



LITERACY ACTION

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The State of Literacy in Georgia
Action Needed For Georgia's Thriving Workforce and Economy

Over 50 years of changing Lives One Word at a Time

MISSION: To build better futures for by empowering adults with literacy, life, and work skills that empower them to reach their highest potential.

Vision: Break the intergenerational cycle of low literacy and poverty.

Founded in 1968, Literacy Action continues to be a grassroots driver of adult literacy services that advance motivated adults towards employment, better wages, and post-secondary education.

An estimated 1 in 6 adults ages 19 to 65 have low literacy skills, which is defined as a reading level equivalent to the fifth grade or lower.

There are more than 1.4 million Georgians over the age of 25 without a high school credential. Of those, only 5% are enrolled in a literacy program.

HOW WE DO IT

- High School Equivalency (HES) preparation and fast track (5 weeks)
- English as a Second Language
- Reading and Language Arts
- Mathematic Class
- Family literacy
- Digital literacy
- Work Readiness and Soft Skills Training
- Certification/vocational training
- College and career-readiness workshops and individual counseling/referral



Why Support Child and Adult Literacy?

- 13% - approximately 1.4 million adults in Georgia, age 25 and up do not have a high school degree. 13% of adults in Georgia also live below the poverty line. The intergenerational cycle of poverty and low-literacy is devastating.
- Approximately 1 in 6 adults in Georgia read below a 5th grade level, and approximately 17% lack “basic prose literacy” (<https://nces.ed.gov/naal/estimates/StateEstimates.aspx>)
- The adult literacy rate in Georgia actually *decreased* 2% from 2002 to 2017.
- Literacy in the 21st century is about more than being able to read text – Digital Literacy is an increasingly important skill. 19% of GA homes have no broadband subscription and 10% have no computer according to the most recent census. (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/GA>).
- According to the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) there are **75,966** unemployed persons who lack foundational digital literacy skills (about 1/3 of all unemployed).
- In the most recent budget, \$381,377,000 was earmarked for Adult Education (primarily to TCSG who is Literacy Action’s primary funder), which sounds like a lot but is a drop in the bucket of Georgia’s \$20 Billion education budget.
- Atlanta was recently ranked as one of the worse cities in America for upward mobility because only 4% of children born into the lowest income bracket eventually make it into the upper income bracket. Despite the strong correlation between low literacy and poverty, on average only 5% of adults without a high school degree in Atlanta are registered in a Literacy Program.

Foundations and corporations are often keen to fund K-12 educational programs but overlook adult education programs, perhaps not considering that the majority of low-literate adults in America have families. While formal education starts at age 5, learning begins at birth. The adult literacy rate impacts the educational outcomes for children, particularly those in high poverty communities.

- The **National Bureau of Economic Research** has found that children whose parents have low literacy levels have a 72% chance of reading behind grade level themselves, perpetuating the cycle of low literacy and poverty.
- According to research from the **National Institutes of Health** (NIH), a mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success, outweighing other factors, such as neighborhood and family income.
- Children from low literate homes who are not read to regularly if at all, hear an average of 5,000 to 50,000 words before age five. Children who are read to daily hear an average of 170,000 to 1.5 million words before entering Kindergarten. (<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/04/190404074947.htm>)

U.S. Adult Literacy Facts

U.S. Facts

43 Million

More than 43 million adults in the United States cannot read, write, or do basic math above a third-grade level.¹

The Cost of Low Literacy

**\$2.2
Trillion**

Bringing all adults to the equivalent of a sixth-grade reading level would generate an additional \$2.2 trillion in annual income for the country.²

**\$ 106-238
Billion**

It is estimated between \$106-\$238 billion in health care costs a year are linked to low adult literacy skills.³

**3X
The Earnings**

Workers who have less education than a high school diploma have the lowest median weekly earnings (\$597), three times less than the highest level of education.⁴

Incarceration

75%

75% of state incarcerated individuals did not complete high school or can be classified as low literate.⁵

43%

Incarcerated individuals who participate in correctional education programs are 43% less likely to recidivate than inmates who do not.⁶

Member Services



50% of ProLiteracy member programs put students on a waiting list due to demand exceeding program capacity.⁷



Less than 10% of adults in need are receiving services.⁸

English Language Learners



53%

Proficient

Among immigrants only half (53%) are proficient English speakers.⁹



103 MILLION

By 2065, immigrants and their descendants are projected to increase the U.S. population by 103 million people.¹⁰

Family Literacy



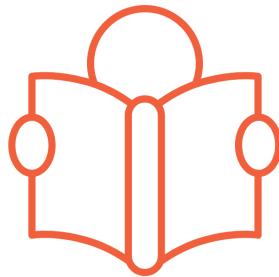
A mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success, outweighing other factors, such as neighborhood and family income.¹¹



ProLiteracy

**LITERACY
ACTION**

By 2024, 80% of all jobs will require at least a high school degree.



**25,163 adults in Georgia are in need
of adult basic education**

816,694

Number of working-age adults (18-64) in the state without a high school credential

53,061

Working-age adults (18-64) without a High School diploma and are unemployed

Many adults have significant barriers to literacy and living wage employment, yet there are only \$639 in Federal funds allocated for each adult learner (as opposed to \$10,000 per pupil in elementary school)

428,952

Number of adults in the state who do not speak English well or at all



Unemployment rate by educational attainment and age 25-34 years

Name	Sep 2022	Aug 2022	Sep 2021
Less than a high school diploma	7.1	7.1	10.6
High school graduates, no college	4.4	5.5	6.8
Some college or associate degree	3.6	4.7	6.0
Bachelor's degree and higher	2.2	2.5	2.7

Source: <https://www.atlantafed.org/chcs/labor-report-first-look?panel=3>

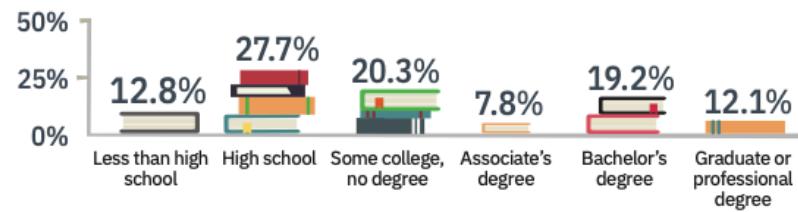


Literacy Impact on Labor Force...

Educational Attainment in Georgia

How Many Pursue Higher Education?

Educational Attainment for People over 25 (2019)



UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR PEOPLE between 25 and 65 (2019)

8.7% 5.6% 4.8% 2.6%

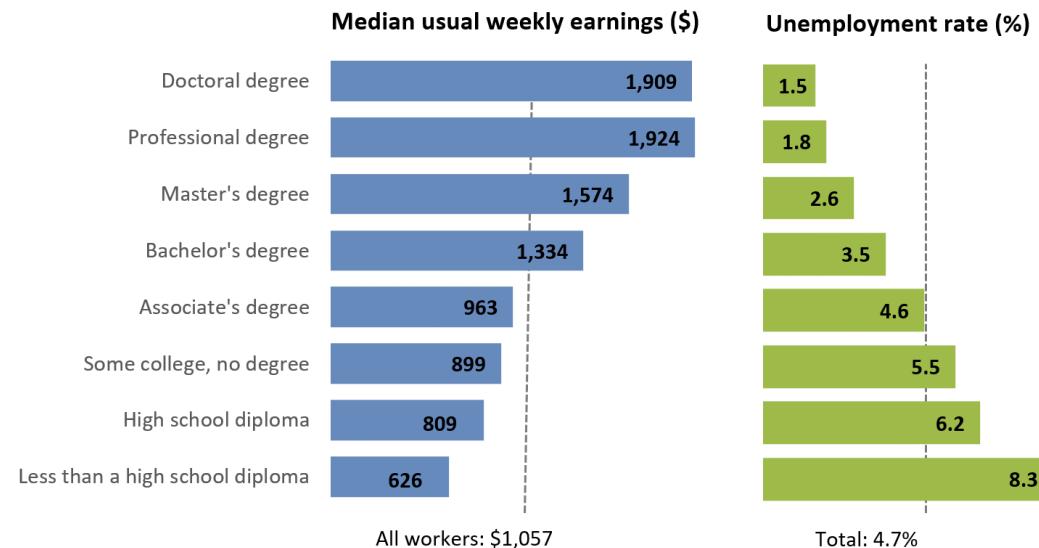
Less than high school High school Some college or associate's degree Bachelor's degree or higher

MEDIAN EARNINGS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR PEOPLE OVER 25 (2020)



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta: Opportunity Occupations Monitor

Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2021



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Policy & Practice – Support for Low Literacy Workers

Basic Skills Training (I-BEST)

- Team teach approach to integrated basic skills and job training
- Basic skills support classes
- Financial and additional advising support

Transferability of Skills

- Value prior (and current) learning
- Connect competencies to credentials
- Skills-Based Career Pathway Activation

Work/Learn

- On-the-Job Training (OJT)
- Apprenticeship programs
- Capstone/Internship

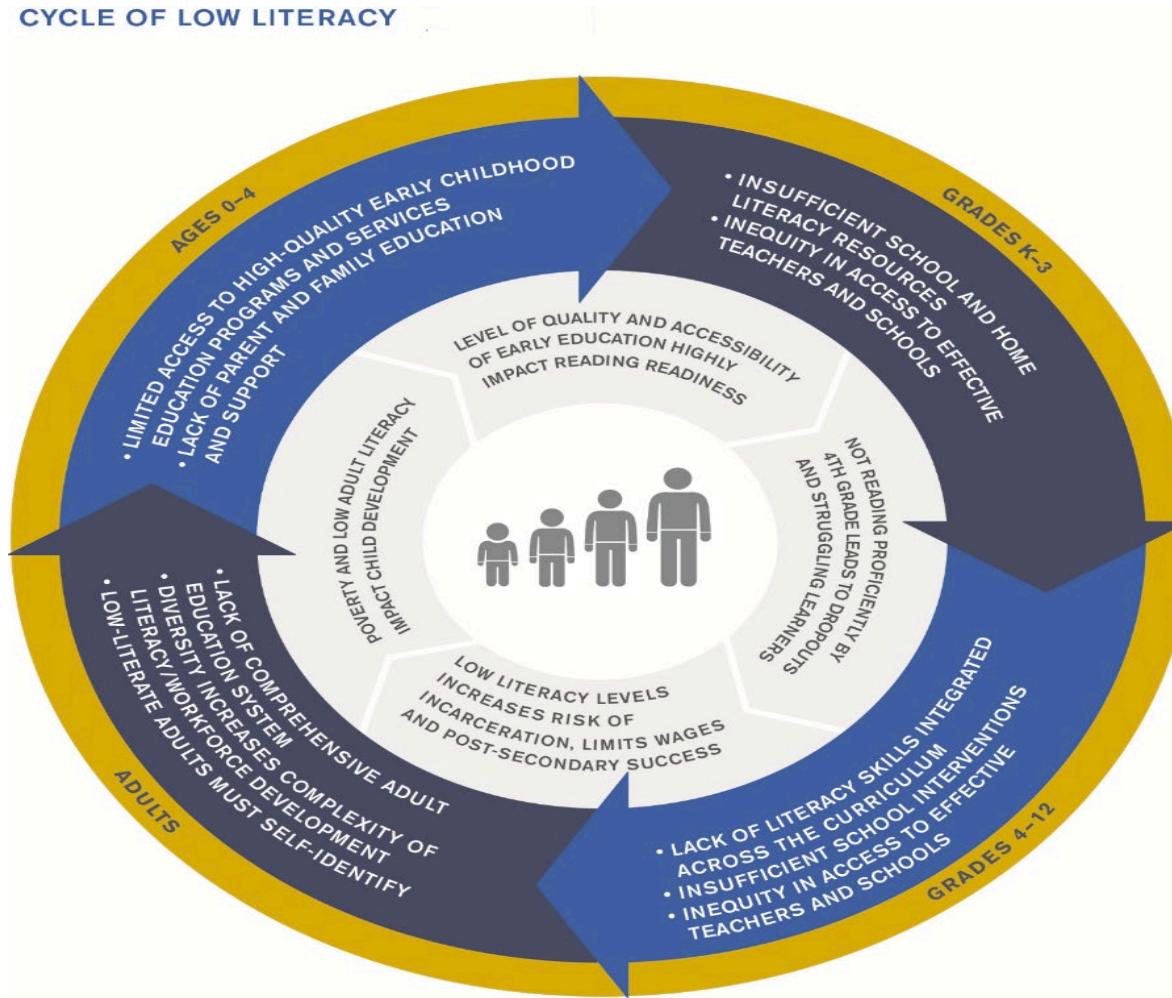
Sector Strategies

- Assess sector competency and credential needs
- Align education and training infrastructure to create wide funnels for talent
- Create industry investors in, and not consumers of, talent

Digital Literacy / Digital Access

- Broadband access and affordability barriers
- Support to be prepared for digital learning
- Mobile training units / roaming access approaches

Low literacy is a multigenerational problem



Source: Barbara Bush Foundation

Governor's Office of Student Achievement(GOSA)

Mission: We support accountability and transparency through strategic data use and collaboration with education stakeholders to advance student achievement.

Programs and Responsibilities

GA AWARDS – the state’s education and workforce longitudinal data system.

Governor’s School Leadership Academy – teacher and leader professional development including strands for new teachers, teacher leaders, aspiring principals and principals.

Growing Readers – instruction for K-3rd grade teachers to teach students reading using the five tenets of the science of reading.

Governor’s Honors Program – a four-week residential program for Georgia’s most talented and academically knowledgeable high school juniors and seniors.

Other statutory responsibilities – end of course assessment audits and research reports.



The State of Literacy in Georgia

- Deloitte conducted research and produced a report in 2017 called “The State of Literacy in Georgia.”
- Without intervention, Georgia is facing a “crisis.”
- 1 in 6 adults with low literacy skills.
- Low literate adults earn \$10K per year less than adults with a high school diploma.
- \$1.26 billion estimated relating to low literacy in social services, penal costs and healthcare.



Georgia Milestones in Reading Comparison

At end of third grade:

<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
27% below grade level	38% below grade level	36% below grade level
73% grade level or above	62% grade level or above	64% grade level or above



Spring 2022 Milestones End of Grade Assessments for Reading

	3 rd Grade	4 th Grade	5 th Grade	6 th Grade	7 th Grade	8 th Grade
Below Grade Level	36%	44%	30%	45%	33%	30%
Grade Level or Above	64%	56%	70%	55%	67%	70%



Importance of 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency

Until 3rd Grade, students are **learning to read**.

From 4th Grade on, students are **reading to learn**.

Low literacy at the end of 3rd grade has serious consequences (if not addressed):

- Students are more likely to drop out of high school.
- They are likely to live in poverty, have poor health and enter the penal system.



Georgia's Work to Improve Low Literacy

- Get Georgia Reading, a program of Family Connections Partnership
- Georgia Literacy Coordinating Council (partnership with GaDOE and Governor's Office)
- Georgia Department of Education L4GA grants)
- Technical College System of Georgia's (TCSG) free adult education programs
 - Certified Literate Community Programs
 - GED preparation
- Two generational approaches to literacy improvements
 - Grants through Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)
 - Partnerships with DECAL and the TCSG
 - Two-Gen Academy (launched in October 2022)
- Growing Readers (hosted at GOSA)
- Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy
- University System of Georgia's new teacher training (SB 88)



House Study Committee on Birth-Adult Literacy

- HR 650 passed and Speaker Ralston appointed members.
- The study committee convened October 17; the committee identified metrics and began discussion the entity that could own accountability.
- Next meeting in 30 days.
- Additional time requested beyond the December 1st deadline for a report and recommendations.
- Link for the House Study Committee Resolution: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/61473>



Action Needed

1. Literacy is a complex issue and should be addressed holistically with researchers, policymakers, business leaders, and stakeholders.
2. Raise awareness of Georgia's literacy crisis.
3. Ensure every child enters kindergarten ready to read.
4. Ensure every child reads proficiently by the end of 3rd grade.
5. Ensure every young adult graduates on time with the literacy skills needed for the workforce or higher education.
6. Ensure every functionally illiterate adult is able to integrate into the workforce and succeed in everyday life.
7. Establish a sustainable system that supports and builds capacity for ongoing literacy success.
8. Build a strong partnership with the local workforce development system for post secondary opportunities for eligible adults...Human Capital Investment.
9. Encourage community-based collaborations to improve literacy.

**Thank
you for
joining
us today!**



Check out our website and follow us for more information:

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