

FISCAL YEAR 2022 RURAL EDUCATION FUND FINAL PROGRAM EVALUATION



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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 funds a variety of projects, as well as serve as a channel for organizations to collaborate on educational solutions.

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 2021, GFPE awarded 12 Rural Education Fund grants to Georgia schools and districts, totaling \$115,003. This year is the first that the GFPE provided up to \$10,000, rather than \$5,000 offered in past rounds. With the increased funding amount, awardees can offer more robust programing with the potential to impact more students. The grants focused on literacy, trauma-informed care, STEAM programs, expanding medical pathway programs, and programming for special needs populations.

This report summarizes the outcomes for the 2021-2022 Rural Education Fund grantees and presents evidence of impacts from grantees.

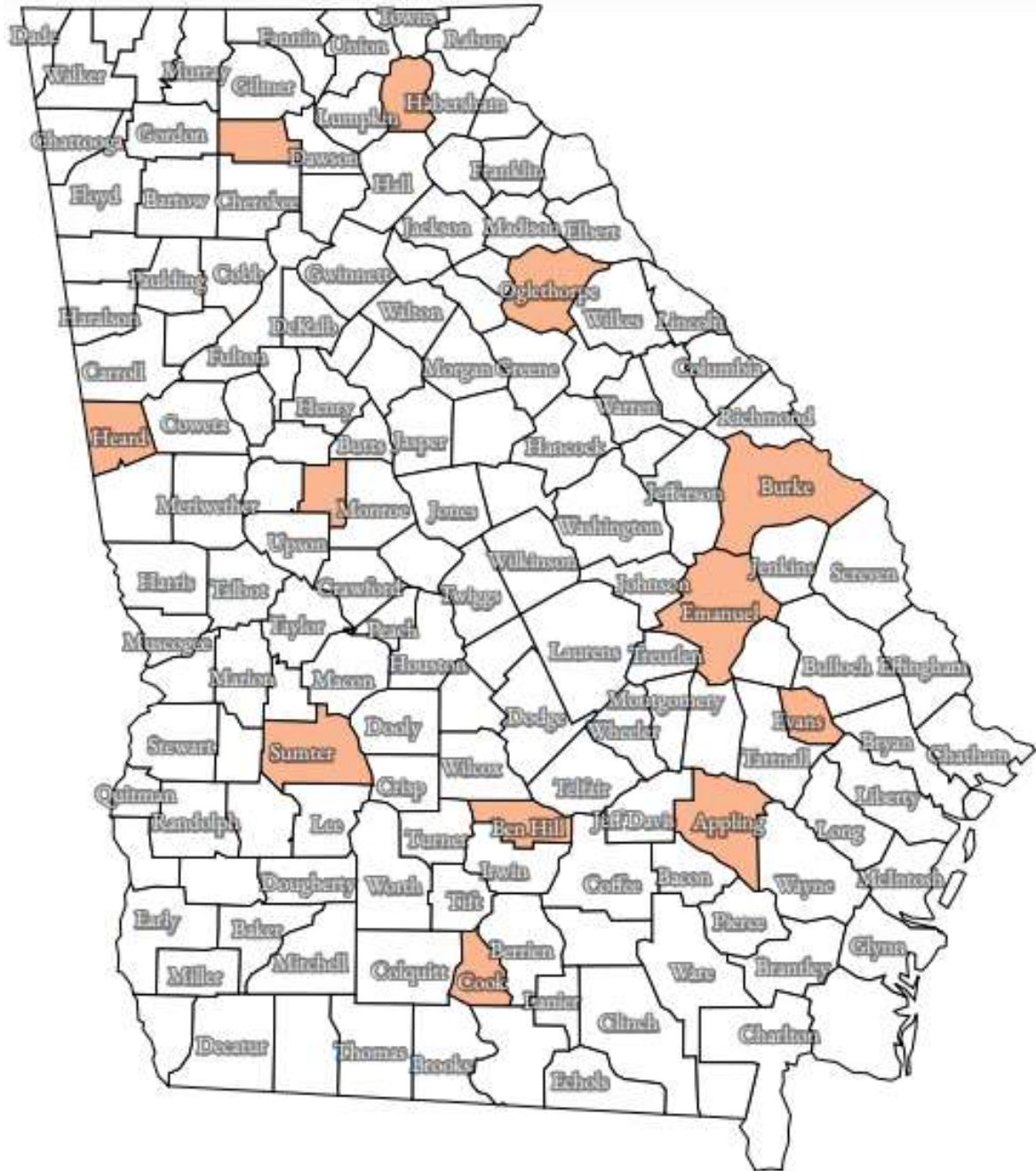
TABLE 1. FY22 RURAL EDUCATION FUND GRANTEES

- *Appling County Middle School, Appling County, \$10,000*
- *Burke County Middle School, Burke County, \$10,000*
- *Claxton Middle School, Evans County, \$8,718*
- *Cook County Elementary School, Cook County, \$9,265*
- *Emanuel County School District, Emanuel County, \$10,000*
- *Fitzgerald High School College and Career, Academy, Ben Hill County, \$10,000*
- *Furlow Charter School, Sumter County, \$10,000*
- *Heard County Comprehensive High School, Heard County, \$10,000*
- *Lamar County Middle School, Lamar County, \$9,020*
- *Oglethorpe County High School, Oglethorpe County, \$10,000*
- *Pickens High School, Pickens County, \$10,000*
- *White County High School, White County, \$8,000*



MAPPING THE FY22 RURAL EDUCATION FUND

GRANTS BY COUNTY



FY22 RURAL EDUCATION FUND IMPACTS

AT A GLANCE

By the end of the grant year, **nearly 5,100** students were **IMPACTED** by Rural Education Fund programs.

Of the students impacted, **48%** are **FEMALE** and **52%** are **MALE**.

Impacts by Race/Ethnicity

White, 51%
African American, 35%
Latino, 10%
Asian, 1%
Native American, 1%
Other, 2%

Impacts by **Grade Band**
Elementary School, 44%
Middle School, 28%
High School, 28%

89% of students impacted are identified as **ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED**

17 Schools Involved in Programming

IMPACTED VOICES

QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

"Two students are very high level/gifted students academically. Being in a Computer Science course offered them a high-level task to meet their needs. This course challenges them and offers a way they can show their academic strengths outside a typical academic classroom." – Teacher, Lamar County Middle School

"I liked that I got to create my own book. It was definitely an experience. I did better than I thought I could." – Student, Furlow Charter School

"For patient care, we have used the mannequin to prepare for clinics with a real patient. I set the vital signs and the student must evaluate Jarvis – the mannequin – and determine what is within normal limits, what needs to be reported, or what position to place him in if he gets short of breath." – Student, Oglethorpe County High School

"For Introduction to Healthcare and Essentials of Healthcare, we have used Jarvis mainly for CPR and first aid. The students were able to see real time feedback on their efficiency at doing high quality compressions and ventilations. We have also used him to practice positioning and using correct body mechanics for lifting and moving." – Teacher, Oglethorpe County High School

"WOW! I can't believe this; I am in Antarctica!" – Student, Emanuel County School District

"Students were so thrilled and fully engaged in learning about a different continent." – Teacher, Emanuel County School District

"Students improved their willingness to complete tasks and ask for more assistance from their peers and/or their teacher. I see this as related to their participation in Computer Science class as processing complicated tasks...related to the course." – Teacher, Lamar County Middle School

"Students have designed and created shirts for annual 'shop with a cop' program for our special needs students across all the schools in the community. Students have designed and created banners for the basketball and wrestling team. Students have taken ownership in the program and are actively learning how to operate the equipment." – Teacher, Heard County Comprehensive High School

"When observing Mr. Sapp's class, the students were fully engaged in the learning. Students were flying the drones. Based on lesson plans reviewed, teams had to collaborate and communicate in order to complete their missions." Assistant Principal, Claxton Middle Schools

"This was my first visit to the public library. There were so many books to choose from. I can't wait to come back." – Student, Appling County Middle School

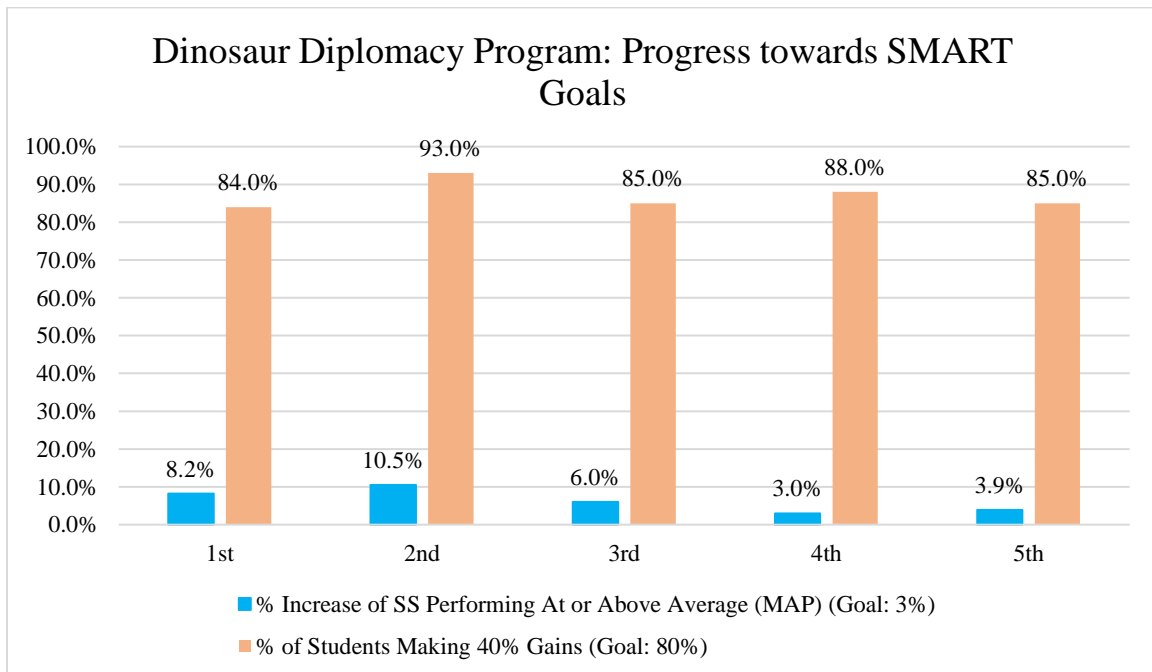
Dinosaur Diplomacy

In the small, rural town of Americus, Georgia, dinosaurs are making a comeback...Or at least in one school they are. Furlow Charter School (FCS) received the Rural Education Fund grant to implement Dinosaur Diplomacy, a project-based learning literacy initiative. More specifically, targeting reading deficiencies in first through fifth graders, the program provides creative literacy intervention through world language acquisition by having students author books in a foreign language about a topic of their choice. As students increase second language proficiency, English literacy skills have the potential to improve significantly. Moreover, the initiative infuses engaging dinosaur lessons that provide scaffolding when necessary and culminates in students publishing books in a second language. Following the completion of the book, the school sent the books to schools in Nepal as part of the service-learning portion of the project.

The program had two main goals:

- By spring 2022, the percentage of students performing at or above the average grade level score on the Measure of Academic Progress Assessment (MAP) will increase by three percentage points.
- 80% of participating students will make 40% gains in foreign language proficiency based on a pre- and post-assessment.

By the end of the grant year, the program had met all its goals:



In addition to meeting most of the goals the grantee set for the program, students and teachers reported that they enjoyed the program and that it was intellectually stimulating:

- “I liked that I got to create my own book. It was definitely an experience. I did better than I thought I could.” – FCS Student
- “I like the way it allowed us to express our creativity.” – FCS Student
- “I liked creating the book; it was the first book I have ever made.” – FCS Student
- “It was very fun...I looked forward to it every day.” – FCS Student
- “Students were very proud and excited about their dinosaur books. They would come back from world language class and compare it to the writing process that we were doing in the classroom. Our class also produced a class book with individual stories. The students were engaged and excited!” – FCS Teacher

Dinosaur Diplomacy has become part of Furlow Charter School’s classroom culture. Teachers will now weave the project-based learning strategy into their lessons, allowing them to easily integrate several subject areas and continue provide students with the opportunity to write books. More impressively, students have continued to use the project-based learning strategy to write more books on their own, outside of classroom hours.

“I liked creating the book; it was the first book I have ever made.” – FCS Student

In June 2022, the grant manager for the program, JoAnna Arnold, attended a service trip in partnership with Georgia Southwestern State University. During the trip, Mrs. Arnold served as a guest speaker for local elementary teachers and used the Dinosaur Diplomacy program as the centerpiece of her talk. She also used it as an opportunity to showcase her students’ one-of-a-kind books, as well as provide a resource to teachers as they implement their own Dinosaur Diplomacy lessons.



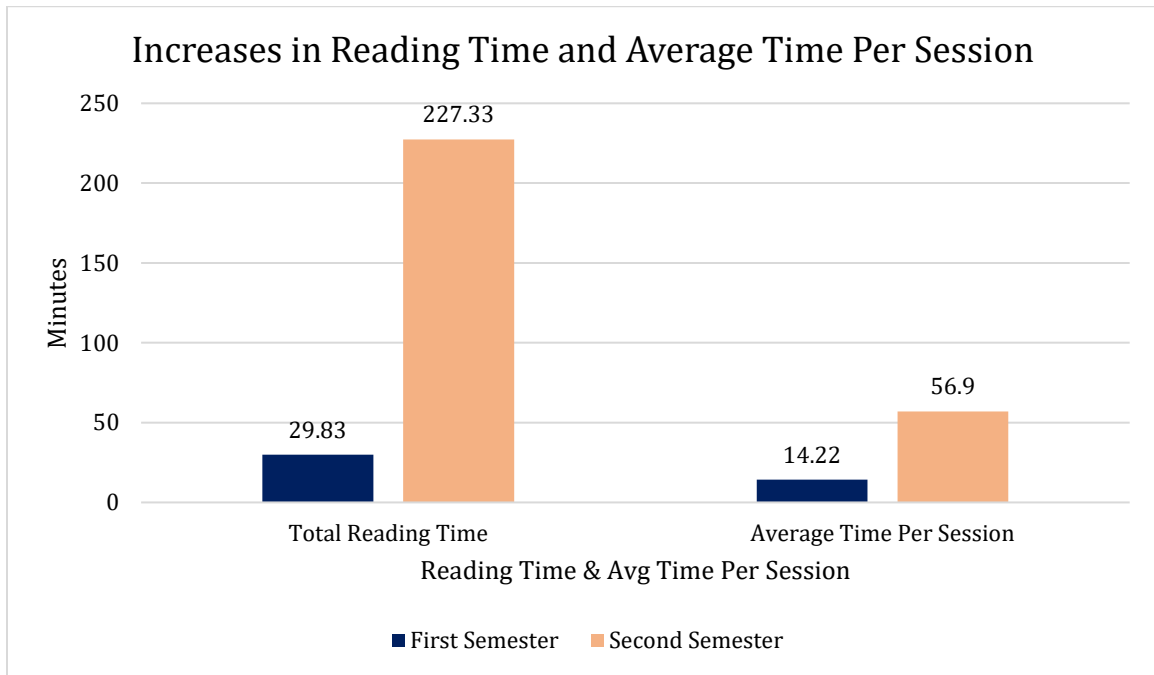
Increasing Access to Reading

In 2021, Appling County Middle School sought to improve literacy and access to literary materials in the students and families it serves. Specifically, the school identified a downward pattern in literacy achievement in its sixth through eighth graders and wanted to address the barriers contributing to the trend. The school received a \$10,000 Rural Education Fund grant to implement Appling Building Connections – or Project ABC – which sought to increase student and family access to literary experiences by offering field trips to the local public library, providing literary materials for home learning, and offering access to First District RESA’s Overdrive Digital Collection and Newspapers in Education.

The program had two goals:

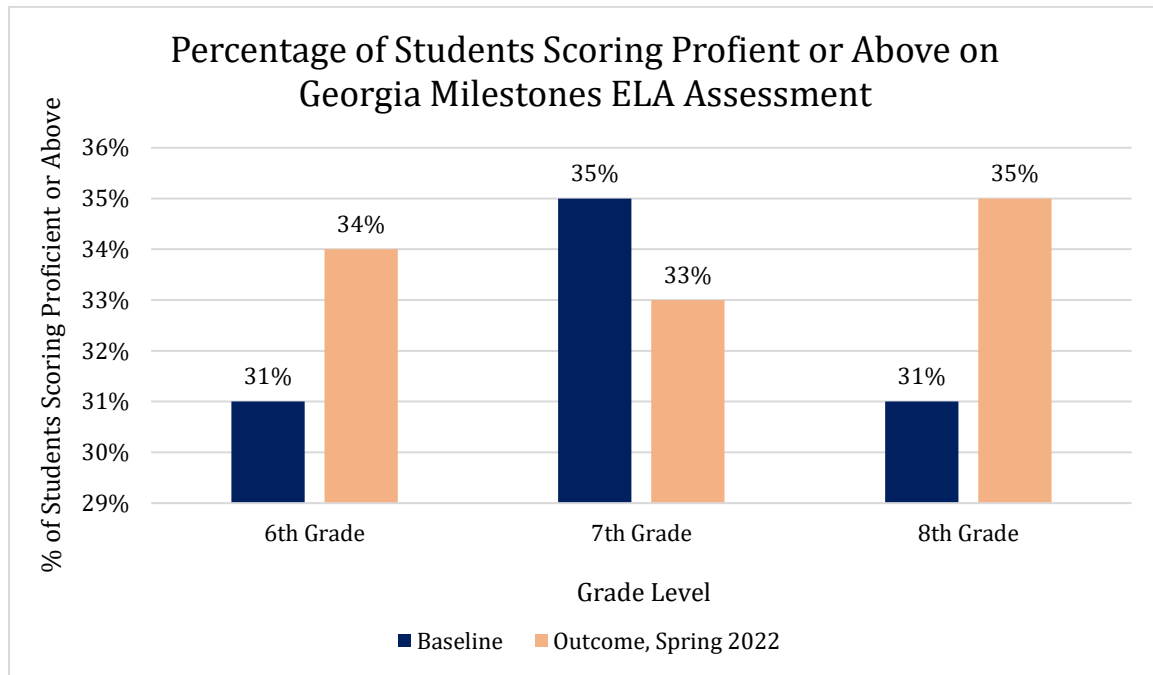
- Increase the percentage of sixth through eighth grade students scoring proficient or above on the English Language Arts Georgia Milestones Assessment by three percentage points over the 2021 baseline; and
- Increase library circulation at both the school and the public library by 25 percentage points, as measured by student book checkouts.

By the end of the grant year, the grantee had surpassed many goals and had additional accomplishments. Firstly, the circulation of digital materials was five percentage points higher for the grant year compared to the previous year. There was an 89% increase in check outs from the digital library. Impressively, the total reading time and average times per session increased significantly for the participants of the program:



Overall print circulation was lower than the previous year, which the grantee attributed to increased access to the digital library. With access to digital books, students can access content on demand, even when the local library is closed.

Georgia Milestones data indicated some improvements and an area for improvement. Sixth and eighth grades showed increases from the baseline and seventh grade showed a decrease of two percentage points:



By the end of the program, the Appling County Middle School felt confident about having built a strong consortium that helps increase student and family access to books and other learning materials.

BURKE COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL, BURKE COUNTY

An Outlet Through Reading

Before the pandemic, schools sought to infuse reading for entertainment throughout the school day. With remote learning and time away from the classroom, students experienced such drastic setbacks that reading for fun took a backseat to ensuring students stayed on track to master the standards. In Burke County, Georgia, one librarian wanted to spark a love for reading in her students and not just to achieve the standards. Mrs. Calhoun, Burke County Middle School's librarian, used a \$10,000 Rural Education Fund grant to implement a program where reading for fun became part of the school's culture. Specifically, Mrs. Calhoun enhanced the reading experience for Burke County Middle School students by:

- Working with English Language Arts teachers to organize trips to the library;

- Setting up flexible seating throughout the library to create a comfortable reading environment;
- Creating a competitive, public scoring system for grade levels to compare reading times and book check outs (both print and digital); and
- Providing incentives to teams recording the highest amount of reading times and book check outs.

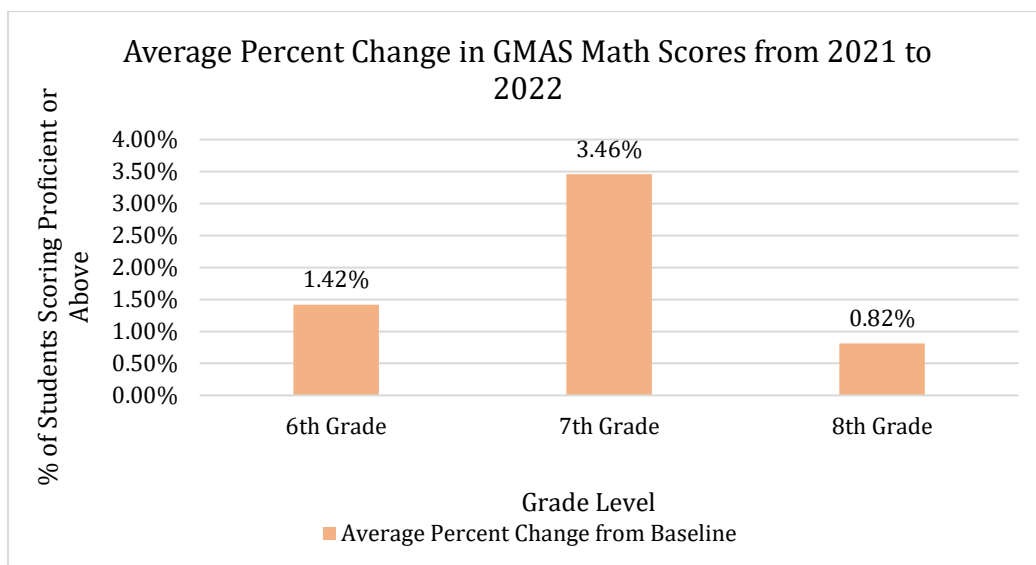
By the end of the program, total book check outs – including print and digital books – increased from 428 in the 2020-2021 school year to 3,404 in the 2021-2022 school year. Mrs. Calhoun is confident her efforts have created a strong culture of reading and made books the centerpiece of Burke County Middle School.

LAMAR COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL, LAMAR COUNTY

Computer Science for the Real World

In an effort to help students meet the needs of today’s workforce, Lamar County Middle School (LCMS) applied for and received a Rural Education Fund grant to implement a computer science program for sixth through eighth grade students. But this wasn’t just a typical computer science program to teach the standards. What LCMS wanted was to foment in its students a deep interest and understanding in computer science and its applications in the real world. To do that, the school used the funding build a program with the more obvious computer science technology, like computers and tablets, but also robots, drones, and circuitry kits. Over the grant period, the school aimed to impact at least 150 students. In addition, LCMS had one measurable goal for the program: participants of the program will show an average three percent increase from baseline on the Georgia Milestones mathematics assessment.

By the end of the program, the program had reached 172 students. The Georgia Milestones mathematics assessment also showed some areas of improvement and areas to continue focusing:



Although LCMS did not achieve its goals for grade six and eight, teachers reported that students enjoyed the program showed increased interest in computer science and math:

- “[Student] participation in computer science has increased his desire and effort to do well in math because he is now looking into his future career paths in computer science.” – LCMS Teacher
- “[Student] and [Student] are very high level/gifted students academically. Being in a computer science course offered them a high-level task to meet their needs. This course challenges them and offers a way they can show their academic strengths outside a typical academic classroom.” – LCMS Teacher
- “[Student] and [Student] improved their willingness to complete tasks and ask for more assistance from their peers and/or their teacher. I see this as related to their participation in the computer science course.” – LCMS Teacher

“[Student] participation in computer science has increased his desire and effort to do well in math because he is now looking into his future career paths in computer science.” – LCMS Teacher



A Pathway to a Career in Medicine

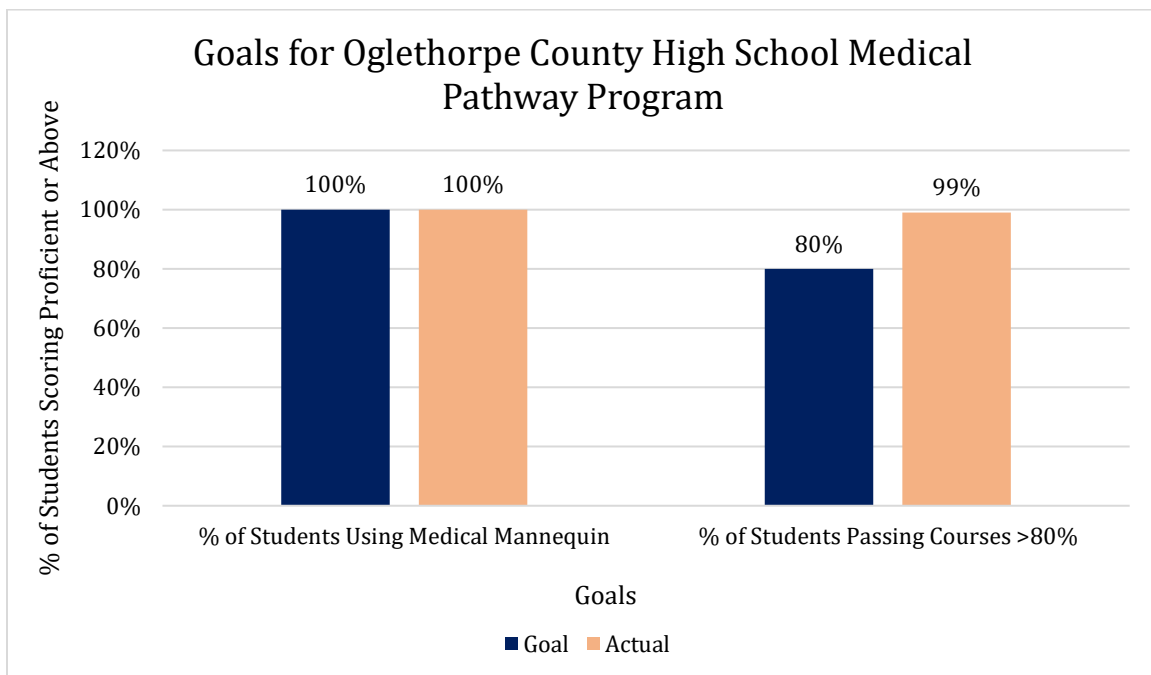
In Oglethorpe County, Georgia lives an issue that is unique to rural counties in Georgia: there is no hospital. Yet, high school students throughout the county are eager to pursue medical pathway jobs. Without a hospital setting to provide on-the-job training, students rely on high school simulations that can mirror real-world medical situations. One high school, Oglethorpe County High School (OCHS), used the Rural Education Fund grant to purchase a medical mannequin, which the students named Jarvis, to provide students with hand-on experiences and stimulate interest in medical pathways beyond high school.

The program had two goals:

- By May 2021, 100% of students enrolled in the CTAE healthcare pathway and EMT classes will have used the simulator mannequin; and
- By May 2021, 80% of students taking the CTAE healthcare pathway classes will have a passing score of 75% or above on the final assessment.

“Having a mannequin that can speak and respond made learning more exciting and fun...Having real-time feedback was beneficial and made us more aware of the appropriate techniques and effectiveness of treatments” – OCHS Student

By the end of the grant year, OCHS had met or surpassed the goals for the medical pathway program:

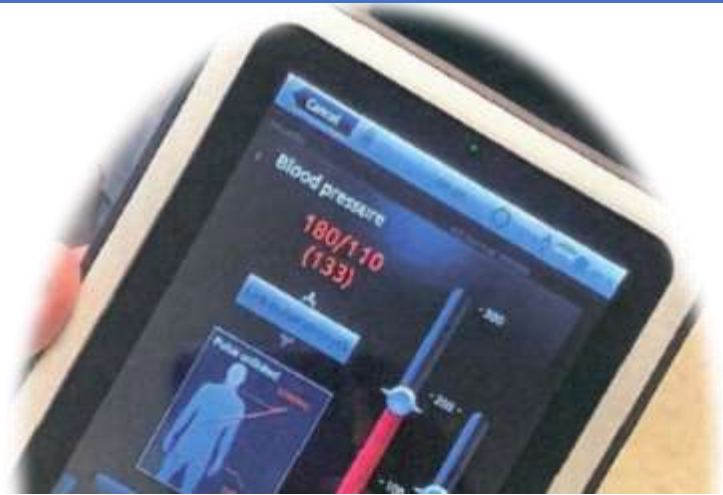


Students and teachers voiced their appreciation for being able to gain the hands-on experience with Jarvis:

- “Jarvis helped to provide a more lifelike experience because of the anatomical accuracy and realism compared to the other models available in class, as well as combining features from the other models into one patient simulator such as the CPR training functions alongside realistic reactions to treatments (like lips becoming cyanotic when lacking proper ventilations), keeping students more aware in real time of their progress and efficiency without the need of a supervisor to relay that the student is giving appropriate chest compressions and ventilations.” – OCHS Student, EMT-in-Training
- “Multiple students commented on how it helped them learn with the ability to hear lung sounds, perform CPR on a full-body mannequin while receiving immediate feedback, and have a patient simulator that had actual bad vital signs to find (which you cannot simulate with a human!).” – OCHS Teacher, EMT Course
- “Being able to use state of the art programs like Jarvis while in high school is extremely helpful for not only my future but for my present. While using Jarvis, I learned about abnormal heartbeats and breathing patterns that I wouldn’t be able to understand and see without him. Also, while searching for colleges, I went to Anderson University, an extremely high-tech school with an incredible nursing program that used tools like Jarvis. So, when competing in such a highly competitive field like nursing, I will have a leg up on the students in my class by having already used these systems and programs.” – OCHS Student, Patient Care Course
- “Having a mannequin that can speak and respond made learning more exciting and fun. It applied what we were learning and discussing to real life scenarios. Having real time feedback was beneficial and made us more aware of the appropriate techniques and effectiveness of treatments.” – OCHS Student, Introduction to Healthcare



“Being able to use state of the art programs like Jarvis while in high school is extremely helpful for not only my future but for my present...When competing in such a highly competitive field like nursing, I will have a leg up on the students in my [college] class by having already used these systems and programs” – OCHS Student



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE 2021-2022 REF GRANTEES

The pandemic disrupted the way nearly every sector operates, especially public education. But over two years after the start of the pandemic, schools and districts are eager to resume regular operations, while also trying to test new approaches that may positively impact student achievement. The 2021-2022 Rural Education Fund grantees aimed to improve outcomes for a diverse student population, and, despite periodic interruptions caused by the pandemic and the supply chain issues, most achieved this goal. Programs focused on literacy, trauma-informed care, STEAM, expanding medical pathway programs, and programming for special needs populations

The REF evaluation template provides a space for grantees to rate their progress towards milestones. Grantees provided a rating of either green, yellow, orange, and red, which correspond with on-track, somewhat on-track, somewhat off-track, and off-track, respectively. GFPE conducted an analysis of the progress towards the action steps by assigning numerical codes to the qualitative rating scale, with four being on track and one being off-track. Only one grantee rated one element of their program as off-track (due to the closure of a library at the centerpiece of the program), one grantee rated their program as somewhat on-track, and one rated their program as somewhat off-track. Overall, grantees rated their progress towards goals an average of 3.85, indicating that most all grantees completed the majority of their milestones.

Some grantees fell just short of their REF goals and/or milestones. The common through line for those that fell short of their goals and/or milestones was COVID-19. As a result of student and faculty absences due to illness, some programs had to delay certain elements of their programs. As one grantee indicated: “The STEM teacher’s plan to begin teaching his planned units second semester were impacted by [a] high percentage of covid cases. This impacted our district with a high percentage of student and staff absences around the same time that the STEM teacher planned to implement his first unit.”¹ In addition, lingering supply chain issues also delayed some actions steps, preventing grantees from assessing some outcomes. For example, Oglethorpe County High School’s medical pathway program was temporarily derailed due to the availability of the medical mannequin: “Our biggest challenge was getting the simulated mannequin. Due to covid, many of the medical supply [stores] were not selling items other than covid related items.”² Finally, some grantees reported that some milestones were not derailed, but just delayed, due to the success of another milestone in the program: “The service project component is currently coded as orange for *somewhat off track* because the enormous success of student writing created enormous amounts of editing, proofing, and printing...Even though the orange code might indicate a negative washback, I am happy to report that the scope of the grant increased to such an unexpected success that this part of timeline was altered.”³

¹ Claxton Middle School, Evans County School System, Final Evaluation Report, pp. 8.

² Oglethorpe County High School, Oglethorpe County Schools, Final Evaluation Report, pp. 8

³ Furlow Charter School, Sumter County, Final Evaluation Report, pp. 6

While grantees indicated successes and challenges during the grant year, most importantly, they were able implement or pilot programs to engage students in school again and improve outcomes: “We would like to thank the GFPE for all their help in this process and allowing us to help more of our students’ access to Game Design and E-sports.”⁴

“We would like to thank the GFPE for all their help in this process and allowing us to help more of our students’ access to Game Design and E-sports ...”



⁴ Pickens County High School, Pickens County School District, pp. 13

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 2021 end of grant 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 five grantees that provided a rating, all gave GFPE an excellent rating.
- GFPE received an overall average rating of five.
- Eight grantees provided comments regarding the rating and/or overall feedback for the foundation. The majority of comments thanked the foundation for awarding the district/school with the funds.
- Here are the grantee comments:
 - **Appling County Middle School:** Thank you for giving our school the opportunity to address barriers to teen literacy through this grant. My favorite part has been introducing our middle school students to the public library. Their relationship with community literacy resources is something that can continue to grow as they move on to high school and then into adulthood. Our goal is to nurture life-long readers and this grant has helped us with this task.
 - **Claxton Middle School:** Reminders are very much appreciated! Thank you for your emails.
 - **Cook County Elementary School:** This grant was the first I had ever applied for from GFPE. Unfortunately, the majority of the process has been a learning experience for me. I hope that my lack of foresight in clarifying the data to be collected will not negatively affect any future GFPE grant applications from this school district. While the reporting period has ended it is my intent to pick apart the data as it applies to the discrepancies listed in Question 8 above. I would like to be able to accurately assess the validity of the Bounce Back program as it was applied to our students. Thank you for the opportunity to address the needs of the students of Cook County.
 - **Furlow Charter School:** Furlow has received excellence technical assistance and support from GFPE throughout the grant period.
 - **Heard County Comprehensive High School:** Finding information seems to be a challenge, the reminder emails help considerably.
 - **Oglethorpe County High School:** Thank you for funding our project. Our students were so excited to be able to use this modern equipment and

gain hands on experience. Without the funding, this would not have been possible.

- **Pickens High School:** We would like to thank the GFPE for all their help in this process and allowing us to help more of our students' access to Game Design and E-sports.
- **White County High School:** GFPE has been very helpful when answering all my questions and providing us with extra time due to covid issues.

