



Research Grant Initiative for Early Language and Literacy Practices

Overview and Guidelines

The aim of the Deal Center’s research agenda is to understand the conditions and processes needed to successfully implement and sustain evidence-based and evidence-informed practices in early language and literacy development in organizations working with children and families from birth to age 8. During the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, the Deal Center will continue to study the conditions for all children to be on the path to reading proficiently—and beyond—as defined by the Get Georgia Reading (GGR) four pillars of language nutrition, access, positive learning climate, and teacher preparation and effectiveness. Building back after the pandemic necessitates a stronger and more urgent recommitment to the pillars and the implementation of evidence-based and evidence informed practice in early language and literacy development.

The COVID-19 pandemic has produced unprecedented complications in areas of early language and literacy development. The Deal Center posits that although there is already a great deal known about factors to consider, the conditions that must be in place, and what to do for early language and literacy development given normal circumstances, the focus for early language and literacy practices should also incorporate the development and use of effective alternative approaches. The question that presents itself now is how do we successfully apply what we know about creating the conditions defined by the GGR four pillars to environments—virtual and otherwise—that have prioritized the safety of all involved? How do we create learning environments that are **both** safe and effective at fulfilling the early language and literacy needs of children birth to age 8 amidst the pandemic?

The purpose of this grant mechanism is to provide funding for research about implementation of early language and literacy practices for children birth to age 8 that create the conditions for all children to be on the path to third-grade reading proficiency, as defined by the GGR four-pillar framework of language nutrition, access, positive learning climate, and teacher preparation and effectiveness. More specifically, funding will be provided to University System of Georgia Institutions and State Agencies for the development and/or implementation of virtual and face to face practices that present innovative approaches to fulfilling the early language and literacy developmental needs of children birth to age 8 while simultaneously addressing the threat of the COVID-19 virus and/or during non-pandemic related conditions.

Utilizing implementation science principles, grantees are expected to design and implement a research study that examines the practices that foster early language and literacy with an understanding of developmental and contextual differences in a manner that allows community organizations, the education sector, and children to safely realize the benefits of early language and literacy and sustain these benefits during and post-pandemic. The aim of using implementation science in this manner is to understand how evidence-based practices in early



language and literacy development are adapted to the demands of society amidst a pandemic and beyond.

Background

Research from a variety of disciplines such as child development, neuroscience, cognitive psychology, communication sciences and disorders, educational psychology, early childhood, and literacy education (K-12) have contributed to the understanding of children's language and literacy development from birth to age 8. While this research is useful and informs practice, full integration and implementation has been, at times, elusive. An aim of this research framework will be to better understand successful implementation of evidence-informed strategies.

In 2009, the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and International Reading Association, now known as the International Literacy Association (ILA), reported the following factors that need to be considered when developing strategies for supporting children's literacy development:

- Children take their first critical steps toward learning to read and write very early in life. Children do not become literate automatically; careful planning and instruction are essential.
- Ongoing assessment of children's knowledge and skills helps teachers plan effective instruction. No single teaching method or approach is likely to be effective for all children, at all times.
- As children move from preschool into kindergarten and the primary grades, instruction focused on phonemic awareness, letter recognition, segmenting words into sounds, and decoding printed text will support later reading competence.
- Children who are learning English as a second language will become literate more easily if they have a strong foundation in their home language.

In 2013, Georgia's public and private leaders expanded the conversation to include research from other disciplines such as epidemiology, demography, neonatology, child welfare, health policy, logistics and supply chain engineering, and more. Through this multi-disciplinary research, a greater understanding of the conditions essential for successful early language and literacy development has been reached. Along with leadership and support from the past and current Governors' offices, education policymakers joined together with public health, child welfare, libraries, economic development, nonprofit partners, and other stakeholders to improve children's early literacy skills and have continued to build upon this work for the last decade. Together, they developed a shared understanding of an even wider range of factors that affect a child's path to successful language and literacy development. With this understanding, they created a shared framework for action that defines the conditions that



must be in place so that all children are on that path. This framework consists of the following interrelated pillars:

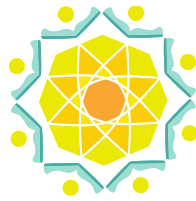
- **Language Nutrition:** All children receive abundant, language-rich, adult-child interactions, which are as critical for brain development as healthy food is for physical growth.
- **Access:** All children—and their families—have year-round access to, and supportive services for, healthy physical and social-emotional development and success in high-quality early childhood and elementary education.
- **Positive Learning Climate:** All educators, families, and policymakers understand and address the impact of learning climate on social-emotional development, attendance, engagement, academic achievement, and ultimately student success.
- **Teacher Preparation and Effectiveness:** All teachers of children ages 0 to 8 are equipped with evidence-informed skills, knowledge, and resources that effectively meet the literacy needs of each child in a developmentally appropriate manner.

Applying Implementation Science

As an attempt to respond to this need, the research framework of the Deal Center will integrate the tenets and methodologies of *implementation science* to study the implementation of early language and literacy practices with an understanding of the developmental and contextual differences in a manner that allows community organizations, the education sector, and children to safely realize the benefits of early language and literacy and sustain these benefits despite the inherent restrictions placed on society during the pandemic. The aim of using *implementation science* in this manner is to understand how evidence-based practices in early language and literacy development are adopted, implemented, and spread. *Implementation science* will provide solutions to the developmental barriers and problems that arise during implementation of these practices. Examples of such problems may be lack of capacity or resources or policy or process barriers that complicate implementation of virtual and face to face initiatives and often become obstacles for implementation.

The Deal Center wants to ensure sustainable programs, systems, practices, policies, and investments in language and literacy practices so that all children in Georgia are on a path to successful language and literacy development. Furthermore, the Deal Center is committed to ensuring that early language and literacy development is not only implemented effectively but can also be done safely, in accordance with public health guidelines, so as many teachers and professionals as possible have access to language and literacy practices without jeopardizing their safety.

Implementation science will enable the identification of contextual factors that can impede the safety of teachers, professionals, and children in order to develop adaptive, successful applications of language and literacy evidence-based practices.



By employing an **implementation science** framework, the guiding methodology of the Deal Center's research framework, the following objectives will be achieved:

- Add to the growing field of implementation science to close the research-to-practice gap in early language and literacy development
- Discover the core components needed to implement and sustain change in programs, policies, practices, systems, and investments that improve early language and literacy outcomes through virtual and face to face initiatives, as well as barriers to implementation
- Identify specific examples for how to build practitioner competencies and promote high-fidelity implementation of innovations that improve children's early language and literacy outcomes through virtual and face to face practices
- Replicate and scale-up safe and effective language and literacy practices, programs, and systems across communities, early childhood and K-12 education, higher education, and all other sectors that contribute to creating the conditions defined by the four pillars fundamental to children's language and literacy development

Eligibility: Eligible applications must exhibit the following characteristics:

- This research grant is only open to University System of Georgia Institutions and State Agencies.
- Cross-sector collaboration between applicant and partner organization. Examples include GA Department of Public Health and Emory University School of Nursing; Georgia State University and the Rollins Center, Atlanta Speech School; University of Georgia and the McPhaul Childhood Development Lab
- Address on of the conditions for all children to be on the path to reading proficiently—and beyond—as defined by the four pillars of language nutrition, access, positive learning climate, and teacher preparation and effectiveness.
- Demonstrate the capacity to show implementation progress by December 1, 2020.

Budget Allocation/Duration: Grants are issued for one year. Allocation is limited to a total cost of \$50,000.00. A total of five (5) grants will be awarded.

Application Requirements: Completed application should be submitted to the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy no later than 5pm on October 28, 2020. Applications will be completed and submitted via Qualtrics. Please click on this link to access the application https://gsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d0CdpPQZxWJqtoN (**Review the application starting on page 7 **BEFORE** visiting this link. The link does not need to be accessed until you are ready to submit your final proposal.)



Timeline

Application Distribution	September 15, 2020
Application Due Date	October 28, 2020 at 5 pm
Award Notifications	December 1, 2019
Grant Project Period	January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2021
Mid-term progress report due	July 1, 2021
Final report due	No later than January 31, 2021

Application Review Process: Members of the research grant review team will evaluate each application to make funding recommendations. The element responses (see application for further information) of the Proposal Narrative will be scored using this scale:

- Excellent: the overall response is descriptive, clear, and coherent, 4 points
- Good: the overall response is clear and understood but lacks descriptive information to gain full understanding, 3 points
- Average: applicant includes required information but the overall response lacks description, clarity, and coherence, 2 points
- Poor: the overall response does not provide adequate information to gain an understanding, 1 point
- Response is missing or response does not provide the required information, 0 points

Grantee Requirements: Successful grantees will be required to:

- Submit a mid-term research report.
- Submit a final research report within 60 days of the end of this agreement.
- Present the findings to the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy staff.
- Present findings and implications at, at least, one to be determined conference presentation.
- Periodically attend events related to the grant initiative.
- Share research data with the Deal Center and submit in an ASCII Text file type.

Use of Funds: The following list of items are not allowable expenditures for this grant:

- Supplanting (Grant funds must be used to supplement not supplant. In other words, the grant funds must be used for a new initiative or scaling up an existing program.)
- Construction or repair of buildings
- Purchase or repair of vehicles



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- Food
- Travel for conferences or professional meetings
- Purchase of equipment
- Items not directly related to grant activities

Questions: Please contact:

Dr. Theresa Magpuri-Lavell, Executive Director of the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy, at 478-445-8500 or theresa.magpurilavell@gcsu.edu

For questions regarding Qualtrics:

Garrett Cook at 478-445-8500, garrett_cook@gcsu.edu



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Application

Application must be submitted online through Qualtrics.

The link to the Qualtrics application is:

https://gcsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d0CdpPQZxWJqtoN

Due Date: The application is due no later than 5 pm on October 28, 2020.

Information about submitting application via Qualtrics: We suggest completing the application in a Word document before beginning the online application. Please note that the application below is exactly the same as the Qualtrics application. Therefore, we highly recommend that you do **not** click through the Qualtrics version of the application until you are ready to submit. We have experienced applicants prematurely submitting their applications because they were simply clicking through the questions.

Pay special attention to the notes found underneath the Partner List table, Project Overview Table, and Detailed Budget Table. The “Back Button” is enabled. Once you submit your application via Qualtrics, send an email to the Garrett Cook at garrett_cook@gcsu.edu to confirm your submission so we can ensure that your application has been received.

SECTION I: APPLICANT PROFILE:

Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigator should be co-leads on the application. These will be the first points of contact for application questions and updates on application status.

Proposal Title:

Principal Investigator

Principal Investigator Name:

Principal Investigator Organization:

Principal Investigator Title:

Principal Investigator Phone:

Principal Investigator Email:

Upload Principal Investigator Curriculum Vitae here:

Co-Principal Investigator

Co-Principal Investigator Name:

Co-Principal Investigator Organization:



Secondary Contact Title:

Secondary Contact Phone:

Secondary Contact Email:

Upload Co-Principal Investigator Curriculum Vitae here:

Fiscal Agent

Name of university/agency/organization that will serve as fiscal agent for the grant:

Fiscal Agent Contact Name:

Fiscal Agent Contact Title:

Fiscal Agent Contact Phone:

Fiscal Agent Contact Email:

Partner Organizations (up to 2 partnerships are allowed)

Name of Organization:

Mailing Address:

Point of Contact:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

Name of Organization:

Mailing Address:

Point of Contact:

Title:

Phone:

Email:

SECTION II: REQUEST

The purpose of this section is to describe your research project.

Request Amount and Project Timeframe

Request Amount (*amount should not exceed \$50,000*):

Project Start Date:

Project End Date:



Proposal Summary

Enter proposal summary here **(200 word limit):**

Proposal Narrative

The following elements should be included:

1. A description of the project, the central research question(s) and its significance **(400 word limit):**
2. A brief summary of the relevant literature, the relationship of the proposed research to that literature, and the new knowledge expected to result from the proposed research **(400 word limit):**
3. A summary to provide detailed information on the following:
 - a. conceptual framework
 - b. research methods
 - c. plan and timeline for data collection
 - d. data collection instruments
 - e. modes of analysis that the project will employ***200 word limit for each component**
4. A clear identification of the principal investigators and a clear definition of the role(s) she/he and any supporting researcher(s) will play **(400 word limit):**

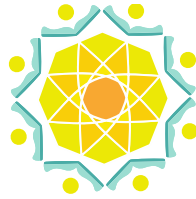
Partner List

Provide a list of partners included in the project, describing their role, and how each will contribute to the project's success.

Partner List Table:

Partner	Description of Partner Role	How partner will contribute to project's success

*At the end of the application, you will find a Supporting Documents section. In that section is a table called Partner List Table. This table is to be completed in a separate Word document and uploaded to Qualtrics under the question **Upload Partner List Table here:**



Project Overview

Provide a list of research questions; data tool(s); data collection methods and analyses and proposed schedule.

Project Overview Table:

Research Questions	Data Tool(s)	Data Collection Method and Analysis	Proposed Schedule
#1:			
#2:			
#3:			

*At the end of the application, you will find a Supporting Documents section. In that section is a table called Project Overview Table. This table is to be completed in a separate Word document and uploaded to Qualtrics under the question **Upload Partner List Table** here:

SECTION III: PROPOSAL BUDGET

Request Amount

Amount:

Budget Narrative

Narrative:

Research Grant Budget Worksheet

- o Access Research Grant Budget Worksheet here: <https://tinyurl.com/yc2nsz59>
- o Download a copy and save to your computer for completion.
- o Within Qualtrics, upload the completed Research Grant Budget Worksheet in the following section:
 - o Section III: Proposal Budget under:
 - Question: Upload Detailed Budget here:



SECTION IV: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the best of my knowledge, the information given in this application is accurate and complete. By authorizing this application, we attest to the accuracy of this data and agree to the responsibility of managing this project if the grant is awarded.

Principal Investigator Name

Signature

Date

Co-Principal Investigator Name

Signature

Date



Supporting Documents



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Partner List Table:

Partner	Role of Partner	How Partner Will Contribute to Success



Project Overview Chart:

Research Questions	Data Tool(s)	Data Collection Method and Analysis	Proposed Schedule
#1:			
#2:			
#3:			