**L4GA Y2 Executive Summary**

Georgia's System for Continuous Improvement (see figure 1) encompasses the process and progress of the Georgia Striving Readers Project, year 2. Our Continuous Improvement framework focuses on the systems and structures that must be in place for the sustained improvement of student outcomes. It also utilizes a problem-solving model to provide a clear process for identifying improvement needs, planning for improvement, and for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating those improvement efforts.

*Figure 1*

The goals and objectives of the GA's Striving Readers Project (referred to locally as "The L4GA 2017 Grant" — Literacy for Learning, Living, and Leading) are honed within our system of continuous improvement and were outlined as project outcomes in our grant proposal as follows: (a) to improve student foundational literacy learning as well as content and disciplinary literacy; (b) to improve the professional capacity among teachers (pre-service and in-service) and other school staff; (c) to improve instructional quality (preschool to grade 12); (d) to improve community participation with literacy-related activities; (e) to improve school climate; (f) to implement systemic policies at the state level.

This executive summary of L4GA 2017 Y2 is organized by first describing the projects and measures focused on our youngest learners (B5 - birth through age five) and then moving through the elementary and secondary grade bands. Further, within the age groups, we focus first on the student – the whole child – and then work outward to classroom and school, local community, and policy.

L4GA 2017 Grant Y2 activities supporting our birth through five students, teachers, and leaders were extensive. Dr. Marilyn Lee (contractor) provided regional professional development (22 trainings were hosted in L4GA districts and participants were encouraged to travel from other districts) during the fall of 2018 and winter of 2019. The professional development was structured around “digging” into the data of the project specific measure (PSM) PALS - Phonological Awareness Literacy Screener Pre-K and the GPRA measure PPVT – Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-IV, but more broadly covered foundational literacy including the phonological awareness continuum, rich language experiences for young learners, and instructional planning and grouping for literacy in the preschool and pre-K classroom. Analysis of available PPVT-IV scores showed that almost half of the 4-year-old students increased their scores by 4 points from fall to spring. PALS data analysis showed that at least 75% of the pre-K students met the spring benchmark for name writing, upper case letter identification, and letter sounds.

Additional Project Specific Measures (PSM) for the B5 age range are participation in the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) and Work Sampling Online (WSO). These PSMs were met with challenges. QRIS is specific to childcare centers in Georgia. Few childcare centers partnered with district subgrantees as most districts focused on pre-K classrooms in elementary schools and on community partners serving families. In addition, the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), the agency for early education and care has launched an initiative to encourage centers to become Quality Rated by December 2020. During L4GA Grant Y3, we will continue to encourage districts to partner with early care providers and to participate in QRIS. We will also support DECAL’s efforts to increase participation. Finally, obtaining data for WSO presented a challenge for the evaluation team because WSO is a whole-child assessment administered in *all* GA Pre-K classrooms (not just L4GA 2017 Grant recipient classrooms). The evaluation team is working on an MOU with DECAL to obtain these data as they are housed in a different system. Additionally, we have scheduled discussions about whether pulling only literacy and language-specific indicators from this whole-child metric (7 domains; 69 indicators) will provide the project with necessary information.

The L4GA 2017 grant team, consisting of Julie Morrill, Program Manager, and Meghan Welch, Program Specialist, provided support to grant districts throughout the 2018-19 schoolyear. We made site visits to most of the 38 districts during which leadership discussed community partnerships, district level data from PSMs, purchases including curriculum decisions, instructional practices, and planned professional development. Districts were required to submit detailed performance plans for the school year and Julie was able to offer remote support around budget questions through online portals. Roberta Gardner (Assistant Professor of Reading and Literacy Education, Kennesaw State University) offered expertise around developing community partnerships. In addition to analyzing district plans, Dr. Gardner also implemented innovative ways, such as webinars and podcasts, to reach districts and develop a professional network of resources.

The L4GA 2017 Grant team was strategic and intentional as we attempted to bolster Georgia’s existing professional networks during Y2. Grant funds allowed organizations to bring in locally and nationally renowned literacy researchers and experts for keynote addresses. L4GA 2017 grantees attended statewide professional conferences organized by the Georgia Association on Educational Leaders (GAEL) and heard from Nell Duke and Freddy Heibert. As we required the use of evidence-based resources and practices from grant districts, we ensured that this expectation was supported during professional network meetings and conferences. The ELA team at GaDOE hosted a summer 2019 conference in central GA focusing on “Literacy and the Whole Child.” Attendees (~600) heard from researchers and practitioners as they presented evidence-based practices aligned with GA’s System for Continuous Improvement. When possible, L4GA 2017 district grantees were encouraged to present at these conferences to share successes and engage in discussion with colleagues. We are confident that these strategies will not only promote sustainability but will also improve the professional capacity of leaders, teachers, and school staff. Analysis of the Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS) PSM shows that 98% of teachers observed received Level III or IV during 2018-19 observations. The PSM for school climate showed that 93.51% of L4GA 2017 district schools received 3, 4, or 5 stars.

Project Specific Measures used for elementary and secondary students are the Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS Next), 3rd Grade End-of-Grade ELA Georgia Milestone Assessment, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Reading Inventory (RI), the Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS), and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). GKIDS analysis showed that the percentage of students (77%) achieving the ELA target remained the same for 2018 and 2019. Over half of kindergarten, first, and second grade students screened using DIBELS met the spring benchmarks in 2019. On the 3rd grade ELA Milestone, there was a 5.88% increase in students meeting or exceeding proficiency. Almost half (48.1%) of students in grades 3-11th met goals on RI.

A significant challenge encountered during Y2 was the collection and sharing of project data with the evaluation teams. We are working to solve these issues by providing grant districts with templates for data reporting in Y3. The Georgia Department of Education is still working on deidentifying Y2 project data to then share with the evaluation team, including data broken down by subgroup. Analysis of subgroup data will guide the GSU evaluation team in selecting classrooms to observe using the CLASS tool (this PSM is planned for Y3).

The L4GA 2017 Grant teachers and leaders participated in Y2 professional development during the L4GA Data Summit in June of 2019. The subgrantees heard from both evaluation teams (Georgia Institute of Technology’s Center for Integrating Science, Mathematics, and Computing (CEISMC); and Georgia State University’s Urban Child Study Center) as they presented findings from the 2018-19 school year. GSU highlighted results from the PSM Data Utilization Survey (report document attached) that was designed to examine district capacity to utilize data and current data utilization practices with L4GA assessments. All L4GA 2017 Grant districts were represented in the survey results that included over 1000 respondents. Data Summit attendees heard a presentation from Barbara Foorman about the “Keys to Effective Early Literacy Instruction” and participated in workshops from the Regional Education Lab Southeast (REL-SE) on Self-Study Guides for Implementing Literacy Interventions for each grade band.

Community participation with literacy related activities will continue to be a major focus of districts in the L4GA 2017 Grant. In addition to partnering with the Get Georgia Reading Campaign, districts designed plans that included community partners that support literacy-related services to improve access to print and language through activities such as book fairs, summer reading camps, library services, and after/before-school programs that utilize evidence-based practices for literacy learning. The CEISMC evaluation team analyzed the social networks (report document attached) in each district and presented leadership with visual “map” of partners and strength of partnerships. All districts participated in this PSM and we expect more buy-in as stakeholders realize impact of partnering and community development.

Updates to the existing State Literacy Plan will be informed by the ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement of this project. Data will be communicated to the (new) Governor’s Literacy Commission and a working committee of advisors from districts, early childhood education providers, and community organizations, and teacher education programs. The Georgia Literacy Commission’s work has grown out of the Get Georgia Reading Campaign efforts and will specifically target coordination among state agencies with regards to budgeting, human resources, and effort. These groups will review outcomes and make recommendations for State Plan updates, technical assistance to enable sub-grantees to improve literacy programs, and possible improvements to teacher preparation programs. Georgia is supporting districts and their communities to create systems that are more purposively organized to improve literacy learning, especially for high-poverty communities. We are doing this by promoting the use of data to support continuous improvement.