The Power of Collaboration: Supporting and Retaining Special Education Teachers

Georgia’s Teacher Provider Retention Program

July 2022
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Adjective: Done on purpose; deliberate.

IMPLEMENTATION OF HIGH-LEVERAGE PRACTICES (HLPS)

- Intentional Planning
- Strategic Implementation
- Leveraging Partnerships
- Seamless Connection of Work
- Stronger Together
Georgia–CEEDAR Partnership

Began in 2014:
• Georgia Department of Education
• Professional Standards Commission
• University System of Georgia
• Georgia State University
• Columbus State University
• Kennesaw State University (KSU)

Scaling up 2017–2021:
• University of North Georgia
• University of West Georgia
• Georgia Gwinnett College
• Clark Atlanta
• University of Georgia
• Georgia Southern University
• Mercer University
Webinar Series

The Georgia High-Leverage Practices Webinar Series is a 7-part webinar that creates awareness of High-Leverage Practices and how these practices align within Georgia’s Tiered System of Support for Students. This series provides information and resources that are applicable to stakeholders in various settings including: P-12 teachers, Administrators, Academic/Instructional Coaches, and Educator Preparation Program Providers. This series helps participants understand the components of High-Leverage Practices and consider ways to effectively and sustainably implement those practices in their learning environments.
High-Leverage Practices in Georgia: From Awareness...

2018
- Initial HLP and Multitiered System of Support Statewide Summit
- Seven-part HLP webinar series (2018–19 academic year)

2019
- Georgia HLP Induction Professional Learning Series
- Purposeful practice of HLPs using mixed-reality simulation (MRS) for preservice teachers and leaders at KSU and the University of West Georgia
Georgia Special Education Teacher Retention

• According to Georgia teacher shortage data collected in 2018 and 2020, the state had **3,400 vacancies** in special education teacher positions.

• New teacher data suggested that between 2018 and 2020, Georgia hired 1,235 new special education teachers and lost approximately the same number of special education teachers each year. Thus, **the gap in the number of vacancies and the number of hires did not narrow**.

• A large proportion of Georgia’s teacher workforce is **within their first 3 years** of their teaching career, meaning they have **limited experience** and **need extensive training and mentoring**, which often is a challenge for a field with high turnover and limited numbers of teachers.

• While retaining 80% of special education teachers, Georgia continues to have a **special education teacher shortage of 19%**.
Induction as a Retention Strategy

• The quality of induction for novice special educators is a powerful predictor of their intention to stay in their schools and the profession overall (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019; Jones, Youngs, & Frank, 2013).

• In a 2019 OSEP survey of more than 1,500 practitioners, hundreds of respondents cited strong mentorship and induction in early career as the most effective method of improving teacher retention they have observed or experienced themselves.
Georgia’s Teacher Provider Retention Program

• Purpose: To improve the retention of special education teachers and early intervention providers in Georgia: Parts B and C.
  – U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs Grant
  – Awarded $500,000 per year for up to 5 years
  – Four key goals: Model Induction Program, leadership development, Early Intervention Part C, and easy access to crucial data
• Collaboration with school and district effectiveness and federal programs to secure funding to support coaching
  – $100,000 to support coaching to support induction teachers
Goal 1: Model Induction Program

- Great Teachers and Leaders Center and Kennesaw State University developed a model train-the-trainer induction program for K-12 special educators to support induction and retention.

- The focus of the model induction program content for professional learning was in addressing High-leverage Practices and an Individualized Education Plan development and implementation.

- Mixed Reality Simulation to support practice for new special education teachers in a safe environment with constructive feedback for professional growth.

- Coaching component to provide mentoring and coaching to teachers support the implementation of high-leverage practices.

- 18 Regional Technical Centers (GLRS) will redeliver the content.

- Community of Practice held monthly to support coaches and trainers.
Train-the-Trainer Model

- **Train instructors**
  A ToT workshop can build a pool of competent instructors who can then teach the material to other people.

- **GTL & KSU train GLRS trainers**

- **Deliver Training**
  Deliver training to a group of educators

- **GLRS trainers train teachers**

- **GLRS trainers participate in CoP with GTL/KSU**
  GLRS trainers provide ongoing coaching to teachers

- **Community of Practice**
  Provides completed, continued, and targeted follow-up support once a professional development event has been completed.
Content and Materials

- Content: 4 Sessions around HLPs
- Facilitator’s guide
- PPT slide deck
- Meeting agenda with recommended time allotments
- Professional learning activity handouts
- HLP Look For Guide
- Coaching Guide
- Coaching Dashboard
An Innovative Solution: The AVATAR Lab

• Simulations allow individuals to **learn and master new skills** in an **environment that does not put others** (e.g., students) or relationships at **risk** (Dieker et al., 2014).

• This enables candidates to **practice decision-making** and receive feedback on decisions through virtual responses and peer observers (Brown, 1999).
How It Works:

Unique Blend of Human & Artificial Intelligence

- Artificial intelligence allows a simulation specialist to control single or multiple avatars: “Human in the Loop paradigm”
- Machine learning used to classify learner’s simulation performance
- Learners can personalize the learning challenge in real time
Mixed Reality Avatar Simulation Lab

• Statewide pilot “train the trainers” induction program using the KSU AVATAR Lab.

• Regional directors and coaches learn how to use Mixed Reality Simulation (MRS) and existing HLP resources to design professional learning experiences for induction teachers.

• Induction-level special education teachers practice teaching HLPs with the avatars as their students

https://youtu.be/QboyNwQJLM8
MRS Student AVATAR Example

https://youtu.be/0dV1JGTFv5g
Coaching and Mentoring

Leveraged funds to provide coaching for all teachers involved in the induction program.

“Coaching done well may be the most effective intervention designed for improving performance.”

-----Atul Gawande (2011)
Teacher Induction Training by the Numbers

- 18 GLRS regions conducted the HLP training series
- 10 additional training sites were district-specific
- 94 districts have been represented
- 473 teachers registered to participate
Teacher Certification Information

24% of Participants are in TAPP

About one-third of participants are certified to teach special education. Half have a provisional certificate.

- Are you certified to teach special education?
  - Yes: 62%
  - No: 38%

- Do you have a provisional certification?
  - Yes: 50%
  - No: 50%

- Are you certified to teach special education?
  - Yes: 76%
  - No: 24%
Teacher Demographic Data

- Most participating teachers are at the elementary level.
- Almost two-thirds of the participating teachers are in the first year of teaching special education.
Post Evaluation Results

- The training content is useful for teaching Georgia students: 98%
- This training was of high-quality: 97%
- The training was relevant to my work: 96%
- Overall, I was satisfied with the training: 96%
- I gained new knowledge as a result of this training: 91%
- I feel ready to use the HLP(s) taught in this training: 96%
Teacher Induction Coaching by the Numbers

1,789 coaching contacts between September ‘21 and March ‘22

369 individuals coached to date

93% of coaching contacts were with special education teachers

49% of the contacts were less than 30 minutes and 79% were an hour or less
Coaching Content Items in Coaching Log and Number of Times that Items Have Been Used

- Coaching and mentoring to provide general support (50%)
- Providing feedback regarding the delivery of HLPs (47%)
- Facilitating an MRS session (40%)
- Providing feedback on MRS session/lesson plan for MRS session (32%)
- Conducting HLP look-fors/observations (21%)
- Sharing resources (13%)
- Supporting the development and implementation of IEPs (10%)
Percentage of Participants in Agreement the PL Influenced Their Decision to Return to Teach

Percentage of TPRP Participants in Agreement that the Professional Learning (Training, Coaching, MRS Labs) Influenced Teachers' Plans to Continue Teaching (2022)

- All (n=286): 91%
- Special Education (n=243): 91%
- General Education (n=28): 89%
- Other (n=11): 9...
Feedback From Teachers

• “This program was such a learning experience for me. The most beneficial aspect of the New Teacher Induction Program was that we not only got to learn and discuss in length the high-leverage practices but also got an opportunity to practice and use them in [an] Avatar lab and get feedback from the coaches as well as other fellow teachers.” – Cobb County Schools

• “As new teachers, we face unique challenges. It was comforting to know that I wasn’t alone and that others were experiencing similar challenges. The training was great, and the mixed reality avatar lab let me see I was not alone in the struggle plus I got great feedback and support. All new teachers should attend this program.” -Cobb County Schools
Feedback

• “I am an IRR [Immediate Reinforcement and Remediation] special education teacher. The training on explicit instruction was exceptionally helpful for me to reach all my students.”

• “Watching other teachers use the HLP in the Avatar lab was a learning experience too.”

• “The most beneficial aspect of the New Teacher Induction Program was that we not only got to learn and discuss in length the high-leverage practices but also got an opportunity to practice and use them in [an] Avatar lab and get feedback from the coaches as well as other fellow teachers.”
Success Stories

https://youtu.be/_J0mdWhSPqY
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