

DMGROUP IN ACTION

Seeing Results at Bibb County School District (GA): Instructional Guidelines and Effective Scheduling Help Raise Elementary Achievement

by Craig Gibbons and Tess Nicholson

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Elementary school students in Bibb County School District (BCSD) in Macon, Georgia, have been showing steady improvements in achievement on Georgia's Milestones Assessment. Students who were in the third grade in SY2017 have seen achievement levels rise throughout their elementary career, with two-thirds of them scoring Developing or above on the statewide ELA assessment by fifth grade in SY2019. Those who were in third grade in SY2016 saw similar increases in achievement, with 64% scoring Developing or above by the time they finished elementary school in Grade 5 in SY2018 (*Exhibit 1*).

"The work done in conjunction with District Management Group (DMGroup) to establish district-wide elementary instructional guidelines and ensure implementation through effective scheduling has played an important role in helping to achieve these results," say Superintendent Dr. Curtis Jones Jr. and Superintendent of Teaching and Learning Dr. Tanzy Kilcrease. "This work, in combination with a variety of other district initiatives, is helping us move the needle for our students."



Bibb County School District students

The First Step: Examining Existing Practices and Establishing Instructional Guidelines

Superintendent Curtis Jones arrived in the district in April 2015 determined to put the district back on solid footing. He sought to stabilize the district following a

FAST FACTS



BIBB COUNTY SCHOOL
DISTRICT (GA)

21,971 students

- **77%** Black or African American
- **13%** White
- **5%** Hispanic or Latino
- **5%** Other

Students Eligible for
Reduced-Price Meals:

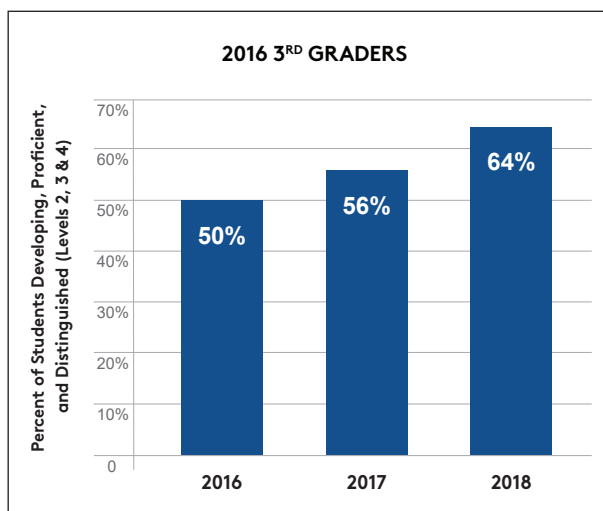
97%

(climbing from 72.8% in FY2008)

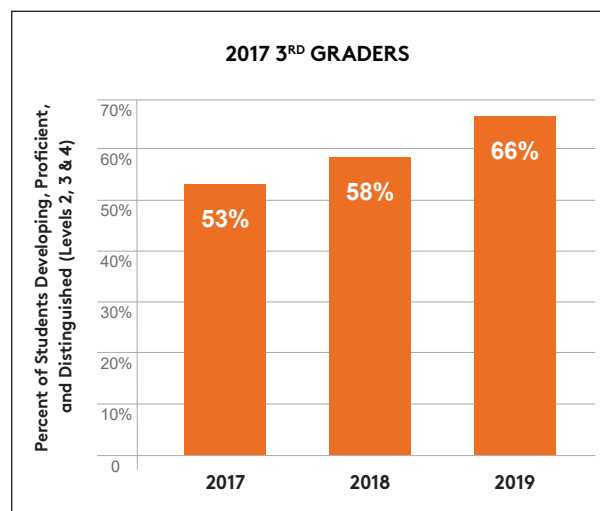
Special Education
Identification:

10%

Exhibit 1 BCSD ELEMENTARY STUDENTS HAVE SHOWN STEADY OVERALL PROGRESS



Source: Georgia Milestones Assessment System.



financial scandal under the prior superintendent's tenure, but most importantly, Dr. Jones wanted to put the focus back on raising the achievement levels of the district's students. Quickly sensing that there were significant differences in the instructional practices across the district's 22 elementary schools, he and Dr. Tanzy Kilcrease decided to focus on this issue immediately and engaged District Management Group in the winter of 2015 to partner with them. DMGroup was charged with (1) conducting a deep analysis of the district's current instructional practices across the elementary schools and comparing the district's practices to best practices; (2) working with district leadership to develop instructional guidelines for elementary schools district-wide; and (3) working to ensure that these instructional guidelines be implemented with fidelity.

DMGroup's analyses of current practices confirmed that there was indeed significant variation among the 22 elementary schools. The analyses provided detailed data on the specific types of variations and helped to identify recommendations for improvement. Armed with this information, district leadership worked closely with the DMGroup team to develop and codify district-wide instructional guidelines that incorporated best practices. For example, guidelines were created as to which subjects are eligible for pull-out to ensure that special education and intervention supports are not scheduled during key reading and math blocks. Additional guidelines increased time for reading instruction and math instruction, including a 45-minute intervention period for every grade level, as well as 50 minutes of specials at every grade and every school.

Total
Schools

37

Total
Staff

3,300

Total
Expenditure:

\$250,193,424

Per Pupil
Expenditure:

\$9,693

Four-year
Graduation Rate:

79.4%

Average Daily
Attendance

96%

Source: Bibb County School District, SY2019. <https://www.bcsdk12.net/>

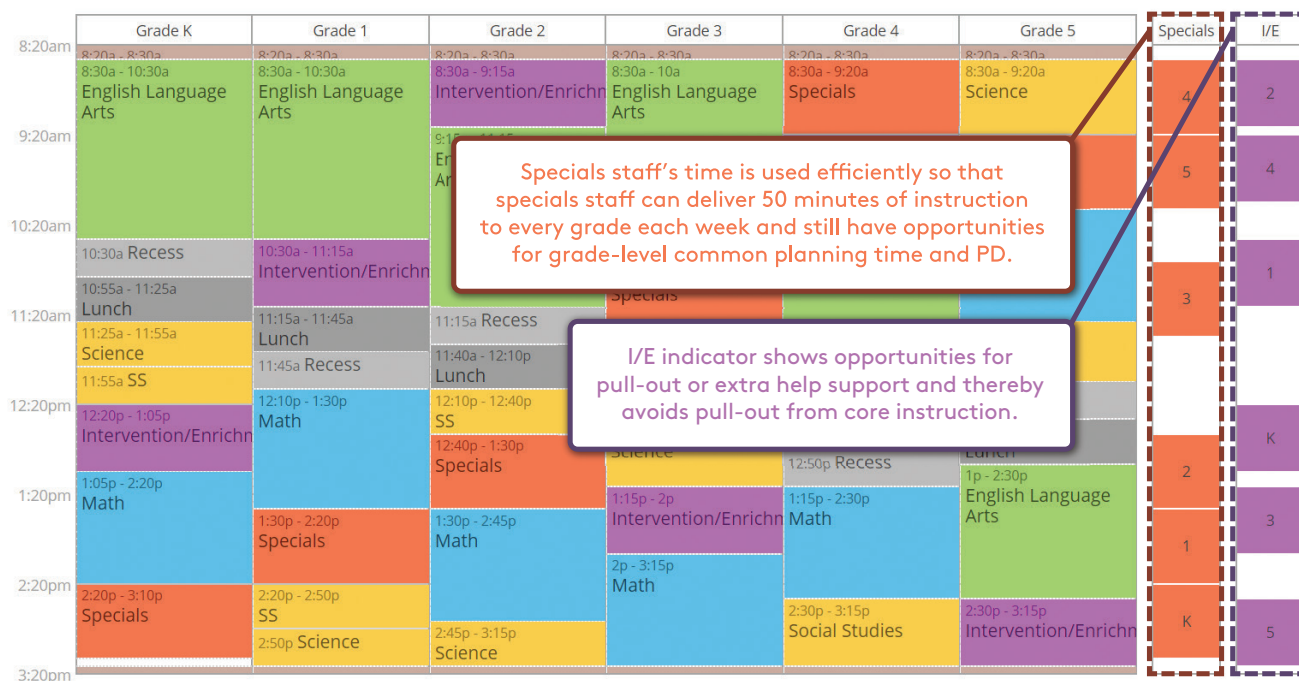
Implementation Is Essential to Impact: Scheduling Shows the Way

Setting guidelines was an important step, but to have impact, Dr. Jones and Dr. Kilcrease knew that they had to ensure that these guidelines were implemented with fidelity. For virtually all districts, it is the complexity of schedules that gets in the way. Using DMGroup's proprietary scheduling software and working closely with DMGroup staff, the district was able to construct schedules that ensured instructional guidelines were being met (*Exhibit 3*). The software helped embed guidelines by protecting certain blocks of the schedule. The software also allowed users to create multiple schedule scenarios. District leaders, with the support of the DMGroup team, explored scenarios, discussed tradeoffs, and created schedules to ensure that student learning was well supported. Building principals appreciated the thought partnership with DMGroup's team and were pleased at how easy it was to build schedules with the software. Dr. Kilcrease and others at central office appreciated that the software allowed them to view schedules for all 22 schools and gave them the ability to monitor that guidelines are being met.

Dr. Jones and Dr. Kilcrease credit the creation and implementation of the new guidelines and scheduling practices at all 22 of BCSD's elementary schools as an important factor in enabling the district to raise achievement at its elementary schools. Also, by providing common instructional guidelines across its schools, it is helping to reduce the gap between the district's highest- and lowest-performing schools.

This is just one component of Dr. Jones' "Victory in Progress" strategic plan for the district, and just one example of the myriad efforts underway in the district. The district is on the move and making a difference for its students. For example, graduation rates have risen from 58.9% in SY2013 to 79.4% in SY2019, and Dr. Jones remains determined to reach the goal of achieving a graduation rate of 90% by 2025. The district's success has been acknowledged nationally, with Dr. Jones being named the 2019 superintendent of the year by AASA. ♦

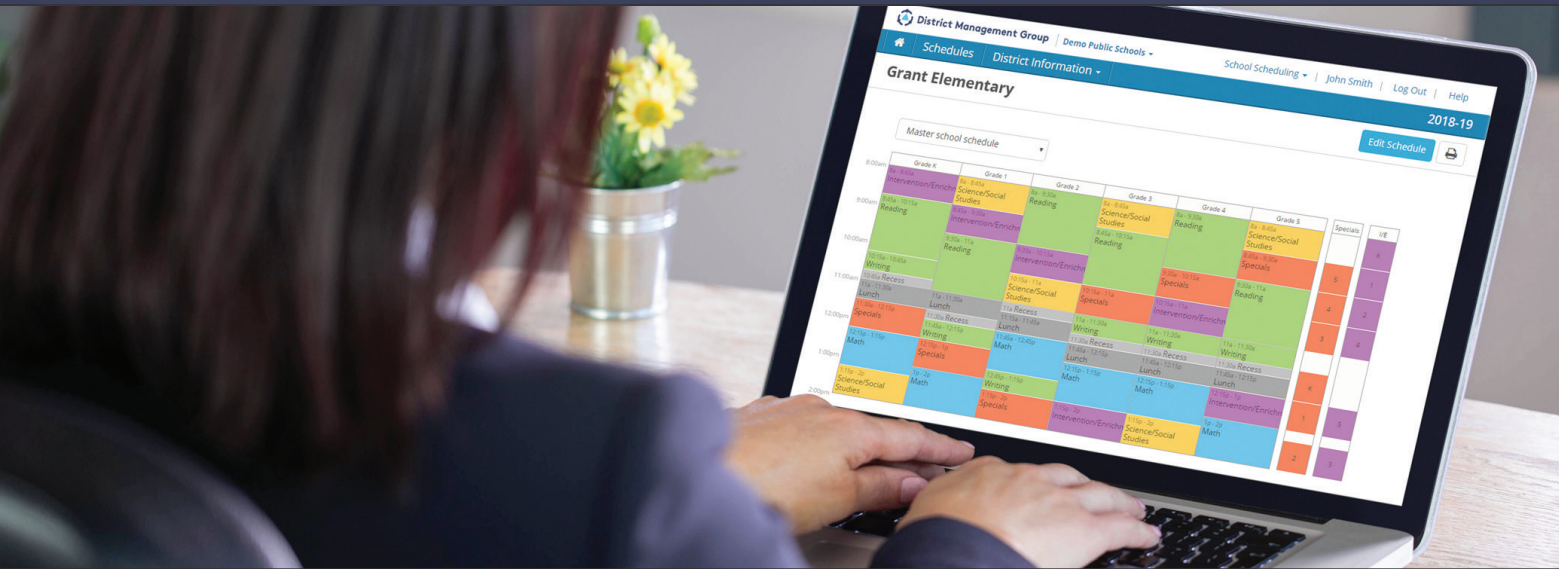
Exhibit 3 USING DMGROUP'S SCHEDULING SOFTWARE, A BCSD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CREATED THIS SCHEDULE THAT MEETS THE DISTRICT'S INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDELINES



Follow-up to the case study "Raising Achievement and Addressing Equity at Bibb County School District (GA): Instructional Guidelines and Effective Scheduling Pave the Way," published in *District Management Journal*, vol. 23.

Scheduling for Success

DMGroup's Elementary Scheduling Solution



Realize **scheduling best practices** to make the most of your school day to better support students.



Build better schedules with DMGroup's Elementary Scheduling Solution which includes:

- **Software for Elementary Master Scheduling**
- **Professional Development on Scheduling Best Practices**
- **Implementation Support**



**District
Management
Group**

Helping Schools and
Students Thrive

Join the thousands of leaders that DMGroup has already helped to leverage schedules strategically to improve equity, raise student outcomes, and achieve more of their learning goals. Contact us today and start *Scheduling for Success*.

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or visit us at www.dmgroupk12.com/elementary-scheduling