

FISCAL YEAR 2023 RURAL EDUCATION FUND FINAL EVALUATION REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

The Georgia Foundation for Public Education (GFPE), the philanthropic arm of the Georgia’s Department of Education’s (GADOE), exists for the single purpose of supporting educational excellence for students in Georgia. Through donations, the foundation is able to fund a variety of projects, as well as serve as a channel for organizations to fund their vision.

One of the GFPE’s signature annual grant programs, the Rural Education Fund, provides traditional public schools, charter schools, and school districts located in counties with 35,000 or fewer residents up to \$10,000 to use however they wish to drive student outcomes. The Rural Education Fund is made possible through the purchase of the “Educator” and “Support Education” license plates by Georgia residents.

In 2022, GFPE awarded seven Rural Education Fund grants to Georgia schools and districts, totaling \$70,000. This year is the second that the GFPE provided up to \$10,000, rather than \$5,000 offered from 2018-2020. With the increased funding amount, awardees can offer more robust programing with the potential to impact more students. The grants focused on art and music education, STEAM programs, virtual reality experiences, literacy, and community service projects for high school students.

This report summarizes the final outcomes for the FY2023 Rural Education Fund grantees and presents evidence of impacts from grantees.

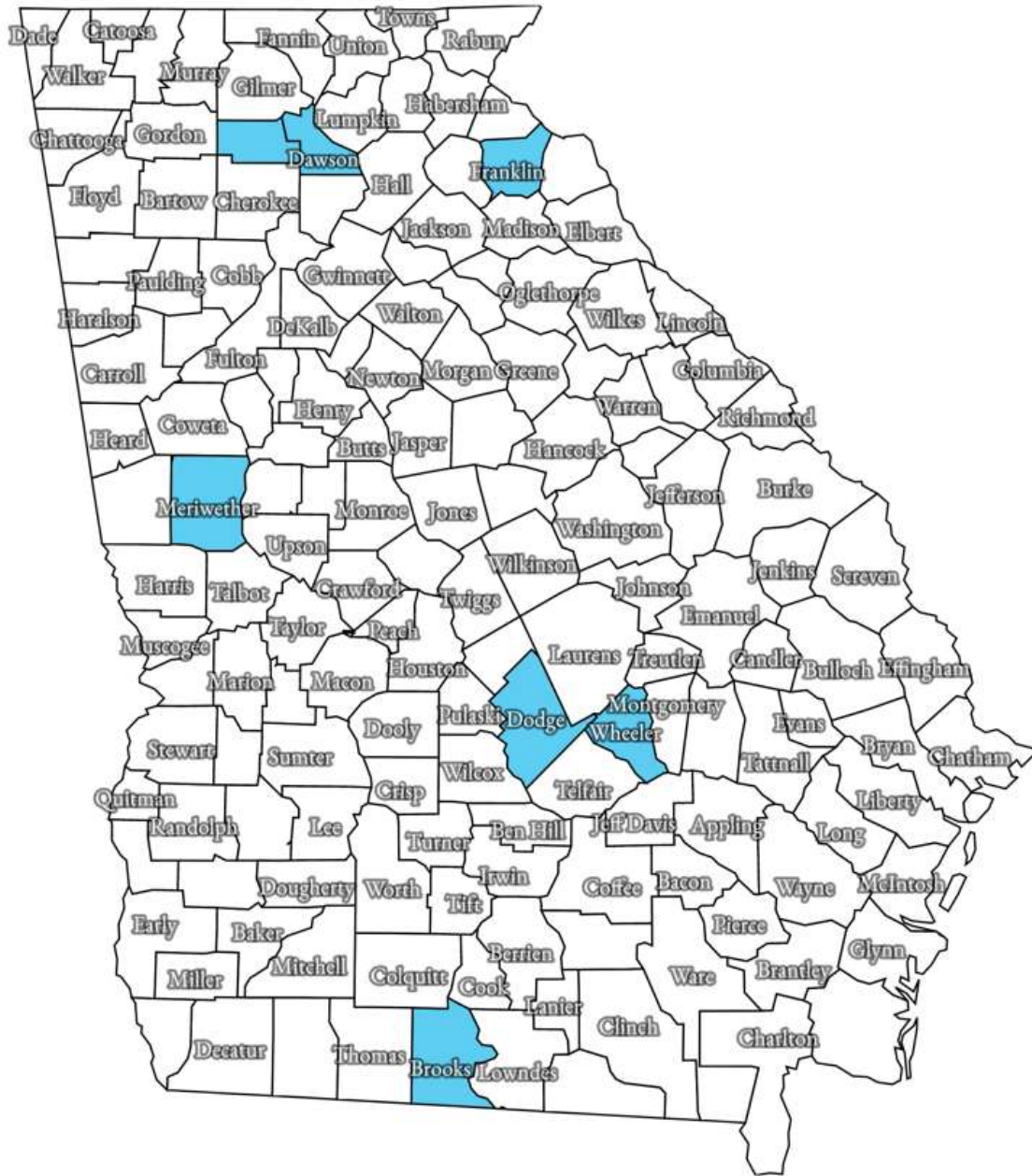
TABLE 1. FY23 RURAL EDUCATION FUND GRANTEES

- *Dawson County Schools, Dawson County, \$10,000*
- *Franklin County High School, Franklin County, \$10,000*
- *Quitman Elementary School, Brooks County Schools, Brooks County, \$10,000*
- *South Dodge Elementary School, Dodge County Schools, Dodge County, \$10,000*
- *Tate Elementary School, Pickens County Schools, Pickens County, \$10,000*
- *Wheeler County High School, Wheeler County Schools, Wheeler County, \$10,000*
- *Unity Elementary School, Meriwether County Schools, Meriwether County, \$10,000*



MAPPING THE FY23 RURAL EDUCATION FUND

GRANTS BY COUNTY



FY23 RURAL EDUCATION FUND IMPACTS

AT A GLANCE

9 Schools
Involved in
Programming

By mid-year, 5,023 students were IMPACTED by Rural Education Fund programs.

Impacts by Race/Ethnicity

White, 74%
African American, 14%
Latino, 7%
Asian, 1%
Native American, 1%
Other, 3%

55% of students impacted are identified as ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED

Of the students impacted, 49% are FEMALE and 51% are MALE

Impacts by Grade Band

Elementary School, 58%
Middle School, 17%
High School, 23%



SNAPSHOTS OF IMPACT

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

"High school art students can now use more advanced art materials to learn new techniques to broaden their foundation in art to increase their love and passion for the new technique to use...in post-graduate courses." – Dawson County Schools

"We were able to cover more material in class because less time was needed to repair and address issues with low-quality equipment. We also were able to cover more in detail how to maintain all instruments." – Franklin County High School

"I have seen an improvement in one of MY students' attitudes when dealing with conflicts since the beginning of our [agriculture club] meetings. I believe this has been impacted through her involvement in the club." – Quitman Elementary School of Brooks County

"Several of my students have expressed to me that they have enjoyed participating in the science experiments with manipulatives that were purchased with our grant funds. STEMscopes has math extension activities that the students can participate in during class. During Q2 2022 I had 46 out of 49 students who were able to pass my math class." – South Dodge Elementary School of Dodge County

"Choral tracks can be used for more independence in learning how to produce music appropriately giving students a more structured lesson to craft a skill to be more marketable after graduation in the field of music." – Dawson County Schools

"With the purchase of high-quality instruments, students were able to make better sounds and perform with more expression and technique compared to on their old instruments." – Franklin County High School

"45 out of 49 students passed the unit assessment for physical and chemical changes. Also, 47 out of 49 students passed the unit assessment for electricity and magnetism." – South Dodge Elementary School of Dodge County

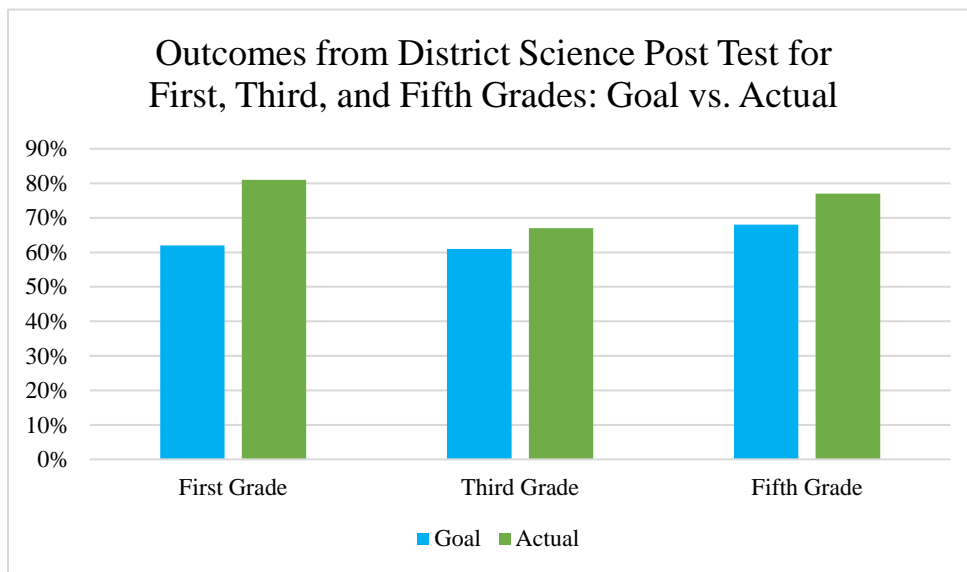
This is so cool!"
"I love being outside to learn."
"This is such a wonderful opportunity to get out in the sunshine and continue learning at the same time. I cannot wait to see students out there!" – Tate Elementary School of Pickens County

"Our virtual reality initiative will provide our students with the opportunity to explore learning spaces that are outside of our district's reach. For example, our students in the 21st Century Afterschool Program were able to visit museum art exhibits from around the world. This opportunity would not have been possible without virtual reality." – Unity Elementary School of Meriwether County

BROOKS COUNTY SCHOOLS, QUITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Quitman Elementary School students take agriculture education courses as part of their curriculum. In an effort to strengthen the agriculture curriculum, the school used the Rural Education Fund grant to build and maintain a pollinator garden for its bee colony. Through the pollinator garden, teachers can easily weave agriculture education into science content and teach additional concepts such as the reproduction of plants, other pollinators, and climate. The school partnered with several local organizations to effectively implement the garden, including the Farm Bureau and local Women's Committee. By the end of the grant year, the school reported the following:

- Five kindergarten classrooms raised butterflies from eggs to adults. At the end of the year, kindergarteners released 75 butterflies.
- Outcomes from District Science Post Test for First, Third, and Fifth Grades: Goal vs. Actual:



- The music department developed a plan to collaborate with the content teachers to explore how music may impact a plant's growth in the 2023-2024 academic year.

DAWSON COUNTY SCHOOLS

Dawson County Schools received a Rural Education Fund grant to support fine arts education across seven schools in the district. Specifically, the district was able to distribute the \$10,000 grant to music, art, and drama programs. Using the funding, the school music, art, and drama programs were able to purchase instruments and music software, art supplies, equipment, costumes, respectively. The grant gave students an opportunity to participate and thrive in fine arts programs, many of which have been underfunded at the district. Here were the outcomes at the end of the grant year:

- 3,787 students across seven schools benefited from the grant, as well as seven music teachers, seven art teachers, and two drama teachers.

- 79% of the grant recipients either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their students have improved academically due to the funding of resources received from the grant.
- 100% of the grant recipients either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that their students are more engaged based on the funding of resources received from the grant.
- Two out of three schools received four superior ratings in music performance (out of seven performances).
- Three out of four elementary schools met their goal of increasing musical performances at school concerts by 50%.
- Drama enrollment increased from baseline 80 in 2021-2022 to 102 in 2022-2023, surpassing the target of 96 by six.
- 100% of schools participated in art shows.

DODGE COUNTY SCHOOLS, SOUTH DODGE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

South Dodge Elementary School (SDES) implemented a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – or STEM – pathway by infusing manipulatives and other hands-on learning opportunities in its fifth-grade science courses. As part of the grant, the school created a science lab on the fifth-grade hallway so teachers may align project-based learning activities with the standards. The school plans to make the lab accessible by all grade levels beginning in the 2023-2024 academic year.

By the end of the school year, SDES boasted the following outcomes:

- The percentage of fifth graders scoring a 70% or higher on the Georgia Milestones assessment increased from 51% in math and 42% in science in the 2021-2022 school year to 72% and 55%, respectively, in the 2022-2023 school year.
- The percentage of students receiving a passing score of 70% or higher on the spring summative assessments in science and math was 100% and 94%, respectively.

“The students in my class use their STEMscopes interactive journals to improve written responses after experiments are completed. Having funds from this grant has enabled my students to be able to work in small groups to complete science experiments using a 5E model.” – Mrs. Rogers, 5th Grade Teacher, SDES

FRANKLIN COUNTY SCHOOLS, FRANKLIN COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

Franklin County High School (FCHS), known for its robust music program, was in need of new instruments for its students to practice on to prepare for concerts and football games. Using the Rural Education Fund Grant, FCHS purchased instruments to allow

every student in the program to have and practice on their own instrument, rather than having to share. By the end of the grant year, the program had shown increased student interest in the program. Specifically:

- Based on an End of Semester survey, students responded 12 percentage points higher from the beginning of the year to the question “I enjoy being in band.”
- The marching band placed first at the state level, a designation only received twice in the last ten years.
- The program increased the number of students using school-owned instruments from the baseline in 12 in the 2021-2022 school year to 31 in the 2022-2023 school year.
- 20% more students enrolled in the band program.

MERIWETHER COUNTY SCHOOLS, UNITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Unity Elementary School enrolls 500 students annually in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade with 100% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. In 2021, the number of students scoring at a proficient or distinguished level was well below statewide averages. Unity Elementary School used the Rural Education Fund Grant to purchase virtual reality headsets and instructional curriculum for science, language arts, and social studies to supplement traditional lesson plans. Students in all grades, with a special focus on third through fifth graders, were able to virtually transport to facilitate experiential learning. The school partnered with the Meriwether Chamber of Commerce, Meriwether Family Connection, and other local groups to provide supplemental lessons related to the virtual reality lessons for students. After the first year of implementing the virtual reality experiential pedagogy, Unity Elementary School reported the following:

- On the spring 2023 End of Grade science assessment, 12% of students overall scored at the “proficient” or “distinguished” levels, up two percentage points from 10% baseline in 2021-2022.
- On the spring 2023 End of Grade science assessment, the percentage of students scoring at the “beginner” level decreased six percentage points, from 74% in 2021-2022 to 68% in 2022-2023.
- On the spring 2023 End of Grade English Language Arts assessment, 18% scored at the “proficient” or “distinguished” levels, up eight percentage points from 10% baseline in 2021-2022.

PICKENS COUNTY SCHOOLS, TATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Tate Elementary School (TES) sought to expand its robust outdoor space to implement StoryWalk. StoryWalk promotes literacy, wellness, and movement in communities and neighborhoods across the United States. TES used the Rural Education Fund grant to purchase books, materials, and supplies to create the StoryWalk area. In addition, the

school partnered with the area high school construction pathway students to help build the Storywalk and the county library to select age-appropriate books. The school reported the following outcomes from the implementation of StoryWalk:

- 50% of Tier Two students and 16% Tier Three third graders met their reading goals by the end of the year, compared to the 2021-2022 baseline where 100% of Tiers Two and Three students were unable to meet their tier reading goals.
- 4% of Tier Three students were able to move down to Tier Two interventions.

WHEELER COUNTY SCHOOLS, WHEELER COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

Wheeler County High School (WCHS) lacked extracurricular opportunities for the students. In response, Wheeler County School District partnered with the Wheeler County Chamber of Commerce to launch an after-school program at the high school. Inspired by the district's mission statement, “Inspire, Care, Support, Lead,” (ICSL) the program addresses students' needs and promotes community service and leadership. The REF grant funded after-school transportation and supplies for ICSL service projects. At the first year of the program’s implementation:

- Thirty-three high school students participated in the service projects throughout the year.
- Based on a student wellness survey, 90.3 % of ICSL participants “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they feel more “plugged in” since joining the ICSL program.

STANDARDIZED DATA

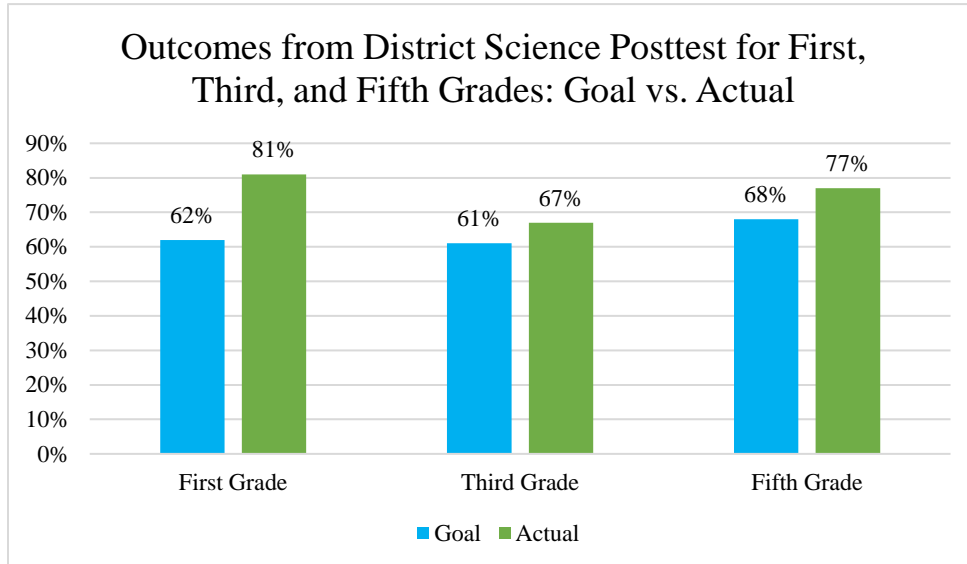
Grantees are required to report standardized data that align with the purposes of their grant. Doing this allows the GFPE to assess high-level grant program impacts even though the grant programs have different focuses and goals. Grantees may provide standardized data from a list of standardized measures that fit with the priority area with which their program aligns. Here is a breakdown of the standardized impacts from the 2022 Rural Education Fund grantees:

- **Student Wellness Survey:**
 - *Wheeler County High School, Wheeler County Schools:* By end of year, 90.3% of students participating in the Wheeler County High School service project agreed or strongly agreed that they “feel more plugged in and a greater sense of belonging” since joining the program.
- **Multitier System of Support:**
 - *Tate Elementary School, Pickens County Schools:* 50% of Tier Two students and 16% Tier Three third graders met their reading goals by the end of the year, compared to the 2021-2022 baseline where

100% of Tiers Two and Three students were unable to meet their tier reading goals.

- *Tate Elementary School, Pickens County Schools*: 4% of Tier Three students were able to move down to Tier Two interventions.

- **District Posttest Outcomes:** *Quitman Elementary School, Brooks County Schools*



- **Georgia Milestones:**

- *South Dodge Elementary School, Dodge County Schools*: The percentage of fifth graders scoring a 70% or higher on the Georgia Milestones assessment increased from 51% in math and 42% in science in the 2021-2022 school year to 72% and 55%, respectively, in the 2022-2023 school year.
- *Unity Elementary School, Meriwether County Schools*: On the spring 2023 End of Grade science assessment, 12% of students overall scored at the “proficient” or “distinguished” levels, up two percentage points from 10% baseline in 2021-2022.
- *Unity Elementary School, Meriwether County Schools*: On the spring 2023 End of Grade science assessment, the percentage of students scoring at the “beginner” level decreased six percentage points, from 74% in 2021-2022 to 68% in 2022-2023.
- *Unity Elementary School, Meriwether County Schools*: On the spring 2023 End of Grade English Language Arts assessment, 18% scored at the “proficient” or “distinguished” levels, up eight percentage points from 10% baseline in 2021-2022.

- **Summative Assessments:**

- *South Dodge Elementary School, Dodge County Schools*: The percentage of students receiving a passing score of 70% or higher on the spring summative assessments in science and math was 100% and 94%, respectively.

- **Fine Arts Outcomes:**
 - *Franklin County High School:* Increased the number of students using school-owned instruments 158%, from 12 students in 2021-2022 to 31 students in 2022-2023.
 - *Dawson County Schools:* 79% of the grant recipients either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their students have improved academically due to the funding of resources received from the grant.
 - *Dawson County Schools:* 100% of the grant recipients either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that their students are more engaged based on the funding of resources received from the grant.
 - *Dawson County Schools:* Two out of three schools received four superior ratings in music performance (our of seven performances).
 - *Dawson County Schools:* Three out of four elementary schools met their goal of increasing musical performances at school concerts by 50%.
 - *Dawson County Schools:* Drama enrollment increased from baseline 80 in 2021-2022 to 102 in 2022-2023, surpassing the target of 96 by six.
 - *Dawson County Schools:* 100% of schools participated in art shows.
- **Funds Leveraged:** By the end of the grant, grantees leveraged \$1,500 because of the Rural Education Fund grant.

FEEDBACK FOR THE GEORGIA FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Grantees are required to provide mid-year and end-of-year grant evaluation forms. In the evaluation, grantees highlight the grant’s current status, including the demographics of students/faculty/families impacted, as well as progress towards the SMART goals outlined on the original application. In addition, the evaluation provides space for grantees to give feedback to the Georgia Foundation for Public Education regarding its responsiveness as a grantor. Here are the feedback findings from the 2022 final evaluation reports:

- Grantees are asked to rate the GFPE’s quality of technical assistance and support on a scale of one to five, with one being poor and five being excellent. Of the six grantees that provided a rating, all gave GFPE an excellent rating.
- GFPE received an overall average rating of five.
- Here are the grantee comments:
 - **Dawson County Schools:** All recipients were very thankful for the funding of their initiatives with this grant. They were able to purchase items and participate in events they would not have been able to do so without this grant. It was very much appreciated, and the outcomes were positive.
 - **South Dodge Elementary School of Dodge County Schools:** Jaclyn has been very easy to work with during the grant period. She has provided

assistance when needed in a quick/professional method. In addition, she has sent reminders for the due dates regarding grant reporting periods. SDES is excited to continue utilizing these GFPE funds towards the success of our students' academics. Thus far, our students have really enjoyed using materials purchased to participate in hands-on learning activities.

