REACH Coordinator Handbook

Getting Started
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Roles & Responsibilities
REACH Coordinator

The REACH Coordinator plays a critical role in the success of the program within your school system. The Coordinator ensures program fidelity and is the point of contact for REACH Georgia staff. The Coordinator should have the ability to work with the mentors, academic coaches, school personnel, members of the community, volunteers, REACH Scholars and REACH staff to ensure that program requirements are met. The REACH Coordinator is appointed by the school superintendent.

Responsibilities:
1. Ensure that all REACH Scholars, parents/guardians, mentors and academic coaches have an understanding of their role and responsibility in the REACH Georgia Program.
2. Ensure school system and student paperwork is submitted to the REACH Georgia staff in a timely manner.
3. Oversee the student selection and interview process.
4. Ensure student academic, behavior, attendance, mentoring and coaching data is entered into the STARS database two times per year; no later than February 15th and June 30th. Submits any additional Scholar reports to REACH Georgia staff as requested.
5. Coordinate the dissemination, completion, and submission of annual surveys.
6. Coordinate events with schools, students, parents and administration.
7. Serve as local mentoring champion. Ensures high-quality mentoring by selecting qualified mentors for all REACH Scholars. Conducts or oversees mentor training (min. two hours pre-match) in compliance with REACH standards. Ensures mentees and mentors have an understanding of their role and responsibility in the mentoring relationship.
8. Work with school principals, superintendents and community partners on fundraising efforts.

REACH Academic Coach

A REACH Academic Coach monitors student progress, ensuring each student stays on the path to high school graduation and college enrollment by tracking academic performance, behavior and attendance. If a Scholar’s performance drops below REACH standards in any of these areas, or if other needs arise, the Academic Coach will help the student and/or parent/guardian identify and access additional resources (e.g. tutoring, counseling, etc.). Additionally, the Academic Coach meets with each Scholar at least once per month to review college and career goals and plans.

Responsibilities:
1. Monitor REACH Scholars’ grades, behavior and attendance on a weekly basis.
2. Meet with REACH Scholars at a minimum of once per month to review future goals and college and career plans.
3. Keep record of all meetings with Scholars and report each semester to either the REACH Coordinator or the REACH Staff.

REACH Mentor

Mentoring, at its core, guarantees young people that there is someone who cares about them, assures them they are not alone in dealing with day-to-day challenges, and makes them feel like they matter. Research confirms that quality mentoring relationships have powerful positive effects on young people in a variety of personal, academic, and professional situations. We ask that all REACH School systems and mentors adopt and adhere to the REACH Georgia Mentoring Standards.

Responsibilities:
1. Complete a comprehensive background check.
2. Complete a training provided by the school system.
3. Adhere to school system policy and procedures.
4. Meet with his/her mentee (REACH Scholar) weekly for a minimum of eight times per semester.
5. Completes mentor survey as required.

REACH Scholar

REACH Scholars are the most important piece of the entire program. REACH Scholars are nominated and selected by the school system and community based on demonstrated academic promise and commitment. REACH Scholars will be provided with the social and academic support they need to be successful in middle school, high school and in the postsecondary pursuits. Additionally, REACH Scholars are given a college scholarship award upon successful completion of the program through middle and high school.

REACH Parent/Guardian

Parents/Guardians play a key role in the success of their REACH Scholar. They are expected to encourage, support, and assist their students in their academic, professional, and personal pursuits to the best of their abilities.

Responsibilities:
1. Complete required program forms (applications, FERPA release, release of information, etc.).
2. Attend the REACH Signing Ceremony to honor the awarded students and sign the REACH Georgia Commitment Pledge.
3. Attend REACH Georgia related meetings.
4. Support and encourage their student to focus on academics, to meet regularly with his/her assigned mentor and academic coach, to maintain positive behavior and attend class.
Application & Selection Process
School System Application Process

School systems interested in becoming a part of the REACH program should complete the REACH Scholarship Program application and proceed with the following:

- Identify the REACH Coordinator.
- Establish a mentor program or utilize an existing local program.
- Identify the Academic Coach that will monitor Scholars’ academics, behavior and attendance as well as their transition from middle school to high school.
- Develop plans to engage the community and sustain the program financially and programmatically (Note: School systems must raise a portion of scholarship funds for the second cohort of REACH Scholars and thereafter).

Post School System Application Process

Once a school system is selected to participate, the school system should:

- Create a REACH Scholar selection committee comprised of community members.
- Ask counselors and principals to nominate students to fill out an application.
- Have community based selection committee select REACH Scholars to participate.
- Establish or utilize an existing mentoring program to pair REACH Scholars with mentors.
- Pair REACH Scholars with an Academic Coach to monitor student progress and develop education/career plans.
- Plan REACH related activities, programs, and a signing ceremony.
- Report program performance measures and REACH Scholar data into the STARS database each semester.
- Begin raising funds for the next cohort of 8th grade REACH Scholars.

Student Application Process

School systems select Scholars by:

- Developing a fair and consistent screening and selection process.
- Nominating qualified students to apply (see Selection Criteria section). Nominations can be made by counselors, principals, superintendents or anyone else who is able to identify students most in need of the REACH Scholarship and that meet the eligibility requirements.
- Requiring student application be filled out in full along with one academic recommendation and one community recommendation.
- Reviewing student applications (nomination form, proof low income, citizenship/residency requirements, grade/attendance/discipline reports, etc.).
Student Selection Criteria

The REACH Program Regulations provide requirements for student eligibility. Eligible students must:

- Be a U.S. Citizen or Eligible Non-Citizen for 12 consecutive months prior to the first day of classes of the spring term of the REACH Scholar’s 7th grade school year. *(Proof of Eligible Non-Citizen Status is required with program application.)*
- Be enrolled as a full-time student at a REACH School System in an eligible middle school.
- Demonstrate and provide proof of financial need.
- Demonstrate academic promise (grade, attendance, and behavior requirements).
- Have attained grades of "C" or better in core courses for the past two reporting periods (semester system) or four reporting periods (quarter system).
- Not be truant. A truant is defined as any child who is subject to compulsory attendance and who has more than five (5) days of unexcused absences during either of the student’s middle school calendar years.
- Have a behavior record that reflects no more than two total combined Level I and/or Level II disciplinary infractions.
- Not have had any out-of-school suspensions in the past two semesters or four quarters.
- Not have any criminal and/or drug convictions.
- Have his/her parents/guardians complete and submit a release of information form, as part of the application process, authorizing the school to provide Georgia Student Finance Authority (GSFA) information related to the student’s participation in the program.

The REACH Program also provides guidance in the selection of Scholars. Preference should be given to:

Future first generation college students.

- Students who have less than a 3.0 cumulative grade point average in core courses but have the potential to make As andBs.
- Students who have no disciplinary infractions during the two semesters immediately preceding the spring term of the student’s 7th grade year.
• Students who have the potential to succeed at the postsecondary level.

Student Selection Committee

After students have been chosen for consideration, the final selection needs to rest on the shoulders of a community group. This group will become the core of your fundraising team. There is a lot of positive energy in the selection process and those involved develop a relationship with the students. Once, they have chosen your Scholars, it will become important to them that these students and the REACH Program succeeds in your school system.

Potential selection committee participants:

• Business leaders
• Faith-based leaders
• University or community college personnel
• Chamber of Commerce or local rotary members
• Local “Champions/Heroes”

The benefits of the local community as a selection committee:

• They develop relationships with the Scholars through the interview process.
• The final selection of Scholars will rest on the shoulders of this community group and not on the school system.
• The committee will have the energy for bring in funding and attracting possible funders after interacting with the Scholars.

Post-Selection

Once selected, Scholars sign a contract on REACH Signing Day committing to:

• Maintain strong grades.
  ▪ Cumulative GPA of 2.5 or better in middle school and high school. (GPA is calculated by GSFA/GSFC in the same manner as GSFA/GSFC calculates the high school grade point average for initial HOPE Scholarship eligibility).
  ▪ Minimum 2.0 GPA and Satisfactory Academic Progress in college.
• Remain drug and alcohol free.
• Meet with their REACH mentor weekly with a minimum of eight face-to-face meetings per semester.
• Meet with their Academic Coach once per month.
• Attend REACH program activities.
• Maintain good attendance.
  o A student’s attendance record must demonstrate the student’s adherence to the established policies and procedures of the local board of education and adherence to mandatory state school attendance policies over the previous school year.
  o Any student deemed truant is ineligible for the REACH Program.
  o Participating School Systems may establish and require REACH Scholars to adhere to more rigorous attendance requirements for the purpose of REACH.

• Maintain good discipline and behavior.
  o A student must not have more than two total combined Level I and/or Level II disciplinary infractions or one Level III disciplinary infraction and no out-of-school suspensions, as defined by Georgia’s Progressive Discipline Model (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-735, et seq.), during the school year immediately preceding the final semester of the student’s 7th grade year.
  o In the case of an 8th, 9th, 10th, or 11th grader entering the program pursuant to Section 5204.4, the student must not have more than two total combined Level I and/or Level II disciplinary infractions or one Level III disciplinary infraction and no out-of-school suspensions, as defined by Georgia’s Progressive Discipline Model (O.C.G.A. §20-2-735, et seq.), during the school year immediately preceding the first day of classes of the Spring semester which precedes the academic year during which the student will first become a REACH Scholar.
  o Participating school systems may establish and require REACH Scholars to adhere to more rigorous discipline eligibility requirements for the purpose of REACH Program eligibility.

• Develop educational and career plans.
• Graduate from high school.
• Enroll in a University System of Georgia (USG) or Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) institution or an eligible private postsecondary institution of their choice.
REACH Signing Day
REACH Signing Day

During the fall, **REACH Georgia** is given statewide recognition through press releases, social media and occasionally live media coverage as new Scholars are inducted into the program. During this week-long event, the Governor and First Lady, state representatives and the REACH Georgia staff travel the state to welcome new students to the REACH Scholarship program by attending REACH signing ceremonies.

During the REACH signing ceremony, students and their families commit to satisfying the program requirements, graduating from high school, and enrolling and completing college. They sign contracts agreeing to uphold program requirements much like athletic signing day ceremonies. Additionally, the REACH Signing Day ceremonies are perfect opportunities to engage community stakeholders and supporters. Consider inviting elected officials, local Chamber of Commerce representatives, potential donors, local TCSG and USG representatives, your scholar selection committee, mentors, etc. to share in welcoming our future college graduates, Georgia workforce and community leaders to REACH Georgia!

While REACH signing ceremonies vary from system to system, below is a sample agenda that can serve as a general guide for your event. We look forward to supporting your school system during this event and welcoming your next cohort of Scholars.

Sample REACH Signing Day Ceremony Agenda

1. Welcome and Occasion (5 min) – Superintendent or designee
   - REACH Program Background Information
   - Play video of Governor and First Lady
2. Recognition of Board, Distinguished Guests, Elected Officials (5 min) – Superintendent or designee
3. Remarks by Guest Speaker (5-7 min) – typically school systems ask an elected official to speak
4. Signing Ceremony (10-15 min) – Superintendent or designee
   - REACH Program Signing Ceremony Instructions (See below.)
   - Students are called by name; student signs student commitment form; parent/guardian signs parent commitment form
5. Closing (2 min) – Superintendent or designee
6. Photo opportunities for families and community members

**Note:** This sample agenda is intended to serve as a guide. Customize for your school system’s event.

REACH Program Signing Ceremony Detailed Instructions

Typically, this segment is led by the Superintendent or designee.

The Superintendent opens by stating:

- At this time, we will induct the REACH Class of ________.
• REACH Scholars, I would like to walk you through your obligations and responsibilities.
• The contract that you are about to sign requires that you:
  - Keep an overall 2.5 (“C”) grade point average
  - Have good attendance
  - Have good behavior and remain drug and crime free
  - Meet with your assigned mentor weekly
  - Meet with your assigned academic coach at least once each month
  - Attend REACH events, meetings and programs
  - Engage in activities to prepare for college
  - Graduate from high school with a diploma
  - Enroll in and graduate from Georgia HOPE-eligible post-secondary institution
• REACH Scholars, before we sign, please signify “I will” as I administer the following charges:
  • Will you commit to keeping good grades, attendance and behavior, meeting with your mentor and academic coach, graduating from high school and college?

  [pause for response]

  • REACH parents and guardians, will you commit to supporting your students as they progress through the program. Will you also commit to attending REACH events, meetings and programs, contacting your student’s academic coach or counselor if there are issues you believe should be addressed?

  [pause for response]

  • Community members, it is incumbent on us, individually and as a community, to affirm our willingness to support these REACH Scholars in their journey to adulthood. Will you commit to supporting these REACH Scholars with your time, talent and treasure as they progress through the REACH program and into college and careers?

  [pause for response]

• It is now time for you to sign your contracts.
• Congratulations, REACH Scholars, Parents and Guardians!
STARS
Scholar Tracking And Reporting System
STARS (Scholar Tracking And Reporting System)

The STARS (Scholar Tracking And Reporting System) data portal is the system used to track REACH Scholar progress. As a program requirement, REACH Georgia Coordinators across will use STARS to document Scholar performance each semester. The data provided in the spring *(reported no later than February 15)* and summer *(reported no later than June 30)* will be used to track student progression, serve as an early warning system and verify eligibility of students for continued program participation. Behavioral data, including attendance and behavior infractions, is manually provided, while academic data is provided through the electronic transcript exchange process. Prior to adding behavioral data, transcripts must be submitted providing the student’s GPA.

Please reference the STARS Data Portal Guide to get started. The guide includes step-by-step instructions on how to access STARS, update student records and upload transcripts to GSFA.

You should find this resource to be user friendly, but if you require additional assistance or have questions, contact REACH Georgia at 770.724.9250 or reach@gsfc.org.
Transfers, Exits & Replacements

Scholars & Administrators
Scholar Transfers and Exits

It is imperative that REACH Georgia staff is aware of the current status and location of each scholar at all times. Scholars move from school to school for various reasons and sometimes without warning. A REACH Scholar that transfers to a participating, non-participating or a nonpublic Eligible High School located within the state of Georgia will remain a Scholar provided all eligibility requirements are met. REACH Scholar documents should be retained at the home (original) school of acceptance for eight years after the Scholar’s high school graduation. A copy of the student’s REACH file will follow the Scholar.

If a REACH Scholar leaves your school system to attend a different school system, you must complete a scholar Transfer Form within one week of departure. The Transfer Form can be found under the Resources tab on the REACH Georgia website (reachga.org) or by contacting the REACH Georgia offices. Once the form is complete:

- Scan a copy to reach@gsfc.org.
- REACH Georgia will confirm receipt and proceed with the scholar transfer process.
- For questions related to the preparation of the form, contact the REACH staff at reach@gsfc.org or 770.724.9250.

If a REACH scholar is determined to be ineligible to continue in the program due to behavioral misconduct, poor academics, truancy or other infractions, please complete a scholar Exit Form within one week of the exit. The Exit Form can be found under the Resources tab on the REACH Georgia website (reachga.org) or by contacting the REACH Georgia offices. Once the form is complete:

- Scan a copy to reach@gsfc.org.
- REACH Georgia will confirm receipt and proceed with scholar exit process.
- Please do not use the exit form if a scholar is transferring to another school system. Please use the transfer form instead.
- If an exited scholar has been replaced, please scan and email a copy of the replacement scholar’s application to the REACH Georgia offices.
- For questions related to the preparation of the form, contact the REACH staff at reach@gsfc.org or 770.724.9250.

Note: If the exit takes place prior to the end of the Scholar’s 8th grade school year, the Participating School System may choose another student in the same grade to participate as a REACH Scholar by communicating such replacement to the REACH Georgia staff and following requirements for student selection in the REACH Program Regulations, provided that such designation is made prior to the day such replacing student begins 9th grade. If a Scholar is deemed ineligible to participate in 9th, 10th, 11th, or
12th grade, the Participating School System will have the opportunity to include an additional 8th grade Scholar in the next Academic Year’s cohort of 8th grade Scholars.

Replacing a Scholar

Determine if the scholar is eligible to return prior to the next REACH signing day. If so, the Participating School System may allow the Scholar to return. If not, move forward with the exit/replacement process.

- If the scholar is not eligible to return as an eligible REACH scholar, notify REACH Georgia staff by submitting the exit form within one week of Scholar’s departure.
- Identify a qualified replacement; replacement should be a rising 8th grader.
- The replacement Scholar must complete a REACH Georgia application. Upon completion, the replacement Scholar should be selected through an eligibility screening process consistent with all other REACH Scholar applicants.
- Scan and email a copy of the replacement Scholar’s REACH application to REACH Georgia staff and retain the original application for your records. **Note:** The original REACH Georgia application should remain on file at your school for a minimum of eight years after the scholar’s high school graduation.

Coordinator/Principal/Superintendent Transfers & Replacements

In an effort to maintain programmatic consistency within your school system and so that there is not a lapse in services for your Scholars, we recommend that each school system maintain accurate records and designate someone as a REACH champion within your school system that can help during a transitional phase. Detailed processes, procedures, REACH Scholar files, calendar of events and community contacts should be made readily available and passed on to the replacement coordinator/principal/superintendent if the role becomes vacant. Notify REACH Georgia staff immediately of a transfer or replacement so that we may make note of the change and to assist with the transition if needed.

In preparation for a planned or unforeseen transition:

- Maintain and store original Scholar applications and any supporting documents securely. REACH Scholar documents should be securely retained for eight years after the Scholar’s high school graduation.
- Maintain documented processes and procedures specific to your school system complete with dates and deadlines (i.e. Mentor Selection, Screening and Training; Annual Fundraising; STARS updates; REACH Scholar Events; etc.).
- Maintain a list and contact information of all Scholars, mentors and academic coaches.
- Maintain and store all mentoring and coaching logs.
• Maintain and store the REACH Georgia handbook and STARS Training guide for reference.
• Maintain a list and contact information of all community champions, financial supporters and selection committee members.
• Remain familiar with the specifics of REACH and be prepared to brief your replacement on how the program works, where you are in the process for the current year, and next steps.
Compliance Checks
Compliance Checks

As mentioned, high quality mentoring and academic coaching are essential to the success of REACH Georgia Scholars. Adequate documentation of each mentoring and academic coaching session is required and should be made readily available to REACH Georgia staff.

Additionally, Program Coordinators should check in with the mentor at a minimum of once per month. These ongoing contacts will help ensure that the mentor and Scholar meet regularly and are also important for uncovering any start-up problems that require the Program Coordinator’s immediate assistance. Many school-based mentoring programs keep track of how frequently each pair is meeting by having a logbook at the school where mentors sign in.

The check-in discussion during this period should be focused on monitoring the quality of the mentoring relationship, assessing whether it is making progress toward its goals, learning whether the mentor or youth is losing interest in the match, and helping to address problems that may be arising between the pair. While the mentor log may prove to be a useful tool for monitoring, Program Coordinators should strive towards a personal interaction as best practice.

Compliance Agreement

The REACH Program Coordinator agrees to the following and will maintain records as proof of compliance:

- School system agrees to adhere to REACH mentoring standards as noted in program regulations and coordinator handbook.
- Program Coordinator agrees to ensure that mentors and academic coaches meet regularly with REACH Scholars as outlined in the program regulations.
- Program Coordinator agrees to secure and maintain in the STARS database, or in any manner prescribed by REACH Georgia, accurate records that detail all mentor and academic coaching interactions with REACH Scholars. The academic, behavioral and attendance status of each Scholar should also be documented.
- Program Coordinator agrees to check in with the mentor at a minimum of once per month to ensure relationship quality.
- Program Coordinator agrees to retain REACH Scholar documents for eight years after the scholar’s high school graduation.
Funding Model, Community Engagement & Fundraising
Funding Model

REACH provides all funds for a school system’s first cohort of 8th grade Scholars ($10,000 for each REACH Scholar).

For each new cohort of 8th grade REACH Scholars (second year of a school system’s participation and each year thereafter), the school system raises funds to support a portion of the scholarship and REACH funds the remainder. The portion of the school system’s financial responsibility is based on the relative wealth of the county. REACH uses the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Jobs Tax Credit Tier Levels to determine the funds needed per scholarship:

- Tier 1 counties = $1,500
- Tier 2 counties = $2,500
- Tier 3 counties = $3,500
- Tier 4 counties = $5,000

Counties are ranked and placed in economic tiers using the following factors: highest unemployment rate; lowest per capita income; and highest percentage of residents whose incomes are below the poverty line.

The 2017 Job Tax Credit Rankings may be found here:

Community Engagement & Fundraising

Through participation in REACH, school systems are encouraged to utilize community resources in order to provide comprehensive support for Scholars, thereby eliminating a duplication of services. REACH Georgia Staff helps school systems “connect the dots” to access community resources and foster local partnerships. Develop and maintain a healthy relationship with community partners to ensure ongoing program and fundraising support and engagement. After the selection process has taken place, request this committee to do the following:

- Make a list of possible local businesses, community organizations, and individuals that might contribute to the REACH scholarship.
- What are some possible fundraising efforts that would be effective in your community?
- From your list, designate of those identified have the potential of being a small, medium or large donor. Assign a possible contribution amount.
- Who should be making each call, writing a letter, and/or planning the events?
• Talk about the benefits of donating to REACH in your community.
Research and stay abreast of the resources available. Consider the following resources to help build and support your overall local REACH efforts.
  • Existing community based mentoring programs (Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Club, Communities in Schools, YMCA)
  • Community members/families/ local “champions” (those with deep roots and history in the community)
  • Chamber of Commerce
  • Service clubs (Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, etc.)
  • Colleges, universities, technical Schools
  • Foundations (school and family)
  • Politicians/school board members
  • Faith-based organizations
  • Local businesses and corporate partners

Increase fundraising by showcasing your Scholars:
  • Have the Scholars speak at rotaries, chambers and other service organization.
  • Present the Scholars at PTA meetings and discuss how this scholarship is going to change their lives.
  • Look for opportunities to have the local paper, TV and radio stations showcase your Scholars.
  • Look to businesses for opportunities for your Scholars to job shadow or intern. These Scholars are helping change the culture of the community and increasing your community’s skilled workforce.

Examples of current fundraising methods by the REACH Sites:
  • Rotary Club and/or Kiwanis Club
  • Grants
  • PTA donations
  • Monthly payroll deductions
  • Competitive sports events (i.e. kickball tournament)
  • School gala and/or beauty pageant
  • Letter writing campaign