

Georgia Narrative Report 2019-2020

1. State Leadership Funds (AEFLA Section 223)

(a)(i) Alignment with Other One-Stop Required Partners

The Georgia Office of Adult Education (GOAE) prioritized IET as a key core partner and workforce alignment strategy in fiscal year 2019-2020 (FY20). Per a state requirement, all 30 adult education programs offered training under the Integrated Education and Training (IET) model during FY20. Grant Program Support Coordinators (GPSCs) and the GOAE supported programs by providing guidance as they worked to develop IET opportunities that aligned to the high-demand industries within their region or local area. Examples of GOAE support included:

- Identifying meaningful IETs for a local area, such as the American Hotel and Lodging Education Institute credential for Catholic Charities located in metro Atlanta;
- Verifying industry-recognized credentials, such as Cobb County School District's Front Desk Representative credential;
- Clarifying which grant funds could be used to pay for credential exams;
- Reviewing planned IET schedules for all programs;
- Contracting with subject matter experts such as Kaylynn Hamilton to offer technical assistance workshops on understanding and developing the single set of learning objectives (SSLOs);
- Evaluating the SSLOs for all programs; and,
- Conducting observations of the adult education instruction part of the IETs.

Additionally, GOAE, along with representatives from the other core partners, participated in the development of the 2019 WorkSource Academy, which was held at Jekyll Island, GA on November 12-13, 2019. The Fall 2019 WorkSource Academy brought together over 400 state and local core WIOA partners and others involved in strengthening Georgia's workforce. The Academy aims to provide workforce development strategies and best practices to support alignment among all core partners. GOAE staff and local adult education leaders attended the Academy and co-presented on a number of topics including "Basics of Program Eligibility," "WIOA Performance 101," and "Integrated Education and Training."

In spring 2020, WorkSource Georgia, the state agency responsible for overseeing WIOA Title I programs, began convening monthly core partner meetings at the request of the GOAE. These core partner meetings convene staff from WorkSource Georgia, the Georgia Department of Labor, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Office of Adult Education. Meeting topics in FY20 focused on one-stop MOU negotiations, service adjustments due to COVID, and each partner's key federal regulations and participant eligibility requirements.

(a)(ii) High Quality Professional Development Programs

GOAE's state professional development plan are based upon an annual statewide needs assessment with a focus on continuous improvement and compliance. During FY20, GOAE provided professional development designed to improve instruction, address the needs of local providers, and reinforce nationally recognized initiatives. GOAE's professional development incorporates a mix of volunteer and paid local, regional, and national subject matter experts, researchers, trainers, and presenters who share best practices through conferences, workshops, and webinars. FY20 professional

development partners included LINCS presenters, adult educators from local programs, trainers from other states, GOAE staff, and WIOA core partners.

Professional development offerings focusing on the essential components of readings for adult learners included Student Achievement in Reading (STAR) Training, Instructional Strategies and Classroom Activities to Help the Struggling Adult Reader, and Decoding Instructional Strategies for Adult Basic Education Students (volunteer session by Dr. Daphne Greenberg).

Professional development offerings focusing on addressing specific adult learner needs, including physical and/or learning disabilities, included Standards for Adult Educators Workshops, Accommodations and Technology for Adult Learners and Educators (Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation), and Attention Management and Student Instruction: Proven Methods for Supporting Adult Learners (Mockingbird Education).

Prior to the pandemic, GOAE provided local programs with distance education and technology-focused professional development sessions both as stand-alone sessions and as part of the Spring Conference. Examples included Technology Basics and Using Resources to Support Adult Education Instruction, Google Bootcamp: Get Started with Google's Applied Digital Skills in your Classroom (Nell Eckersley), and Introduction to Using Microsoft Word: Common Skills Teachers Need for Themselves and Their Students (Dr. Kim Mulkey).

However, the frequency and intensity of these offerings dramatically increased after the state of Georgia officially shut down due to COVID-19 on March 13, 2020. GOAE shifted immediately and contracted with nationally-recognized facilitators to deliver 27 workshops between March 26 and June 16, 2020 to address training needs for COVID-19. All sessions were delivered live using online platforms and recorded so that all field staff could leverage the asynchronous content. Sessions aimed to support instructors and students as they quickly pivoted from face-to-face to distance education. Webinar topics included:

- An Introduction to Online Resources and Tools for Supporting Student Learning at a Distance
- Delivering Evidence-based Reading Instruction with Technology
- Free (Resources + Online Tools) = Amazing Online Math Lessons!
- Understanding Technology Common to Classrooms and Troubleshooting Basics Every Teacher Must Know
- Creating and Sustaining a Motivational Learning Environment

GOAE also created a targeted [web page for Distance Education](#) resources on our website so all professional development resources were easily accessible. From March through the end of FY20, GOAE distributed weekly Ready, Set, GO Newsletters focusing on distance education best practices and resources from GOAE, subject matter experts, and local programs.

(a)(iii) Technical Assistance

All GOAE staff provide technical assistance to local programs. However, the first line of contact is often through four Grant Program Support Coordinators (GPSCs) who each work very closely with 7-8 local programs. The GPSCs provide a consistent source of information, guidance when a program is struggling, and accurate referrals to appropriate resources.

In addition to targeted technical assistance to individual programs, during FY20, the GOAE conducted several webinar series to provide ongoing opportunities for instructors and administrators to increase their understanding of some of the best practices in adult education in reading, writing, math, English Language Acquisition, distance education, and more. GOAE also provided additional technical assistance on a variety of policies and procedures related to the successful operation of a local program and the appropriate use of our data management system. The ongoing webinars addressed a wide variety of topics including:

- Innovation Exchange Webinars– Tools for Student Success (electronic learning plans; technology access in Corrections), Local Data Management (analyzing program data; data review), Using Northstar Digital Literacy Assessments, Implementing the New Student Registration Form
- Technically Speaking Webinars– TABE 11&12 (best practices), Successful Retention of English Language Learners, Guiding Teachers to Performance Excellence (instructor data analysis), Distance Education Practices for ABE and ESL
- Data Training – Data Closeout parts 1 and 2, Using the GALIS Reports Module
- IET Phone Home – Focus on the SSLOs, New IET Perspectives, Follow-Up from In-Person Workshop, Local Program Spotlights

When local programs began shifting to virtual instruction in March 2020 due to COVID-19, staff members quickly put together specific guidance and resources that local programs needed to continue operations. Communication increased and the number of webinars and other training opportunities increased. Specific training related to the pandemic included: Using Webex for Virtual Student Testing, Remote Proctoring with TABE, Using BEST Plus as a Virtual Assessment, and other related technology training.

GOAE also distributes a monthly newsletter to subscribers to disseminate technical assistance resources and highlight best practices from across the state and nation. After the COVID-19 shutdown, GOAE also distributed a weekly Ready, Set, GO newsletter focusing on distance education strategies and resources to further support the transition to virtual learning.

(a)(iv) Monitoring and Evaluation

GOAE has utilized state leadership funds provided under WIOA Section 223 to support the monitoring and evaluation of adult education programs in several ways. The main FY20 activities included: (a) a revised program monitoring process, (b) webinars and newsletters to disseminate best practices, and (c) local program snapshots. Each of these methods is further described below.

Revised Program Monitoring Process

GOAE launched a revised and streamlined monitoring process in FY20. The new process incorporated or strengthened the following components:

- **New Local Program Monitoring Guide:** GOAE created a new [monitoring guide](#), modeled after OCTAE's monitoring protocol. The guide includes three monitoring modules: (a) *Data, Intake & Assessment*, (b) *Instruction, Programming & Performance*, and (c) *Fiscal*. Each module includes guiding questions and citations related to the federal and state regulations pertaining to adult education. This guide accomplished several objectives. First, it focused GOAE's monitoring efforts on ensuring programs provide high-quality, standards-based

instruction and comply with all applicable federal and state regulations. Second, it provided greater transparency to programs regarding the monitoring process. The Local Program Monitoring Guide is posted on GOAE's website. Any program – even those not being monitored during the fiscal year – can use the guiding questions and citations as a checklist to ensure they are meeting all necessary requirements.

- **Updated Risk Assessment:** GOAE updated its annual risk assessment. The revised risk assessment generates a separate programmatic and fiscal risk score for each program. GOAE then uses the results of this risk assessment to determine which programs to monitor, as well as which modules to monitor a program on.
- **Virtual Document Review & Monitoring:** GOAE incorporated several virtual components into its monitoring process. Rather than review documents on site, programs now upload documents into a secure shared folder for GOAE staff members to review *prior* to the visit. This change shortened the average monitoring visit length from four to five days to one to two days, minimizing disruptions to local programs. In FY20, GOAE also monitored two of its providers 100% virtually. In FY20, the visits included document review and interviews with students, staff, and partner organizations. GOAE was able to seamlessly update this process in preparation for conducting all of its FY21 monitoring visits virtually due to COVID-19. More information regarding these updates are discussed later in this section.
- **Program Summary Review Form:** As part of GOAE's old monitoring process, programs received a detailed and lengthy monitoring report. While these lengthier reports were helpful, they also took significant time to prepare – delaying valuable feedback. Under its new process, GOAE provides a Program Summary Review Form within 30 days of the monitoring visit. Programs also receive immediate, high-level, verbal feedback during the closeout conference on the last day of the visit.

In FY20, GOAE utilized the new process to monitor five programs (two virtually and three on site). Based on feedback, local programs found the revised process and more timely feedback helpful. For example, one program stated: “The information that was sent to us [prior to the visit] was right on target and helped me feel prepared, especially as we communicated back and forth. I don't think there was anything that could have made things go smoother. Everyone knew what to expect, except they were surprised at how simple and quick it was. We received feedback and suggestions quickly and were able to start implementing many of those ideas right away.”

The monitoring visits surfaced one common finding – local programs need additional support on aligning instruction to the College & Career Readiness Standards and the English Language Proficiency Standards. This common finding prompted GOAE to begin planning additional training on standards alignment.

While all the FY20 monitoring visits occurred prior to COVID-19's onset, GOAE updated its monitoring guide and process at the end of FY20 to prepare for 100% virtual visits in fall 2020 and winter 2021. These updates included: (a) additional questions and citations in the protocol related to virtual enrollment, provisional EFLs, and distance education, b) virtual classroom observations of either live or recorded synchronous distance education classes, and (c) a review of asynchronous learning materials. GOAE plans to conduct seven virtual monitoring visits in FY21.

Dissemination of Models and Promising Practices

GOAE utilized several methods to disseminate models and promising practices during FY20. These methods included:

- **IET Phone Home:** Single Set of Learning Objectives, New IET Perspectives, Follow-Up from In-Person Workshop, Local Program Spotlights
- **Poolside Chats:** When COVID-19 hit, local program leaders expressed a need to meet and talk informally with their peers, particularly around challenges and successes transitioning to virtual instruction. GOAE provided a platform for these discussions by hosting Poolside Chats via Webex. The Poolside Chats were informal, participant-led discussions around a certain topic, such as virtual instruction for lower-level students, virtual enrollment, and ESL virtual instruction.
- **Monthly Newsletter:** GOAE distributes a monthly newsletter to almost 1,000 subscribers. The monthly newsletter includes features on promising practices from local providers GOAE has identified through monitoring, evaluation, and technical assistance activities.
- **Ready, Set, GO Newsletter:** During spring and summer 2020, GOAE prepared a weekly newsletter focused exclusively on best practices and relevant information regarding virtual instruction in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Program Snapshots

In the beginning of FY20, GOAE produced local program snapshot reports summarizing each program's demographic and performance characteristics from the prior year. The goal was for local programs to use the snapshot reports to inform data-driven decisions and program improvements during FY20. GOAE distributed the program snapshots during the July 2019 Operations meeting and digitally. GOAE also produced similar state snapshots throughout the fiscal year to monitor performance progress and inform stakeholders. Programs also have access to local versions of the NRS Table 4 report to monitor enrollment and learner gains throughout the year. The local reports allow programs to drill down by instructor, class, and student to inform programmatic improvements.

(b) Additional Permissible Activities

After the COVID-19 shutdown in March 2020, GOAE partnered with the Georgia Virtual Technical Connection department of the Technical College System of Georgia to deploy an online learning management system for all adult education providers in Georgia. GOAE selected Blackboard to align with the learning management system used by the technical colleges. GOAE implemented Blackboard statewide to ensure all local providers could support distance education for any student during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to facilitating the rollout of Blackboard, GOAE also provided significant technical assistance and professional development for Blackboard and distance education to support local use of the instructional technology. For instance, GOAE began hosting weekly It's GO Time with Blackboard webinars for local program leaders to share best practices, provide demonstrations, and allow programs to share with one another. GOAE plans to continue the use of Blackboard to enhance adult education instruction in the future.

2. Performance Data Analysis

During FY20, local programs had Measurable Skill Gain (MSG) targets for each educational functioning level (EFL) aligned to the state's target of 57%. GOAE's data system, GALIS, produces state- and local-level reports to support regular data analysis by GOAE and local programs. For example, local programs accessed Table 4 reports that allowed them to disaggregate the data by

instructor, class, and student. At least quarterly, GPSCs conducted either in-person visits or desktop monitoring that included reviewing their assigned programs' data and monitoring progress towards their targets. Through this process, GOAE identified overall challenge areas for programs to inform technical assistance.

At the beginning of the year, GOAE also reviewed each program's prior performance to place programs on either Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) or Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs). In FY20, one local program was on a CAP due to noncompliance with state and federal policies related to local data management. In addition to the required CAP, the program was monitored more frequently and more comprehensively. Eight programs were put on a PIP because they did not meet 90% of their MSG target for the prior fiscal year (one of these programs was terminated in December 2019 due to grant noncompliance). In addition to submitting plans to improve performance, the programs had to identify a performance improvement team, identify reasons for prior low performance, and develop actions to improve performance. Additionally, these programs were required to host a performance-related training by GOAE and submit quarterly updates. GOAE plans to continue its use of risk assessments and monitoring to identify targeted supports for programs to increase performance.

Georgia's overall MSG percentage for FY20 was 37.49%, which did not meet the 90% threshold of the negotiated 57% target for FY20. Prior to the COVID-19 shutdown in March 2020, MSG performance in FY20 was already trending lower than FY19 even though overall NRS enrollment was similar. FY20 was the first fiscal year in which all programs were using only the TABE 11/12 as the approved ABE assessment for the NRS (programs were still using TABE 9/10 in FY19 prior to the sunset date). While analyzing Table 4 data throughout the year, GOAE saw a significant change in ABE entry EFLs and performance due to the full implementation of TABE 11/12. For instance, the number of students entering adult education at ABE Level 1 was twice as high as in FY19 and the number of students entering at ABE Level 2 was two-thirds as high. On the other hand, the number of students entering at ABE Levels 5 and 6 declined by at least 90 percent. As a result, most programs encountered more challenges achieving MSGs as instructors and students adjusted to the increased rigor of the TABE 11/12. By March of 2020, the ABE MSG percentage statewide was 9 percentage points lower than the same point in FY19, whereas the ESL MSG percentage was 0.2 percentage points higher than the same point in FY19.

With regards to the other indicators of performance, GOAE saw very slight increases in second and fourth quarter employment and median earnings after exit compared to the FY19 NRS reports. GOAE observed a larger increase in high school equivalency attainment and employment within one year, but a decline in high school equivalency attainment and enrollment in postsecondary within one year (this indicator also declined from FY18 to FY19). Part of the increase in high school equivalency attainment and employment within one year was impacted by improvements to our data match business rules. Overall, given that the cohort of students included in FY20 for the follow-up indicators were not yet impacted by COVID-19, GOAE believes the changes in the employment and credential performance indicators reflected the general economic trend of declining unemployment rates prior to COVID-19.

After the COVID-19 shutdown in March 2020, enrollment and post-testing stalled as programs worked to resume operations virtually, ultimately resulting in minimal growth in enrollment and MSG performance by the end of FY20. Between March and June 2020, total enrollment grew by

only 3% instead of the expected 15% in prior years. Due to challenges with accumulating contact hours and virtual test administration for ABE and ESL students, MSG performance barely changed between March and June 2020 instead of typical gains of at least 10 percentage points in prior years. For instance, typically 60% of all students are post-tested as reported on Table 4B; in FY20, only about 45% of all students were post-tested by the end of the year, indicative of the retention and testing struggles imposed by COVID-19. Additionally, the total contact hours grew by 10% between March and June 2020 compared to a typical 40% growth in prior years.

As all programs shifted to distance education, GOAE required programs to submit virtual enrollment plans for approval prior to implementing virtual enrollment to ensure programs had effective procedures for verifying student eligibility, collecting student information, and protecting personally identifiable information. After the transition to distance learning, the proportion of distance education contact hours grew significantly. Prior to the shutdown, about 5% of contact hours were distance learning; after the shutdown, 96% of all contact hours were distance learning. Additionally, before COVID-19, only 2% of students were classified as distance education students, which GOAE defines as whether more than 50% of the student's hours were earned through distance education. After COVID-19, 93% of students met the definition for distance education students.

As GOAE and Georgia's adult education programs continue to tackle the challenges posed by COVID-19 in FY21, GOAE plans to implement a target negotiation process similar to OCTAE's federal process to set meaningful enrollment and MSG targets with local programs. GOAE will continue to monitor progress towards these targets through regular data analysis and provide targeted support based on findings. GOAE will also engage local programs in data reflection exercises to inform program improvement throughout the year.

3. Integration with One-stop Partners

Per 34 CFR § 463.415, GOAE delegated its required one-stop responsibilities to local providers. In Georgia, the 19 Local Workforce Delivery Areas (LWDAs) do not directly align with the service delivery areas of the state's 30 adult education providers. Therefore, GOAE designated a primary adult education one-stop partner in each LWDA to fulfill one-stop partner responsibilities, including signing the MOU and paying infrastructure costs. Adult education programs that were not the primary one-stop partner were still required to engage with their local one-stop(s) by providing direct linkage to their services.

GOAE accomplished this delegation through two grant assurances – one related to negotiating infrastructure costs and another related to ensuring programs have direct linkage to the one-stops in the LWDAs where they serve students. In April, GOAE also released OAE Memo 20.4.20, accompanied by a webinar, to provide additional guidance and clarification on one-stop partner responsibilities and MOU renegotiations. The April memo and webinar helped providers navigate the MOU renegotiation process, which occurred for Georgia's LWDBs in spring 2020.

Georgia's adult education providers provided access to career services in multiple ways. Several adult education programs had staff co-located at their local one-stops that provided information about the program, conducted intake, orientation and testing, and taught classes. For example, Atlanta Public Schools (APS) conducted intake, orientation and testing for new students each Wednesday at their local one-stop. APS also offered three classes at the one-stop location. Similarly, Lanier Technical College enrolled students and offered classes for students at their local

one-stop. Lanier Tech was able to continue to offer these services at the one-stop – either virtually or through modified in-person instruction with social distancing requirements – during the pandemic. Other programs provided direct linkage to their adult education programs through technology. In many instances, the adult education program had a designated phone line where interested students could call the adult education program to obtain information about the program and begin the enrollment process.

GOAE provides multiple layers of monitoring and technical assistance to ensure local providers are fulfilling one-stop partner responsibilities. In FY20, GOAE’s Director of Accountability attended several of the MOU renegotiation meetings, reviewed several MOUs and infrastructure funding agreements (IFAs)¹, and provided technical assistance to local programs on the one-stop MOU renegotiation process. As part of its annual monitoring process, GOAE also reviewed one-stop MOU agreements, LWDB and one-stop partner meeting notes, and interviewed one-stop partners and LWDB representatives.

4. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) Program (AEFLA Section 243)

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) grant funds were competed in Spring 2017 for the grant period of FY18-FY20. The application for IELCE funds was separate and distinct, with the requirements of the grant clearly delineated. Eleven local providers were awarded IELCE grants for services beginning July 1, 2017. The grantees included six technical colleges, four community-based organizations, and one faith-based organization. (NOTE: During FY20, one community-based organization was defunded mid-year due to ongoing fiscal accountability issues.) The range of grant expenditures for FY20 was from \$13,522 to \$507,726. Georgia’s IELCE providers serve a diversity of ELLs, from refugees who lack literacy in their native language to professionals with degrees from their native countries.

All IELCE grantees had Integrated Education and Training (IET) opportunities for students during FY20. Training needs were identified by IELCE grantees through their participation in local workforce board meetings and/or one-stop partner meetings for their area. To support the need for the IET, programs reviewed employment data, communicated with employers and training providers, and conducted student surveys to find which IETs held the greatest interest for IELCE students. IELCE programs used 243 funds in combination with other federal, state, and local funds to provide IET services. While most of the IELCE grantees partnered with other organizations to conduct the training, four providers opted to conduct their own in-house training for students; Catholic Charities, Cobb County Schools, and Georgia Piedmont Technical College all offered an American Hotel and Lodging Education Institute training, and Savannah Technical College offered Entrepreneurship training. Some other local offerings included Certified Nursing Assistant, Home Health Aide, and Phlebotomy.

All IELCE providers had a Career Services Specialist (CSS) to support students by building strong relationships with other social services agencies in their areas. The CSS actively referred students for services that will support them and their families, including housing, childcare, schooling, and healthcare. Many CSSs also led the IET efforts for their program, offered soft skills training, and generally worked with students in all areas of college and career readiness.

¹ In Georgia, the majority of Infrastructure Cost Agreements utilize the square footage methodology to determine each partner’s proportionate share of infrastructure costs.

GOAE provided technical assistance and professional development to IECLE grantees throughout FY20. Several grantees received targeted technical assistance with identifying and establishing their IETs. Other technical assistance included observation and feedback of instruction, and understanding performance accountability. In terms of professional development, a targeted training was conducted on the Single Set of Learning Objectives at the beginning of the fiscal year. Then, on December 4-5, 2019, GOAE's ESL Summit provided workshops including, "Preparing English Learners for Work and Career Pathways: Understanding Key Concepts," "Navigating Online Resources for Adult ESL Learners," and "Supporting ESL Learner Persistence." In mid-March 2020, the GOAE held its annual conference and included a specific track devoted to ESL/IELCE grantees. The year culminated with a series of webinars that were designed to support all providers, including IELCE providers, with the conversion to virtual program administration and instruction in response to COVID-19.

In line with other groups of students, performance measures were more difficult to accomplish in FY20 due to the onset of the pandemic, which resulted in the closure of face-to-face classes. While programs quickly launched virtual instruction, the number of parents who stopped attending to care for their children, and the challenges many students faced related to technology, resulted in reduced MSG opportunities. Also, from mid-March through most of June, many programs halted new student enrollment due to the need to develop clear procedures for virtual enrollment and testing. By the end of FY20, the MSG percentage for IELCE students was 44.49%, which was about 10 percentage points lower than the prior year.

5. Adult Education Standards

GOAE adopted and implemented a statewide rollout of the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) beginning in FY17-18. The CCRS, which are Georgia K-12 aligned, along with the later released English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) provide the foundation for all instruction and assessment across the state. All GOAE funded programs are required to provide CCRS- and/or ELPS-based instruction to all students. GOAE provides rigorous training and technical assistance to instructors. GOAE posts standards resources on its [website](#). Local instructional leads and the GOAE Grant Program Support Coordinators (GPSCs) monitor programs on a regular basis. These individuals review and monitor classroom instruction, lesson plans, and program curriculum. They provide coaching, technical assistance, and feedback to local program leadership and the GOAE as required.

GOAE delivers standards-focused professional development in two phases:

1. A six-week online introductory course: Understanding the College and Career Readiness Standards, provided by the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL). The online course is a prerequisite to attend the in-person workshops.
2. In-person three-part workshop series:
 - a. Part 1 – Classroom Resource Alignment Workshop
 - b. Part 2 – Instructional Activities & Learning Assessments Workshop
 - c. Part 3 – Sustainability: Instructional Preparation, Delivery and Leadership Support Workshop

The online class and the in-person workshops are based upon the knowledge gained from participating in the Standards-In-Action (SIA) initiative. Using the SIA learnings, GOAE continuously

revises the standards professional development offerings to improve the understanding and implementation of standards-based instruction statewide. One of the key lessons learned during the standards implementation roll-out is the importance of ongoing training, observation, and support. GOAE has found that even though instructors may say that they “understand” how to leverage standards in their practice, effective implementation is a different story altogether.

With the onset of COVID-19, GOAE adopted the Blackboard learning management system. In addition to supporting programs with the switch in instructional platforms, the professional development team immediately began planning for the redesign and migration of all face-to-face standards workshop materials into Blackboard. This work will continue into the new fiscal year. GOAE also worked with local programs to develop a Quality Assurance Rubric for Distance Education Instruction that included a focus on standards alignment in the distance learning environment.

6. Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals (AEFLA Section 225)

The Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) has a distinct and independently funded education program for inmates. Since GDC’s funds are not enough to serve all inmates and all facilities, adult education local providers support these efforts by offering classes in prisons, local jails, day reporting centers, and substance abuse centers. During FY20, 23 adult education programs served 2,733 correctional students throughout the state. Overall, correctional students earned 859 measurable skill gains in 2,740 periods of participation (31.35%), which was 25 percentage points lower than the previous year. Similar to the overall student population, the drop in performance was due to the increased rigor of the TABE 11/12 assessment and the COVID-19 shutdown.

During FY20, GOAE worked with the Technical College System of Georgia’s Data and Research team to establish a data sharing agreement with GDC to begin calculating recidivism rates specifically for GOAE correctional students. GOAE also began collecting GDC identification numbers for adult education students in GALIS. GOAE has not yet received the full three years of data needed to calculate a recidivism rate that aligns with GDC’s definition, which looks at new arrests or parole violations with returns to prison within three years. Nevertheless, according to the latest report from GDC, based on FY16 releases, the recidivism rate for incarcerated adults completing GED programming was 19%, compared to a recidivism rate of 28% for the general incarcerated population.

After the COVID-19 shutdown, most local programs were unable to provide in-person or virtual instruction due to COVID-19 concerns and restrictive Internet or technology policies for inmates. Some programs were able to provide paper-based distance education through instructional packets. One program was able to continue instruction because the adult education instructor was the warden of the prison. GED testing was also suspended at correctional facilities beginning mid-March through the end of June. Several correctional facilities had high incidents of COVID-19, ultimately limiting outside personnel from entering the facility. In response, the paper-based testing (PBT) option was implemented at selected facilities. State correctional staff were certified and appointed as PBT Test Administrators, and Official PBT correctional sites were approved for GED testing of incarcerated candidates.