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Georgia Primary Education Project  
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# GEORGIA PRIMARY EDUCATION PROJECT

**MONTHLY REPORT**  
**JULY 1 – JULY 31, 2012**

**Contract No. AID-114-C-09-00003**  
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## MONTHLY REPORT

July 1 – July 31, 2012

During this reporting period, G-PriEd staff saw a change in the Minister of Education and Science as well as a few key counterparts (these changes are still ongoing as of this writing). Given these circumstances, G-PriEd organized an orientation meeting for our primary Ministry liaison (the head of international programs) as well as a key discussion about the project's conceptual framework for school-based teacher professional development. Specifically at issue was the project-proposed payment of teacher coaches. When the Ministry decided that it could not pay coaches and initially proposed vice-principals as coaches, G-PriEd conducted focus groups with school principals and vice principals to get their feedback on the proposed school-based professional development model.

In addition, during the reporting period, G-PriEd staff hired the core members of various working groups and began working with them on the diagnostic assessments and training modules. Also, G-PriEd staff finalized procurement of educational equipment and supplies for the MES educational agencies and schools and initiated the distribution planning along with the process for acquiring USAID approval for the property title transfer; and announced the request for proposals to seek qualified companies to assist the project in delivery of school professional development module. Finally, international consultant Ted Hull concluded his assignment supporting the module writers to develop the math training modules.

The current status with MES staffing as it related to GPriEd is as follows:

- Dimitri Shashkin, the former Minister, has been replaced by Khatia Dekanoidze.
- Maia Siphraşvili-Lee, the Head of International Relations has been replaced by Nato Javakhishvili.
- Tamuna Mamukelashvili, Deputy Director of National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) is moving to the Ministry of Defense. It appears the assessment function of NCEQE is being absorbed into the National Examinations Center. This new department is still being organized and no new head has been named.
- Giorgi Gulua, the Director of EMIS has been replaced by Lasha Verulava.
- Ana Kebabze, the Head of General Education Development Division (and in charge of minority-language education) has being replaced by Nino Revishvili.

As of yet, no change has been made to the project's key counterparts at the National Curriculum and General Education Development Department (Natia Jokhadze) or the Teachers' Professional Development Center (Thea Kvintradze and Teona Kupatadze).

Below we provide further detail of this month's activities, as per the updated workplan and the logframe, which can be found in Annex A.

### **Outcome 1: Reading and Math Instruction Improved**

#### **Output 1.1: Improve Teacher Effectiveness in Teaching Reading and Math, as Well as in Using the Diagnostic-Assessment-Based Teaching Approach in Reading and Math**

##### **A: Develop and propose school-based professional development as a mechanism for training reading and math teachers**

*1. Concept paper for school-based professional development.* The re-design of the project's concept for school-based professional development has been a core activity during the month. The original design proposed by the project to the MES assumed that the Ministry would

allocate funds for supplementary salary for school-based coaches (either allocate Ministry funds or allow schools to spend their leftover budget). The project assumed that these coaches would receive project training and would then train their fellow teachers. Based on this assumption, the project had included 318 schools in its pilot sample (including 109 minority-language schools). In July, the MES reviewed the proposed design and — realizing that the pilot model, if successful, would be nationalized throughout Georgia — decided that the Ministry was unable to bear the financial implications. With this decision, the MES proposed a low-cost approach: since vice-principals are considered instructional leaders, they could act as coaches and would require no supplementary salary. Given this new possible orientation, G-PriEd staff requested MES permission to conduct focus groups with principals and vice principals to determine the pros and cons of vice principals as coaches.

In July, G-PriEd staff conducted four focus groups with the following goals: (1) to understand the current practices of teacher professional development at schools; (2) to seek feedback regarding the most appropriate candidates for school-based coaching; (3) identify the right incentives and motivating factors for coaches; and (4) determine schools' willingness to participate in the school-based professional development program. Of these focus groups, two were in Tbilisi (one with administrators of large schools and one with administrators from minority-language schools of different sizes), one was in Telavi (administrators from medium-sized schools), and one was in Kutaisi (administrators from small schools). For a full report of these focus groups, please refer to Annex B. The findings are summarized below.

- Many schools were very enthusiastic about the possibility of participating in the program and eager to find out how they could get involved.
- Most respondents said that vice principals are not good candidates for the professional development leader role (i.e., the coach role) because they are too busy with other duties; they could manage implementation of the program but would not be effective professional development leaders.
- Participants thought that certified teachers are the best candidates for the coach position because they have subject expertise in elementary grade reading and math and have more time available to handle the role.
- In addition, respondents said that teachers are not likely to make long-term commitment to this role without financial incentives. Other incentives, such as the opportunity to earn credits for TPDC's teacher professional development scheme will be an attractive complementary incentive.
- Large schools may need to create a stand-alone full-time position due to the high workload of their current teachers and the large number of Georgian-language and math teachers (which will create a large workload for the professional development leader).
- Schools are willing to use their unspent carry-over budget and/or existing budget to create small financial incentives if they were allowed by the MES;
- Some school administrators felt that a grade 1-4 math teacher could not coach a grade 5-6 math teacher (because they lack authority) and a grade 5-6 math teacher could not coach a grade 1-4 math teacher (because they lack knowledge of early grade math instruction). These respondents suggested that there be two math coaches to cover all six grades.
- The Ministry should not mandate that any specific person serve as the professional development leader. Rather they should only recommend, and leave the final decision to the school, since several factors will influence final decision: subject expertise of the teacher, his/her authority among other teachers, motivation, availability, and good management skills.

G-PriEd believes that using the feedback is crucial to the success of the school-based professional development model and plans to revise the model design once more and present it to USAID and MES in early August. Implementation of the model will depend on the agreements reached and will include:

- Revising of the sample for final selection of the pilot schools;
- Planning of the training approach, i.e., cascade or direct training of all reading/math primary teachers, or a combination;
- Planning of training schedule/locations;
- School Principal orientation and professional development courses.

4. *Hold conferences with principals.* Pilot schools have not yet been informed of their participation in the project’s pilot, as notification is pending final agreement on the school-based professional development model. Nevertheless, in July, G-PriEd staff drafted and/or updated the following materials to be used in the eventual conferences with principals.

- Draft agenda for the principals’ conferences
- Schedule of the principals’ conferences
- Informational brochure for school principals
- Job description for literacy and numeracy leaders (i.e., coaches)
- Notification letter for the school principals (to be sent by the MES)
- Procedures and criteria for selecting literacy and numeracy leaders
- Evaluation form for selecting literacy and numeracy leaders.

These materials will be finalized and used for holding the principal conferences once the conceptual framework is approved by the MES.

**B. Identify national trainers of reading and math, design TOT program for them, and provide training/consultation on training the leader-teachers**

1. *Identify and engage national trainers.* In previous months, G-PriEd staff identified the core group of national trainers. However, since the school-based professional development model is still under re-design, which meant that the number of trainers needed at any given location was unclear, G-PriEd paused confirmation of trainer availability. In August, project staff will renew confirming training availability.

2. *Create a working group together with TPDC representatives and local and international experts to develop the TOT manuals.* In July, the project’s Reading Improvement Director and Math Improvement Director began working with their respective working groups to create the project’s training modules. While they initially began work under the project’s first school-based professional development model, they then revised the outline of project training to fit the reduced training schedule. The project is currently planning training according to the table below.

Trainee Group	Length of Training
Grade 1-4 teachers	12 days of training (6 reading and 6 math)
Grade 5-6 reading teachers	4 days
Grade 5-6 math teachers	4 days
Coaches**	4 days
Principals and vice principals	2 days

\*\*In addition, coaches will take both grade-related trainings.

3. *Develop TOT manuals for national trainers in reading to use in their trainings for coach-teachers.* The team of module writers have begun work developing the reading professional development manual. During July, they revised and developed a major part of materials for the first three days of training (general introduction, conceptual issues about differentiated reading instruction, and phonological skills).

4. *Develop TOT manuals for national trainers in math to use in their trainings for coach-teachers.* At the beginning of July, international consultant Ted Hull facilitated a three-day training on differentiated instruction for members of math module writing group. After his visit, the group created a training plan for grades 5-6 teachers and grades 1-4 teachers. The group has begun drafting materials for two days of training and will continue to finalize drafts of all training module sections in August.

5. *Video and multimedia supplements for trainings.* For videos related to reading instruction, G-PriEd staff will meet with TPDC staff at the beginning of August to determine how to collaborate on creating relevant videos. For the math training, materials in English are being reviewed for inclusion (dubbed) in the pilot year training. The list of resources will be finalized next month and then dubbed. If the English materials are determined to be inadequate for Georgian realities, original scenarios will be developed for differentiated instruction in math classroom activities in August and video will be developed in September following the opening of 2012-2013 school year.

### C. Support national trainers to train leader-teachers in the pilot schools to teach reading and math

1. *Develop the list of the pilot schools.* Once agreement is reached with the Ministry regarding the school-based professional development approach, project staff will revisit the list of the pilot schools. The project’s goal is to have project schools that include at least 200 students from each region and include a representative number of schools by size (small/medium/large), type (urban/rural), and language of instruction (Georgian- and minority-language). While the initial number of pilot schools was set at 318, project staff now anticipate direct training of every Georgian-language and math teacher in grades 1-6. Given this expanded training plan, project staff now anticipate the pilot will have some 150 schools.

2. *Develop the list of control schools.* Control schools have been selected. However, they may need to be modified depending on the final number of pilot group schools.

3. *Design the schedule of training for leader-teachers.* In July, G-PriEd announced an RFP to identify a qualified company (or companies) to administer trainings, including the hiring, compensation, and fielding of national trainers; training logistics; training monitoring; and training reports. The RFP was announced on July 5. By the closing date, G-PriEd had received applications from CTC; the School, Family, and Society Association; and Evaluation Management and Consulting. Applicants were notified that the review of applications has been put on hold until further notice. Given the new training plan, the project may need to re-announce the RFP. The table below outlines the currently planned training timeline.

Trainees	Number of Teachers	Number of Cohorts	Cohorts Trained Per Month				
			Oct	Nov	Dec	Feb	Mar
Gr 1-4	864	45	10	10	10	10	5
Gr 5-6 reading	290	16	4	3	3	3	3
Gr 5-6 math	311	15	4	3	3	3	4
Principals, VPs	249	10	2	2	2	3	1
Coaches	150	6	0	2	2	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,864</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>

### Output 1.2: Increase the Availability and Use of Age and Language-Appropriate Reading Materials and Supplies for Learning Math

## A. Develop age- and language-appropriate reading and math materials (paper-based and electronic)

1. *Review of existing materials.* In June, G-PriEd staff identified the National Curriculum and General Education Development Department (NCGEDD) as the primary partner for the supplementary materials and began work on the materials in July, which included review of available and in-use resources, such as current textbooks for both subjects. G-PriEd has engaged a programmer to develop an Excel program that can identify the most frequently used words in both textbooks and popular children's books. G-PriEd's Reading Improvement Director has contacted major publishers of textbooks and children's books who have agreed to give the project access to electronic versions of these texts.

2. *Development of readability criteria.* In August, international expert Mary Spor will visit Georgia to help develop readability criteria and begin development of the leveled readers.

## B: Distribute age- and language-appropriate reading and math materials, paper-based and electronic

6. *Provide low-cost technologies (specifically CD players) to minority-language and other target schools; provide equipment to MES agencies.* 7. *Provide visual aids and manipulatives for math learning to the pilot and other target schools.* In July, G-PriEd staff completed the contractual paperwork with UGT, which was selected to deliver educational equipment in addition to Premier Plus, selected to deliver CD players and math manipulatives. Project staff initiated the title transfer process with USAID and in parallel started to work with the MES to agree upon and identify recipients and the target schools. So far, the draft distribution plan is as follows:

#	Items	Total Q-ty	TPDC	EQE	MES	TLG	NCC
<b>Educational Equipment</b>							
1	Smart Board	6	5	1			
2	Multi-function printer/copier (HP LaserJet M2727 or equivalent)	3	1	2			
3	Color Printer (HP LaserJet Enterprise 500 Color M551n or equivalent)	1		1			
4	Projector Screen	1		1			
5	Projector (Epson VS210 or equivalent)	343		1	342 for 257 minority-language schools		
6	Projector Screen	342					
7	CD/DVD Player	342					
8	CD Player	1,500				1,500 for 255 schools participating in Teach and Learn with Georgia	
<b>Math Manipulatives</b>							
9	Learning Resources Rainbow Fraction Tiles	330					330 for 150 pilot schools selected by G-PriEd**
10	Base 10 Decimal Blocks	330					
11	One-inch colored cubes 100/Pk 9 Plastic colors	330					

#	Items	Total Q-ty	TPDC	EQE	MES	TLG	NCC
12	EduShape 977081 Magic Shapes in Jar	330					
13	D-Stix Geometry Student Kit	330					

\*\*Manipulatives were procured for the original pilot sample. Extra sets will be stored for G-PriEd's expansion phase.

Due to the change in management at the MES, the plan to distribute equipment and supplies to language-minority and TLG schools is still under development, as project staff are expecting to receive updated lists and the rationale for item quantity per school. As requested by and agreed with the ministry, G-PriEd will distribute items 5-8 (listed above) to schools through Education Resource Centers (ERCs). Since the schools are from all regions of Georgia, project staff plan to contract one or both of the contractors (UGT and/or Premier Plus) to provide distribution services. As for math manipulatives, Premier Plus will be asked to warehouse the supplies until G-PriEd is ready to distribute them to pilot schools through the national trainers and school-based coaches. Once G-PriEd gets the final lists of schools, a detailed distribution plan will be submitted to USAID to process disposition.

## Outcome 2: Reading and Math Delivery Systems Improved

### Output 2.1: Promote Professional Standards and Support Professional Development for Teachers and Administrators

#### A: Provide evidence-based recommendations for improved effectiveness of teachers and administrators

1. *Conduct a field study in teacher effectiveness.* To further develop a background paper on existing practices of teacher induction and retention in Georgia, G-PriEd's Teacher Effectiveness Director together with Erica Rounsefell, USAID Education Officer, created a research plan for conducting focus groups with various target groups, such as:

- Teachers of public and private schools (a representative sample by age, number of teaching years, size of schools, the size of communities, etc.)
- Principals of public and private schools (large and medium-size schools)
- Graduates and current students of teacher education programs
- Mentor teachers
- Inductees
- Principals of schools with mentoring programs
- Principals of rural schools (including the principals of schools with Teach for Georgia Program)
- Teachers of rural schools
- Participant teachers of the Teach for Georgia Program
- Principals of minority-language schools (including the principals of schools with Georgian as a Second Language program and Georgian Language for Future Success program)
- Participant teachers of Georgian as a Second Language program and Georgian Language for Future Success program.

Following the changes to the training plan (and budget) and in agreement with USAID, focus groups with the above-mentioned target groups were postponed to Year 3 or 4 of the project.

## **B: Expand the project-developed school-based professional development model and support appropriate policy changes to improve teacher professional development**

*1. Help establish Teacher Houses.* The work with TPDC in regards to support to Teacher Houses logically follows the progress on school-based professional development. Therefore, activities were undertaken during July. As for equipping the Teacher Houses, in reference to Output 1.2.B above, TPDC will receive five interactive white-boards (smart boards) and one multi-function printer-copier in late August.

*4. Build capacity of school principals.* In reference to Output 1.1A above, G-PriEd is also considering merging the orientation sessions for principals and vice principals with the professional development of these groups in the following areas: professional development of teachers, instructional leadership, parent engagement, and remediation for at-risk kids. The timing, the format, location/s and trainers will be determined following finalization of school-based professional development design.

## **C: Support improved integration of reading and math training in the teacher pre-service programs of universities**

*1. Select universities.* Given the budget implications of the new school-based professional development model and the pipeline ceilings for the project, it was agreed with USAID that this activity would be delayed until Year 3 or 4 of the project.

## **Output 2.2: Strengthen the System for Testing Reading and Math Outcomes Through Classroom Diagnostic Assessments**

### **A: Develop formative assessment methodology in reading and math**

*1. Create task forces.* In July, following reference checking process completed by the MES Reference Committee, G-PriEd began working with the members of the math and reading assessment task forces. Members for all designated positions were recruited, with the exception of inclusion specialist. As the groups began working (and some members had to drop out for various reasons), G-PriEd began recruiting new members, specifically:

- additional Georgian language teachers to help create items
- Georgian-as-a-second language teachers to help create items
- additional math teachers to help create items
- a linguist (this position was originally declined by NCEQE but the group raised the need for one)
- a child psychologist (this position was originally declined by NCEQE but the group raised the need for one)

G-PriEd staff also re-opened the recruit for an inclusion specialist, however NCEQE has determined that there is no need for such a position. The recruitment process has been slowed a little by the changes in management at the MES, but G-PriEd expects to conclude the recruit in early August.

*2. Develop the formative assessment methodology (reading).* During July, G-PriEd's Reading Improvement Director facilitated several task force meetings. The team revised and provided comments on the conceptual framework developed by international expert Julie Alonzo. In addition, the item writers developed materials (word lists) for four sub-tests. The team has given Dr. Alonzo suggestions for revising the conceptual framework.

3. *Develop the formative assessment methodology (math).* The Math Task Force met several times during July, and discussed the draft outline of conceptual framework. The group achieved agreement on Section 1 of the conceptual framework and has begun identifying the math competencies to be included in the test. In August, item developers will begin creating items according to the criteria delivered by international consultant John Olson. Up to six new item developers will be recruited in August to accomplish the item development task.

## **B: Design the three-year impact evaluation of the project pilots and support the implementation of the initial phase, a baseline study**

1. *Design the methodology.* In July, G-PriEd staff further elaborated the impact evaluation design following USAID practice in conducting impact assessments of reading and math competencies in the past and drawing on the expertise of Dr. Alonzo and Dr. Olson, the project's international consultants. The project understands that USAID has shared a concept paper about the assessment with MES, and discussions about it are ongoing. We understand that it was agreed that USAID will use the G-PriEd-created diagnostic assessment tool (currently under development in both subjects) in pilot and control schools in autumn 2012 (baseline), in spring 2013 (round 1), in spring 2013 (round 2) and in spring 2014 (final round 3).

G-PriEd hopes to also conduct a baseline in winter 2013 in order to provide teachers with cut scores for the performance they should expect at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. Discussions about this are ongoing with USAID and the MES.

## **Output 2.3: Strengthen the System for Testing Reading and Math Outcomes Through National Assessments Against Objectives of National Curricula**

### **A: Build the capacity of the NCEQE to conduct national assessments**

1. *Work with NCEQE to build internal capacity to conduct national assessments.* As mentioned in earlier monthly reports, G-PriEd has been expecting to collaborate with the World Bank and Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in their work with the NCEQE on national assessments. Given the changes in G-PriEd's training plan and the pipeline ceilings, G-PriEd has discussed with USAID that we will likely not have the funds to support national assessment work. In July, G-PriEd staff met with MCC representatives and shared this possible development.

In addition, in July G-PriEd staff monitored the performance and the quality of deliverables of the Institute of Poling and Marketing, which G-PriEd contracted to administer the national assessment of first-grade Georgian-as-a-second-language students and of fourth-grade reading and math students. This work included testing, interviews, and focus groups with students, parents, teachers, school principals, and volunteers. By the end of July, IPM had conducted the field work for both assessment, and completed SPSS files for the results of the first- and fourth-grade assessments. In August, IPM will submit the final report to NCEQE (who in turn will submit it to G-PriEd), supported by hard and digital copies of the first- and fourth-grade assessment materials, at which point (upon positive review by NCEQE), their contract will be concluded.

## **Outcome 3. Community and Public Engagement, Accountability, and Transparency Enhanced**

### **Output 3.1: Promote Expanded Student Participation in Reading/Math Activities and Parent Engagement in Children's Reading/Math Outcomes Through School-Based Committees and Implementation Plans**

**A: Promote expanded student participation in reading/math activities and parent engagement in children’s reading/math outcomes through school-based committees and implementation plans**

*1. Work with MES to develop a model of parent engagement.* Due to the changes in management at the Ministry, in July no activities occurred under this task. G-PriEd has identified an international consultant to travel to Georgia and finish the work started by Ron Mirr and will meet with the MES in early August to set a timeline for the working group to meet to finish this work. After that, G-PriEd will begin the focus group work.

**Output 2: Strengthening Community and Education Stakeholder Access to and Use of Education Data for Local Decision-Making**

No activities under this output were implemented during this reporting period.

# ANNEX A: GEORGIA PRIMARY EDUCATION PROJECT LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Goal /Impact:	Reading fluency and comprehension and math reasoning outcomes improved in grades 1-6	
<b>Outcome 1: Reading and Math Instruction Improved</b>	<b>Output 1.1: Improve teacher effectiveness in teaching reading and math, as well as in using the formative-assessment-based teaching approach in reading and math</b>	<b>A. Develop and propose school-based professional development as a mechanism for training reading and math teachers</b>
		<b>B. Identify national trainers of reading and math, design TOT program for them, and provide training/guidance/consultation on training the leader-teachers</b>
		<b>C. Support national trainers to train leader-teachers in the pilot schools to teach reading and math</b>
		<b>D. Expand the training of leader-teachers and a cascade training of school teachers to the other target schools of the project</b>
	<b>Output 1.2: Increase the availability and use of age and language-appropriate reading materials and supplies for learning math</b>	<b>A. Develop age- and language-appropriate reading and math materials, paper-based and electronic</b>
		<b>B. Distribute age- and language-appropriate reading and math materials, paper-based and electronic</b>
<b>Outcome 2: Reading and Math Delivery Systems Improved</b>	<b>Output 2.1.Promote professional standards and support professional development for teachers and administrators</b>	<b>A. Provide evidenced-based recommendations for improved effectiveness of teachers, and assist in the implementation of effective policies for professional development of teachers</b>
		<b>B. Expand the project-developed school-based professional development model, adjusting it as needed for rural and ethnic minority schools, and support appropriate policy changes to improve teacher professional development</b>
		<b>C. Support improved integration of reading and math training in the teacher pre-service programs of universities</b>
	<b>Output 2.2: Strengthen the system for testing reading and math outcomes through classroom formative assessments</b>	<b>A. Develop formative assessment methodology in reading and math</b>
		<b>B. Design the three-year impact evaluation of the project pilot and support the implementation of its initial phase, a baseline study</b>
		<b>C. Cooperate with the independent team on pilot impact evaluation throughout the project implementation</b>
		<b>D. Suggest reading and math benchmarks and appropriate policy changes for Georgia</b>
	<b>Output 2.3: Strengthen the system for testing reading and math outcomes through national assessments against objectives of national curricula</b>	<b>A. Build the capacity of the NCEQE to conduct national assessments</b>

Goal /Impact:	Reading fluency and comprehension and math reasoning outcomes improved in grades 1-6	
Outcome 3. Community and public engagement, accountability, and transparency enhanced	Output 3.1: Promote expanded student participation in reading/math activities and parent engagement in children’s reading/math outcomes through school-based committees and implementation plans	A. To promote expanded student participation in reading/math activities and parent engagement in children’s reading/math outcomes through school-based committees
	Output 3.2: Strengthening community and education stakeholder access to and utilization of education data for local decision-making	A. Support local and national initiatives that inform communities, parents, and students about schools’ reading and math activities

# ANNEX B: FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS' SUMMARY REPORT

## Summary

As a result of the focus group discussions with the principals and the vice principals regarding the school based professional development leader candidacy, following major findings should be considered:

- Most respondents said that vice principals are not the best candidates for the professional development leader role (i.e., the coach role) because they are too busy with other duties; they could manage implementation of the program but would not be effective professional development leaders themselves.
- Participants thought that certified teachers are the best candidates for the coach position because they have subject expertise in elementary grade reading and math and have more time available to handle the role.
- Large schools may need to create a stand-alone full-time position due to the high workload of their current teachers and the large number of Georgian-language and math teachers (which will create a large workload for the professional development leader).
- In addition, respondents said that teachers are not likely to make long-term commitment to this role without financial incentives. Other incentives, such as the opportunity to earn credits for TPDC's teacher professional development scheme will be an attractive complementary incentive.
- If they were given permission by the MES, schools would be willing to use their unspent carry-over budget and/or existing budget to create small financial incentives.
- Participants suggested that the Ministry not mandate that any specific person serve as the professional development leader. Rather they could recommend, and leave the final decision to the school, since several factors will influence final decision: subject expertise of the teacher, his/her authority among other teachers, motivation, availability, and good management skills.
- Many schools were very enthusiastic about the possibility of participating in the program and eager to find out how they could get involved.
- In addition to creating subject leaders, such as reading and math, there should be subject/grade leaders, i.e. 1-4 grade leader in reading and/or math and 5-6 grade leader in reading and/or math. If school has certified teacher from 1-6, such person might serve as a leader for all grade teachers.

## Introduction

The G-PriEd team conducted focus groups with school principals and vice principals from Georgian public schools during the last two weeks of July 2012. The goal of the focus groups was to learn their perspectives on how the most effective model of school-based professional development can be designed. Specifically, the G-PriEd team had the following objectives:

- Understand the current practices of teacher professional development at schools;
- Understand the perspectives of principals and vice-principals on the most appropriate candidates to serve as school-based professional development leaders;
- Investigate incentives and motivating factors that would encourage professional development leaders to fulfill their task effectively;
- Understand principals' and vice-principals' attitudes and willingness to implement a school-based professional development program at their schools;
- Understand possibilities for teachers to collaborate with each other as part of the school-based professional development program.

In addition to the qualitative data, a small survey was distributed after the focus groups to ensure that opinions from all participants are considered and responses are quantified.

## Research Sample

G-PriEd selected four different groups to cover various types of schools across Georgia. The main selection criteria for the focus group participants were school size, location (rural/urban), and language of instruction (Georgian / minority). According those criteria, the following groups were created:

- Large schools from cities: Tbilisi, Rustavi, and Gori (9 schools; 14 participants)
- Small schools from western Georgia: Imereti and Samegrelo regions (10 schools, 16 participants)
- Minority schools (large-, medium- and small-size schools) from Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli (6 schools, 15 participants)
- Medium-size schools from eastern Georgia: Kakheti region (4 schools, 8 participants).

Both principals and vice-principals participated in the focus groups. Small schools with no vice-principal position were represented by the principals only. Together with the principals and vice-principals, two teachers participated in the minority-school focus group.

## Main Findings

The main findings from the focus groups are described below.

### Current Practices of Teacher Professional Development at Schools

Most of the school principals and vice-principals mentioned that continuous and school-based professional development is important. The only divergence from this opinion was that several principals of minority schools pointed out that teachers enter the teaching profession with a higher education degree in their area of specialization and therefore there is no need for their continuous professional development.

Although most of the principals emphasized the importance of continuous school-based professional development, few of them demonstrated understanding of what school-based professional development means and how they, as school principals, can support teachers. Most of their answers were limited to teachers participating in professional development trainings organized outside the school, primarily by TPDC. In addition to TPDC trainings, a few principals mentioned such professional development activities as “critical friend programs,” by which they meant (1) teachers observing each other’s classrooms and exchanging feedback, (2) a vice-principal observing classrooms and providing feedback, and (3) subject departments organizing lesson study meetings for the subject teachers.

Additionally, the principals of small schools mentioned that multi-grade teaching is a huge challenge for the teachers and they as principals cannot provide much professional support to them on the methodologies of multi-grade teaching. They emphasized the importance of teacher professional development in multi-grade teaching methodology. As focus group participants reported from Imereti region, teachers prefer to receive less salary and teach primary grade classes separately instead of mixing different grades, because of the following reasons:

- Teachers lack methodological approaches how to handle students from different grades within one class
- First graders are using net-books, while third graders don’t, which makes multi-grade approach more complicated. Same concerns to the second and fourth grade multi-grade classes.

### Who Should be the Professional Development Leader?

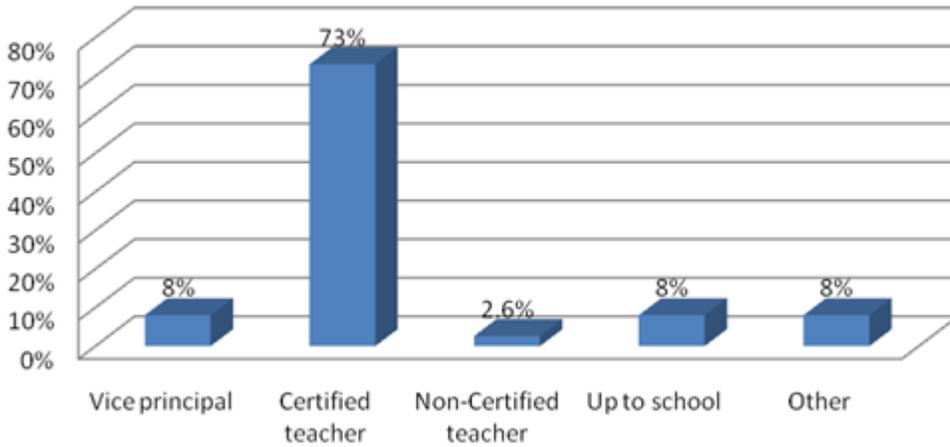
#### Quantitative Data

After the focus group discussions, respondents were asked to fill out a survey and respond on the following questions:

- Best person at their schools to fulfill the role of the professional development leader
- Reasons for naming the selected candidate as a leader
- Motivating factors for this person to serve as a leader

In total, 38 questionnaire sheets were collected. Of 38 participants, 22 were school principals (58%) and 16 vice principals (42%). 100% of the focus group participants would like to participate in the school-based professional development program.

**Who should be selected as a professional development leader?**

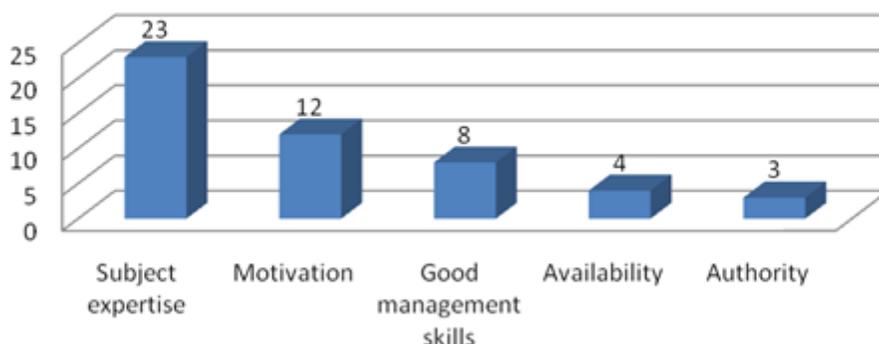


School size and the choice of the professional development leader

		Who should serve as a leader					Total
		Vice Principal	Certified teacher	not Certified teacher	other	school should decide	
Type	big schools	0	8	0	3	3	14
	medium size schools	0	7	0	0	0	7
	small schools	3	13	1	0	0	17
Total		3	28	1	3	3	38

As the table above shows, different sizes of schools have a common attitude when considering the professional development leader candidacy and consider a certified teacher as the best nominee for the given position.

**Why certified teachers are considered to be the best candidates for the role of the leader**



### Qualitative Data

Most of the participants of the focus groups gave preference to primary-school teachers as the most appropriate candidates to serve as a professional development leaders at their schools. As mentioned, they identified certified teachers as the best candidates; however, they said that motivated and talented non-certified teachers could also successfully handle the task if the school has no certified teachers to nominate for this role. The major arguments in favor of nominating primary-school teachers as professional development leaders are as follows:

- Primary school teachers have subject expertise;
- Even teachers with a full-time load will be able to handle additional tasks (mostly supported by small- and medium-size school representatives). Also, principals of the above-mentioned schools suggested that if needed, they could re-allocate some teaching hours so that leader teachers had less hours to teach;
- Among other potential candidates, primary school teachers, especially the certified ones, will be most motivated to serve in this role.

While most of the principals and vice-principals supported the idea of nominating a certified or non-certified teacher in the leader's role, they recognized that it would be challenging to nominate one teacher who would be able to provide effective professional development leadership to all the subject teachers across grades 1-6. They felt this was particularly true for math, and less so for Georgian language. As they pointed out, primary grade teachers (1-4) do not have sufficient subject-matter expertise to coach teachers of grades 5-6. On the other hand, teachers of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades would be less effective as leaders for grades 1 through 6 since they lack the understanding of the methodology of teaching in grades 1-4. Principals and vice-principals of minority schools suggested that to address this challenge, for math they would nominate two separate leaders: one for grades 1-4 and another for grades 5-6.

Among all the participants, only the principals of large-size schools opposed the idea of nominating primary schoolteachers for the role of a professional development leader. They pointed out that given to the high number of Georgian language and math teachers at schools, certified or non-certified teachers will not be able to provide sufficient professional support to the whole team along with teaching their classrooms. Therefore, they instead suggested creating a separate position, such as Coordinator of the Primary School, with the major function of leading professional development in the primary school. According to the principals of large-size schools, this candidate could be either selected from the school, or could be recruited from outside of the school. The major criteria for selecting the candidates to serve in this position would be expertise of teaching math and Georgian language in grades 1-6.

Several principals and vice-principals of medium-size Georgian schools also mentioned the possibility of nominating heads of department as the professional development leaders. However, at the same time they

recognized that head of department is a rotating position, and they said they would prefer leaders to serve in this role for a longer period. Representatives of other schools pointed the same disadvantage of having head of department as a professional development leader.

All focus group participants reported that they did not see vice principals serving as the professional development leader. The following reasons were mentioned:

- Since schools have at most one vice-principal, these people are very busy with various administrative and instructional leadership tasks. (“*Even if I was selected as a leader, I would delegate this function to a teacher and monitor implementation of the program*”, a vice principal from a large-size Tbilisi public school mentioned.);
- Vice-principals are not subject experts and cannot provide subject-based coaching to Georgian language and math teachers;
- Small-size schools don’t have vice principals.

### **Incentives and Motivating Factors for Professional Development Leaders**

Most of the schools reported that a financial incentive is the only motivating factor that would secure long-term commitment by the future leaders. Only the principals and vice-principals from medium-size schools from Kakheti region pointed out that while a monetary incentive would be ideal, teachers will be excited and motivated to serve in this role without any supplementary salaries. As they pointed out, the following non-monetary incentives would motivate teachers to serve in this role:

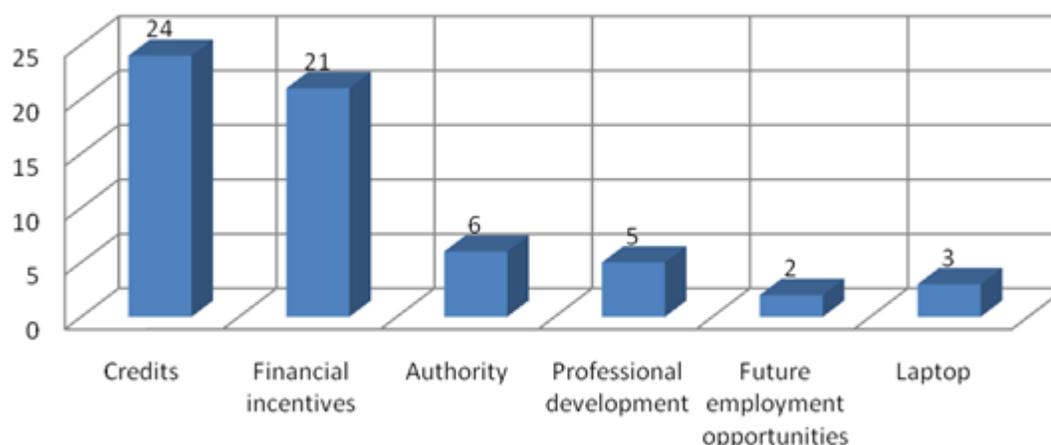
- Earning credits for the Teacher’s Professional Development Scheme (for certified teachers only)
- Opportunity to prepare for the certification exams (for non-certified teachers)
- Higher prestige associated with teacher leader title
- Interest in future professional growth
- Future employment opportunities (as a G-PriEd trainer, or text writer, etc.)
- Comfortable working environment: principals thought they could create a “Leader’s Corner” with the laptop for the leader;
- Recognition by the school and the MES (thank-you letters/certificates).

Principals of other schools reported that the above-mentioned incentives would motivate teachers only if they were also given supplementary salaries. All the principals, and particularly the ones from the minority schools, mentioned that no long-term commitment can be secured from the teachers unless they are offered monetary incentives.

Most of the schools reported that — provided that they had specific permission from the MES — they would be able to provide certain financial incentives for the leader teachers. Large-size and small-size schools reported that given to the importance of this program, they will be able to reallocate the budget and find resources for paying supplementary salaries. Medium-size schools were less confident about paying monthly supplementary salaries; however, they mentioned that they would be able to pay minimal amount monthly (30-40 GEL), or at least pay annual bonuses. Similar to other schools, large-size minority schools also expressed readiness for finding money for supplementary salaries, whereas representatives of small-size minority schools mentioned that they have serious financial constraints and would not be able to offer such a financial incentive to the leader teachers.

Survey results on the incentives for the professional development leaders:

**Motivating factors to serve as a leader**



### **Willingness to Participate in the Program**

All focus groups participants — with no exception — expressed their desire and motivation to participate in the school-based professional development program offered by G-PriEd for the following reasons:

- Opportunity to improve teaching of math and reading at their schools (quite a few principals pointed out that they have already made efforts to improve reading and this kind of program would enable them to fulfill these existing goals);
- Additional educational resources: leveled readers and manipulatives;
- Professional development opportunities for school administration (they mentioned that unlike teachers, fewer trainings are organized for principals and vice-principals and they would be happy to take this advantage provided by the project).
- Increased competitiveness and opportunity to attract more students.

A majority of the schools also expressed readiness to input their own resources to support the program's successful implementation, such as finding resources for monetary incentives for the leaders. Though some of the principals of the minority schools suggested that since G-PriEd is proposing the implementation of this program at the schools, they should provide all necessary resources (including supplementary salaries).

### **Collaboration Among Teachers**

In general, principals and vice-principals were optimistic about the possibility for effective collaboration among teachers. As they mentioned, when the school-based professional development program is introduced teachers will work constructively, provided that the leaders selected have high credibility and are respected by the teachers.