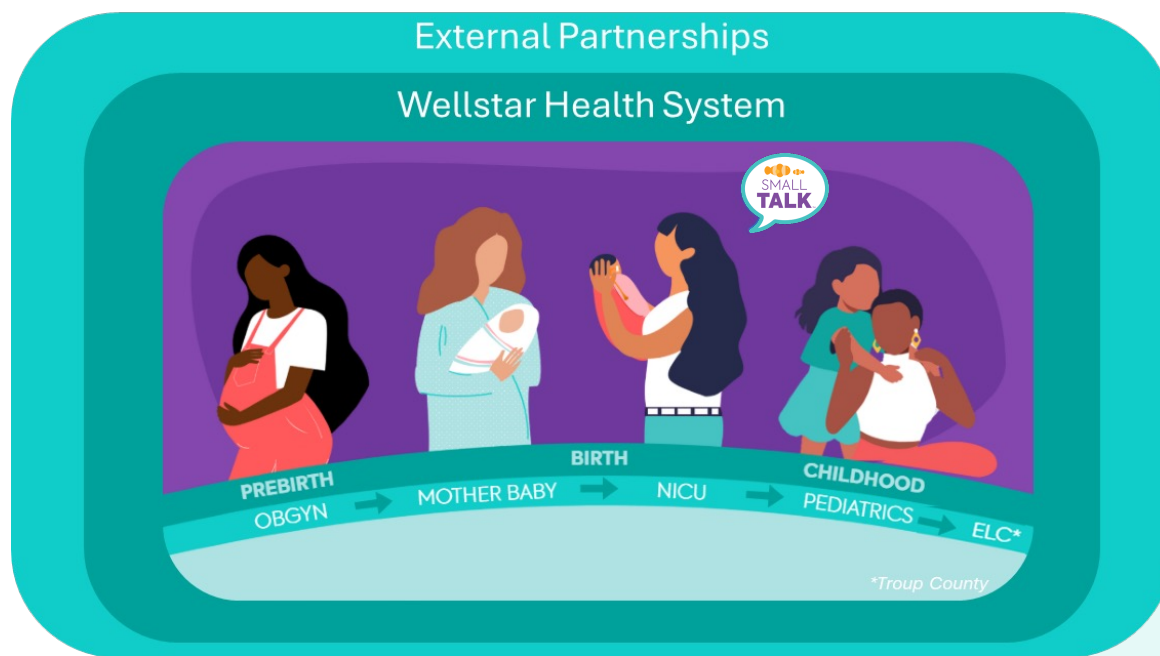
Common Language Milestones

- Uses crying and body language to communicate needs (hungry, wet diaper, tired)
- Able to see close up and prefers looking at eyes and faces of family
- Recognizes and turns head towards the sound of parents' voices
- Hears and responds to loud stimuli



The Literacy Ecosystem

Small TALK, BIG Impact



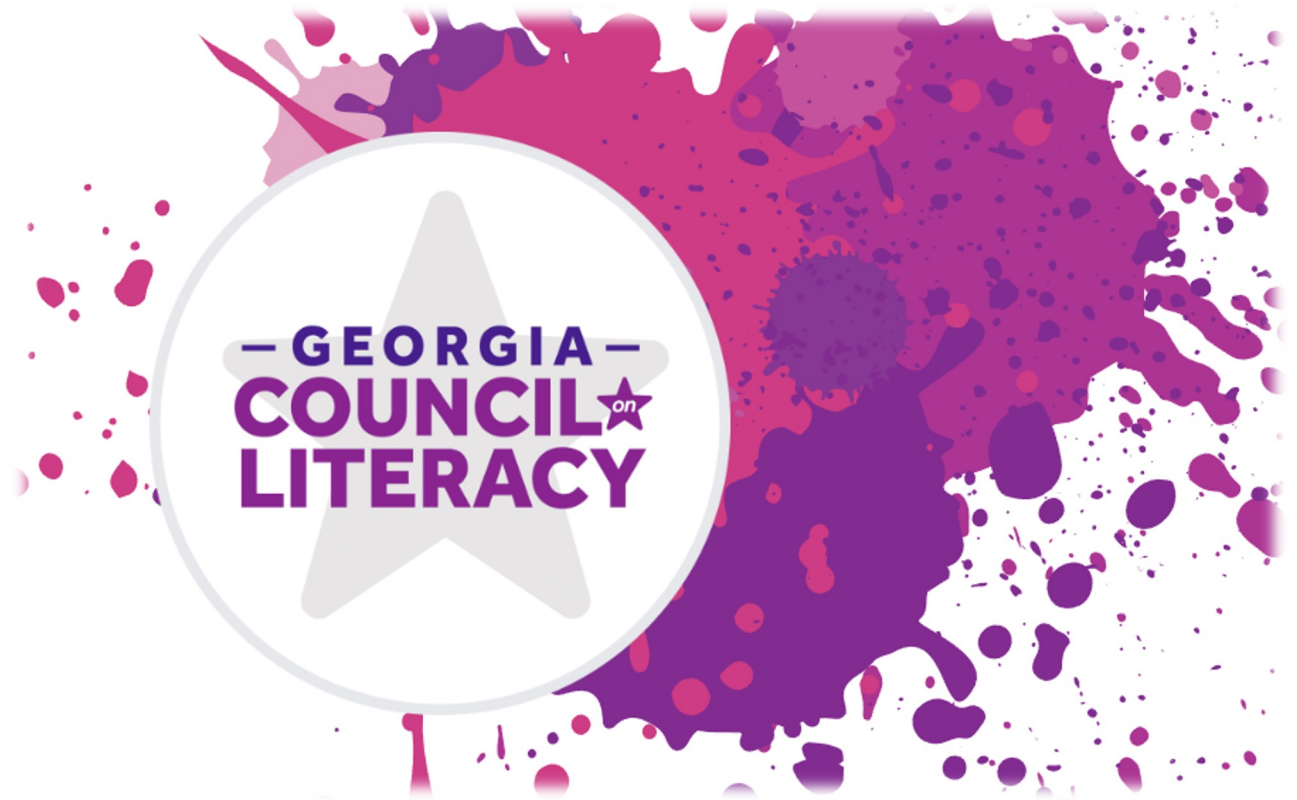
Thank you!
Lisa.Liedke@wellstar.org



Update on Vision and Hearing Screening Recommendation

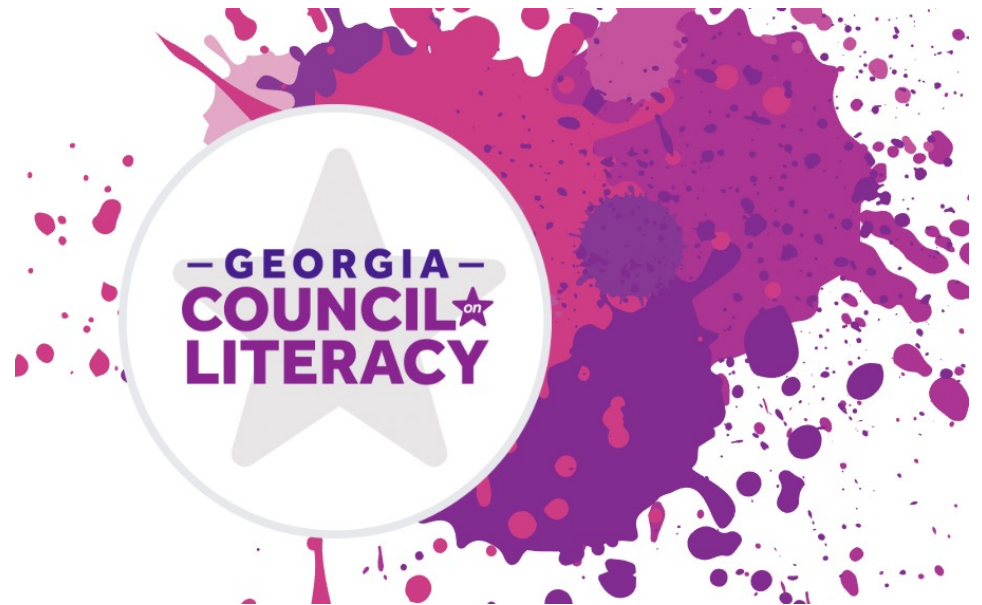
Vision and Hearing
Work Group

Barriers to Learning
Work Group



Vision 2030 – Uniting Georgia for Literacy

The Council’s recommendation was to advance vision and hearing screening in Georgia’s early grades—and frame that progress within the Council’s **Vision 2030** and **Four Pillars strategy** from the **Get Georgia Reading Campaign**.



Vision 2030 – Uniting Georgia for Literacy

We know that literacy is not just about instruction—it's about access to instruction.

If a child cannot see the board or hear their teacher, we are unintentionally creating barriers to learning from the very beginning.



Up to **30%** of students have some type of vision issue, and approximately 8% experience auditory or hearing-related challenges that can interfere with learning.

But here is the good news – well over **80%** of children’s vision problems identified through screening are correctable, most commonly with eyeglasses.

- ✓ In fact, many studies show that the majority of childhood vision impairments are due to **refractive errors** (like nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism), which are easily treatable.

Most of childhood hearing loss is due to preventable or treatable causes (e.g., ear infections, wax buildup, infections, or other conditions).

- ✓ A large portion of childhood hearing issues are conductive (middle ear-related), which are **medically treatable, if identified.**

Vision and Hearing Screening

These are not complex problems—we are talking **about largely correctable barriers to learning.**

The issue is not whether we can fix them;
it's whether **we identify them early enough to matter.**

To move the recommendation for vision and hearing screening forward, **three coordinated strategies** were pursued.

House Resolution 145 (HR 145) was introduced by **Rep. Chris Erwin**, Chair of the House Education Committee, and ultimately passed.

This Urging Resolution formally encourages the Georgia Department of Education and the Department of Public Health to collaborate in expanding vision and hearing screening for students statewide at multiple grade levels.

House Bill 1402 (HB 1402) was introduced by **Rep. Leesa Hagan**, Chair of the Rural Development Committee. This bill would have required vision and hearing screening for all students in Pre-K through third grade. It passed the House overwhelmingly but did not ultimately pass the Senate. A budget request was submitted to support implementation—specifically, funding for vision and hearing screening equipment.

Here's where we landed:

The passage of **HR 145** established a clear statewide expectation and policy signal to implement vision and hearing screening.

While **HB 1402** did not pass, it played a critical role in elevating the issue, building awareness, and shaping legislative momentum.

Most importantly, due to the influence of HR 145 and HB 1402, the state appropriated **\$2.7 million for vision and hearing screening equipment for grades K–3.**

That's **\$15,000** per school district.

From Vision 2030 Four Pillars perspective:

This is a clear **Access strategy**—ensuring students can fully engage with instruction.

It strengthens **Positive Learning Climate**, because students who can see and hear are more engaged, less frustrated, and more connected to their learning environment.

It supports **Language Nutrition**, as early sensory access is foundational to language development and language development is a predictor of reading success.

And it reinforces **Teacher Preparation and Effectiveness**, by ensuring teachers are not working against unidentified barriers to learning.

From a systems perspective, this is **Vision 2030 in action**.

We aligned:

a **policy signal** through **HR 145**,

a **policy mechanism** through **HB 1402**,

and an **implementation lever** through **state funding**.

That alignment moved this work from **recommendation** to **action**

Looking ahead, the next phase is critical.

Screening is **only the entry point**. The real impact depends on **closing the loop**—ensuring that students who are identified actually **receive** glasses, hearing supports, and follow-up care.

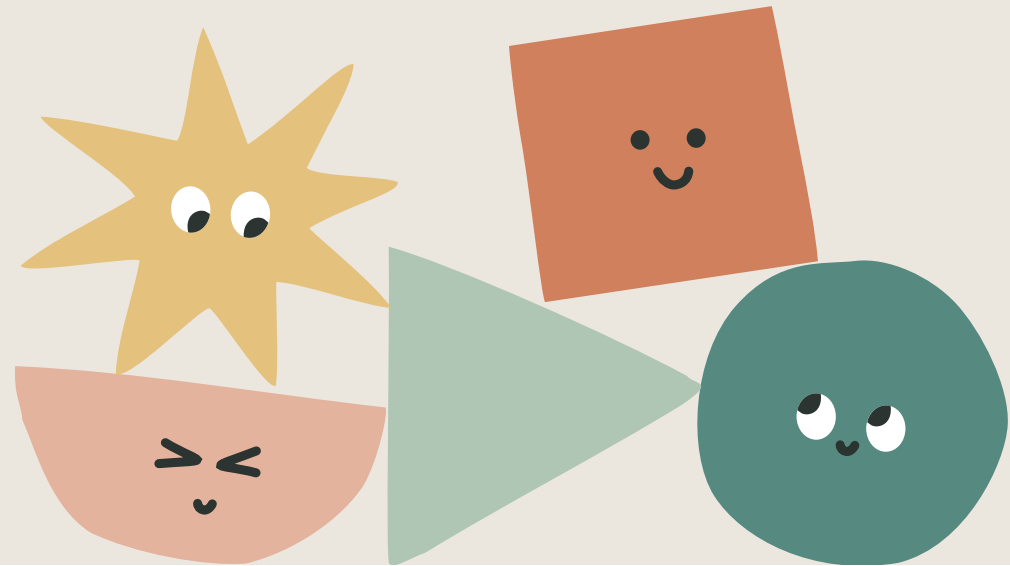
If we do that well, we are **removing barriers** that affect **tens of thousands of students** and directly **impacts literacy outcomes**.

This is **prevention** and a strong example of how the **Vision 2030** can **influence systems at scale**.

When **one in three children** may struggle to see clearly, **and nearly one in ten children** may struggle to hear clearly, addressing these barriers is not optional—it is **foundational to literacy**.

Georgia Council on Literacy Birth to Five Updates

Christi Moore, PhD
Director of Workforce Supports and Learning
Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning



Major Milestones Achieved



Training Requirement Adoption

Educators working in licensed child care have access to a variety of evidence-based language and literacy trainings annually.

Literacy Lab Development

The DECAL Early Language and Literacy Lab was developed to support access to high-quality trainings.

Workforce Knowledge and Competencies

Revisions ensure continued alignment with best practices in educator preparation.

Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards

Revisions support alignment with K-12 standards as well as explicit integration of science of reading.

The background is a solid teal color with several large, overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in a lighter shade of teal. These shapes are abstract and organic, resembling soft-edged circles or petals. The text is positioned in the lower-left quadrant of the image.

Workforce Knowledge and Competencies (WKCs)



Strengthening Educator Practice

Emphasis on Science of Reading

Revised competencies emphasize evidence-based literacy strategies grounded in the science of reading.

Support for Dual Language Learners

Competencies provide guidance for supporting dual language learners with cross-language connections and first-language support.

Classroom-Focused Strategies

More emphasis on practical strategies, such as interactive read-alouds, meaningful conversations, and playful exposure to sounds and print.

The background is a solid teal color with several large, overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in a lighter shade of teal. These shapes are organic and abstract, resembling soft-edged geometric forms or stylized organic shapes. They are positioned in the upper and middle sections of the page, creating a layered effect.

Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS)



What Children Birth to Five Should Know and Be Able to Do

Comprehensive Developmental Domains


Standards cover physical, cognitive, social-emotional, communication, and play-based learning development for children birth to five.

Emphasis on Science of Reading

Revised standards align with reading science focusing on oral language, vocabulary, print awareness, and early writing skills.

Supporting All Children

Revisions better support dual language learners, children with disabilities, and social-emotional learning.

The background is a solid teal color with several large, overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in a lighter shade of teal. These shapes are organic and curved, resembling stylized waves or abstract forms. They are positioned in the upper and middle sections of the slide, creating a layered effect.

GELDS Rollout and Implementation

The background is a solid teal color with several large, overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in a lighter shade of teal. These shapes are organic and curved, resembling stylized hills or abstract forms. The text is positioned in the lower-left quadrant of the image.

Birth to Five Working Group: Ongoing Work

Focus Area: State Literacy Plan

Legislative Impact Report

2024-2025 – Implementation Year 1

Georgia Council on Literacy

April 21, 2026

The Implementation Journey

Georgia's Literacy Legislation



1 EXPLORATION

Setting a vision; creating a collaborative team to identify the need and the best innovation.



3 INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Trying out the innovation; establishing systems of support with feedback loops.



4 FULL IMPLEMENTATION

Skillfully using and integrating the innovation.



2

INSTALLATION

Securing staff buy-in and leadership support; building the plan.



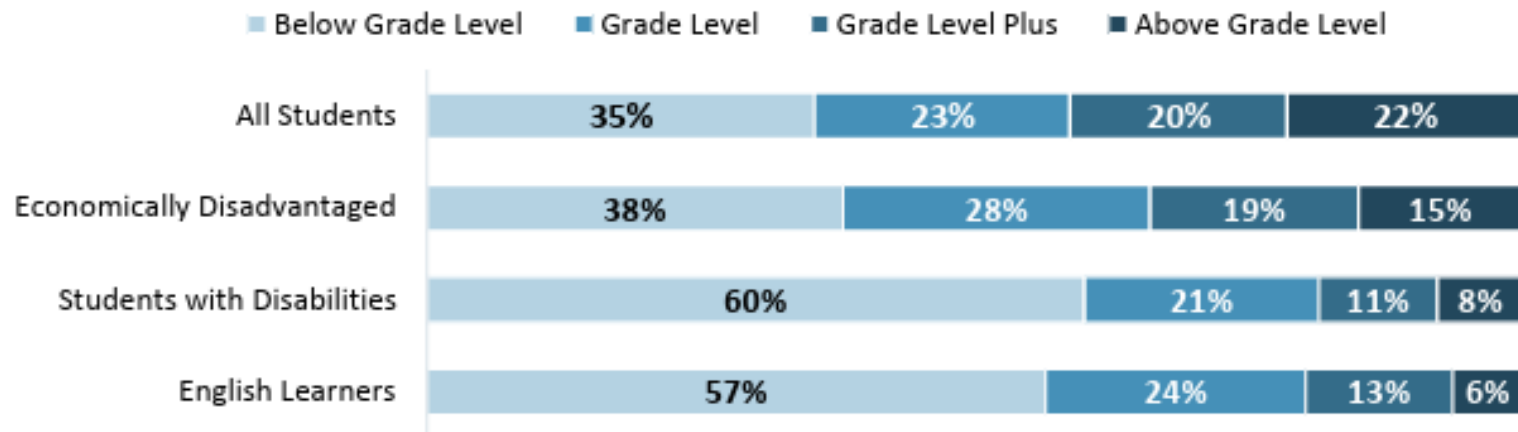
5

SUSTAINABILITY

Securing long-term commitment and continued growth.

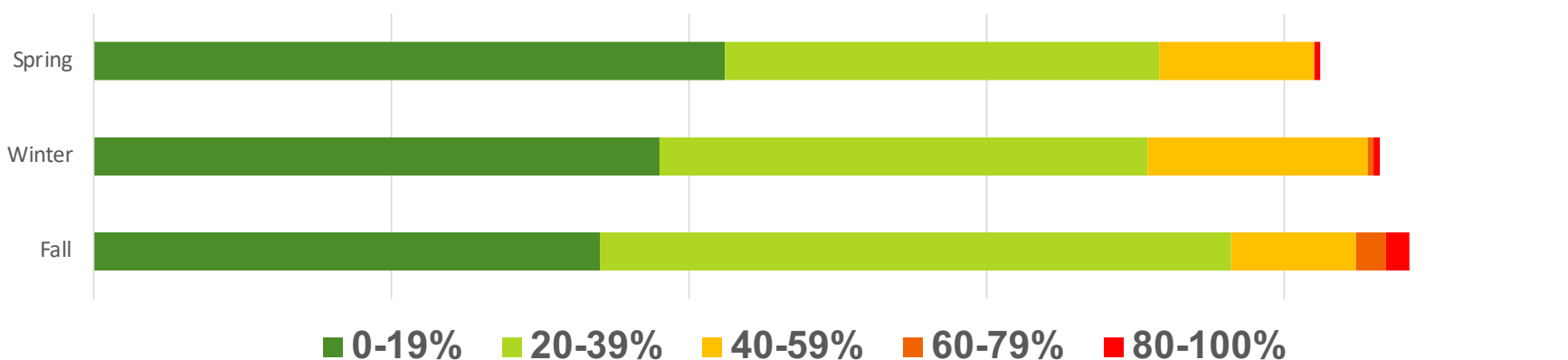
Section 1: Summary of Georgia Milestones Results

Georgia 3rd Grade State Literacy Metric, 2024-25



Section 2: Formative Reading Assessments for 1st Grade Students

Grade 1

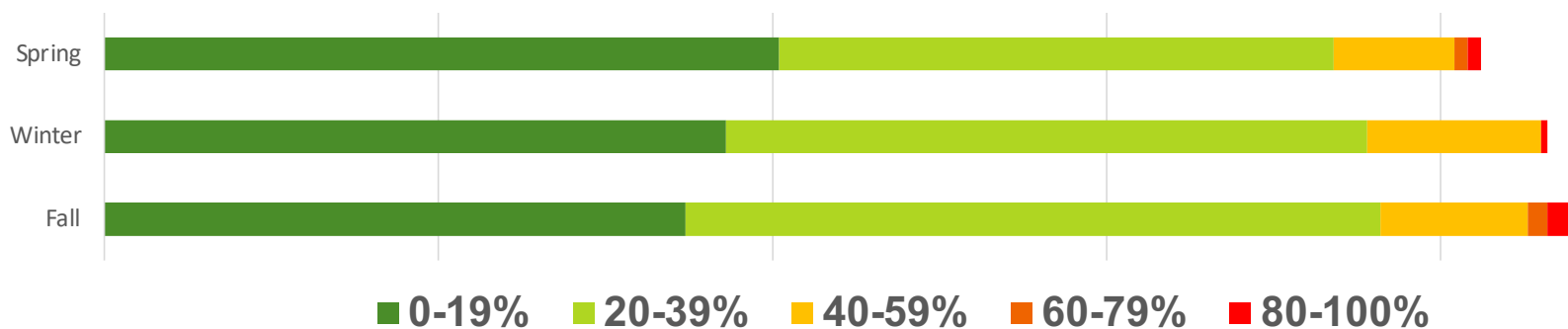


Number of districts based on percentage of students classified as significantly at risk in Grade 1

Season	0-19%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80-100%
Fall	85	106	21	5	4
Winter	95	82	37	1	1
Spring	106	73	26		1

Section 2: Formative Reading Assessments for 2nd Grade Students

Grade 2

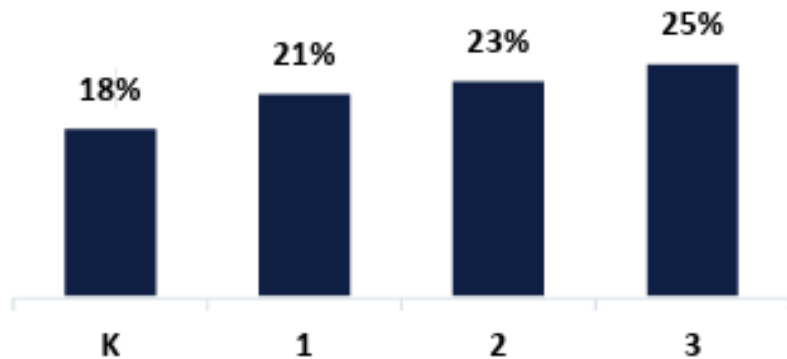


Number of districts based on percentage of students classified as significantly at risk in Grade 2

Season	0-19%	20-39%	40-59%	60-79%	80-100%
Fall	87	104	22	3	5
Winter	93	96	26		1
Spring	101	83	18	2	2

Section 3: Impact of Use of Reading Screeners

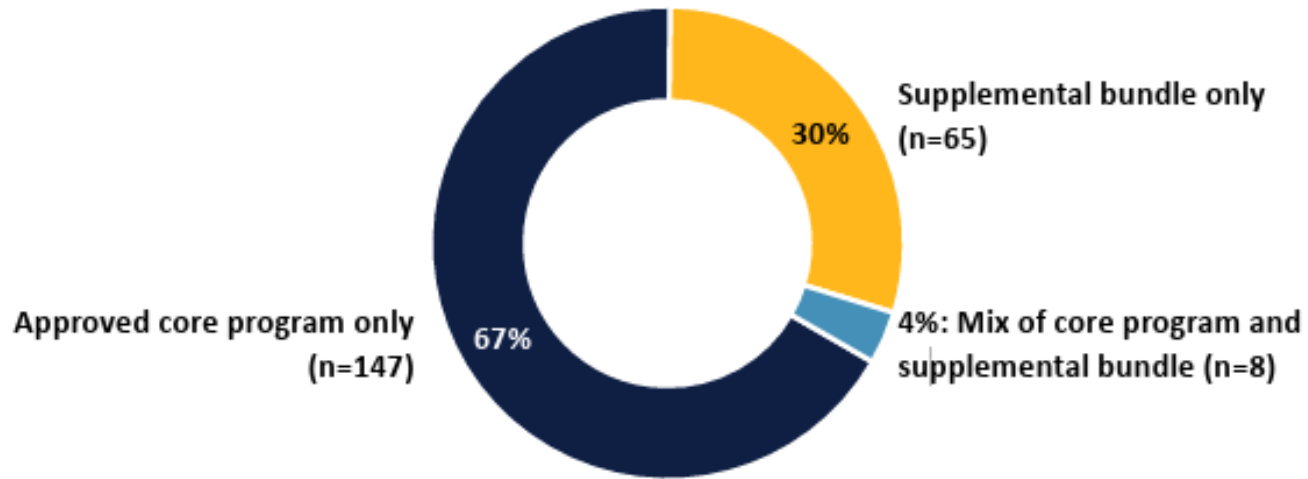
Percentage of Students in Grades K-3 Identified as Having a Significant Reading Deficiency by Universal Reading Screeners, 2024-25



- **19.3% of K-3 students in Georgia participated in intervention to address reading deficiencies in 2024-25.**

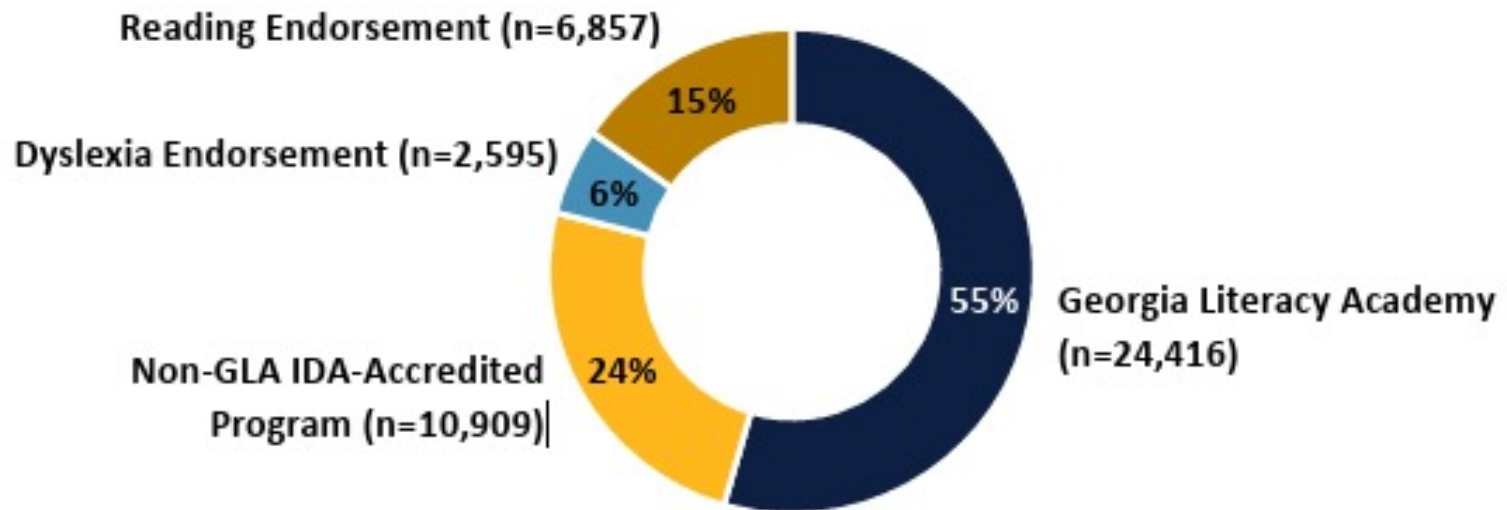
Section 4: Use of High-Quality Instructional Materials

HQIM Adoption by Georgia Districts, 2024-25



Section 5: Instructional Practices Linked to Professional Learning

LEA-Reported Literacy Training Options Selected by Teachers, 2024-25



Cox Campus Course: Learner-Centered Coaching



- An approach in which coaching conversations are centered on student learning, rather than teacher performance. Instead of focusing on “fixing” teachers, learner-centered coaching uses relevant student data to guide coaching practices and inform instructional decisions.
- Structured literacy research is made actionable through practical coaching scenarios
- Video demonstrations of real coaches facilitating coaching conversations
- Ready-to-use coaching resources

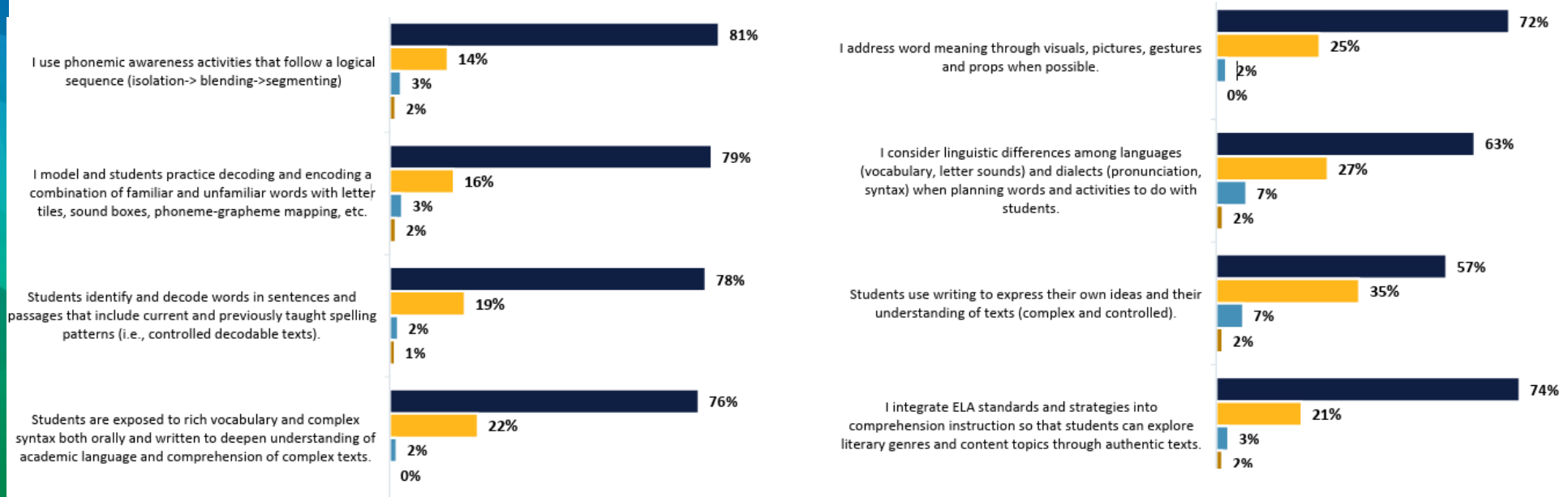
Course Lessons

1. High-quality Coaching Essentials
2. Who is Involved in the Coaching Process?
3. Launching Coaching in a School
4. Impactful Coaching
5. Building Relationships
6. Coaching Conversations
7. Supporting All Teachers
8. Working in Partnership
9. Data and Coaching
10. Coaching Challenges and Wins

Section 5: Instructional Practices Linked to Professional Learning

Frequency of Structured Literacy Instructional Activities, 2024-25

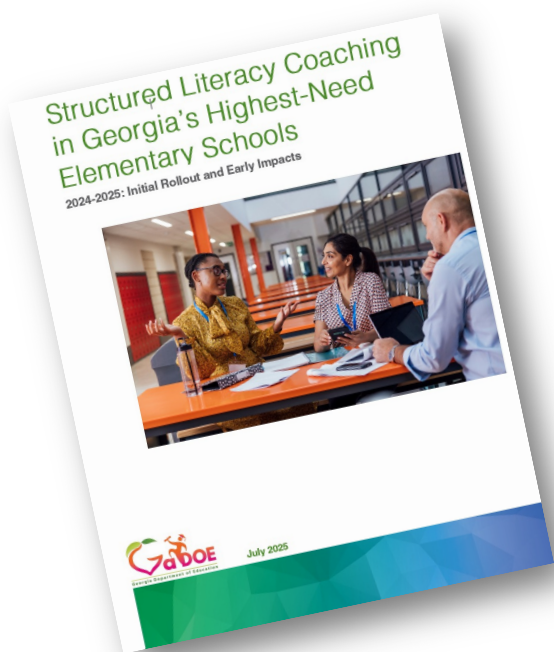
■ Daily ■ Frequently (2-5 times per week) ■ Occasionally (1-4 times per month) ■ Never



Section 6: Policy Impact – School Identified Impacts of Literacy Policies

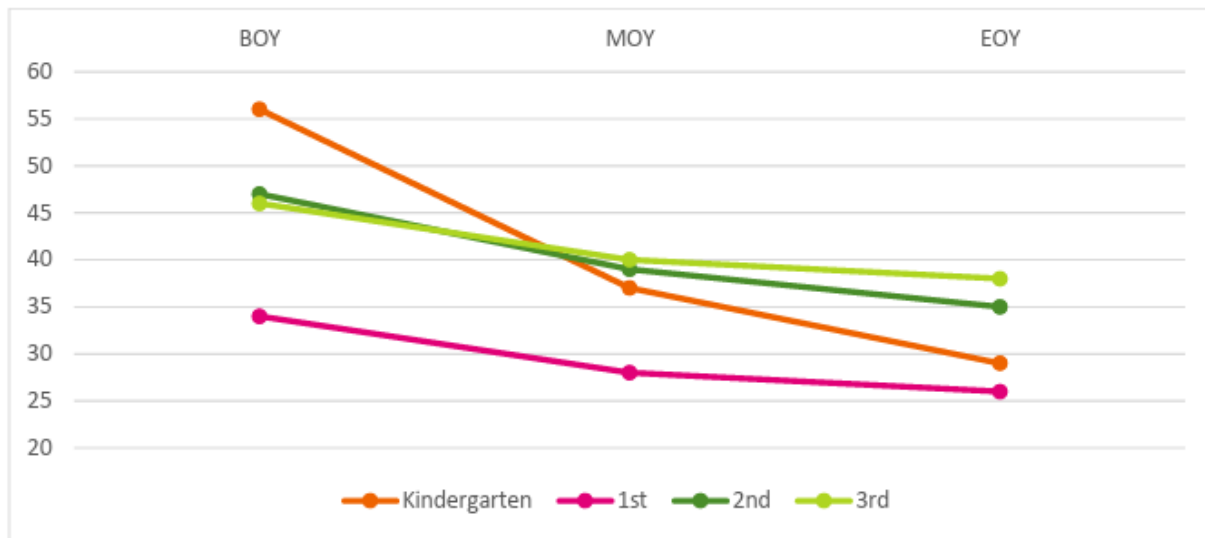
- Improved identification of students in need of support.
- Increased knowledge and awareness
- Improved identification of students' specific instructional needs
- Improved ability to meet students' specific instructional needs

Section 6: Policy Impact – State Literacy Coaches



[Access the report HERE](#)

Decrease in At-Risk Percentage on Universal Screeners



Section 7: Challenges and Needs

Challenges related to screening and intervention

- Time
- Staff
- Screening tools

Needs related to implementation of HQIM

- Additional training
- More time
- Funding
- Coaching
- Additional Staff

Preparing ALL students for life.

www.gadoe.org

   @georgiadeptofed

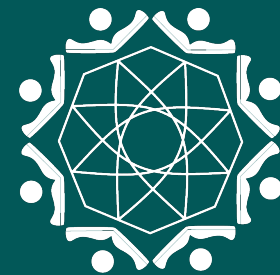
 youtube.com/user/GaDOEmedia



Engineering a Unified Foundation for Georgia Literacy

An Overview of the Unified
Literacy Coaching Project

Presented by Dr. Lindee Morgan



SANDRA DUNAGAN DEAL
**CENTER FOR
EARLY LANGUAGE
AND LITERACY**

AT GEORGIA COLLEGE
& STATE UNIVERSITY

Unified Literacy Coaching Project

The Unified Literacy Coaching Project (ULCP), led by the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy, followed a rigorous, collaborative process to create a comprehensive framework for literacy coaching in Georgia.

Project Components



Landscape
Analysis

Domains,
Standards &
Competencies



Cohesive
Evaluation
System
Components

Georgia Literacy Coach Competency Framework

Competency Task Force



Amy Lingo - Dean, Georgia Southern University College of Education

Gary Bingham – Director, The Urban Child Study Center, Georgia State University

Lindee Morgan – Executive Director, Deal Center, Georgia College and State University

Michelle Palmer – RESA Network Lead, Let’s Read Georgia

Nik Philmon – State Structured Literacy Coach Coordinator, GaDOE

Julillian Davis – District Curriculum & PD Specialist – Kendezi School

Amy Denty – Director of Literacy, GaDOE

Shakia Bruce – Growing Readers Specialist, Growing Readers; RESA Metro

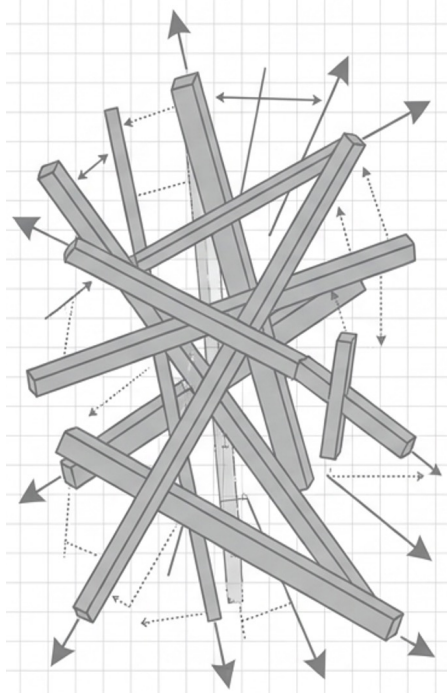
Laurie Allison – Executive Director, Let’s Read Georgia; RESA Northeast

Ann Marie Johnson – Early Literacy Coordinator, Growing Readers; RESA West

Stacey Lutz – State Literacy Coaching Coordinator, GOSA

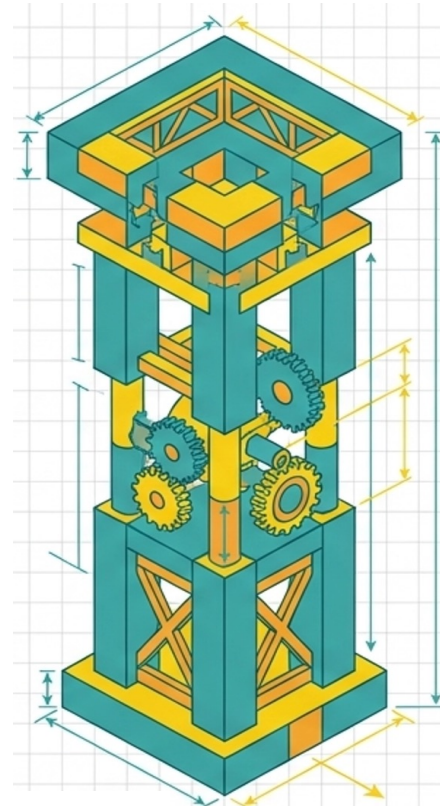
Paige Pullen – Owner, Literacy Mindset

“CTF”



The Challenge

Literacy Coaching systems in Georgia operate independently without a shared framework—often with very different methods, expectations, and processes.



Finding A Solution

The UCLP produced a set of Domains, Standards, and Competencies that comprise a consensus-driven framework to help support, elevate, and unite the work of literacy coaches statewide.

“It takes all of us to build children’s reading brains.” –The Deal Center Team

Supportive Structure

Literacy Coaching Domains, Standards, & Competencies are the foundation for effective literacy coaching that school systems and educators can rely on for support.

4 Literacy Coaching Domains

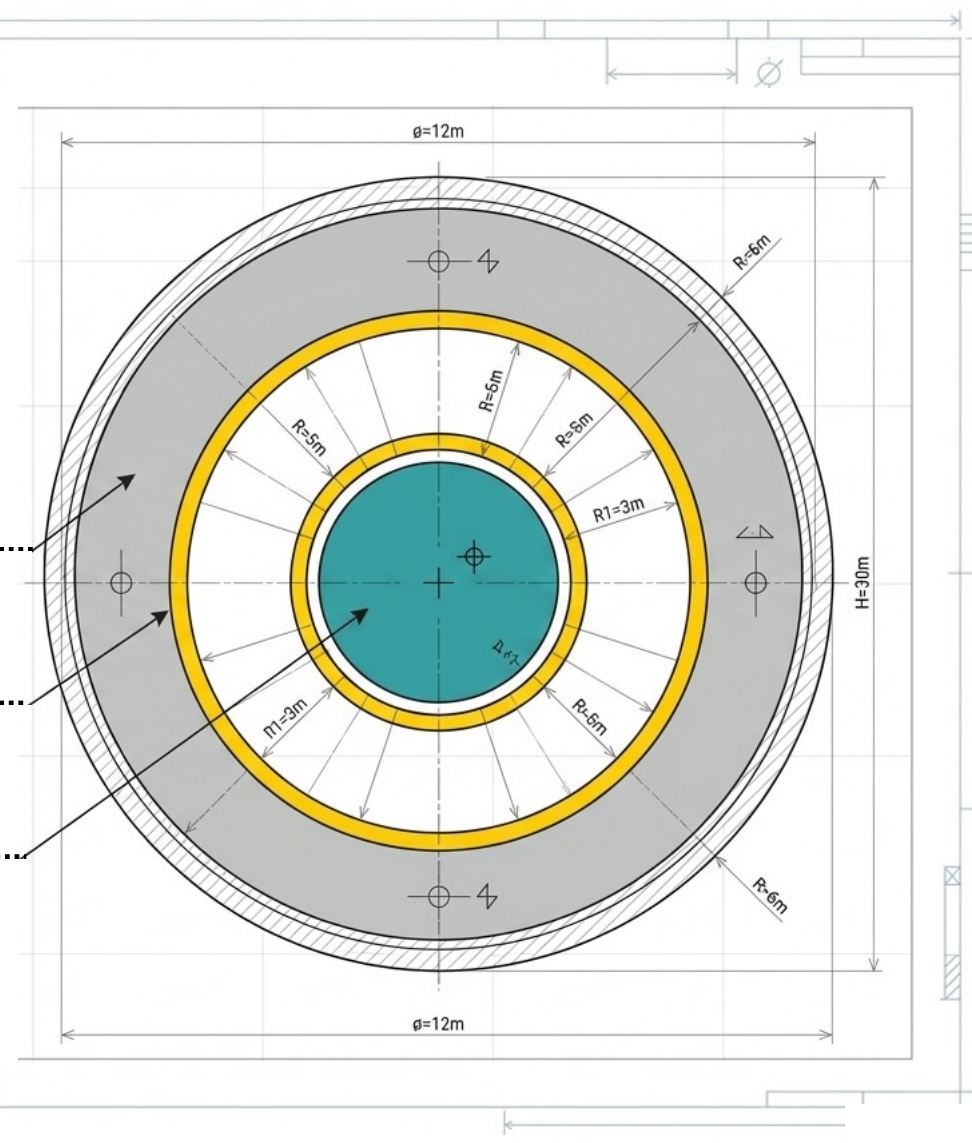
Broad, overarching categories of practice

Standards

Specific expectations nested within each domain

Competencies

Granular, measurable, specific actions or abilities



Completion Timeline



“Stress Test” Process



Intensive analysis to determine stability, durability, and “breaking points”

“Stress Test” Process



Phase 1:

Review existing examples (e.g., from other states)

Phase 2:

Create draft informed by stakeholder input and Georgia goals, standards, and priorities

Phase 3:

Gather feedback, then revise & refine; remove redundancy, ensure alignment/completeness. and build consensus

Phase 4:

Finalization and approval

“Stress Test” Process



Phase 1:

Review existing examples (e.g., from other states)

Phase 2:

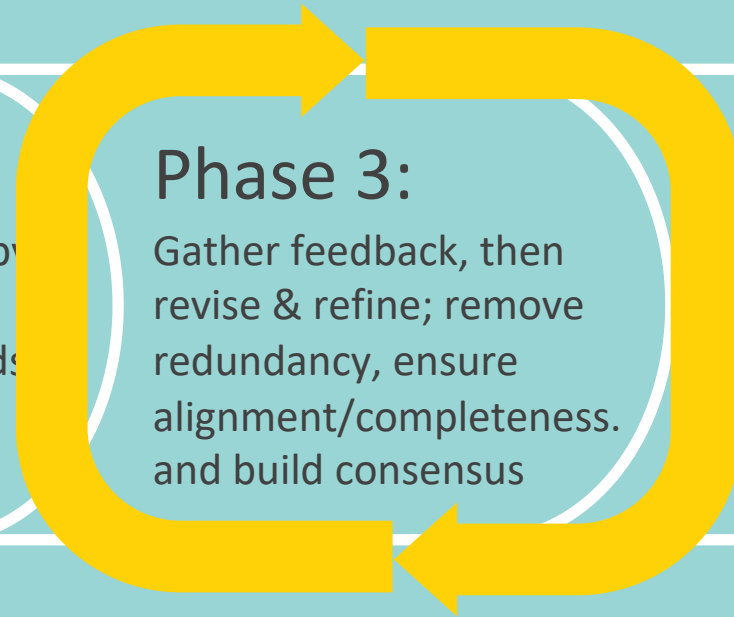
Create draft informed by stakeholder input and Georgia goals, standards and priorities

Phase 3:

Gather feedback, then revise & refine; remove redundancy, ensure alignment/completeness. and build consensus

Phase 4:

Finalization and approval



Phase 3 'Rounds'



Gather Feedback

Revise

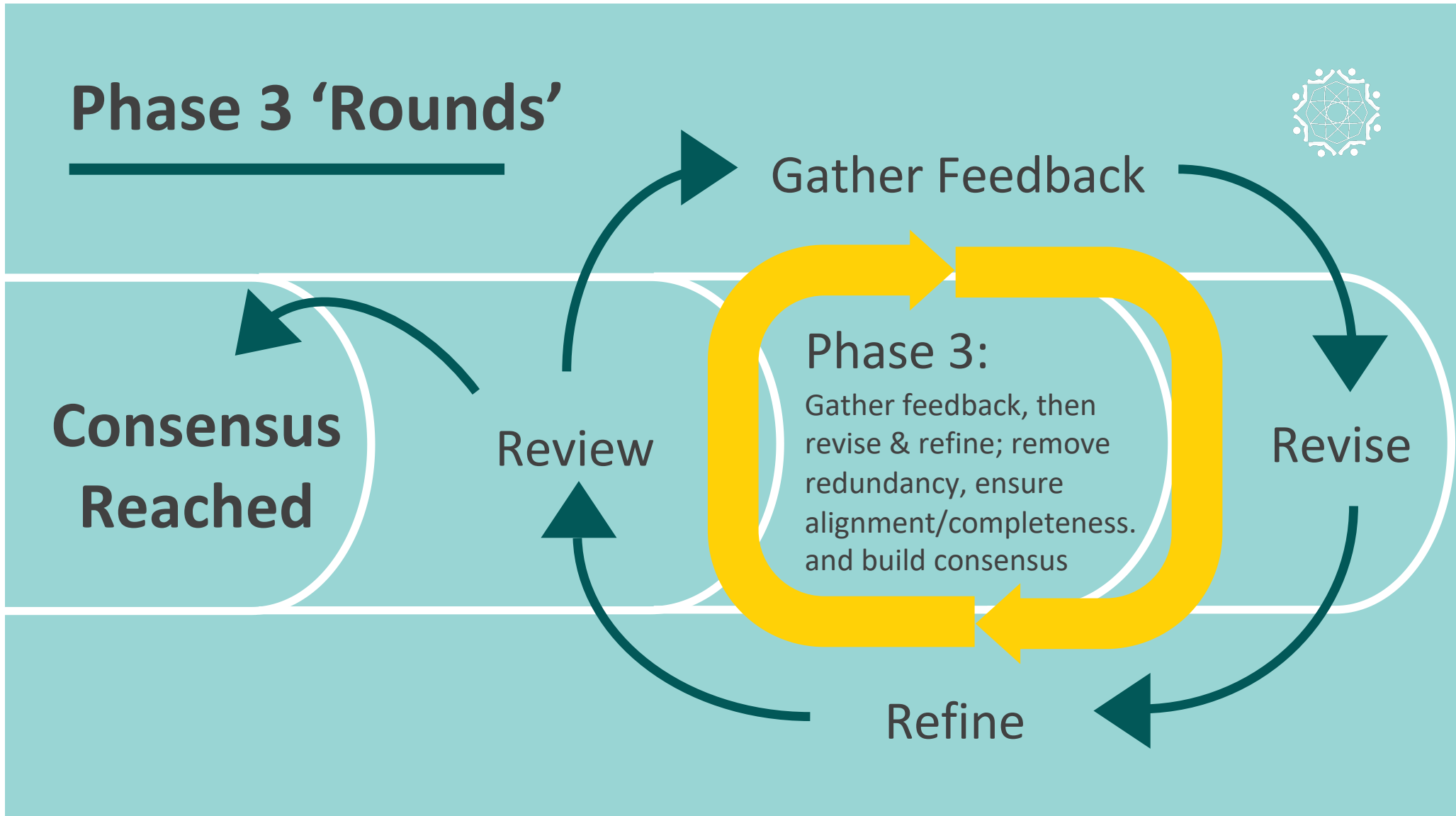
Phase 3:

Gather feedback, then revise & refine; remove redundancy, ensure alignment/completeness, and build consensus

Review

Refine

Consensus Reached



Domains



1. Creating and Fostering a Culture of Collaborative Literacy Leadership
2. Knowledge and Application of Assessment to Inform Literacy Instruction
3. Knowledge and Application of Literacy Development and Instruction
4. Development and Implementation of Literacy-Focused Professional Learning

Standards for each Domain



1. Creating and Fostering a Culture of Collaborative Literacy Leadership – **5 standards**
2. Knowledge and Application of Assessment to Inform Literacy Instruction – **4 standards**
3. Knowledge and Application of Literacy Development and Instruction – **9 standards**
4. Development and Implementation of Literacy-Focused Professional Learning – **6 standards**

Competencies for each Standard



1. Creating and Fostering a Culture of Collaborative Literacy Leadership – **5 standards, 11 competencies**
2. Knowledge and Application of Assessment to Inform Literacy Instruction – **4 standards, 11 competencies**
3. Knowledge and Application of Literacy Development and Instruction – **9 standards, 26 competencies**
4. Development and Implementation of Literacy-Focused Professional Learning – **6 standards, 11 competencies**



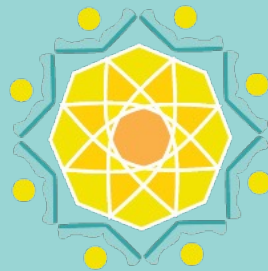
Preamble

- Contextualizes the Domains, Standards, and Competencies

Glossary

- Limited
- Focused
- Clarified technical terms readers would be most likely to interpret inconsistently

THANK YOU



SANDRA DUNAGAN DEAL

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Thank you for Joining Us!