

**GEEARS' mission is to inspire and provide leadership for a statewide movement on quality early learning and healthy development for all children ages birth to five. Our vision is, by 2020, all students will enter kindergarten prepared to succeed and on a path to read to learn by third grade.**

**Science proves that early experiences shape the brain.** Early childhood education and experiences have lasting impacts on later learning, behavior and health. In the first few years of a child's life, more than one million new neural connections are formed every second through the interaction of genes and a child's environment and experiences. These connections build the brain's foundation upon which all future learning, behavior and health depend. Differences in the size of children's vocabulary first appear at 18 months of age, depending on their family's income and education level. By three years old, children with college educated parents have vocabularies two to three times larger than those whose parents did not graduate high school.

**Children who receive high-quality early education are more likely to graduate high school, attend college, and are better equipped for the workforce.** The first step to ensuring we have a highly skilled workforce to compete in the global economy is improving early education. The foundation of skills needed in school and the workforce is built during a child's first five years

**Continuing support for early education has both short- and long-term economic benefits for Georgia.** The early care and education industry is an important part of Georgia's economy. It creates over 84,000 jobs and generates over \$4.7 billion of economic activity in the state each year. The availability of child care in Georgia supports annual parent earnings of at least \$24 billion, according to a study commissioned by Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). Research conducted by Dr. James Heckman, a Nobel Prize winning economist, proves that investing in early education produces the greatest return on investment. **Every \$1 invested in high-quality early education saves, on average, \$13 down the road as a result of reduced crime rates, lower demand for social services, and increased tax revenues.**

**High-quality early care and education services help ensure that even the most at-risk students arrive at kindergarten prepared to succeed.** A large body of research shows that children who live in poverty and have access to high-quality early education are more developed cognitively, socially, emotionally and academically than their peers who did not receive similar education. Children who enter kindergarten prepared to succeed are more likely to graduate from high school, go on to college and be productive members of the workforce. Georgia's children are falling behind – or barely meeting – the basic reading and math standards by the end of third grade. In 2013, 66% of Georgia's 4<sup>th</sup> graders tested below proficient reading levels and 61% tested below proficient math levels. Significant gaps in access and quality must be addressed if the state is to excel in preparing students for learning in grades P-12. Children who attend high-quality early education programs are more likely to read at grade level and be on a path to read to learn by third grade.



# GEEARS

GEORGIA EARLY EDUCATION  
ALLIANCE FOR READY STUDENTS

## WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT EARLY EDUCATION

### LEARN MORE.

- Sign up for the GEEARS email list to receive the latest early education news.
- Follow us on Twitter @GEEARS, Instagram @gearlyed, and like us on Facebook.
- Visit high-quality early education programs in your area.
- Check out the publications and resources at [www.GEEARS.org](http://www.GEEARS.org)
- Arrange for GEEARS to speak to your professional association, faith community, or civic organization about the GA First 2,000 Days Campaign. #GAFirst2KDays

### SPREAD THE WORD.

- Contact your state and federal legislators and ask them to support legislation and policies in favor of early education and healthy development. (<https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>)
- Use P-12 instead of K-12 to emphasize that education begins before kindergarten.
- E-mail five friends about something you learned about early education today.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper/magazine advocating for high-quality early education.
- Update your social media pages with an early education fact.
- Participate in local events sponsored by GEEARS and other early childhood advocates.
- Encourage your colleagues to get involved and support early education.

### LEAD BY EXAMPLE.

- Read to your child, grandchild, or volunteer to read in a classroom.
- Enroll your child in a Quality Rated center and encourage others to do the same.
- Ask your current child care provider to become Quality Rated.
- Enhance an early education center's library by donating complex story books.
- Encourage your business organizations and professional networks to adopt positions in support of public investments for high-quality early education.
- Check out our Business Toolkit for ways to help your company or employees promote early education practices. (<https://gears.org/take-action/business toolkit/>)
- Donate online at [www.gears.org](http://www.gears.org) to support our current and future efforts for Georgia's youngest citizens and their families.

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