EDTASS: Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL)

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

3.1.2A – Case Study of FY 2014–15 SRCL Discretionary Grant Project: Georgia

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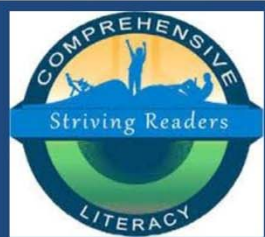
GEORGIA'S SRCL Program: 2014–15

The purpose of the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) program is to advance literacy skills, including pre-literacy skills, reading, and writing, for students from birth through grade 12, including limited English-proficient students and students with disabilities.

36 participating Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and Early Learning Providers (ELPs)

WHOM THE PROGRAM SERVED

148 Elementary Schools
47 Middle Schools
36 High Schools
25 Early Learning Sites

170,560 Students
81% Disadvantaged
13% Students with Disabilities
7% Limited English Proficiency

WHAT THE PROGRAM OFFERED

Georgia State Literacy Plan (pg. 8)	Literacy Funding for LEAs and ELPs (pg. 10)	Technical Assistance (pg. 12)	Data-Based Decision-Making (pg. 14)	Effective Use of Technology (pgs. 4, 10 14)

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Program Successes

- SRCL funds were used to create *Comprehensive Reading Solutions*, providing free professional online learning modules for literacy instruction from birth–grade 12.
- School literacy plans mapped to the state literacy plan allowed strategies and programs to be individualized to the needs of the schools.

Policy Changes

- The 2014–15 school year marked the beginning of the new state outcome assessment, the Georgia Milestones. Due to increased difficulty it was expected that scores would initially be lower.

Percentage of SRCL Four-Year-Olds Achieving Significant Gains in 2014–15[1]

Pre-K **14%**

0%   100%

Percentage of SRCL Students Scoring Proficient in Reading in 2014–15[2]

5th Grade **29%**
8th Grade **32%**
High School **27%**

0%   100%

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[1] Significant gains is defined in terms of a treatment effect size, which calculates gains as standard deviation units from fall to spring assessments.

[2] Proficiency is defined as the percentage of participating students who meet or exceed proficiency on the State English language arts assessment.

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Case Studies of SRCL Discretionary and Set-Aside Grants

This case study examines the Georgia Department of Education Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) grant by describing and discussing the following areas:

- Program successes and accomplishments;
- Lessons learned during the implementation of SRCL grant activities;
- Progress in the implementation of the state's comprehensive literacy plan;
- Alignment of federal and state funds to support effective literacy instruction;
- Technical assistance and monitoring processes;
- Data-based decision-making practices;
- Demonstration of improvement on performance measures;
- Effective use of technology (with examples presented in callout boxes); and
- The sustainability of the SRCL program.

Data sources included approved SRCL grantee applications, comprehensive literacy plans, annual performance reports, evaluation reports, continuation project plans, English language arts standards, reports on subgrantee performance, state assessment data, state demographic data, ED*Facts* data,[3] and state department websites. It also includes information from the sustainability meeting and interview with the SRCL program director for the state.

This document is separated into four sections. The first section, *Program Highlights*, serves as a high level summary of outcomes and processes. It presents grantee reported successes over the course of the grant cycle.

The second section, *Grantee Profile*, provides a brief overview of SRCL activities, highlights specific aspects of the program, and focuses on lessons learned during the implementation of SRCL grant activities. This section addresses the grantee's use of professional development, literacy content standards, literacy curriculum and instructional materials, targeted interventions, and data-based decision-making. It also provides grantee characteristics to inform the understanding of the populations served.

The third section, *Review of 2014–15 Performance Indicators*, describes how grantees have increased oral language skills and school readiness in preschool children, improved student achievement on state literacy assessments, improved literacy skills among disadvantaged students, and increased data-based decision-making.

The fourth and final section, *Sustainability of SRCL Activities*, reviews the 2014–15 progress alongside reported activities geared at sustaining the SRCL activities beyond the grant period.

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[3] ED*Facts* is a U.S. Department of Education initiative to collect, analyze, report on, and promote the use of high-quality, kindergarten through grade 12 (K–12) performance data for use in education planning, policy-making, and management and budgeting to improve outcomes for students.

I. Program Highlights

Georgia's program successes and accomplishments over the course of the grant have included the following:

- To implement the Georgia State Literacy Plan, each subgrantee developed a **school literacy plan** that was mapped to the state literacy plan. Each school literacy plan demonstrated the implementation of the six building blocks of effective literacy instruction: *engaged leadership*, *continuity of care and instruction*, *ongoing formative and summative assessments*, *best practices in literacy instruction*, *systems of tiered intervention*, and *professional learning and resources*. School literacy plans allowed strategies and programs to be individualized to the needs of the subgrantees.

- To improve literacy learning outcomes among at-risk students from birth through grade 12, Georgia provided **high-quality professional development** to teachers and school leaders. These included online modules, weekly electronic office hours, leadership trainings, implementation field coordinators, onsite professional development, and learning institutes. As a result, despite increased rigor and difficulty in the state assessments, student performance was 10 percentage points or less than the state average for the grade level. In 2014–15, the percentage of SRCL participating students who met or exceeded proficiency on the State English language arts assessment was 29% in 5th grade, 32% in 8th grade, and 27% in high school while the state average was 39%, 39%, and 36%, respectively.

- To provide sustainable professional development, Georgia created the **Comprehensive Reading Solutions** website. The website contains 68 professional learning modules that are open to all teachers in the state and worldwide. In addition to the learning modules, the website provides free evidence-based resources (e.g., a comprehensive K–5 text-rich reading curriculum to aid schools in empowering any class of students). This free professional development allows districts to increase capacity and build sustainability to improve literacy learning outcomes. As of September 2016, the professional learning modules have had over 88,000 users and have been accessed in 172 countries.

- To support coherent approaches and funding to implement effective literacy instruction, Georgia **coordinates and aligns** with other divisions, state agencies, and education organizations throughout the state and nation. These activities include collaborating with divisions within GaDOE and serving on several steering committees within the state. For example, SRCL staff collaborate with teams from Teacher/Leader Effectiveness, Special Education Services, and State Schools twice a month. The SRCL program manager also serves on several committees that support projects throughout the state, including the state personnel development grant and the Spring Special Education Leadership Conference.

II.   Grantee Profile

In September 2011, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) was one of six state education agencies awarded the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) grant. Each year since, Georgia has held an annual subgrant competition to provide the state's neediest schools with SRCL funding. The 2014–15 school year marks the fourth cohort of local education agencies (LEAs) and early learning sites to receive funding. Schools are eligible to participate in the Georgia SRCL program if they meet three conditions:

1. At least 35 percent of the school's student population is eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch.
2. The school agrees to use data to inform instruction.
3. The school agrees to implement a 90-minute reading block (if an elementary school) or 2–4 hours of content-area reading (if a secondary school).

This report reviews Georgia's SRCL activities and performance across all four cohorts of LEAs receiving SRCL funding during the 2014–15 school year. Now in the fourth year of continuation funding, GaDOE continues to implement the SRCL program in 256 schools from 36 districts and early learning sites across the state.

Overview of Georgia SRCL Grant Activities

The SRCL grant allowed Georgia to implement a state literacy plan and provide funding and technical support to the neediest schools in the state. The Georgia State Literacy Plan focuses on nine research-based components:

1. **Standards**: From birth through grade 12, students will receive standards-based curriculum (e.g., Georgia Early Learning Standards for early literacy from birth through the third year of life, Head Start Child Outcomes framework standards for literacy for children 3–5 years of age, and the Georgia Standards of Excellence).
2. **Components unique to birth to five:** These include professional learning opportunities, coordination of services among the birth-to-five community, assessments, and transition support.
3. **Ongoing formative and summative assessments:** Teachers will have access to ongoing formative and summative assessment data (e.g., screenings, diagnostics assessments, progress monitoring) to inform instructional decisions about the intensity of interventions and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.
4. **Response to intervention**: Applicants will employ a four-tiered response to intervention model for all students: Tier 1—the core curriculum, Tier 2—strategic intervention, Tier 3—intensive intervention, and Tier 4—due process.
5. **Best practices in instruction:** Research-based programs will include systematic and explicit instruction (e.g., organizing instruction to improve learning, extended time for reading based on grade level).
6. **High-quality teachers:** Teachers will have access to high-quality professional learning to build competence in evidence-based practices in literacy instruction.

7. **Engaged leadership:** Schools will have leadership that is committed to improving instruction (e.g., administrators attend professional learning opportunities and regularly monitor classrooms).
8. **Clearly articulated plan for transitions and alignment:** Districts will provide a clearly articulated plan for curriculum and professional learning alignment vertically and horizontally, as well as a clear plan for transition between grades and schools.
9. **Intentional strategies for maintaining engagement:** Teachers will use intentional strategies for developing and maintaining engagement as students progress through school.

Program Goals

Georgia's SRCL program created six strategic goals in combination with the recommendations of the Georgia Literacy Task Force[4] to ensure a viable and cohesive literacy plan for Georgia students. The strategic plan outlines the following six major goals:

- **Goal 1**: Increase high school graduation rate, decrease high school dropout rate, and increase postsecondary enrollment rate.
- **Goal 2**: Strengthen teacher quality, recruitment, and retention.
- **Goal 3:** Improve workforce readiness skills.
- **Goal 4:** Develop strong education leaders, particularly at the building level.
- **Goal 5:** Improve the SAT, ACT, and achievement scores of Georgia students.
- **Goal 6:** Make policies that ensure maximum academic and financial accountability.

During the 2014–15 school year, specific program goals and objectives included providing all subgrantees with technical assistance and training through learning institutes and online media, conducting site visits to ensure implementation and provide onsite assistance, supporting data collection and evaluation components, providing leadership training for the fourth cohort of subgrantees, and monitoring activities.

Lessons Learned

As part of the annual performance report, Georgia described activities that were particularly successful during implementation of the SRCL program:

- Sustainable professional learning and resources through the Comprehensive Reading Solutions website;
- The use of data to improve instruction; and
- The infusion of high-quality literacy instruction in all content areas.

> *Comprehensive Reading Solutions,[5] funded by SRCL, has provided online professional learning modules for literacy instruction from birth through grade 12.*

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[4] In the fall of 2008, the GaDOE convened a Literacy Task Force for the purpose of writing the first iteration of a literacy plan for K-12th grades. Over fifty members from a variety of educational contexts statewide were asked to participate.
[5] www.comprehensivereadingsolutions.com

Professional learning and resources provided through the Comprehensive Reading Solutions website offers sustainable professional learning to all teachers of children from birth through 12th grade. The site provides open access to learning modules and an evidence-based, comprehensive K–5 reading curriculum. A steadily increasing number of teachers in Georgia and elsewhere have accessed the professional learning modules developed through SRCL funding. Thus far, the site has had over 68,000 repeat users.

Georgia also highlighted using data to inform decision-making, monitor and inform instruction, and understand tiers of instruction. One example is the use of local assessment data to drive instruction and fill in gaps. Professional learning architects and staff initiated "data digs" with schools, which allowed teachers and leaders to identify materials that were lacking, discuss the strength and weaknesses of students, and differentiate instruction.

Lastly, a strong component of the SRCL plan has been to infuse high-quality literacy instruction in all content areas. This included increasing authentic literacy experiences and instruction across the curriculum. For example, schools gave students opportunities to read across the curriculum by implementing cross-curriculum text and using shared reading strategies across all disciplines, and provided more evidence-based writing instruction across all content areas.

Grantee Characteristics: 2014–15

During the 2014–15 school year, 170,560 students in 256 schools from 36 districts and early learning sites participated in Georgia's Striving Readers program (see Appendix Table A1). Elementary school students made up the largest percentage of students served (58 percent; see Figure 1), followed by middle school students (18 percent), and high school students (14 percent). Early learning sites served the smallest percentage of children (10 percent).

Figure 1. Percentage of Students Served by Grade Level, 2014–15
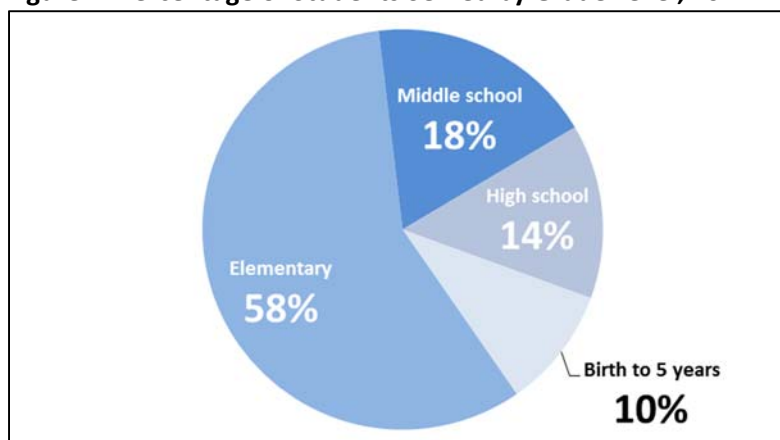
Source: Georgia Department of Education. FY 2014 Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Annual Performance Report.

The majority of students (80 percent) in participating schools were considered disadvantaged (see Figure 2). This accounts for a total of 137,324 students receiving free or reduced lunch. In addition, 21,507 students (13 percent) were identified as students with disabilities, and 11,374 students (7 percent) were identified with limited English proficiency.

Figure 2. Percentage of Students Served by Disadvantaged Populations, 2014–15
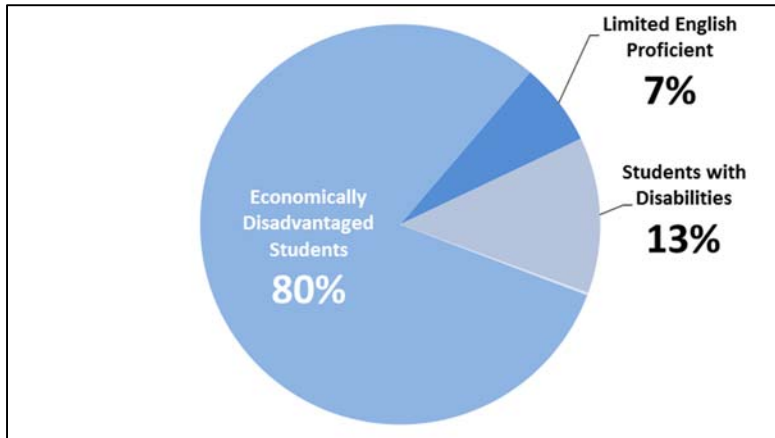
Note: Georgia uses the free/reduced meal rate to define disadvantaged students.
Source: Georgia Department of Education. FY 2014 Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Annual Performance Report.

III. Review of 2014–15 Performance Indicators

To determine whether grantees were succeeding in improving learning outcomes and enabling data-based decision-making processes and practices, five performance indicators were developed, based on the criteria for continuation awards provided in the SRCL grant application.[6] These indicators include:

1. **State Literacy Plan:** Demonstration of progress in the implementation of a state comprehensive literacy plan. Progress may include plan development, updating the original plan, plan implementation, and continuous plan improvement.

2. **Federal and State Program Alignment:** Demonstration of increased alignment of federal and state funds and programs to support a coherent approach to funding and implementing effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students, specifically through the following:
   a. *Distribution of funds:* Funds are distributed according to grant targets (i.e., 15 percent for birth to 5 years, 40 percent for K–5, 40 percent for middle and high school, and 5 percent for state activities).
   b. *State leadership activities—aligns use of federal and state funds and programs:* As appropriate, federal and state program alignment supports a coherent approach to funding and implementing effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students under Head Start, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006.

3. **Technical Assistance:** Demonstration that grantee has provided high-quality technical assistance to subgrantees and implemented a rigorous monitoring process to ensure that SRCL subgrant funds are used to support effective literacy instruction, specifically through the following:
   a. *State leadership activities—technical assistance/training:* Subgrantees receive high-quality technical assistance from state grantee.
   b. *State leadership activities—subgrantee monitoring:* State grantees monitor subgrantees to inform continuous improvement in program implementation and outcomes.

4. **Data-Based Decision-Making:** Demonstration that grantee collects, analyzes, and uses high-quality and timely data, especially on program participant outcomes, to improve instructional practices, policies, and student outcomes in early learning programs and in schools.

5. **Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Measures:** Demonstration of improvement on the GPRA measures as set out in the "Performance Measures" section of the SRCL application, to the extent such data are available. Specifically looks for the following:
   a. Percentage of participating four-year-old children who achieve significant gains in oral language skills;
   b. Percentage of participating 5th grade students who meet or exceed proficiency on state English language arts assessments under section 1111(b)(3) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA);

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[6] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education Academic Improvement and Teacher Quality Programs. (2011). Application for New Grants Under the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program (CFDA 94.371C). Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/programs/strivingreaders-literacy/2011.371c.doc.

c. Percentage of participating 8th grade students who meet or exceed proficiency on state English language arts assessments under section 1111(b)(3) of the ESEA; and

d. Percentage of participating high school students who meet or exceed proficiency on state English language arts assessments under section 1111(b)(3) of the ESEA.

The subsequent sections walk through each performance indicator (see Figure 3), document associated evidence, and highlight implementation successes, knowledge gaps, and areas where additional enhancements or further inquiry is required.

Figure 3. Georgia's SRCL Performance at a Glance
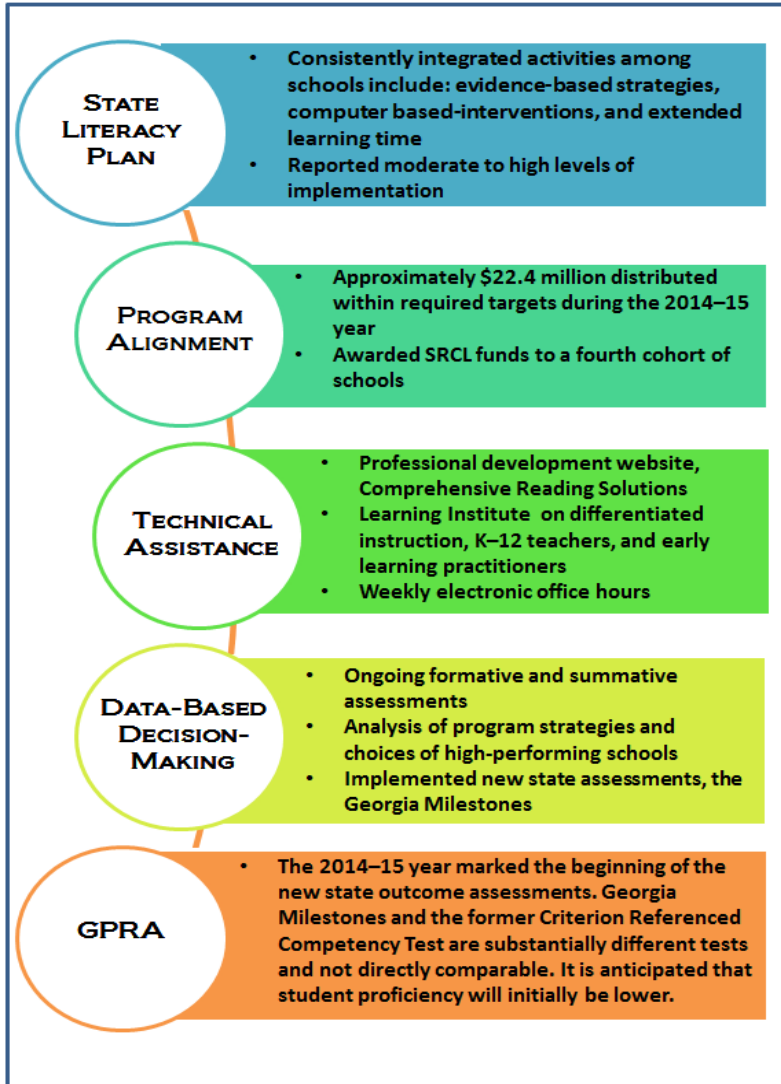
Performance Indicator 1: State Literacy Plan

During the 2014–15 year, Georgia took steps to implement activities from the state's comprehensive literacy plan, including the alignment of policies, resources, and practices and the establishment of high expectations for all students. This primarily included the awarding of a fourth cohort of SRCL subgrantees, the development of school literacy plans and performance plans, professional learning and technical assistance, and ongoing program monitoring.[7]

Subgrantees implemented SRCL activities through the development of local school literacy plans aligned to the state's plan (see Box 1). This process begins with the development of a school-based literacy team that completes the SRCL needs assessment to determine areas in need of improvement. In this way, strategies and programs are individualized to the needs of the subgrantees.

Grade-level leaders in participating SRCL schools completed a survey that assessed the program and strategies used during whole class, small group, and/or intervention time. Program and strategy choices that appear to be most consistently integrated across SRCL schools and grade levels included

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[7] Ongoing professional learning activities, technical assistance, and program monitoring are discussed in more detail under Performance Indicator 3: Technical Assistance.

implementing evidence-based strategies (particularly those provided through the Comprehensive Reading Solutions website), the use of computer based-interventions for reading and writing, and the practice of extended learning time in literacy activities. These practices tended to be consistently implemented in early learning sites and elementary schools. Early learning sites and elementary schools also reported consistently integrating core and phonics programs in literacy, interactive read-alouds, and formal guided reading activities.

Box 1. Creating a School Literacy Plan

Subgrantees are required to submit a strong school literacy plan that infuses high-quality literacy instruction in all content areas. Building on foundations of rigorous standards and effective practices for producing successful readers and writers, subgrantees must demonstrate how they will implement six building blocks of effective literacy instruction:

1. **Engaged leadership:** Leaders create a plan for shared leadership and a plan for organizing, implementing, and sustaining an effective approach to literacy.
2. **Continuity of care and instruction:** An early childhood coalition for literacy through which professionals from many organizations affecting young children and other stakeholders may meet to learn from and support one another is active.
3. **Ongoing formative and summative assessments:** The infrastructure is in place for full implementation of screening and diagnostic assessments to adjust interventions to meet the needs of children and students and determine their effectiveness.
4. **Best practices in literacy instruction:** Instruction is clearly and consistently aligned with Georgia Early Literacy Standards, Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, and Learning Standards for Georgia Pre-Kindergarten.
5. **Systems of tiered intervention:** Infrastructure is in place for a system of tiered intervention based on screening and guided by progress monitoring.
6. **Professional learning and resources:** Community partners and in-service personnel receive professional development on early literacy.

In addition to awareness sessions and individualized assistance from SRCL staff, subgrantees receive several planning documents to aid in the completion of a school literacy plan. These include:

- The **"What"** lists what communities and schools will need to have in place to provide children and students with access to a lifetime of literacy.
- The **"How"** provides communities and schools with direction on how to implement the six building blocks.
- The **"Why"** synthesizes current research and recommendations from Georgia's Literacy Task Force
- The **"Needs Assessment"** provides a way to assess the current level of implementation.
- The **"Template"** helps organize the plan and ensures that the plan addresses all building blocks and action items.

All planning documents can be found on the GaDOE SRCL website (https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/Literacy-Reading.aspx).

Georgia also noted taking steps to improve the ability of the state literacy plan to address student literacy needs, including student subgroups, and set clear instructional goals. For example, preliminary planning, conducted in collaboration with the Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction for GaDOE, is under way to revise the state literacy plan. Additionally, Georgia monitors the level of implementation across subgrantees through a survey of SRCL teachers designed to assess six different categories of the state literacy plan. These include leadership engagement, continuity of instruction, ongoing formative and summative assessments, best practices in literacy instruction, a tiered intervention system for all students, and professional learning. Respondents report levels of implementation on a six-point scale from "not addressed" to "fully operational," and composite scores are then created and analyzed to inform a comprehensive picture of the Georgia literacy plan. During the 2014–15 academic year, Georgia reported moderate to high levels of implementation across all categories and grade levels. However, similar to the programs and strategies survey, higher levels of implementation were found for early learning sites and elementary schools. For example, elementary schools reported significantly higher levels of implementation in leadership engagement, continuity of instruction, use of best practices in literacy instruction, a tiered intervention system, and professional development.

Performance Indicator 2: Federal and State Program Alignment

GaDOE holds an annual subgrant competition to award funding to local communities and districts (see Box 2). The 2014–15 year marks the start of a fourth cohort of SRCL schools. Subgrantee funding is determined on a per pupil basis based on the number of students in the awarded district and allocated according to the federal statute (i.e., grantees are required to distribute funds as follows: 15 percent for birth to 5 years, 40 percent for K–5, 40 percent for middle and high schools, and 5 percent for state activities). All funds are obligated when subgrants are approved by the Georgia State Board of Education; however, subgrants are made available for an approved performance period of

> *Subgrant applications are submitted into **Georgia's Fluid Review platform,** an online data management system. The online system allows for collaborative grant development and management and facilitates the applicant's workflow from application upload to managing grant development. Georgia provides face-to-face and online trainings with school and district leadership to discuss Fluid Review use and how to upload grant applications to the grant management platform.*

five years. For example, Cohort 4 subgrantees have until September 30, 2020, to draw down the portions of their grants. The Grants Accounting Department sets up individual accounts in the state portal from which all budgets are allocated, approved, and drawn from. Each school submits a detailed budget timeline and performance plan annually. During the 2014–15 year, Georgia retrofitted the invoice application process to view invoices for each purchase schools make with SRCL funds. This made it possible for subgrantees to manage multiple schools and cohorts within each age/grade band and for district and SRCL staff to approve budgets and monitor drawdowns.

Box 2. Georgia's Annual SRCL Grant Competition

GaDOE holds an annual subgrant competition to award SRCL funding. After eligibility is determined and superintendents contacted, awareness sessions are scheduled throughout the state. Districts then have three to four months to complete their grant application. Once applications have been submitted to Georgia's Fluid Review platform, an online data management system, program staff assigns them to a review panel. Each application receives five scores, with the highest and lowest dropped and a mean calculated. An expert panel reviews and scores the applications by following a detailed rubric, which includes:

- **District Management Plan and Key Personnel (5 points)** clearly details key personnel's understanding of the goals, objectives, and implementation of the proposed plan.
- **Experience of the Applicant (5 points)** demonstrates ability to adequately administer funding.
- **Needs Assessment, Concerns, and Root Cause Analysis (10 points)** describes the needs assessment process, which includes all content and ancillary teachers and disaggregated and identified specific age/grade/content levels, and identifies areas of concern.
- **Scientific, Evidence-Based Literacy Plan (20 points)** explicitly incorporates and references the research in the "Why" document and utilizes the "What" and "How" documents to develop an implementable plan (see Box 1).
- **Analysis and Identification of Student and Teacher Data (10 points)** documents assessment data that are used to develop goals and objectives, provides for disaggregation of data, identifies strengths and weakness, includes data for all teachers, and addresses teacher participation and retention.
- **Project Plan—Procedures, Goals, Objectives, and Support (10 points)** relates directly to identified needs, measures goals and objectives, provides a response to intervention model, considers practices already in place, details a sample schedule, and references research-based practices.
- **Assessment/Data Analysis Plan (10 points)** provides a comparison of the current assessment protocol with the proposed SRCL assessment plan, a brief narrative detailing how the new assessments will be implemented, and a list of professional learning for teachers.
- **Resources, Strategies, and Materials (Existing and Proposed) Including Technology to Support the Literacy Plan (10 Points)** is clearly aligned with the state literacy plan and demonstrates how any proposed technology purchase supports response to intervention, student engagement, instructional practices, writing, etc.
- **Professional Learning Strategies Identified on the Basis of Documented Needs (15 Points)** is targeted to state goals and objectives, and effectiveness is measured.
- **Sustainability Plan (5 Points)** details a clear plan for extending professional learning beyond the grant, sustaining technology implemented, and expanding lessons learned through SRCL to other schools and/or teachers.

Scores are combined within districts to calculate a district score, with the highest scores in each of the subgroups receiving a grant. Subgroups include large systems (more than 45,00 students), mid-sized systems (more than 10,000 students), and small systems (fewer than 10,000 students).

During the 2014–15 school year, GaDOE distributed $22,367,412 in grant funds (see Figure 4). LEAs or other nonprofit providers of early childhood education serving children from birth to age 5 received 15 percent of these funds ($3,355,112). Kindergarten through grade 5 received 40 percent ($8,946,965).

Middle schools and high schools received 40 percent ($8,946,965) divided equally. State leadership activities received the remaining 5 percent ($1,118,371).

Figure 4. Georgia Allocated Funds According to Program Requirements in 2014-15
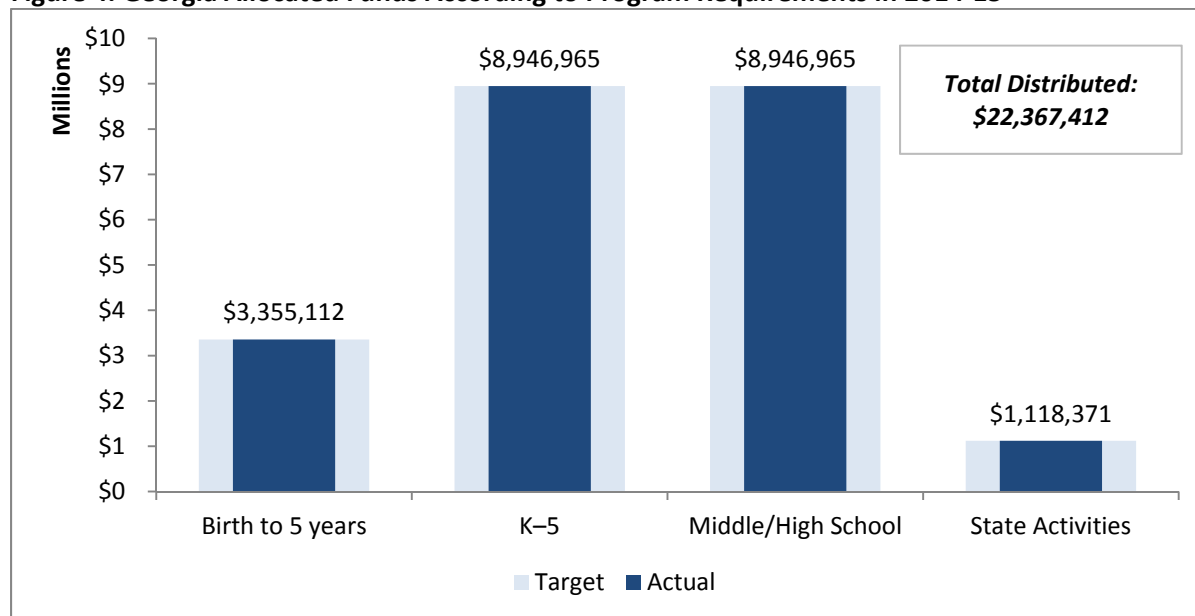
Note: Grant targets for distribution of funds were as follows: 15 percent for birth to 5 years, 40 percent for K–5, 40 percent for middle and high schools, and 5 percent for state activities.
Source: Georgia Office of Public Instruction Annual Performance Report FY 2014 Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Annual Performance Report.

An important aspect of Georgia's SRCL program is the coordination and alignment with other divisions, state agencies, and education organizations throughout the state and nation. In this effort, program staff serve on several steering committees and make presentations at conferences and meetings throughout the year. For example, the SRCL program manager serves in the "Get Georgia Reading Cabinet" along with members of the Governor's Office, the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, the Department of Early Care and Learning, the Family Connection Partnership, the Department of Health, the Department of Juvenile Justice, and other leaders from the nonprofit sector. This campaign is part of the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, and sessions are open to the public. SRCL program staff also make biannual presentations to the Georgia State Board of Education, which include updates on performance data, program monitoring, and program successes.

Performance Indicator 3: Technical Assistance

During the 2014–15 school year, GaDOE provided technical assistance to subgrantees through online learning modules, routine meetings, onsite professional development, and literacy institutes for administrators and teachers. For example, Georgia provides free access to online literacy professional learning modules through a website called Comprehensive Reading Solutions[8] (see Box 3). Established through SRCL grant funding, Comprehensive Reading Solutions provides an evidence-based literacy

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[8] http://www.comprehensivereadingsolutions.com/

program with separate modules for different grade levels, strategies to address differentiation of instruction, and a focus on reading and writing. The professional learning modules are open to all teachers (SRCL and non-SRCL) and provide access to numerous literacy resources.

Box 3. Comprehensive Reading Solutions

Comprehensive Reading Solutions, in collaboration with the SRCL program, has provided online professional learning modules for literacy instruction from birth through grade 12. On this website, teachers can learn from open-access professional readings and multimedia resources, and they can download and implement lesson plans. This free, evidence-based comprehensive reading program empowers schools to provide text-rich curriculum for any class of students.

To date, over 65 professional learning modules have been developed and made available for free to all who support literacy instruction. Sample topics in the modules include Assessment, Language and Literacy Development, Building Basic Skills, Strategies for Student Reading, and Teaching Vocabulary and Writing. Modules provide introductions and overviews and are geared to specific grade levels (i.e., birth to pre-K, kindergarten to grade 5, and grades 6 through 12). The modules may be used independently, in a study group, or within a professional learning community. They offer teachers access to evidence-based information about reading and writing development, instruction, and assessment.

A steadily increasing number of teachers in Georgia and elsewhere have accessed the professional learning modules developed through SRCL funding. There have been 68,000 repeat users to the site, which has been accessed in over 168 countries.

Weekly electronic office hours, using Adobe Connect, are also held throughout the school year for all K–12 content teachers, leaders, and administrators. These meetings give attendees the opportunity to ask questions about research, instruction, and/or assessments and to obtain responses and resources from SRCL professional development architects. Additionally, program staff and several practitioners from earlier cohorts hosted leadership training for new subgrantees (i.e., those in Cohort 4). Held in March 2015, the Cohort 4 leadership training provided a two-day kickoff meeting for new leaders.

Implementation field coordinators work closely with district and school personnel. Through bimonthly visits, field coordinators provide in-class coaching, teacher observations, and debriefings, and they model effective literacy strategies. Field coordinators also assist teachers in organizing classroom space and environment, as well as aid in the co-planning of literacy instruction for a variety of student needs.

Georgia also facilitated several learning institutes throughout the year. In January 2015, differentiation institutes were held in three regional locations for teachers in kindergarten to grade 5. Differentiation institutes focused on using knowledge of students and grade-level expectations to inform what is taught, along with evidence-based practices to inform how teachers taught. In June 2015, two summer teacher institutes were held to support teachers in kindergarten through grade 12. This conference was designated for teachers in all content areas. Lastly, in July 2015, two professional learning institutes targeted new and returning teachers of children from birth to grade 5. Institutes were open to both project sites and schools not receiving SRCL funding.

Georgia reviews program implementation through monitoring visits, at least once per year but as much as once a quarter if needed. During the monitoring visit, annual performance plans are reviewed with key school staff to determine implementation compliance. Additionally, all grade-level teams within each school complete a survey to discuss their program choices and grant implementation. Universal screening data are also analyzed to see how they are being used to influence and differentiate instruction. Classrooms and professional learning sessions are also observed, when possible, with corresponding debriefings and discussions with appropriate staff.

> *During the 2014–15 school year, Georgia coordinated the uploading of universal screening data into the student information data system. For many teachers, this was the first opportunity to see universal screening data that were not attached to an outcome measure.*

Performance Indicator 4: Data-Based Decision-Making

To evaluate the SRCL program's impact on student literacy achievement, Georgia employs data from a variety of screening and assessment tools (see Table 1). Participating preschools used the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) during the fall and spring to measure oral language skills. Participating elementary, middle, and high schools collected data from the Dynamic Assessment of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). To measure foundational reading skills, Georgia reviewed DIBELS composite scores (kindergarten), nonsense word fluency (grade 1), and oral reading fluency for children (grades 2–5). SRI was used as a measure of reading comprehension and collected for grades 3 through 12. DIBELS and SRI were administered at three points throughout the year (fall, winter, and spring).

Table 1. Georgia's Assessment Activities

Type	Grade Level Served	Performance Measures/Data Collections
Assessment	Pre-K	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)
Assessment	3-8	Georgia Milestones End-of-Grade Assessment
Assessment	9–12	Georgia Milestones End-of-Course Assessment
Assessment	K–12	Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs)
Universal Screening	K–5	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)
Universal Screening	3–12	Scholastic Reading Inventory

Source: Georgia Department of Education. http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/default.aspx.

The 2014–15 year marked the beginning of a new state outcome assessment, Georgia Milestones (see Box 4). The new assessments set higher expectations for students, are better aligned to Georgia standards, and are more sensitive to student growth.

Box 4. Georgia Milestones

With the implementation of the Georgia Milestones Assessment System, Georgia has developed four achievement levels to describe student mastery and command of the knowledge and skills outlined in its content standards. Achievement levels give meaning and context to scale scores by describing the knowledge and skills students must demonstrate to achieve a level.

The four achievement levels in the Georgia Milestones are:
1. **Beginning Learners:** Beginning learners do not yet demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia's content standards. The students need substantial academic support to be prepared for the next grade level or course and to be on track for college and career readiness.
2. **Developing Learners:** Developing learners demonstrate partial proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia's content standards. The students need additional academic support to ensure success in the next grade level or course and to be on track for college and career readiness.
3. **Proficient Learners:** Proficient learners demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia's content standards. The students are prepared for the next grade level or course and are on track for college and career readiness.
4. **Distinguished Learners:** Distinguished learners demonstrate advanced proficiency in the knowledge and skills necessary at this grade level/course of learning, as specified in Georgia's content standards. The students are well prepared for the next grade level or course and are well prepared for college and career readiness.

In addition to multiple choice items, Georgia Milestones includes constructed response and extended response items, which require students to generate, rather than select, responses. The system also assesses writing at each grade level/course.

In an attempt to detect themes related to substantial classwide growth in reading comprehension, Georgia identifies schools that have experienced exceptional growth (i.e., schools where at least 70 percent of the students meet or exceed growth expectation in comprehension) and examines the strategies and program choices in use. During the 2014–15 school year, 26 elementary schools, 13 middle schools, and 7 high schools were identified as "high growth." Analysis of these high-growth schools investigated what changes had been made, what successes were noticed, and what program choices the schools had made. Master themes and commonalities were identified across sites to formulate and share valuable knowledge and foundation pieces suggestive of school improvement (see Box 5).

Performance Indicator 5: Government Performance and Results Act Performance Measures

The 2014–15 school year marked the beginning of a new state outcome assessment system in Georgia. Georgia Milestones scores officially replaced the former Criterion Referenced Competency Test scores as a measure of student achievement. Georgia Milestones and the Criterion Referenced Competency Test are **substantially different tests**, with **different expectations** set for student achievement, and are **not directly comparable**. As expectations for student performance on the Georgia Milestones are higher, it was anticipated that the percentage of students considered proficient in reading would initially be lower. This change in assessment directly affects the percentage of 5th, 8th, and high school grade students who meet or exceed proficiency in reading.

The percentage of four-year-olds achieving significant gains[9] in oral language skills is based on PPVT scores and was unaffected by the change in state outcome assessments. However, on closer inspection of the 2012–13 data for four-year-olds, GaDOE detected a discrepancy in how the 2012–13 data were reported. Rather than being based on significant gains from fall to spring assessments, the 2012–13 assessment data stem solely from the percentage of four-year-olds scoring proficient during the fall assessment.

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[9] Significant gains is defined in terms of a treatment effect size, which calculates gains as standard deviation units. An effect size of .20 standard deviations or greater in addition to the expected developmental gains based on a child's age will be considered "significant."

Oral Language Skills Outcomes

During the 2014–15 school year, 14 percent of all four-year-old children in SRCL schools showed significant gains in oral language skills from fall to spring (see Figure 5). However, the higher percentages of four-year-old disadvantaged children (19 percent), children with limited English proficiency (16 percent), and children with disabilities (21 percent) showed significant gains. These findings may suggest that SRCL efforts have been more effective for at-risk children.

Figure 5. Percentage of SRCL Four-Year-Olds Achieving Significant Gains in Oral Language Skills, 2012–15[1]
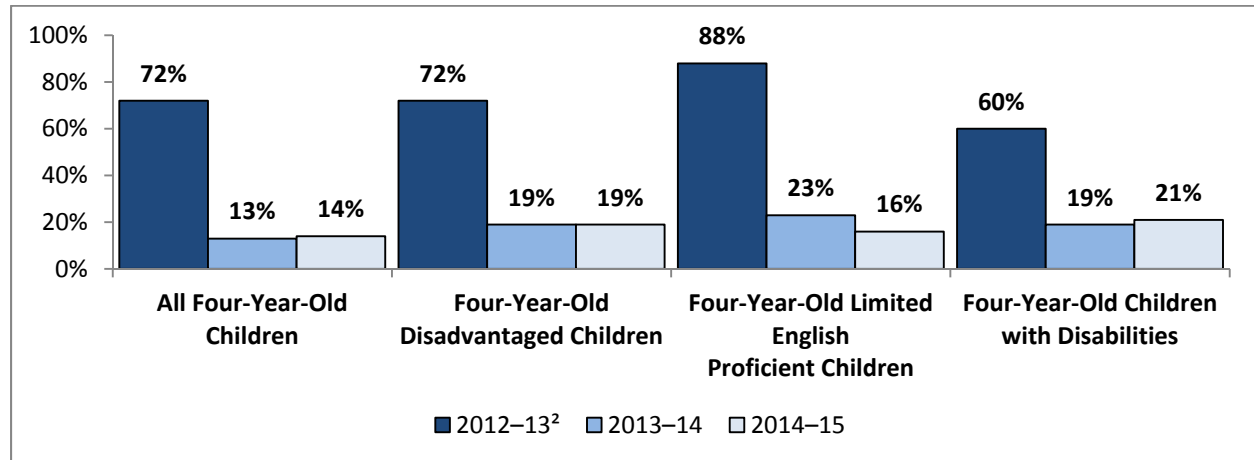
Note: Data for four-year-olds for the 2011–12 school year were not available. ED*Facts* does not collect data on four-year-olds' oral language skills, nor were these data available through grantee annual performance reporting.
[1] The percentage of four-year-olds achieving significant gains is based on all students participating during 2012–15, regardless of cohort.
[2] GaDOE detected a discrepancy in how the 2012–13 data were reported. Rather than being based on significant gains from fall to spring assessments, 2012–13 assessment data stem solely from the percentage of four-year-olds scoring proficient during the fall assessment.
Source: Georgia Department of Education. Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Annual Performance Reports FY 2012, FY 2013, and FY 2014, Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Annual Performance Report, Section A—Performance Objectives Information and Related Performance Measures: Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Objectives and Performance Measures.

Reading Proficiency Outcomes

Figure 6 presents the percentage of 5th, 8th, and high school grade students scoring proficient or above in reading for the 2011–12, 2012–13, 2013–14, and 2014–15 school years. As noted earlier, the 2014–15 year introduced the Georgia Milestones assessments as a measure of student proficiency in reading, which is not directly comparable with the Criterion Referenced Competency Test previously used. Criterion Referenced Competency Test scores are included only for historical purposes and not for direct comparison or trend analysis purposes. During the 2014–15 school year, 29 percent of 5th grade students, 32 percent of 8th grade students, and 27 percent of high school students met or exceeded proficiency on the Georgia Milestones reading assessments. As this was the first year the Georgia Milestones assessments were used, disaggregated results for disadvantaged students, limited English proficient students, and students with disabilities were unavailable at the time of this report.

Figure 6. Percentage of SRCL 5th Grade, 8th Grade, and High School Students Scoring Proficient in Reading, 2011–15[1]
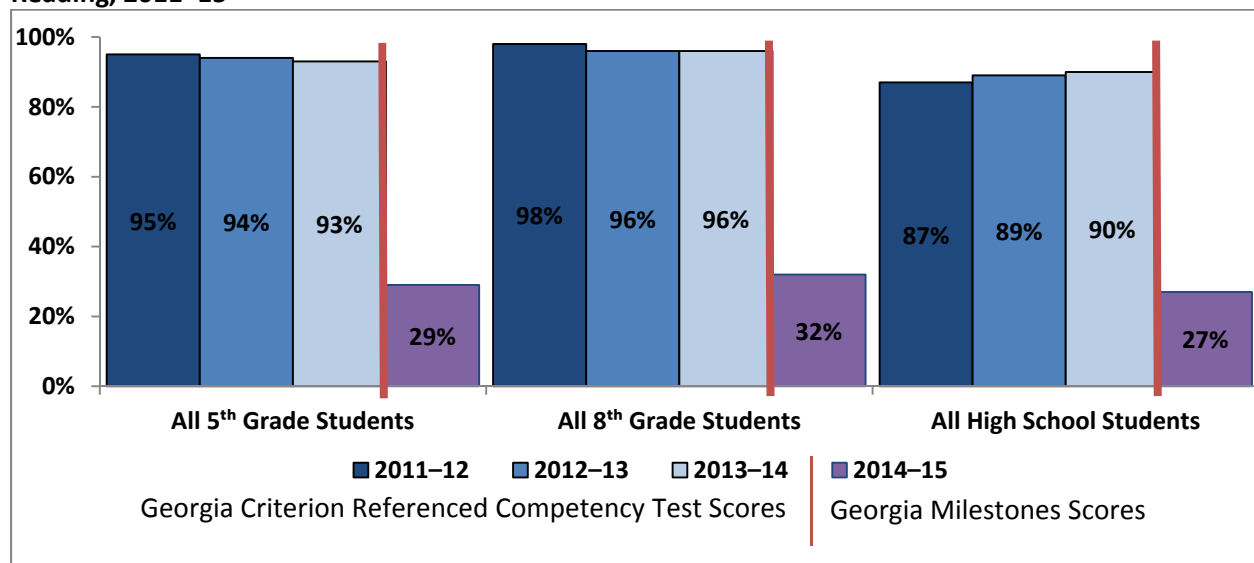
Notes: Georgia Milestones and the former Criterion Referenced Competency Test are substantially different tests and are not directly comparable.

Grantees were not required to submit reading proficiencies for the 2011–12 school year. Instead, the 2011–12 data were obtained from the U.S. Department of Education ED*Facts* initiative.

[1] The percentage of 5th grade, 8th grade, and high school students scoring proficient is based on all students participating during 2012–15, regardless of cohort.

Sources: Georgia Department of Education. Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Annual Performance Reports FY 2012, FY 2013, and FY 2014, Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Annual Performance Report, Section A—Performance Objectives Information and Related Performance Measures: Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Objectives and Performance Measures.

U.S. Department of Education. (2014). ED*Facts*: SY 2011–12 Reading/Language Arts Assessment Results, Washington, DC.

IV.   Sustainability of SRCL Activities

As part of a comprehensive technical assistance effort provided to SRCL grantees, State Education Agency (SEA) SRCL project directors and teams of key stakeholders engaged in sustainability planning. The goal of this planning process was for each SEA SRCL team to create a comprehensive sustainability plan focused on the SRCL reforms that produce gains in student achievement, based on evidence and the conditions needed to ensure that these reforms "stick" beyond the SRCL grant period, despite any changes in the internal and external environment.

The Georgia Department of Education's (GaDOE) SRCL team and a diverse group of literacy leaders from across the state led the development of the SRCL Sustainability Plan for GaDOE's SRCL project, during a two-day SRCL TA sustainability planning session with other SRCL SEA grantees. The sustainability plan identifies goals; key SRCL priority reforms to be sustained beyond the grant period; focus areas, or conditions to support the key reforms; strategies and champions; and metrics for measuring progress.

The key SRCL reforms identified in the GaDOE Sustainability Plan include literacy planning documents, universal screeners and diagnostics; and professional learning resources, including Comprehensive Reading Solutions (CRS), online professional development lessons for birth to grade 12 aligned to GaDOE's State Literacy Plan. GaDOE's overarching goal for sustainability is to create broad support and alignment among GaDOE and other state agencies in Georgia, including the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), Professional Standards Commission (PSC), and the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), to support capacity-building and learning in districts across the state to increase achievement of literacy outcomes.

To ensure the sustainability and extended use of literacy planning documents beyond SRCL grantees, GaDOE intends to develop broad public support, build capacity within the Agency and districts, and further refine these tools. The long-term goal for sustaining this SRCL reform is statewide consistent use of common literacy planning documents. GaDOE plans to achieve this goal by aligning the work of GaDOE and other state agencies to support literacy plan development, implementation, monitoring, and training.

To ensure that the universal screeners and diagnostic assessments tool created through SCRL are sustained beyond the grant period, GaDOE will develop a comprehensive plan for the design and delivery of these tools, including: integration of universal SRCL data into the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), creating a literacy dashboard, designing and implementing a protocol to capture assessment practices from SRCL districts, communicating the power and purpose of universal screens, and showing districts how to replace or reduce student learning objectives with screeners. GaDOE's vision for the sustainability of these tools is for the consistent use of a protocol for implementing common universal screening and diagnostic tools and effective use of data to inform practice.

Finally, GaDOE plans to build broad public support and capacity within the Agency and districts to sustain professional learning resources, including CRS, in an effort to achieve its long-term goal for professional resources to be nested in a user-friendly online website with open access for all teachers. To make this happen, GaDOE will do a comprehensive analysis of professional resources, build

additional courses as needed, align the resources to Get Georgia Reading Pillars, and align assessment tools a landscape analysis of tools used across GaDOE.

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Appendix A: Detailed Tables for SRCL-Funded Schools

Table A1. Georgia SRCL Demographic Characteristics: 2014–15

Number of Districts and Schools	
Total Number of Districts	36
Total Number of Schools and Pre-K Centers	256
Number and Percentage of Schools by Level	
Pre-K (Birth to 5 years)	25 (9.8%)
Elementary (K–5)	148 (57.8%)
Middle (6–8)	47 (18.4%)
High (9–12)	36 (14.1%)
Number and Percentage of Total K–12 Students by Disadvantaged Populations	
All Students	170,560
Disadvantaged Students	137,324 (80.5%)
Students with Disabilities	21,507 (12.6%)
Limited English Proficiency	11,374 (6.7%)

Note: Georgia uses the free/reduced meal rate to define disadvantaged students (i.e., economically disadvantaged). Percentages do not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.
Source: Georgia Office of Public Instruction Annual Performance Report FY 2014 Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Annual Performance Report.

Table A2. Georgia SRCL Student Performance Measures for Disadvantaged Students,[1] Limited English Proficient Students, and Students with Disabilities, by Four-Year-Olds, Grade 5, Grade 8, and High School: 2011–15

	2011–12		2012–13[2]		2013–14		2014–15[3]	
	n	Percent Proficient	n	Percent Proficient	n	Percent Proficient	n	Percent Proficient
Four-Year-Olds	†	†	596	72	2,132	13	**5,263**	**14**
Disadvantaged Children	†	†	456	72	890	19	1,869	19
Limited English Proficient Children	†	†	104	88	193	23	413	16
Children with Disabilities	†	†	47	60	86	19	219	21
Grade 5	6,291	95	10,544	94	6,187	93	**11,412**	**29**
Disadvantaged Students	4,639	94	5,906	90	4,651	91	†	†
Limited English Proficient Students	412	94	353	76	458	88	†	†
Students with Disabilities	809	83	1,452	78	750	77	†	†
Grade 8	6,095	98	10,578	96	6,013	96	**10,188**	**32**
Disadvantaged Students	4,203	97	5,619	93	4,224	96	†	†
Limited English Proficient Students	143	90–94‡	238	81	205	89	†	†
Students with Disabilities	706	88	1,102	88	600	79	†	†
High School	4,953	87	20,778	89	9,404	90	**7,231**	**27**
Disadvantaged Students	3,058	84	9,789	82	5,973	87	†	†
Limited English Proficient Students	80	65–69‡	343	57	115	47	†	†
Students with Disabilities	444	56	1,895	56	838	52	†	†

Note: Grantees were not required to submit reading proficiencies for the 2011–12 school year. Instead, the 2011–12 data were obtained from the U.S. Department of Education ED*Facts* initiative.

[1] Georgia uses the free/reduced meal rate to define disadvantaged students (i.e., economically disadvantaged).

[2] GaDOE detected a discrepancy in how the 2012–13 data were reported. Rather than being based on significant gains from fall to spring assessments, 2012–13 assessment data stem solely from the percentage of four-year-olds scoring proficient during the fall assessment.

[3] The 2014–15 school year marked the beginning of a new state outcome assessment system in Georgia. Georgia Milestones scores officially replaced the Criterion Referenced Competency Test scores as a measure of student achievement. Georgia Milestones and the Criterion Referenced Competency Tests are substantially different tests, with different expectations set for student achievement, and are not directly comparable.

† Data not available. ED*Facts* does not collect data on four-year-olds' oral language skills, nor were these data available through grantee annual performance reporting. As this was the first year the Georgia Milestones assessments were used, disaggregated results for disadvantaged students, limited English proficient students, and students with disabilities were unavailable at the time of this report.

‡ 2011–12 ED*Facts* data for medium-sized groups (i.e., fewer than 200 students in a cell for the "All Students, All Grades" category and fewer than 300 for all other categories) are reported as a range, to protect against the ability to determine personally identifiable information on students.

Sources: Georgia Department of Education. Annual Performance Reports FY 2012, FY 2013, and FY 2014, Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Annual Performance Report, Section A—Performance Objectives Information and Related Performance Measures: Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Objectives and Performance Measures.

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