

**ONE TEAM - ONE VISION - ONE GOAL**

The Dr. David "Butch" Mosely

Office of  
Rural Education & Innovation



*Educating Georgia's Future*  
by leading transformational  
efforts to ensure a  
**prosperous, connected,  
and thriving rural Georgia.**

[GaDOE.org/rural](http://GaDOE.org/rural)



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**Dr. Bronwyn Ragan-Martin,  
Deputy Superintendent for Rural Education and Innovation  
Georgia Department of Education**

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## Our Challenges

### Lack of Exposure & Poverty

- **40.5% of the population** in Georgia is rural
- **Nearly ¼ of the population** may be illiterate
- **19.4% of rural Georgia** lives in poverty compared to 12.4% of its urban counterparts
- **1 in 4 children** in rural Georgia live in poverty

### Infrastructure

- **Approximately 25% of Georgians** do not have access to broadband in their homes. The percentages are higher in rural counties.

### Teacher Recruitment & Retention/Economic Development

- Attracting, retaining, and growing **quality teachers and leaders**
- **It is more difficult to attract teachers**—and to keep them—in the rural areas
- **Lack of businesses & prepared workforce** affects the economy

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On July 28, 2021, State Superintendent Richard Woods established a new Office of Rural Education and Innovation at the Georgia Department of Education.

### *Priority #1: Prosper*

- **Providing a strong foundation of the fundamentals** for rural Georgia's early learners
- Ensuring **all students** have the supports they need to **succeed**
- **Empowering families and communities** to access services and supports
- **Removing non-academic barriers** that impact learning and achievement

### *Priority #2: Connect*

- **Increasing broadband** availability to support student learning
- **Ensuring access** to technology and devices in rural Georgia

### *Priority #3: Thrive*

- Attracting, retaining, and growing **quality teachers and leaders**
- Creating a vibrant **workforce and economy** in rural Georgia
- **Expanding opportunities** for students beyond core content areas

# Our Team

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- **Dr. Bronwyn Ragan-Martin**
  - Deputy Superintendent, Early County
- **Dr. Kermit Gilliard**
  - Senior Program Manager, Grady County
- **Dr. Charity Roberts**
  - Instructional Specialist, Pioneer RESA
- **Russell Paine**
  - Technology Specialist, SWGA RESA
  - Partnerships Specialist
- **Heather Finley**
  - Teacher Recruitment & Retention Specialist, Fannin County
- **Dr. Laura Ergle**
  - Partnerships & Operations Specialist, Griffin-Spaulding
- **Ilisha Terez-Evans**
  - Business Support Analyst, GaDOE

## Assessing Needs

- The REI Team has used different needs assessments to learn what districts need to provide funding and to advocate for them more clearly.



# Break for Questions

- What questions do you have before we get into each area of work?



October 9, 2023

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## Senior Program Manager - Dr. Kermit Gilliard

### GaDOE Policies & Contracts

- Serves on the GaDOE Policies Committee and Cabinet
- Supports the specialist in obtaining contracts

### Grant Management

- Supports school districts by answering questions regarding Rural Grants
- Approves grant budgets and prior approval forms for Rural Grants

### Research / Communication

- Supports Dr. Ragan-Martin and the team by conducting research as needed for initiatives
- Serve as liaison between Dr. Ragan-Martin and the team, working to ensure communication is clear and consistent

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## Leadership - Dr. Kermit Gilliard

### Identified Areas of Focus

- Concerns about leadership shortages
- Concerns about building capacity of current leaders
- Concerns about certification rules for leadership degrees in regard to pay upgrade

### Possible Solutions

- Developing a leadership pipeline "grow your own" initiative
- Existing leadership programs that could make a rural model
- Equipping current school leaders through a partnership with GLISI, GAEL, and/or the Schlechty Center
- Working with local universities to develop leaders for rural Georgia

### Next Steps

- Consider contracting with an outside person/group to develop an Aspiring Leaders program
- Start a group for principals and a group for assistant principals to help develop personal capacity and allow for discussion of current issues
- Consider funding positions at RESAs to provide capacity/instructional leadership in content areas



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# Instruction – Dr. Charity Roberts

## Areas of Focus

- CONNECTING, COMMUNICATING, AND COLLABORATING
- Building Teacher Capacity
- Literacy - Foundational Skills, Science of Reading, Interventions, Clarity, and Writing
- Leveraging Instructional Leadership to Impact Student Achievement & Teacher Excellence

## Opportunities for Support

- Literacy Partnerships with RESAs
  - Professional Learning for Teachers – LETRS, Orton-Gillingham, Wilson Reading
- The Rural Seats Project
  - Partnerships with Forsyth Virtual Academy – Computer Science
- Bridging the Digital Divide
  - Building capacity for AP Courses and expanded course catalogs in rural districts through live-streamed instruction

## Communication

- "Heads Together" Sessions
- Teacher Table Talks
- REI Newsletter

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# Technology - Russell Paine

## Problems

- **Connectivity:** Approximately 25% of Georgians do not have access to broadband in their homes. Rural counties have a higher percentage
- **Cybersecurity:** Ransomware attacks on schools are increasing
- **Classrooms:** Equitable Access to 21st Century Learning & Devices

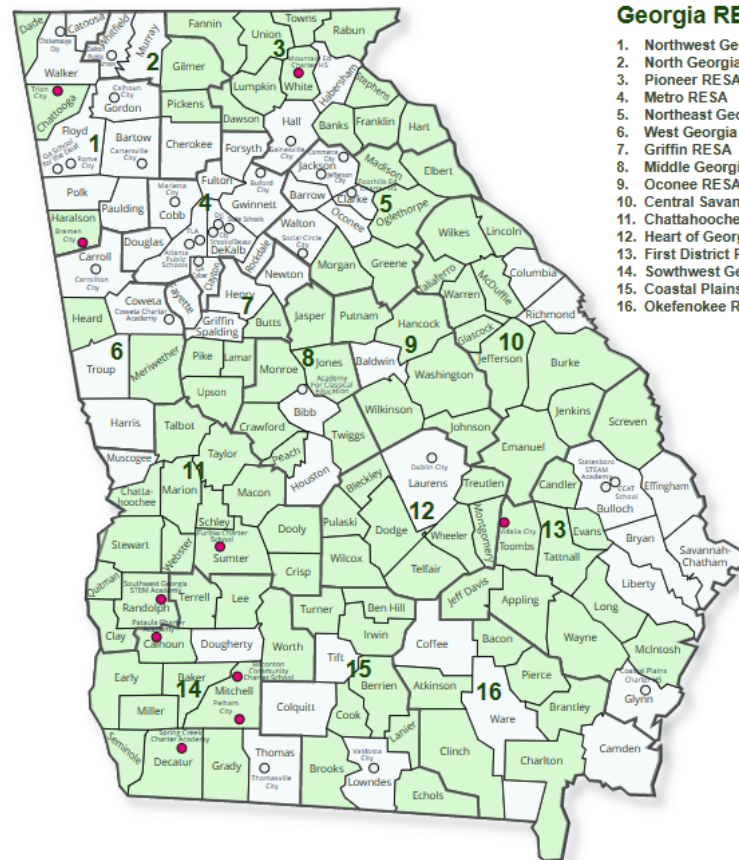
## Solutions

- **100k Rural Technology Grant** for all 115 Rural School Districts **Awarded!**
- Increase **Broadband** availability to support student learning and help to close the homework gap through the **AffordableConnectivityProgram (ACP)**
- Provide **Cybersecurity Training Cohorts** for Districts through the 16 RESAs.
- Provide **Cybersecurity Tools** for Districts: **RAVE + BitSight + KnowBe4**
- Provide **21<sup>st</sup> Century Standards** – Technology Task Force & Carl Vinson
- Provide **21st Century Technology** in rural Georgia: **WALB News Baker County**
- Provide **Virtual AP and World Language Courses:** **Kloud-12 | Swivl | eGlass**
- **Chromebook Repair Class** **Computer Support Interns CSI | PC Pro | CBParts**

## Communications

- **Rural Education and Innovation** webpage that includes technology resources and a **Rural Innovation Map** | **Monthly CIO Call** | **K12 Connections** & Govt CIO
- **Georgia Insights Technology Inventory**
- **iTT Instructional Tech Talk** for Instructional Techs and Academic Coaches

# REI Innovation MAP



## Georgia RESAs

1. Northwest Georgia RESA
2. North Georgia RESA
3. Pioneer RESA
4. Metro RESA
5. Northeast Georgia RESA
6. West Georgia RESA
7. Griffin RESA
8. Middle Georgia RESA
9. Oconee RESA
10. Central Savannah RESA
11. Chattahoochee-Flint RESA
12. Heart of Georgia RESA
13. First District RESA
14. Southwest Georgia RESA
15. Coastal Plains RESA
16. Okefenokee RESA

Hover an LEA to see it on the map or click to go to the LEA's website. Georgia Demographics icons are also present where available. Click these to get a full Demographics-by-County Report.

LEA Name	Links
18,386 Appling County	
8,165 Atkinson County	
11,164 Bacon County	
Baconton Community Charter School	
872	
3,038 Baker County	
19,234 Banks County	
16,700 Ben Hill County	
19,397 Berrien County	
12,873 Bleckley County	
19,109 Brantley County	
6,600 Bremen City	
15,457 Brooks County	
22,383 Burke County	
24,936 Butts County	
6,189 Calhoun County	
10,803 Candler County	
13,392 Charlton County	
10,907 Chattahoochee County	
24,789 Chattooga County	
2,834 Clay County	
6,618 Clinch County	
17,270 Cook County	
12,404 Crawford County	
22,372 Crisp County	
16,116 Dade County	
26,108 Dawson County	
26,404 Decatur County	
20,605 Dodge County	
13,390 Dooly County	

Click on the map to access LEA websites

# iTT (Instructional Technology Talk)

The goal of our Instructional Tech Talk (iTT) initiative is to inspire and equip a community of Instructional Technology Specialists, Academic Coaches, and other Innovative Educators by creating a platform where participants can share personal stories, struggles, successes, and EdTech resources with each other to recharge your coaching batteries!



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## Partnerships - Russell Paine

### The Problem

- Increased mental health needs and lack of resources in rural areas
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for adolescents
- Over 40% of students will have experienced a mental health problem
- The most prevalent health barriers to learning development are dental pain, persistent hunger, and uncorrected vision problems

### Solutions

- Mass Vision Screening - SW & ChattFlint RESA
- Partnerships with Ag. Ed. and foodbanks to address food insecurity
- School Safety grant support for rural Georgia schools
- Handle with Care

### Partnerships

- Albany Area Primary Healthcare
- Communities in Schools
- GEMA

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## Partnerships & Operations Specialist – Dr. Laura Egle

*Rural students must be prepared to enter the workforce with the knowledge and skills to obtain high wage, high skill and/or high demand careers. Additionally, they need to be prepared for careers that might not yet exist due to the ever changing and advancement in technology.*

### Need for More College & Career Ready Opportunities

- College credits – with articulations and dual enrollment opportunities either at your high school campus, CCA, or post-secondary campus.
- Work based learning – job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships aligned to their career pathway and/or desired pathway.
- Students ready for the workforce – accelerated career diploma.
- At risk students – Great Promise Partnerships
- Expand scholarship opportunities

### Partnerships

- **College and Career Academies**
- **Post-Secondary Experiences**
- **Business & Industry**

### Impact on Georgia's Economic Development

- Giving rural students more college and career opportunities will **strengthen local areas and the state as well as empower those individuals** to be successful and prosperous.

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## Teacher Recruitment/Retention - Heather Finley

### The Problem

- **It is more difficult to attract teachers and leaders** and to retain them in the rural areas.
- **Teacher Preparation Programs** are not producing enough teachers.
- **High quality teacher preparation programs** are often not near rural areas, creating barriers for rural residents who want to become teachers.
- **Retention rates** are declining due to teacher workplace dissatisfaction.
- **Promotion of the Profession and Rhetoric** about teaching is negative.

### Possible Solutions

- **Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs** are being promoted to combat the Georgia teacher shortage.
- **Grow Your Own** district initiatives strengthen teacher and leader pipelines.
  - Para to Teacher Grant- 70+ rural districts will be granted over 2 million in tuition reimbursements in SY 23-24 to 527 paras
- **Colleges & universities** are establishing partnerships with RESAs and Districts to find innovative ways to strengthen the educator pipeline.
- **HB 32 Teacher Tax Credit** was designed to improve teacher recruitment in high need subject areas for rural and low-performing public schools.
- **GaLEADS** is a new teacher evaluation pilot system that emphasizes teacher growth and elevates the educational profession.

### Effects on Georgia's Economic Development

- **School districts are often the largest employers** in a rural district. Having a **strong and stable educator workforce** supports the overall economic growth of a rural area.
- Districts with strong educator workforces ultimately lead to **better student education** and in turn supports **future economic growth**.

# Break for Questions

- What questions do you have about the areas of work?



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## Our Wins

- Well received with a great deal of support
- Trust
- Visibility
- Grant process
- ESSER funds
- Professional learning summits
- Networks



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## Our Barriers

- Learning GaDOE processes, which can be cumbersome
- Figuring out how we fit into the agency as well as how we coordinate with RESAs, LEAs, and different networks
- Position changes
- Small team, large state
- Sustainability



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## Conclusion

### Dedicated

- Rural educators who are **dedicated to serving the rural districts of Georgia**

### Solutions

- **Seeking solutions to rural issues & concerns**

### Support & Sustainability

- Ensuring that what we set up is **supported & designed to be sustained by the districts**

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## Q & A

Questions???