LITERACY FOR LEARNING, LIVING, AND LEADING

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What if...

Georgia took lessons learned from two successful Georgia-grown frameworks for improving literacy outcomes to build capacity, scale success, and create sustainable change?

Get Georgia Reading Campaign

Get Georgia Reading Campaign partners developed a clearly defined common agenda to create the conditions for every child in Georgia to become a proficient reader by the end of third grade.

Georgia's Striving Readers grant

Georgia's Striving Readers grant (2011-2016) resulted in growth across 100% of participating pre-schools, elementary schools, and middle schools and 87%+ participating high schools.

Literacy Issues are a Complex Problem

Georgia's literacy outcomes are significantly correlated to poverty (r^2 = .674). In Georgia, over 24.4% of children under age 18 live in poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2016). Of children who are growing up in poverty, 84,000 (or 59%) of Georgia's youngest learners do not receive early education (Kids Count Georgia, 2017). Reasons for absenteeism are varied. Data from Georgia's schools show that students who come from impoverished communities miss many days of school, are suspended, and drop out at a higher rate than their wealthier peers. This can be for many reasons, including difficulty getting timely appointments for healthcare and lack of transportation. Furthermore, once in the K-12 system, children who live in families who are struggling to make ends meet are less likely to do well on literacy outcomes (Adelman & Taylor, 2018; Dickinson & Tabors, 1991; Campbell &
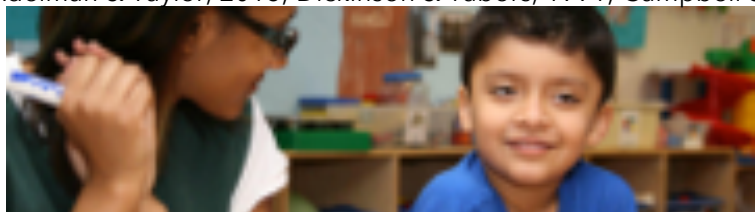
von Stauffenberg, 2008; Jensen, 2009; Noble, Norman, & Farah, 2005). In short, living in poverty seems to hamper many students' ability to be successful literacy learners. This issue will require a host of evidence-based solutions.

Evidence-based Practices to Address the Complexity of Literacy

Evidence-based practices (EBP) are developed through studies and theories that have been published in peer-reviewed publications. Evidence-based practices are also data-informed, appropriate to the community, and include educators in professional decision-making processes. When practices have strong, moderate, or promising evidence, that means that there is a significant research base and scholarly literature that supports implementation. By using EBPs, Georgia has an opportunity to get adults who care about children to support a shared goal of improving literacy outcomes. Together all Literacy for Learning, Living, and Leading (L4GA) stakeholders can engage in evidence-based practices and continuously strive for improved outcomes.

EBP for Community Coalitions

Research is emerging about how to support literacy learners in communities. This body of evidence provides promising practices for addressing students' literacy needs with less conventional interventions (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007; Allington, & McGill-Franzen, 2013; Campbell, S. B., & von Stauffenberg, 2008; Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, 2011; Hiebert, & Mesmer, 2013; Kim & Quinn, 2013; Melosh, 2013; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017; Neuman, & Celano, 2001; Schacter & Bo, 2005; Smith & Foorman, 2015).

In Georgia, communities are creating coalitions that include leaders from K-12 schools, early childhood education centers, and community organizations that are becoming "Get Georgia Reading Communities." Together local coalitions review data from the U.S. Census, Kids Count Georgia, and student academic outcomes. In addition, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning can offer county-level data about children, family needs, and local assets.

Through community conversations, leaders generate ideas about which data are important for their region and for supporting families and children. These community coalitions developed projects such as participating in library literacy clubs, securing housing, and finding food for families. By mapping local needs to local resources and following where the students come from, community coalitions are essential to the success of L4GA. LEA-Partnerships can utilize L4GA allocations to engage with family and child care providers who may not have been engaged before, such as caregivers paid for with child care subsidies, healthcare providers, *Babies Can't Wait,* and social workers. For example, "Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care" providers may be good partners for museums, theatres, libraries, and parks so that children have exposure to more of the community's learning resources. In addition, research shows this approach creates a sustainable infrastructure for continuous improvement in Georgia's schools (Southern Education Foundation & Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2015). GaDOE is currently aligning district Title 1 programs with Georgia Family Community Partnership liaisons who provide social service connections

Evidence for Community Coalitions
Smith and Foorman (2015) provide a summary of how summer reading camps provided a fun and meaningful opportunity for summer learning. Furthermore, Sheldon (2003) links family-school-community partnerships to academic outcomes. Summer school and other summer learning opportunities may be an essential element to community partnerships (Boorman, 2016).

within every county in the state; therefore, all districts should have a social worker in the community poised to help build connections.

EBP for Reading Development

Georgia already has expert coaches and online resources for promoting improvements in reading. These need to be scaled and made more accessible through face-to-face meetings, online instruction and coaching, and on-site coaching. Instructional focus should include:

> explicit comprehension strategy instruction (**strong evidence)**;
>
> explicit vocabulary instruction (**strong evidence**)**;**
>
> dialogic reading (**moderate evidence**);
>
> peer-assisted learning (**strong evidence**);
>
> small-group reading interventions (**strong evidence**);
>
> developing academic English (**strong evidence**); and
>
> intensive supplementary instruction for struggling students (**strong evidence**), including English learners, and Students with Disabilities that effect sight, hearing, language development, and cognitive development.

> To learn more about how research-based practices qualify as **strong**, **moderate,** or **promising**, see https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceuseseinvestment.pdf
>
> The Georgia Department of Education encourages school leaders to evaluate programs and instructional strategies using these qualifications.

These areas together constitute balanced instruction. However, quality teaching also requires attention to specific student abilities and interests. Excellent teachers conduct screening and diagnosis of specific developmental needs, and, when students struggle, offer specific interventions. Assessments that are formative and diagnostic are helpful for teachers as they determine students' abilities and needs.

EBP for Writing Development

Writing is an essential component of literacy and should be a primary focus in order to prepare children for a digital society. Georgia has four National Writing Project (NWP) sites at state universities (Kennesaw State University, Georgia Southern University, University of Georgia, University of West Georgia). The NWP has a long history of offering high-quality professional learning about writing instruction. NWP was recently deemed as having moderate evidence for improving student outcomes (Gallagher, Woodworth, & Arshan, 2015; National Writing Project & Nagin, 2007).

Together GaDOE and Georgia's NWP sites have developed U˙cohesive partnership to promote writing instructional strategies across content areas and across developmental phases/ages. Georgia NWP sites share research on writing development as well as formative ways to assess writing. They also develop teacher leaders.

> The Institutes of Education Sciences (IES) offers practice guides which complement and support many of the writing practices promoted by the NWP, offering multiple strategies for improving writing instruction (Berninger, Nagy, & Beers, 2011; Bielenberg, & Fillmore, 2005; Gallagher, Woodworth, & Arshan, 2015; Graham et al., 2016; Graham, & Hebert, 2012; Graham, McKeown, Kiuhara, & Harris, 2012; MacArthur, 2012; MacArthur, 2014; Ogletree, & Allen, 2013; Philippakos, & MacArthur, in press; Sadler, 2007; Saddler, Behforooz, & Asaro, 2008; Troia, 2014).

EBP for Language Development

There is **strong evidence** that early language development is correlated to children's early reading abilities, and this focus on early language is consistent with IES instructional guidance about building foundational reading skills (see Foorman et al., 2016; Lesaux, Crosson, Kieffer, & Pierce, 2010). Building children's narrative and inferential language skills, vocabulary, and lexical knowledge, Georgia's teachers can learn strategies for engaging students in authentic conversation and growing academic language.

Furthermore, there is **promising evidence** that discussions about academic knowledge can support both academic language development and reading comprehension (Kiemer, Groschner, Pehmer, & Seidel, 2015) . Across the grade levels, a focus on language differences is especially important for English Learners. Language development can be addressed through **promising practices** and **moderate evidence** related to culturally sensitive focus on academic language and attention to improving classroom discourse (see Baker et al., 2014; Dickinson & Snow, 1987; Dickinson & Tabors, 1991; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Hollie, 2011; Kiemer, Groschner, Pehmer, & Seidel, 2015; Schleppegrell, 2004).

Discussions with the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and analysis of Kindergarten learning outcomes showed the L4GA development team that instructional and conversational interventions for language development need to be addressed. Because of the unique context of Georgia's children (e.g., southeastern accents and varied dialects), L4GA professional development will add a focus on how instructional practices can address dialectal differences to improve foundational reading skills. The L4GA team is coordinating with several Georgia professors who are national experts in this area (e.g.,Washington, Patton-Terry, Seidenberg, Stone, & Silliman, 2013) and with Dr. Barbara Foorman's Regional Education Lab at Florida State University to grow this area of practice. This emerging research was recently funded by the National Institutes of Health (award # 1R24HD075454-01). Outcomes suggest several **promising practices** for supporting young children with dialectal differences as these differences have potential to influence their phonemic and phonological development.

EBP for Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Development

*S*ocial-emotional engagement improves not only academic outcomes, but also the climate for learning in Georgia's schools (Gou, Connor, Tompkins, & Morrison, 2011). In Georgia, school climate ratings directly correlate to reading outcomes (see https://tinyurl.com/y759ffln for an explanation). Georgia was the first state in the nation to implement K12 school climate ratings in 2011. Annual measurement of school climate is mandated in Georgia law via Part 3 of Article 2 of Chapter 14 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (see http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20112012/127822.pdf).

Strong theory connects social and emotional development, school climate, and learning (Benbenishty, Astor, Roziner, & Wrabel, 2016; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). The Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS; see http://www.gelds.decal.ga.gov/) include standards for social and emotional development from birth through age five, and the K-12 Georgia Standards of Excellence include social and emotional development within the practices they promote (although Georgia does not have explicit standards for social-emotional learning). Aligning social and emotional development standards of GELDS to the Georgia Standards of Excellence is of utmost importance.

In early childhood classrooms (birth through grade 2), professional learning should include a focus on Universal Design for Learning (Universal Design Learning Center, 2012) and Pyramid practices for Positive

Behavior Support (Hemmeter, Fox, Jack, & Broyles, 2007). In grades 3-12, Universal Design for Learning and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (see www.pbis.org) offer **promising practices** integral to literacy instructional areas, such as reading comprehension strategies, writing instruction, and content literacy for social studies and science (c.f., Rubin, Townsend, & Vittori, 2015). These interventions have **moderate evidence** that they are especially helpful for students with disabilities and communication disorders (Benbenishty, Astor, Roziner, & Wrabel, 2016; Carpenter et al., 2011; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Georgia promotes multi-tiered systems of support that integrate social-emotional, behavioral, and academic supports for learners; therefore, this focus complements GaDOE-led offerings by contributing specific support for literacy classrooms.

EBP Digital Literacy Development

The digital age requires students who can receptively and expressively communicate using digital technologies. The digital age also requires students to become digital participants who can engage with different kinds of media—printed text, images, design features, sound, animation, video, etc. This requires not only conventional print literacy, but also multi-modal literacies and, ultimately, knowledge of computational thinking and computer science (Kafai & Burke, 2014).

One-hundred percent of Georgia's schools are internet-connected, and many school leaders, community members, and families are asking how to best support students' digital literacies and online communications. The "homework gap" still exists; many students have access in school, but not at home or in their communities because broadband availability is still spotty in many rural areas across Georgia. Local internet access is an urgent need for student success across our rural communities.

> Research on literacy has shown the dire necessity for all students to develop digital literacies and for educators to understand how digital literacy development is different from conventional literacy (Baker, 2010; Dooley, Ellison, Welch, Allen & Bauer, 2016; Dooley, Flint, Holbrook, May, & Albers, 2011; Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, & Robison, 2009; Leu, Forzani, Rhoads, Maykel, Kennedy, & Timbrell, 2014; National Council of Teachers of English, 2008).

The U.S. Department of Education re-released the National Education Technology Plan (2017), indicating the need for pedagogical integration of learning technologies in classrooms as well as the need for research on evidence supporting how educational technologies can improve student learning. The plan suggests that innovation and design-based research cycles would be most helpful to educators who are actively trying to figure out how to thoughtfully and collaboratively explore new learning models.

One focus of digital literacy instruction, digital citizenship, guides children and youth on how to safely, respectfully, and effectively engage in online communications. GaDOE is partnering with several curriculum providers and partners to support digital literacy, including partners from Google (see the *Be Internet Awesome* curriculum, grades 4-6), the International Society for Technology in Education, Common Sense Media (see the Digital Citizenship curriculum, grades K-12), the Family Online Safety Institute, the Internet Keep Safe Coalition, and Connect Safely. GaDOE also includes researchers of digital literacies on the Literacy Think Tank to ensure that Georgia's educators, community members, and families understand how to be safe and responsible communicators online.

In addition to digital citizenship, educators can learn how to leverage digital communications and resources to support student learning in ways that support their development as "digital participants." Research on how to support students as digital learners includes many **promising practices** (Ito et al., 2013; Mishra & Koehler, 2006; Pelligrino & Hilton, 2012). The role of schools in this effort cannot be understated; digital

literacy is a matter of equity (Losh & Jenkins, 2012; Welch & Dooley, 2012). Georgia's children and youth are at risk of becoming digital exiles (those who have no digital access nor support) and digital orphans (those who have access but no support); however, with a concentrated and sustained effort across Georgia's schools, all students can become digital heirs (those with both access and support).

EBP for Addressing Dyslexia

In recent years there has been growing attention around the unique instructional needs of students with dyslexia. GaDOE adopted the definition of dyslexia offered by the International Dyslexia Association several years ago. Georgia's parents of students who have been diagnosed with dyslexia as well as educators and professors support the use of this definition. The use of early screening tools and professional learning about how dyslexia is different from garden-variety poor reading is a necessary focus for professional learning among educators (Berkeley, Lindstrom, Nealy, Southall, & Stagliano, 2012; Lindstrom & Sayeski, 2013; Vellutino, Fletcher, Snowling, & Scanlon, 2004). Several Georgia professors focused on dyslexia have agreed to become part of the Literacy Think Tank and coordinate a research-proven, data-informed method for differentiating dyslexia from other reading difficulties and methods for ensuring that all students are offered early interventions and free appropriate public education. The Literacy Think Tank can support professional development by offering professional learning opportunities, course materials, and resources related to dyslexia for inservice and/or preservice teachers and teacher educators.

EPB for Professional Learning for Educators

Professional learning should be offered for school leaders, teachers, and community literacy program providers in a coherent series of opportunities to focus collaboratively (online and face-to-face) on improving practice. Georgia's L4GA team piloted a tiered approach to professional development in the 2016-17 school year and survey findings from over 1000 educators demonstrated that participants liked this hybrid approach. This approach ensures that professional learning is consistent and coherent across an extended time and situated in the context of schools (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardener, 2017; Flint, Zisook, & Fisher, 2011).

Educators, from early childhood through grade 12, should be offered targeted professional learning that is appropriate for their students' specific developmental needs and abilities. By aligning high-quality, EPB efforts to literacy-related areas of focus and emergent data, we can further disseminate high-quality resources across the state.

The L4GA website hosts resources and links to opportunities not only to support the professional development of educators and school leaders, but also to support non-educators who are essential to children's lives and literacy learning (Diamond, Justice, Siegler, & Snyder, 2013). All resources will be explicitly linked to the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) and Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) which are Georgia's evaluation tools for meaningful feedback and support. These TKES and LKES links will provide teachers and leaders with information about how their practices and performance impact student learning. The resources will also be placed in the GaDOE's Learning Object Repository, a database accessible through school districts' student information systems.

Institutes

Institutes offer face-to-face opportunities to gather all educators to meet each other, discuss statewide findings, and improve particular EBP areas that, as determined by data, require additional emphasis. Building on the experience from GaSRCL, these face-to-face institutes serve to engage educators and

leaders and attract them to online supports. These Institutes will also ensure that participants are familiar with and technically able to use the online platform. Institutes conducted across the state will be targeted to specific audiences:

> District leaders and school leaders,
>
> Leaders and teachers of the early education and primary grades,
>
> Leaders and teachers of the primary and elementary grades;
>
> Leaders and teachers of the middle and secondary grades;
>
> Out-of-school providers (e.g., summer reading camps, library literacy programs; museum, park, and theatre programs)

Professional learning providers for the Institutes will be selected through a peer-review process. After meeting to discuss L4GA baseline data, members of the Literacy Think Tank, RESAs, and ELA Advisory will be invited to propose and peer-review Institute proposals based on "content-focus strands" initiated by the GaDOE. Each proposal will include the following:

> Focal content
>
> Description of how the session will actively engage participants
>
> Targeted "tier" of support (core instruction strategies; strategies for students who are not making progress; intensive instructional strategies)
>
> Research evidence base for the proposed strategies
>
> Online follow up (course content, online coaching, PLC moderation)
>
> Face-to-face options for local partners (consultation and local coaching)
>
> Capacity and resources for conducting the institute and follow-up services

All professional learning providers are expected to explicitly link to evidence-based practices and research; link to the *Georgia System for Continuous Improvement* by identifying how each strategy might affect "effective leadership," "coherent instruction," "community and family engagement," etc. and what formative data might be helpful to monitor progress. They will also provide specific curricular materials (lesson plans, unit plans, etc.), link to children's literature and other authentic texts, and provide video examples of instructional strategies being promoted.

Online courses, professional learning communities, and coaching for educators

A state-wide professional learning platform can host social online learning networks and is maintained by the Georgia Department of Education's Virtual Learning program, which serves over 30,000 students and 1000's of teachers each year. Online courses will include online coaching and PLC conversations, moderated by teacher educators from the RESAs, Literacy Faculty Think Tank, and L4GA partners who have passed the peer-review process for proposing Institutes. The subject matter experts who host Institutes also will be the online PLC moderators and coaches. Content on evidence-based practices produced for Institutes will contribute to online course development. The course catalog for the state-wide online

platform will grow continuously; the platform has already ingested course offerings from the Comprehensive Reading Solutions website funded by GaSRCL and merged them with online PLC opportunities. The state-wide online platform also has capacity for inter-operability with course offerings from Georgia's Institutions of Higher Education which use the Desire2Learn (D2L) platform (Note: the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning hosts professional learning modules in D2L, and those will be accessible through D2L and GeorgiaLearns). GeorgiaLearns also has capacity to integrate videos and resources from existing national platforms such as the *Watch Me Grow* modules and resources offered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (see https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/watchmetraining/index.html)

Local Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Any Institute session offered will include a facilitator's guide for local PLCs to continue the content focus through a series of peer observations and conversations, similar to the guides provided by the IES and REL-SE (see https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southeast/plc.asp). These professional learning communities should be supported through collaborative planning time offered by schools so that teachers have time to review research-proven strategies, analyze formative data, discuss ideas, and conduct peer-mentoring and observations.

Time for collaboration is of utmost importance for educators. Providing opportunities to engage in high-quality collaboration that they perceive as extensive and helpful, has shown to have both an individual and collective benefit. Additionally, high-quality collaboration among educators has been linked to increases in their students' achievement, their performance, and their peers' students' achievement (Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, & Grissom, 2015).

Assessing Professional Learning for Educators

By working closely with partners in Georgia's teacher preparation programs and RESAs, the L4GA project aligns professional learning providers with what schools need, based on data. This strategy also closely aligns the Institutes and professional learning content with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) career ladder for teacher certification as well as the PSC-approved K-12 Reading Endorsement Standards, as well as the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards for Teacher Development (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011) and Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2015).

Evidence of Successful Communities of Practice

High quality professional learning opportunities should include multiple ways for groups to engage together, over time, in Institutes, online learning, and local professional learning in order to support their involvement in "communities of practice." Local and online communities offer educators opportunities to discuss peers' progress and to engage peers in critical conversations (Fakey & Ippolito, 2014), give and receive feedback (Flom, 2014), and develop sustainable change cultures. Literature on professional learning suggests that engaging in communities of practice can change educators' instructional, assessment, and reflection practices (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardener, 2017). Several widely-shared features of effective communities of practice include:

Content focus on specific teaching strategies with specific content supports for literacy within English Language Arts and other disciplinary content areas. L4GA not only emphasizes the need for teacher knowledge about how early literacy develops, but also how school leaders and teachers can adapt that knowledge into practical pedagogical approaches for content and disciplinary literacy in mathematics,

science, social studies, as well as in English language arts. As L4GA data are collected and analyzed, findings will be used to identify content priorities. Participants in the feeder systems will be directed to focus their efforts on these instructional goals and this will be a requirement of LEA-partnership sub-grantees so as to avoid having competing priorities.

Active learning that engages teachers and school leaders directly in trying out new strategies and connecting their own experiences as learners to their classroom contexts. Georgia is host to two programs that have **Strong Evidence** of high-quality professional learning according to the IES-evidence standards: Reading Recovery P-12 and National Writing Project. Professionals from these programs are active members of the GaDOE Literacy Faculty Think Tank.

Collaboration among peers ensures that teachers and school leaders communicate about their instructional changes, encourage each other, engage in critical conversations, and positively change the culture of their environments. L4GA utilizes fact-to-face convenings via Institutes and local (PLCs) as well as online courses, online Communities of Practice, and online coaching (Ronfeldt, Farmer, McQueen, & Grissom, 2015).

Demonstrations of curricular models can provide a clear vision for what effective instruction looks like. The L4GA will provide teachers and school leaders opportunities to discuss sample lesson plans, assessments, curricular planning guides, videos of their own and others' effective practices, and classroom observations.

Feedback and reflection are critically important to changing practices. Therefore, the L4GA plan includes supports for school leaders and teachers on how to give and receive feedback, both online and in face-to-face contexts.

Sustained duration is necessary for teachers and school leaders to engage with a particular content focus over time, offering opportunity to practice, implement, and improve new strategies that, in turn, improve instruction.

Evidence of Successful Networked Improvement Communities (NICs)

Communities of Practice that are aimed at specific outcomes are called "Networked Improvement Communities" or NICs (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011). NICs require collaborative, active engagement among participants. They also require routine examination of data (qualitative and quantitative) as participants help each other reach their goals for improvement.

Georgia has an opportunity to create NICs that focus on diverse local approaches to improving literacy outcomes because the GaDOE has focused on creating shared language, tools, and resources for transferable ideas by introducing the **Georgia System for Continuous Improvement (see** http://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/School-Improvement-Services/Pages/GeorgiagYY%E2%80%99s-Systems-of-Continuous-Improvement.aspx **).** This organizes comprehensive school improvement into five target areas: Effective leadership, supportive learning environment, family and community engagement, professional capacity, and coherent instructional system.

Georgia's educators have opportunities to review their own data in face-to-face meetings through the GaDOE school improvement teams; however, all schools, not just "identified schools" could benefit from an online space for communication, participation, sharing resources, and reviewing data. The state-wide online platform can support these NICs and improve literacy outcomes for all.

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