

Executive Summary of the Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program Implementation Analysis 2019–2020

Conducted by the RC6 at SERVE Center, SREB, and the GaDOE (Full report: region6cc.uncc.edu/resources/)

The Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program

In 2019 the Georgia Assembly passed [Senate Bill 48](#) (S.B. 48) into law. S.B. 48 requires local school systems to screen all kindergarten students, and certain students in grades 1-3, for characteristics of dyslexia beginning in 2024-25.

To prepare for this statewide mandate in 2024, the bill requires the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) to conduct a three-year Dyslexia Pilot Program (2020-2023) including at least three school districts (see timeline below). Pilot requirements include:

- > Screen all kindergarten students for characteristics of dyslexia.
- > Screen certain at-risk students in grades 1-3 for characteristics of dyslexia.
- > Provide reading intervention for and track progress of students with characteristics of dyslexia.
- > Obtain parent consent for students to participate in the pilot.
- > Report pilot data to the GaDOE.



Pilot Districts

Districts applied to the GaDOE in 2019 to participate in the Dyslexia Pilot Program.

September 2020 Participating Dyslexia Pilot Districts		
District	Location	Student Enrollment (2019-2020)
Charlton County Schools	South Georgia (Rural)	1,628
City Schools of Decatur	Atlanta (Urban)	5,540
DeKalb County Schools	Atlanta (Urban)	98,957
Jackson County Schools	Near Athens (Non-Rural)	7,621
Marietta City Schools	Atlanta (Urban)	8,624
Muscogee County Schools	Columbus (Non-Rural)	30,756
Ware County Schools	South Georgia (Rural)	5,809

State Efforts to Support Implementation

In 2019-20, the GaDOE’s efforts to support implementation of S.B. 48 included the following:

- > Established a GaDOE Dyslexia Pilot Program leadership team and contracted with a consultant to provide hands-on support for the pilot districts.
- > Created a Dyslexia Informational Handbook to guide district efforts.
- > Ensured district access to digital resources on Georgia’s Tiered System of Supports for Students (otherwise known as MTSS), the state’s preventive framework to improve performance outcomes of all learners.
- > Provided pilot districts with supports for reporting within the state’s longitudinal data system.
- > Partnered with the Region 6 Comprehensive Center to provide various informational resources.
- > Facilitated virtual and in-person communication between participating districts.
- > Provided professional learning opportunities to the pilot districts.

District Efforts to Plan for the First Year of Pilot Implementation

The following information about implementation plans was collected through interviews with the pilot districts in June 2020.

Screening

S.B. 48 requires that all kindergartners and at-risk students in grades 1-3 be screened to identify characteristics of dyslexia. At the time of the interviews many pilot districts were still making decisions about the screening tools they would use.

Screening Overall	Most Common Screening Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most of the pilot districts planned to continue using their existing universal reading screening tools. Some also planned to use an additional tool. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) MAP (Measures of Academic Progress)

Interventions

S.B. 48 requires that pilot districts provide students who are identified through screening as having characteristics of dyslexia with an International Dyslexia Association (IDA)-approved reading program/intervention(s) staffed by teachers trained in structured literacy. At the time of the interviews, plans for particular programs/interventions varied among the pilot districts.

Multiple Interventions	Types of Interventions
All but two districts planned to use multiple interventions — as many as 10 or more (to provide schools choices).	Interventions mostly consisted of commercial programs. Some might be considered multisensory language programs appropriate for students with dyslexia and other specialized needs; others might not.

Progress Monitoring and Data Use

S.B. 48 requires that pilot districts administer regular assessments to monitor students receiving intervention. At the time of the interviews most pilot districts were still deciding how to conduct progress monitoring and use the data.

Progress Monitoring Tools	Data Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three districts planned to use data from DIBELS; others planned to use data from other tools. Three districts planned to organize data in Excel. One district planned to use the state’s MTSS-SLDS platform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection cycles varied from weekly to every six to eight weeks. Data analysis and decision-making cycles ranged from every three weeks to every 12 weeks. One district’s MTSS staff planned weekly check-ins with teachers and school-level MTSS staff.

Approaches to Implementation

S.B. 48 gave pilot districts flexibility to determine goals and an implementation design that best fit their local contexts. Pilot districts’ approaches to involving schools in implementation varied.

Number of Schools Involved	Staffing	Related Efforts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three districts started with three schools and planned to add more. Two districts began in all elementary schools. One district began with one school and planned to expand. One district was still planning its approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All seven districts planned for district and school staff to work together. One district funded additional staff. Most districts planned to rely on existing staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four districts were receiving support for MTSS implementation through Georgia’s State Personnel Development Grant. Two districts had MTSS models that will support the pilot in place. Several districts had related professional learning initiatives.

Monitoring Implementation

S.B. 48 requires pilot districts to report data about the operation and results of the pilot program to the GaDOE and requires the GaDOE to submit a report to legislators by December 1, 2022. While not required by S.B. 48, a few districts described plans to monitor their implementation of the pilot:

- > Two districts had a project management process and one district planned to use a self-assessment rubric.
- > Other districts described informal procedures: meeting periodically as a team and reviewing feedback, classroom walkthroughs, using the GaDOE’s teacher and leader evaluation tools, and developing “look-fors.”

Challenges

Some districts described challenges they faced in implementing the pilot in 2020-21. For more information, see the full *Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program Implementation Analysis, 2019-2020*.

Challenges Related to COVID-19		Challenges in Building Educator and District Capacities	
Reopening Plans	Many of the pilot districts were not yet certain of their reopening plans or settings (virtual, hybrid, or in-person with a virtual option) for fall 2020.	Educator Capacity Areas of Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of Senate Bill 48’s requirements. • Recognizing dyslexia and understanding its impacts on students’ instructional needs. • Screening for reading difficulties and interpreting screening data. • Understanding of MTSS implementation, including how dyslexia screening and intervention fit into the MTSS model. • Identifying and securing appropriate intervention programs for students with characteristics of dyslexia. • Implementing interventions.
Screening	Regardless of how they began the year, all the pilot districts faced the challenge of conducting valid and reliable universal screening when some students were not in schools.		
Lack of Internet Access	Fast and reliable internet access was a particular challenge noted by rural districts.	District Capacity Areas of Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance for communicating with parents about aspects of the pilot. • A list of screening tools recommended by the GaDOE and/or assistance selecting appropriate screening tools.

For more information on the Georgia Dyslexia Pilot Program, please visit the program webpage: www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Dyslexia.aspx

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