



2025 Georgia Reads Community Awardee Summary Report

Prepared for: GA Reads Evaluation

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Executive Summary

In 2025, ten communities were designated as Georgia Reads Communities in recognition of their strong cross-sector partnerships and demonstrated progress in advancing literacy. Each received funding and technical support from the Georgia Council on Literacy and an external evaluation conducted by the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy.

Statewide Strengths

Across all ten communities, several consistent strengths emerged:

- Clear literacy goals tied to measurable outcomes
- Alignment with evidence-based practices, including the Science of Reading
- Equity-centered approaches that reduce barriers and expand access
- Strong cross-sector partnerships (schools, nonprofits, healthcare, business, higher education)
- Literacy embedded in community life, not confined to classrooms
- Growing instructional and intervention capacity

Collectively, these communities are building local literacy ecosystems—coordinated systems that align families, schools, and community partners around shared outcomes.

Key Areas for Growth

As initiatives move from energetic implementation to long-term systems building, common opportunities for refinement include:

- Moving beyond participation counts to tracking student skill growth
- Streamlining data systems and dashboards to guide decision-making
- Clarifying partnership roles and accountability structures
- Codifying high-impact instructional and family engagement routines
- Measuring equity outcomes through disaggregated data
- Planning for long-term sustainability and workforce stability

These refinements represent a next phase of development—from strong programming to durable, measurable systems.



Recommendations for State Leaders

The evaluations suggest that targeted state support can accelerate impact by:

1. Investing in practical, shared data infrastructure
2. Encouraging measurable, time-bound literacy goals
3. Supporting scalable partnership and governance models
4. Sustaining multi-year funding structures tied to evidence and equity

Conclusion

Georgia Reads Communities demonstrate that literacy improvement is strongest when it is evidence-based, partnership-driven, and community-rooted. With strengthened measurement, sustainability planning, and continued legislative support, these local models can inform scalable, long-term literacy gains across Georgia.

Full Report

Introduction

This report was prepared by the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy for the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) on behalf of the Georgia Council on Literacy. This report provides a summary of the findings from the individual external evaluation reports for each 2025 “Georgia Read Communities” award recipient.

Background

In January of 2025, the Georgia Council on Literacy recognized ten communities for their approaches to involve meaningful partnerships in achieving literacy goals. Each of these ten “Georgia Reads Communities” were awarded \$25,000 to extend their literacy work, an engagement visit by Georgia Reads Coach Malcolm Mitchell, and an external evaluation one year after award recognition. To earn the Georgia Reads Community title, each awardee completed an application describing their literacy improvements made in the last three to five years. Applications were scored using a 45-point rubric on the following criteria: Program Overview, Meaningful Partnerships, Needs Assessment, Goals and Strategic Plan, Community Activities, Data, Budget Justification, and Partnership in Literacy Initiatives. The Georgia Reads Community Awardees are:

- Believe Greater Dalton
- Ben Hill School District
- Black Child Development Institute-Atlanta
- Charlton County Board of Education
- Cobb Collaborative
- Dooley County Schools
- Lamar County School System
- Marietta City Schools
- ReadSource and Purpose Built Schools of Atlanta
- RISE Augusta

External Evaluation

Each awardee participated in an external evaluation that focused on their application, approaches, and data collection strategies which culminated in an individual report. The process used to write individual reports followed four phases.

Phase 1: Review and Preliminary Analysis of Applications

A detailed review of each awardee’s application was conducted to identify areas of promise and potential improvement for:

- Program approach and design
- Data collection and evaluation methods
- Partner involvement and collaboration
- Family engagement strategies

Phase 2: Development of Follow-Up Questions

Based on the findings from Phase 1, follow-up questions were developed for each awardee to discuss during an interview. The purpose of the questions was to explore aspects of the work that aligned with or diverged from established research-based practices, including inquiries into promising strategies not clearly described in the application or potential enhancements to current efforts.

Phase 3: Conduct Interviews with Awardees

Interviews were conducted with each awardee during the Fall of 2025. Interviews served to clarify elements of the application, explore the awardee’s receptivity to potential recommendations, and gather information about future plans. All interviews were transcribed for qualitative analysis.

Phase 4: Write Individual Awardee Reports

Using information gleaned from Phase 1 and insights from the interview conducted during Phase 3, a report for each awardee was written. Each individual report included an executive summary, a program overview, strengths, clarifications and insights (limitations), recommendations and next steps (including family engagement recommendations), and a conclusion.

This report provides a summary of the findings from the individual external evaluation reports for each 2025 “Georgia Read Communities” award recipient. It includes awardees’ approaches to involve meaningful partnerships in achieving literacy goals and summarizes the ten individual external reports:

- Strengths
- Areas for Growth
- Key Recommendations for Literacy Efforts (including family engagement recommendations)
- Conclusion

Strengths

The individual external reports highlight several recurring strengths across early literacy efforts. These strengths are organized into the following themes: *clear goals aligned to measurable outcomes, evidence-based frameworks, equity-centered designs, cross-sector collaboration, data use and continuous improvement, public-facing literacy environments, instructional and intervention capacity, and attention to foundational learning conditions*. Together, these themes illustrate how awardee communities are building strong, coherent literacy ecosystems.

1. Clear Goals Aligned to Measurable Outcomes

Across the reports, awardee communities consistently established goals that were both clear and aligned to desired literacy outcomes. Many communities articulated short-term behavioral goals (e.g., increased family participation, more frequent use of home-based literacy routines) alongside longer-term student-level goals (e.g., growth in foundational reading skills or oral reading fluency). For example, Believe Greater Dalton set a measurable goal of 60% third-grade proficiency by 2027, supported by intermediate benchmarks such as kindergarten readiness scores measured through MAP assessments, third-grade milestones, and the number of Quality Rated childcare centers. Clear goals aligned to measurable outcomes provided a shared direction for partners and helped unify classroom, community, and family-facing literacy efforts.

Importantly, many goals were directly tied to observable changes in children’s skills or family engagement, which strengthened coherence across initiatives. One example includes RISE Augusta’s attendance tracking for engagement events, which helps ensure accountability and measure program dosage. When communities used goals as anchors for planning, they were able to select aligned activities, prioritize which populations to target, and communicate expectations clearly among partners. This clarity played a key role in accelerating early successes and setting a strong foundation for longer-term systems improvement.

2. Evidence-Based Frameworks

Awardee communities consistently designed programming that reflected strong alignment with evidence-based early-literacy frameworks. Many leaned on the Science of Reading to guide instructional strategies, family engagement messaging, and intervention design. Evidence-based practices, such as explicit instruction in phonological awareness, structured read-aloud routines, multisensory literacy activities, and coaching cycles, helped ensure that community-based literacy supports were not only creative but also grounded in research. Ben Hill Public Schools (BHPS) is advancing a community-driven approach to early literacy which is grounded in the Science of Reading and implemented in all K–2 classrooms through the HMH Into Reading curriculum. This implementation is supported by teacher training via LETRS and Cox Campus. In Charlton County, the public library’s Babes to Tots program introduces families to early



phonological and phonemic awareness activities, aligning with classroom content and modeling practical strategies for caregivers

These evidence-based early-literacy frameworks were evident across diverse settings, including early learning centers, after-school programs, community events, libraries, and homes. By rooting their work in research, communities were better positioned to ensure quality, maintain consistency across partners, and increase the likelihood that literacy supports translated into measurable gains.

3. Equity Centered Designs

Equity considerations were intentionally embedded across awardee communities. Many designed programming that was accessible to families with diverse linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This included offering multilingual materials, ensuring that engagement opportunities were free or low cost, and locating events in familiar community spaces. For example, Cobb Collaborative's commitment to accessibility is evident in its Spanish-language website and the Engage feature, which connects families to free or low-cost activities. Further, their programs are intentionally located in high-need areas, such as South Cobb, to reach families who may lack preschool access.

Equity centered design also appeared in decisions about resource allocation, such as focusing efforts on neighborhoods with historically lower reading outcomes or partnering with organizations already trusted by families. These strategies increased participation, reduced barriers, and ensured that supports reached children most likely to benefit. This design can be seen in several awarded projects, including work completed by the Black Child Development Institute Atlanta, which has advanced a comprehensive, equity-centered early literacy agenda that spans birth through age eight and places Black children and families at the heart of program design. The equity-centered focus is evident in the curation of culturally responsive books and learning experiences that reflect Black children's identities, languages, and histories.

4. Cross Sector Collaboration

Collaboration emerged as a defining strength. Awardee communities built networks that included schools, early childhood providers, healthcare systems, faith-based organizations, civic groups, higher education institutions, and local businesses. Marietta City Schools has cultivated a robust network of partners, including the Rollins Center & Cox Campus, Cobb Collaborative, Wellstar Kennestone Hospital, and higher education institutions such as the University of Georgia and Kennesaw State University. These partnerships expanded reach and created cohesive literacy ecosystems where multiple organizations reinforced shared goals.



Communities maintained alignment through leadership teams, working groups, and regular convenings. At ReadSource, in partnership with Purpose Built Schools Atlanta, integration into school communities and close collaboration with literacy coaches has built trust and strengthened cross-sector coordination with school-based teams. Some strengthened coordination by creating dedicated literacy leadership roles, establishing demonstration sites for evidence-based practices, or adopting lightweight governance structures. These systems supported consistent communication, resource sharing, and long-term partnership stability.

5. Data Use and Continuous Improvement

Data use across communities was intentional and action oriented. Awardees used a wide range of data sources, including school achievement data, formative assessments, progress monitoring tools, family feedback, and social emotional indicators, with some communities, such as Lamar County Schools, tracking kindergarten readiness, GKIDS performance, vocabulary growth, GA Milestones results, library circulation, and event participation to inform decision-making and monitor progress over time. These awardees employed data informed decision making, surveyed areas needing additional support, and helped partners adjust programming in real time. Multi-measure evaluation strategies, such as early literacy screeners or observation tools, helped educators track growth and adjust instruction. Some communities also used real-time tools such as QR coded check ins or text-based surveys to gather quick insights and support continuous improvement cycles. These practices strengthened program quality and enabled timely adjustments.

6. Public Facing Literacy Environments

Communities successfully extended literacy beyond classrooms and into everyday spaces. Many created literacy-rich environments through signage, yard signs, and digital displays that normalized literacy practices in public settings. Reading nooks in clinics, community centers, and local businesses made books accessible to families during routine activities. These practices can be seen in Charlton County BOE's work, where the public library's *Babes to Tots* program offers phonological and phonemic awareness activities in a community setting and local boutiques and florists host registration sheets and book displays to normalize literacy in everyday spaces.

Little Free Libraries, literacy trails, and community gardens with themed prompts offered consistent touchpoints that encouraged reading and language play. Digital resource hubs provided easy access to curated literacy activities, events, and materials. Some health departments played a unique role by integrating literacy messaging into their services, enrolling families in home book-distribution programs, and embedding literacy into early childhood health routines. RISE Augusta similarly strengthened public-facing literacy environments through



interactive Hub events anchored in the Basics framework and monthly “Winning Wednesdays,” which use QR-code check-ins to gather parent feedback and maintain engagement in a community space. Together, these public-facing strategies strengthened community-wide messaging and elevated literacy as a shared value.

7. Instructional and Intervention Capacity

Awardee communities demonstrated strong instruction in foundational reading skills and a growing capacity for high-quality intervention. Instruction in early grades frequently aligned with the Science of Reading, supported through structured routines, ongoing coaching, and professional learning opportunities. Many communities implemented intervention models with explicit, multisensory structured literacy components delivered in small groups or by trained specialists, such as Cobb Collaborative’s 10-week playgroups and Basics-aligned Palooza events that provide sustained, structured early-literacy practice for families and caregivers.

Additionally, several communities strengthened the systems that support instructional quality. They developed intervention playbooks, defined partner roles clearly, and established multiyear cost-sharing agreements that protected staffing continuity. These structures helped maintain instructional consistency and allowed programs to expand or shift without losing quality. This quality can be seen in the work accomplished by Believe Great Dalton, where The Basics parenting principles are embedded across literacy nights, summer reading celebrations, book distributions, and workplace partnerships to unify instructional messaging for families and reinforce evidence-based routines.

8. Foundational Learning Conditions

Finally, communities addressed the foundational conditions that influence children’s capacity to engage with literacy. Many treated attendance as an instructional priority and implemented practical measures—such as onsite health services, transportation supports, and food access—to reduce barriers to consistent participation. For example, Ben Hill Schools, an in-school health clinic and food supports helped reduce chronic absenteeism by ensuring students arrive ready to learn. Communities also leveraged cross-agency partnerships to ensure that families had access to wraparound resources that support early learning. Dooly County Schools’ use of WIN Time and Walk to Read instructional structures alongside community-based efforts such as carline outreach and a dedicated family engagement specialist to maintain consistent participation and relational support for families demonstrated this practice. These efforts demonstrated an understanding that literacy outcomes cannot be separated from the broader conditions shaping children’s readiness to learn.



In sum, these strengths form a cohesive foundation for improving early literacy outcomes. They also reflect the early emergence of durable literacy ecosystems capable of sustaining and scaling positive results. Figure 1 presents a summary of the strengths identified within each community.

Figure 1: Strengths Identified Within Each Community

STRENGTHS	Clear Goals Aligned to Measurable Outcomes	Evidence-Based Frameworks	Equity Centered Designs	Cross Sector Collaboration	Data Use and Continuous Improvement	Public Facing Literacy Environments	Instructional and Intervention Capacity	Foundational Learning Conditions
COMMUNITY								
Believe Greater Dalton	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Ben Hill School District		X		X	X	X	X	X
Black Child Development Institute-Atlanta	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Charlton County Board of Education	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Cobb Collaborative		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Dooley County Schools		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lamar County School System	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Marietta City Schools	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
ReadSource and Purpose Built Schools of Atlanta		X	X	X	X		X	
RISE Augusta	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

Figure 1 presents a summary of the strengths identified within each community. X indicates that the community demonstrated the corresponding strength area. Most communities demonstrated strengths across multiple areas, indicating a strong foundation for coordinated literacy improvement efforts.

Areas for Growth

The individual external reports shared areas for growth as awardee communities transition from energetic implementation to building durable systems that consistently convert participation into behavior change and child level literacy gains. These areas for growth are organized into the following themes: *precision of outcome measurement, moving from participation to confirming impact, streamlined and shared data tools, partnership governance structures, family engagement evidence, instructional quality and fidelity, codification of high leverage routines, equity measurement, and sustainability and workforce capacity*. The following subsections summarize these themes using examples from the reports.

1. Precision of Outcome Measurement

A common area for growth across the ten reports is the lack of precision of outcome measurement. Many awardees reported encouraging signals, including rising participation, positive family and teacher feedback, and early signs of improvement in foundational literacy skills, but measurement systems often emphasized reach rather than well baselined, time-bound goals with clear ownership and routine fidelity checks. Across sites there is a shared need for simple leading indicators tied to specific activities. These activities can include brief pre and post checks aligned to modeled strategies, repeat engagement tracking, and early warning thresholds that signal when additional support is needed. Just as important is the ability to link program dosage to changes in student’s skills such as vocabulary, phonological awareness, decoding, and comprehension. These shifts strengthen causal stories and allow awardees to adjust supports before small issues become persistent gaps.

2. Moving From Participation to Confirming Impact

Across the awardees there is also a clear opportunity to move from counting participation to confirming impact. Although attendance records and satisfaction comments were universally practiced, they do not by themselves demonstrate learning. Systematic documentation of behavior change and skill development would provide a more accurate picture of effectiveness. Low burden strategies such as follow up messages aligned to the specific activities taught, brief items embedded directly into sessions, and short observation tools for core instructional routines allow partners to demonstrate changes in how families and students are engaging with literacy and how those changes translate into skill growth.

3. Streamlined and Shared Data Tools

The emphasis on meaningful measurement is supported by the need for simple and shared data tools. Many awardees already gather key data—such as assessment results, participation counts, and event analytics—but this information is stored in separate systems rather than consolidated into streamlined dashboards. A streamlined dashboard that integrates leading and lagging

indicators, establishes clear action thresholds, and supports regular data huddles would reduce silos and help awardees connect activities to behaviors and behaviors to skill development.

4. Partnership Governance Structure

The reports revealed common limitations within partnership governance structures.

Collaboration is a major strength across settings, yet many partnerships operate informally even as initiatives scale across neighborhoods and counties. Informal relationships have allowed awardees to innovate quickly, but they make it harder to maintain clarity when staff turnover, funding shifts, or responsibilities expand. Lightweight agreements, shared outcome expectations, and simple reporting routines have the potential to provide the right balance of flexibility and consistency, allowing awardees to sustain relationship driven work while maintaining accountability for results.

5. Family Engagement Evidence

Family engagement is a notable strength across communities, and the next step is to better understand how families are using the literacy practices introduced through programming. Partners are reducing barriers to participation, offering multilingual and culturally responsive materials, and meeting families in accessible spaces, which has resulted in strong attendance and trust. Documenting whether families are adopting the practices they learn, how frequently they use them, and what shifts appear in children's language use or engagement at home will help clarify impact. Strategies, such as short event-linked follow ups, specific practice reminders, and quick caregiver reflections, can turn family engagement into measurable improvements in everyday literacy interactions.

6. Instructional Quality and Fidelity

Instructional quality and fidelity also emerged as common themes for areas of growth. Many sites have adopted evidence-based instructional methods or tutoring approaches aligned with foundational skill development. However, there is a need for clear descriptions of specific instructional routines to determine the quality and brief tools to check their fidelity to implementation. When these expectations are named, observed, and supported through coaching, awardees can maintain instructional strength even as programs grow or move into new settings.

7. Codification of High Leverage Routines

Codification is the practical mechanism that will enable higher levels of consistency. Many partners are ready to document high leverage routines into concise playbooks that outline session flows, parent engagement strategies, data routines, and fidelity expectations. These resources make onboarding more efficient, reduce variation in quality, and provide a shared foundation for continuous improvement across sites.

8. Equity Measurement

An equity lens runs through all ten reports, visible in decisions about content, access, and outreach. The shared opportunity now is to make equity measurable in day-to-day analytics by disaggregating participation, behavior change, and skill growth to ensure populations most in need are experiencing the greatest gains. This level of clarity strengthens transparency, informs resource allocation, and ensures that expanded reach does not dilute impact for priority groups.

9. Sustainability and Workforce Capacity

Finally, sustainability and workforce capacity are recurring areas for growth across the awarded communities. Multiyear planning, diversified funding, and strong pipelines for tutors, interventionists, and family facing staff are increasingly important as programs scale. Clear onboarding processes, coaching supports, and professional learning structures help maintain quality over time. Simple impact briefs and transparent dashboards also strengthen stakeholder confidence and attract continued investment.

Overall, the areas for growth across the ten awardees suggest a practical action path centered on clarity, consistency, and measurable impact. By defining specific outcomes with baselines and timelines, simplifying data systems, formalizing the right aspects of partnership work, codifying high yield routines, and embedding behavior focused and skill focused checks, partners can demonstrate not only strong participation, but meaningful, sustained gains in early literacy. This shift from implementation to improvement is both the shared challenge and shared opportunity across the ten awardees.

Key Recommendations for Literacy Efforts

Across all ten awardees, a strong and unified story emerges. Each initiative reflects a deep commitment to early literacy, grounded in creative programming, relationship building, and persistent efforts to strengthen learning conditions for young children. The recommendations across all awardees reveal not only shared priorities but also shared opportunities to transform promising programs into resilient, sustainable systems that can deliver lasting improvements in literacy outcomes. Together, these recommendations call for *deeper investment in data systems, clearer and more consistent goal setting, stronger partnership structures, codified implementation practices, more intentional equity strategies, and long-term sustainability planning.*

1. Data System Investment

A central theme across all awardees is the need for more robust and actionable data systems. Communities are encouraged to transition from tracking basic counts of activities to developing

more meaningful ways of understanding progress. This includes integrating student growth indicators, participation patterns, and measures of implementation quality into clear and easy to interpret dashboards. Many specific recommendations highlight opportunities to refine how data is presented so that trends are visible, progress can be monitored across time, and evaluation becomes a regular part of program operations rather than an occasional exercise. These systems are envisioned not only as tools for leadership, but also as supports for educators, tutors, and partners who benefit from consistent access to timely information. More comprehensive data analysis can illuminate which strategies are working, which populations are benefiting the most or the least, and where further adjustments are needed.

2. Clear Goal Setting

Alongside improved data use is a recommendation to strengthen goal setting. Although many awardees articulate high aspirations, it is recommended that the aspirations be refined into goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound (SMART). Establishing clearer milestones, regular check-in routines, and shared ownership of outcome targets can help keep implementation paced and focused. This kind of structured goal setting clarifies expectations, strengthens communication among collaborators, and helps ensure that energy and resources remain directed toward meaningful progress. Stronger goal design also sets the stage for more consistent monitoring, allowing communities to celebrate success, address challenges early, and adapt when needed.

3. Strengthening Partnership Structure

The individual external reports also emphasize the importance of strengthening partnership structures. Most communities rely on broad networks of schools, early learning providers, libraries, civic groups, nonprofit organizations, and local leaders. While these relationships are often positive and collaborative, the recommendations highlight the value of adding light but intentional structure. This may include clarifying shared responsibilities, outlining expectations for communication, establishing simple agreements for ongoing collaboration, or creating shared metrics that define how success will be measured. Such practices help maintain alignment as initiatives expand, staff shift, or new partners enter the work. They also create a foundation that supports accountability and ensures that the contributions of each partner remain coordinated and connected.

4. Codified Implementation Practices

Another recurring theme is the codification of strong practices. Across communities, programs have developed effective strategies that reflect local strengths, cultural priorities, and evidence-based approaches. However, many of these practices exist in the hands of individual staff members or within specific teams. To support consistency and scalability, the recommendations

encourage documenting effective routines through playbooks, guides, or structured frameworks that outline key steps, instructional sequences, community engagement practices, or event models. Codifying these practices allows communities to maintain quality as programs expand, helps orient new staff, and preserves successful approaches when personnel or partners change. The reports also suggest incorporating simple fidelity checks, coaching routines, or peer observation practices to ensure that implementation remains strong and aligned with intended design.

5. Intentional Equity Strategies

Equity centered strategies are woven throughout the recommendations. Communities are encouraged to expand multilingual resources, tailor outreach strategies to diverse families, and use data to identify where additional support may be needed. In many cases, the recommendations include highlighting the importance of meeting families where they are, whether that means engaging through community spaces, workplaces, or healthcare settings. The recommendations also emphasize the value of qualitative feedback from families and educators so that programs can remain responsive to cultural and contextual needs. In addition, many communities have found that making literacy visible across public environments helps reinforce reading as a shared value, and the individual external reports encourage continued investment in community-based literacy assets that reach families outside of formal learning settings.

6. Longterm Sustainability Planning

Finally, long term sustainability is identified as essential for maintaining momentum. Communities are encouraged to think beyond single year funding cycles and develop multiyear plans that blend different types of support, including philanthropic contributions, public funding, partner investments, and volunteer engagement. Sustainability planning also includes strengthening staffing pipelines, maintaining partner commitments, and documenting effective models so they can be replicated without loss of quality. Many recommendations emphasize the value of publishing clear summaries of progress to build community confidence and maintain support among funders, leaders, and families. The overall aim is to ensure that literacy efforts remain stable and impactful, even as circumstances change or the work expands into new areas.

These recommendations chart a path forward for communities statewide. They highlight the importance of building systems that are strong enough to support the passion and dedication that drive early literacy efforts. As communities strengthen data use, refine goals, clarify collaboration, codify effective practices, advance equity, and invest in long term sustainability, they create the conditions necessary for enduring literacy success. The shared vision that emerges is one in which early literacy is not just supported through programs and events, but is

embedded into the structures, relationships, and routines that shape everyday life for children and families across the state.

Family Engagement Recommendations

Across all ten communities, recommendations present a consistent picture of what strong family engagement should look like in early literacy work. The guidance emphasizes *practical support families can use right away, clear and welcoming communication, culturally and linguistically responsive design, low barrier access, purposeful pairing of resources with guidance, active listening to families, and a shift from one-time activities to reliable systems* that endure.

1. Practical Daily Literacy Routines

A central recommendation is to equip caregivers with simple strategies that fit into daily life. Rather than lengthy lessons or complex routines, families are most supported by short, specific practices they can try during ordinary moments such as mealtime conversation, bedtime reading, or a few minutes in the car. Examples include asking open-ended questions during shared reading, practicing letter and letter sound play through quick games, and building vocabulary by naming and discussing things in the environment. These approaches prioritize confidence and consistency, helping families turn small interactions into regular habits that grow language and literacy over time.

2. Clear and Consistent Communication

Clear and consistent communication is another essential element for improving family engagement. Families benefit from brief reminders that are easy to access and do not create additional burdens. These reminders might include short text prompts that suggest one concrete action, concise messages that explain how to use materials at home, and regular updates that celebrate progress and reinforce next steps. Communication works best when it is multilingual, offered through multiple channels, and designed with plain language so families can act on guidance quickly and confidently.

3. Culturally Responsive Practices

Embedding culturally responsive practice runs through all recommendations. Engagement is most effective when families see their languages, identities, and experiences reflected in books, activities, and visual materials. Programs are encouraged to locate events in familiar community spaces, to offer content in the languages families use at home, and to center materials that affirm local culture. This approach helps families feel welcome and respected, and it positions literacy as something that belongs to the whole community rather than to a single institution.

4. Reducing Barriers to Participation

Reducing barriers to participation is equally important. Family friendly environments make it easier to join and return. Helpful practices include providing meals, offering childcare, scheduling sessions at flexible times, and locating activities where families already spend time, such as libraries, community centers, parks, recreation venues, and places of worship. Many recommendations suggest pairing literacy with existing celebrations and seasonal events so that families can engage in comfortable settings without adding extra trips to already full schedules.

5. Pairing Resources with Guidance

Access to resources is most effective when paired with guidance. Book distribution and take-home materials have greater impact when caregivers receive short demonstrations, activity cards, and simple prompts that show how to use resources with intention. Modeling during events, brief coaching moments, and follow up reminders all help families move from occasional reading to purposeful routines that support language, decoding, and comprehension.

6. Family Provided Feedback

Another shared theme is the importance of listening to families. Programs are encouraged to create easy ways for caregivers to share experiences and preferences through quick surveys, conversational check ins, and simple reflections. These feedback loops help staff understand what is helpful, what needs to change, and how to tailor supports for different ages and needs. Collecting both numbers and stories ensures programming reflects real conditions and builds trust by showing that family voices guide decisions.

7. Sustainable Engagement Systems

Finally, the recommendations call for making family engagement a system rather than a series of isolated events. This means documenting what works into clear playbooks, establishing consistent communication cycles, creating training and coaching routines for staff and partners, and aligning messages across channels so that guidance is steady and predictable. It also means planning for continuity through staff transitions and funding shifts by creating shared tools, roles, and routines that others can pick up quickly. Publishing concise summaries of progress and lessons learned strengthens community confidence and helps maintain support over time.

Collectively, these recommendations describe a coherent approach to family engagement that is practical, welcoming, inclusive, and sustainable. When communities provide simple routines families can use every day, communicate clearly and often, honor culture and language, lower barriers to participation, pair resources with guidance, listen actively, and build reliable systems, they create the conditions for lasting gains in early literacy for children and families.



Conclusion

The findings across all ten Georgia Reads communities highlight a statewide movement that is both deeply committed and increasingly aligned in its approach to early literacy. Each community has built a strong foundation by mobilizing partners, centering families, and using evidence-based practices to improve learning conditions for children. The next phase of work calls for translating this momentum into long-lasting systems that ensure consistency, equity, and measurable impact.

By strengthening data use, refining goals, clarifying collaboration, codifying effective routines, and sustaining the conditions that support children and families, communities can build models that endure beyond individual initiatives or grant cycles. More importantly, they can create environments where early literacy is woven into everyday life and supported by families, schools, and community organizations working together with shared purpose. With these commitments in place, the Georgia Reads communities are positioned not only to advance early literacy in their own regions, but also to serve as models for scalable, sustainable literacy ecosystems statewide.