

## Atlanta Early Education Leadership Council

### Recommendations

1. Use a proven investment model to create a PAACT Fund for Quality for the following purposes: a) expanding the number of quality seats available to low income families, b) supporting the professional development and credentialing of early childhood educators, c) expanding quality through helping centers become quality rated and helping them move up the continuum in the quality rated system to achieve 2 or 3 stars, d) working with ECE providers and APS to pilot a unified enrollment system for ECE programs, and e) making capital investments to increase the capacity of existing quality rated providers to serve more children
2. Fund child care affordability gap scholarships for families in the Douglass and Washington clusters and public service employees (also embedded in recommendation #1)
3. Fund grants to quality rated early education programs to expand access to children from low income families (also embedded in recommendation #1)
4. Expand learning spaces in libraries and other public gathering spots across the city
5. Expand Summer Transition Programs and KinderCamps
6. Develop an Early Childhood Education Leadership Institute
7. Create a multi-platform, city-wide messaging campaign
8. Build greater capacity to serve the health and well being needs of children and families across the city
9. Create formal structures for Early Childhood Education engagement in APS, including adding an ECE representative to the APS Cluster Advisory Teams and including ECE providers on the APS cluster maps.
10. Develop an outcomes and research agenda to inform policy and practice, build in accountability for the early childhood investments being made and communicate outcomes to stakeholders

Recommendation #1: Use a proven investment model to create a PAACT Fund for Quality for the following purposes: a) expanding the number of quality seats available to low income families, b) supporting the professional development and credentialing of early childhood educators, c) expanding quality through helping centers become quality rated and helping them move up the continuum in the quality rated system to achieve 2 or 3 stars, d) working with ECE providers and APS to pilot a unified enrollment system for ECE programs, and e) making capital investments to increase the capacity of existing quality rated providers to serve more children

## DESCRIPTION

GEEARS worked with the Reinvestment Fund to develop the Atlanta ACCESS Map which models child care supply and demand and identifies gaps.

[https://geears.org/research/readiness\\_radar/](https://geears.org/research/readiness_radar/)

*In Philadelphia, once the access map was complete, the Reinvestment Fund raised funds to develop a targeted investment strategy to increase high quality seats in communities with identified gaps. Through the provision of business planning support and facilities-related financing, Fund for Quality supports high-quality early care and education providers with expanding their services to reach more low-income families. Providers may apply for planning grants to support organizational planning and project predevelopment to ensure a successful and high-quality expansion project. Based on successful completion of the planning phase, providers will be eligible to apply for capital grant awards of up to \$300,000 and/or loan funds to support the expansion project.*

Information can be found at <http://www.fundforquality.org/#about> and at <https://www.reinvestment.com/initiatives/fund-for-quality/>. There is positive feedback coming out of Philadelphia about this effort there.

DECAL has also had success with capital investments made for the purpose of expanding access to existing quality programs through the Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs) across the state.

We propose replicating this successful funding mechanism in Atlanta to create the PAACT Fund for Quality to support the recommendations of this council. This funding mechanism would be used to secure funding in order to invest in improvements to the quality of the early childhood education system in the city and to expand access to high quality programs.

## GEOGRAPHY

- Expanding the number of quality seats in the greatest priority areas based on the data provided in the access map, which includes areas of high-poverty, unmet demand for

ECE services and lack of high quality ECE

**TARGETED POPULATIONS**

- Low income families across the city of Atlanta

**INTENDED IMPACT**

- Increase access to high quality child care in areas with identified gaps in supply
- Expand the number of quality seats available to low income families
- Support the early education workforce through credentialing and professional development
- Remove barriers to quality ECE programs
- Help early childhood education providers become quality rated and move up the continuum to achieve 2 and 3 stars
- Ensure that existing quality rated providers have the capital funds needed to expand their capacity

**HOW WILL WE KNOW IF IT IS WORKING?**

- **Planning grants awarded**
- **Capital grants awarded**
- **Increase in quality seats serving low income families**
- **Teachers have the resources needed to earn credentials**

**BUDGET (all figures are estimates)**

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Ongoing
\$6 million	\$10 million	\$15 million	\$15 million	\$18 million	TBD based on success of the investments

\*these budget figures include the funding for recommendation #2 (gap scholarships) and #3 (grants to centers)

**Recommendation #2: Fund child care affordability gap scholarships**

**DESCRIPTION**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that childcare take up no more than 7% of a family’s budget. For most families, this is an unattainable standard, and for

low income families, child care costs can consume as much as 40% of a family’s budget. A childcare affordability gap scholarship would cover the gap between 10% of a family’s income and the average cost of child care. These scholarships could only be used in a quality rated program. Scholarships in the absence of other interventions may not be as impactful; because of this, we are recommending layering the scholarships with existing comprehensive investments for families and other recommended PAACT investments in targeted clusters.

**GEOGRAPHY**

Initially, there are 2 priority populations-  
In order to target the initial investments where they are most needed and in areas of the city where there is alignment with other relevant initiatives, the first group are families are those living in the Douglass and Washington Clusters; the 2<sup>nd</sup> group is comprised of public employees living anywhere in the City of Atlanta who perform essential services and are earning wages below a certain threshold.

**TARGETED POPULATIONS**

- Families of birth to 4-year olds in the Douglass and Washington clusters making 50% or below of the state’s median income; AND
- Public employees including firefighters, police, APS and early education teachers who are eligible due to their income.

**INTENDED IMPACT**

- Help families afford high quality care for their children.
- Support quality rated programs by helping them to fill vacancies.
- Create a greater incentive for programs to participate in quality rated.

**HOW WILL WE KNOW IF IT IS WORKING?**

- Applications by eligible families are processed and scholarships are given.
- Children are continuously enrolled in quality rated centers for at least one year
- Adults whose children receive scholarships maintain employment and see a reduction in their work absenteeism

**BUDGET (all figures are estimates)**

Costs to cover gap between 10% of the income of adult making 50% of SMI are an average of \$7350. Average scholarship and eligibility for public employees is to be determined.

4 FTEs to administer the program.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Ongoing
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500 scholarships	750 scholarships	1000 scholarships	1000 scholarships	Consider expanding to other clusters	Yes- hope that state will use Federal funds to expand CAPS program so that we could use scholarship funds to expand eligibility to those making more than 50% of SMI
\$3.5 million	\$5.5 million	\$7 million	\$7 million	\$xx,000	

**Recommendation #3: Fund grants to quality rated early education programs to expand access to children from low-income families**

**DESCRIPTION**

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning has administered a CAPS subsidy grant program to help quality rated centers expand access to children from low income families. The program has been successful in creating affordable access to quality and also helping child care programs achieve and maintain quality. The subsidy grants reimburse centers at a higher rate to help them attract and retain high quality early childhood educators. Grants to centers can help incentivize programs to take lower income children, help improve the quality of programs by directing that grant funds be spent on priorities shown to improve the quality of care and stabilize high quality centers.

We propose that grants be made available for programs willing to take between 10 and 20 infants or toddlers from families up to 200% of the federal poverty limit.

Grants will be available for quality rated child care centers and family child care networks in the City of Atlanta.

**GEOGRAPHY**

City-wide

**TARGETED POPULATIONS**

Families up to 200% of the federal poverty level

**INTENDED IMPACT**

- Encourage high quality providers to serve low income children.
- Stabilize the early education marketplace.

DRAFT

- Incentivize centers to become quality rated and support consistency in quality.

**HOW WILL WE KNOW IF IT IS WORKING?**

- More quality rated providers will serve children from low income families
- More centers are encouraged to improve quality in order to be eligible for grants
- Programs are able to fill their granted seats.

**BUDGET (all figures are estimates)**

As this grant program would complement a similar state program, we propose that the reimbursement rate mirror the reimbursement rate in the state’s subsidy grant program which is \$238/ week per child. We propose providing grant slots for up to 250 infants and toddlers at a cost of approximately \$3 million annually.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Ongoing
100 grant seats	250 grant seats	250 grant seats	As more centers are quality rated, new grants are added		Yes- use this as a way to incentivize quality and increase reimbursement rates
\$1.3 million	\$3 million	\$3 million		\$xx,000	

**Recommendation #4: Expand learning spaces in libraries & other public gathering spots across the city**

**DESCRIPTION**

- Partnerships to transform spaces where caregivers eat, pray and play (e.g. libraries, barbershops, faith institutions)
- Facilitated play and learn sessions by early childhood teachers/trainers
- Spaces are activated approximately 6 times per month
- Curriculum aligned with the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS)
- Screening and referrals grounded in relationships
- Social support networks
- Healthy snacks

**GEOGRAPHY**

This initiative is for the entire city of Atlanta. We recommend initially establishing 9 Learning Spaces, one in each high school cluster.

**TARGETED POPULATIONS**

- Children 0-5
- Parents, Caregivers, Family Child Care Providers

**INTENDED IMPACT**

- Screen and refer students to ensure those who need additional services are identified and connected to available services
- Foster learning and development through enriched, guided play spaces
- Help parents, caregivers and family child care providers develop skills
- Foster community building through regular gatherings

**HOW WILL WE KNOW IF IT IS WORKING?**

- Attendance
- Number of screenings completed
- Parent surveys

**BUDGET (all figures are estimates)**

Costs include

- Establishing the Initial Learning Space is \$20,000 to \$25,000 per site
- Ongoing Annual Costs of \$15,000 per site

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Ongoing
4 new sites= \$160,000 (cost of start up and one year of operation)	5 additional new sites (\$200,000= cost of start up and one year of operation) 4 operating sites= \$60,000 Total= \$260,000	9 operating sites  \$135,000	Consider expansion to new sites	Consider expansion to new sites	Yes
\$160,000	\$260,000	\$135,000	\$xx,000	\$xx,000	

**Recommendation #5: Expand Summer Transition Programs (STPs) and KinderCamps for rising Pre-K students and rising Kindergartners to serve students who need additional instructional time and transition support**

## DESCRIPTION

There are a number of programs in place at the state level and within the city to support young learners who need additional instructional support and to aid them in the transition from early learning programs to the elementary school. Three specific programs are worthy of replication across the city.

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning administers 6-week, intensive academic programs for rising kindergarteners. These programs take place in child care centers and elementary schools. The programs take place during June and July and offer high-quality instruction with a focus on language, literacy and math. The experience is designed to reduce the achievement gap by providing additional family support and resources to targeted high needs populations.

Additionally, DECAL administers 6-week, rising Pre-K summer transition programs that specifically target students who are registered to attend Georgia's Pre-K Program or a Head Start Program for the upcoming school year AND whose home language is Spanish. A defining characteristic of the program is that at least one teacher must be bilingual, fluent in English and Spanish. The presence of the bilingual staff facilitates the strategic use of the home language to support young dual language learners' early language and literacy development in English.

There are a number of providers, including the United Way of Greater Atlanta, Atlanta Public Schools and Sheltering Arms, that provide some version of KinderCamps, which are school transition activities for families and children transitioning from home and/or an early learning setting to kindergarten. KinderCamps provide the opportunity for the children to become acclimated to their new learning environment to experience school routines, to learn or practice skills needed in Kindergarten, and to develop relationships with school staff and other Kindergarteners - prior to the actual first day of school. KinderCamps range in duration, from 3 or 4 days to 6 weeks. Most are half day. They typically occur the last few weeks before school starts but may take place any time during the summer. KinderCamps are generally staffed by Pre-K teachers, Kindergarten teachers and aides, other school personnel, and volunteers.

## GEOGRAPHY

Initially, the rising Kindergartner Summer Transition program expansion would be targeted to high need clusters in APS that do not currently have sufficient STPs: Washington, Douglass,



Therrell and Mays. As resources are available, the plan is to increase the number of programs available with a continued focus on students in high risk clusters.

The rising Pre-K program for English Language Learners would be targeted to the North Atlanta cluster and the Mays cluster where we have a larger number of students who are English Language Learners. There are currently two programs offered in the North Atlanta cluster by DECAL and there may not be additional need there.

The KinderCamp expansion would be available in elementary schools across the city with a goal of serving at least one elementary school in each cluster, starting with the lowest performing school in the cluster.

**TARGETED POPULATIONS**

- Rising Pre-K students
- Rising Kindergarten students who need additional academic support
- All rising Kindergarten students in the city whose families wish for them to have more support in the transition from home or early learning programs into elementary schools

**INTENDED IMPACT**

- Ease the transition into elementary school for children and their families in the city of Atlanta.
- Provide additional support to at risk populations to reduce the achievement gap and bolster these children and their families as they enter Pre-K and elementary school.

**BUDGET (all figures are estimates)**

- Summer Transition Program for rising Kindergarten students - the cost of the program is approximately \$24,000 for 18 students in each class. We propose scaling this to 10 new STPs offered in 5 years with two new programs being funded each year.
- Summer Transition Program for rising Pre-K students - the cost is approximately \$24,000 for 18 students in each class. We would like to offer at least one program in the Mays cluster.
- KinderCamps – the cost is approximately \$10,000 each with about 32-40 students being served. This cost includes transportation. The plan would be to expand these offerings and to target them to the Douglass, Therrell and Mays clusters. We propose scaling this to 10 new STPs offered in 5 years with two new programs being funded each year.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Ongoing
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2 new rising K STPs = \$48,000	Add 2 new rising K STPs = \$48,000	2 new rising K STPs = \$48,000	2 new rising K STPs = \$48,000	2 new rising K STPs = \$48,000	Potentially – need to evaluate impact
1 new rising Pre-K STP = \$24,000	Continue to fund 1 Pre-K STP = \$24,000	1 new rising Pre-K STP = \$24,000	1 new rising Pre-K STP = \$24,000	1 new rising Pre-K STP = \$24,000	
2 new rising KinderCamps = \$20,000	Add 2 new rising KinderCamps = \$20,000	2 new rising KinderCamps = \$20,000	2 new rising KinderCamps = \$20,000	2 new rising KinderCamps = \$20,000	
\$92,000	\$160,000	\$228,000	\$296,000	\$364,000	

**Recommendation #6: Develop an Early Childhood Education Leadership Institute**

DESCRIPTION

There have been misunderstandings in the past between and among elementary school leaders and providers of early childhood education. This has led to missed opportunities to optimize early education outcomes. It is critical to have alignment about what is expected at each educational stage, what is normal child development and the appropriate curriculum and instructional practices for young children.

Research has highlighted the importance of leadership in affecting child outcomes and a need for professional development content that builds bridges between the cultures and practices of birth to age five programs and Kindergarten through grade three.

We propose to establish an Early Childhood Leadership Institute to provide a substantive professional learning program for joint cohorts of elementary school principals and child care center directors.

GEOGRAPHY

Citywide but with a strong effort put towards ensuring we have cohorts in the targeted clusters of Douglass and Washington

TARGETED POPULATIONS

Start with cohorts of elementary school principals and child care center directors in the lowest performing clusters in APS.

INTENDED IMPACT

- Team building for elementary school principals and child care center directors
- Strong, substantive professional development around child development, appropriate instruction, serving families well
- Ease the transition for families from early learning programs to elementary schools
- Positive impact on children whose elementary school principals and child care center directors are trained

BUDGET (all figures are estimates)

- We are assuming a cost of \$3000 per participant with teams of 6 people (3 representing the elementary school and 3 representing each child care provider with a maximum of 3 child care centers represented in each cohort). We would like to have teams from each of the 9 APS clusters participate in each year.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Ongoing
Cohorts from 3 clusters within APS would take part in the institute (a maximum of 12 people would be in each cohort at a cost of \$3000/person) = \$108,000	Cohorts from 3 clusters within APS would take part in the institute (a maximum of 12 people would be in each cohort at a cost of \$3000/person) = \$108,000	Cohorts from 3 clusters within APS would take part in the institute (a maximum of 12 people would be in each cohort at a cost of \$3000/person) = \$108,000	TBD based on the success of the first cohorts	TBD based on the success of the first cohorts	
\$108,000	\$108,000	\$108,000	TBD	TBD	TBD

**Recommendation #7: Create a multi-platform, city-wide messaging campaign**

**DESCRIPTION**

Create a multi-platform, city-wide messaging campaign that includes a “Countdown to Kindergarten” focused on giving parents the information they need regarding the importance of high-quality early learning, including Pre-K, developmental milestones, best practices and services available to support children and families.

**GEOGRAPHY**

Citywide

**TARGETED POPULATIONS**

Parents, citizens of Atlanta

**INTENDED IMPACT**

- Create a culture in Atlanta where children and families are valued and prioritized in decision-making
- Help citizens understand the importance of children and families having affordable access to high quality early learning environments
- Help parents better understand how to support their children in their development and the education journey
- Help parents understand the resources that are available to support their children and family and connect families to those services
- Build a culture where citizens understand that the well being of our children and families and the opportunity available to our children will determine the future success of our city
- Communicate the value of early childhood educators

**BUDGET (all figures are estimates)**

- We will seek to get some of this work done pro bono but below are the cost estimates if we have to go to the marketplace and fund this project in its entirety.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Ongoing
\$1,000,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	There will likely be some ongoing cost

**Recommendation #8: Build greater capacity to serve the health and well being needs of children and families across the city**

**DESCRIPTION**

Currently, in the city of Atlanta, there is fragmentation in the services available to families in need of them. Too many children and families fall through the cracks and do not receive the health and well being services they need. It is not enough to simply screen children for developmental delays; we must also ensure that children and families are connected to the services that they need. Lack of knowledge about available services and transportation continue to serve as barriers for families. In order to meet the health and well being needs of children and families across the city and to build the capacity of early childhood providers, we propose providing funding that will enable existing Head Start providers to partner with other, less-resourced providers to serve their children and families and to build their capacity for providing these services moving forward. This is a replication of the state's existing Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships.

Funds will be invested and RFPs will be issued to create teams of specialists to serve children and families. The functions that would be provided by these teams are: developmental screens for all children, mental health services, physical health services including referral to pediatric medical homes, family support, support for children with special needs, school transition support, etc. The nurse navigator program could be part of this. Delivery of services through mobile units could be part of this. These efforts should be coordinated with the Fulton County Public Health Department, CMOs and with existing providers in the city.

**GEOGRAPHY**

Citywide but rolled out initially prioritizing the Washington and Douglass clusters

**TARGETED POPULATIONS**

Children 0-5 and their families

**INTENDED IMPACT**

- Ensure that children and their families are well supported and are receiving the services that they need
- Better alignment of family and child healthcare needs
- Reducing visits to emergency rooms
- Increasing the number of children in the city with a pediatric medical home

- Improving health outcomes

**BUDGET (all figures are estimates)**

- We assume a cost of about \$4500/student based on other hub models and the EHS Child Care Partnership model. Over a five-year period, we would propose starting five of these hubs or teams of specialists to serve kids and their families. We would prioritize high need clusters in APS based on student achievement in the elementary schools and a lack services available in the early childhood settings.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Ongoing
Creation of two hubs/shared service programs serving 150 kids each or a total of 300 kids: \$1,350,000	Creation of two new hubs/shared service programs serving 150 kids each and the continuation of the first 2 hubs to serve a total of 600 kids: \$2,700,000	Creation of one new hub/shared service program and the continuation of the first 4 hubs serving a total of 750 kids: \$3,375,000	Continuation of all 5 hubs/shared service programs serving a total of 750 kids: \$3,375,000	Continuation of all 5 hubs/shared service programs serving a total of 750 kids: \$3,375,000	Evaluate success to determine next steps
\$1,350,000	\$2,700,000	\$3,375,000	\$3,375,000	\$3,375,000	TBD

**Recommendation #9: Create formal structures for ECE engagement in APS, including adding an ECE representative to the APS Cluster Advisory Teams and including ECE providers on the APS cluster maps**

**DESCRIPTION**

Alignment between the early learning programs in the city and the elementary schools in APS is critical to ensure a seamless system for families. Each APS Cluster Advisory Team should include an ECE representative to ensure that the youngest learners and the early childhood

education providers are taken into consideration in the decisions that are made. In order to make clear that early learning providers are an important part of the education system for children, APS cluster maps should include ECE providers.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Citywide

## **TARGETED POPULATIONS**

All children in the city birth through elementary school

## **INTENDED IMPACT**

Create a seamless, high-quality education system for children and families

## **BUDGET (all figures are estimates)**

No cost

**Recommendation #10: Develop an outcomes and research agenda to inform policy and practice, build in accountability for the early childhood investments being made and communicate outcomes to stakeholders**

## **DESCRIPTION**

There is a lot that we know about how to serve children and families well. Many of these best practices are going on in pockets around the city. We can use research to inform how to scale and expand these practices. For example, DECAL has invested in Summer Transition Programs to serve at risk populations in an effort to close the achievement gap between those students and their peers. From DECAL's research, we know that children who participate in these programs are more ready for school. This research has driven our desire to ensure more children have access to these programs.

There are still things that we don't know. We can use research to help us understand how to better serve children and families well and how to remove existing barriers to services and programs. For example, there are clusters in the city where a large gap exists between the number of four-year-old children living in the cluster and the number of children enrolled in the Georgia Pre-K program. Additional slots have been allocated in some of these clusters, but some slots have remained unfilled. It is important that we determine why this is the case in order to address the barriers in place for families. As part of a robust research agenda, a needs assessment could be conducted with an eye towards availability of information to all families,

ease of registration, transportation, need for extended day/year outside of the Pre-K school day/year, etc. The purpose of the assessment would be to determine the barriers in place for families so that those barriers can be removed and more children can be served through this program.

We also need to understand how the PAACT investments that we are making are impacting children and families. Communicating our successes and lessons learned will be critical to the ongoing support for this work. The data currently available is much more long term and bigger picture data. We need a more granular approach to the data to measure the impact of the investments that we are making. For instance, we want to know if the child care affordability scholarships and the grants to high quality programs are resulting in greater access to quality for the children who need it most. We will need an infrastructure for studying and reporting on this.

For all of these reasons, we propose developing a research agenda that informs policies and practices, holds us accountable for investments that are made and communicates outcomes to stakeholders. We need to build the infrastructure necessary to be able to do this. The existing resources at Georgia State University and the 323 project should be leveraged to support this work. GSU has already begun connecting data from ECE providers and APS.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Citywide

## **TARGETED POPULATIONS**

Children and families across the city

## **INTENDED IMPACT**

- Ensure that data is driving the decisions being made
- Improve our practices
- Hold ourselves accountable for the investments that are being made
- Communicate out the results to stakeholders
- Disseminate best practices and lessons learned
- Build support for future investments in high quality early education and care for all children

## **BUDGET (all figures are estimates)**

- TBD