




MAKING THE CASE | MAKING THE DIFFERENCE

MAKING THE

P·A·A·C·T

PROMISE **ALL** ATLANTA CHILDREN THRIVE



We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say, "It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem." Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes.

Fred Rogers

Envision yourself in a new Atlanta. In this Atlanta, every mother gets high-quality, affordable prenatal care. Every baby hears rich and loving language from birth. Parents have resources to ensure their children are well-nourished, healthy, and exposed to robust and engaging learning experiences. Families have access to high-quality, affordable learning opportunities, with educators who are well-equipped and supported to ensure their students are prepared to thrive as citizens.

ACHIEVING THE VISION

Now imagine yourself as the architect of this new city. Where would you start? What foundational pieces exist? Where are the greatest needs? What would you build?

In 2018, a group of 24 Atlanta leaders was convened by GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students to work toward this vision. Over six months, these leaders from Atlanta's public and private sectors immersed themselves in the real challenges faced by Atlanta families and educators and began to develop workable solutions to close the gap between the Atlanta of today and the Atlanta we envision for tomorrow.

We know there is a long way to go. Atlanta's growing workforce and low unemployment suggest an economically thriving city, but many of Atlanta's neighborhoods are left behind. Atlanta has the highest rate of income inequality in the country, and our economic mobility rate is near the bottom. Atlanta workers supporting families and living in the city are facing rising costs for housing, health care and child care that present challenges to participation in the workforce and the city's economy. In turn, these challenges affect the city's employers, both public and private, who must recruit and retain the best and most productive employees for success. We also know the future of these employers depends on a qualified workforce now and in the future. But at some Atlanta elementary schools, fewer than 10% of third graders score at or above proficiency on state assessments.

The early years are a critical foundation, not only for reading, academic success and high school graduation, but also for long-term positive outcomes such as health, employment, and community involvement. Today's children are tomorrow's community leaders and workers. The future of the city depends on these children reaching their full potential.

Realizing the Atlanta we envision for tomorrow will take all of us, together we make a promise that all Atlanta children will thrive. We believe that we have both a practical and a moral obligation to work together to ensure that all children, starting at birth, are healthy, developing, and learning so they enter school ready for success, flourish in school, and leave school prepared to reach their full potential as citizens. We know this will only be possible with citywide partnerships and commitments from Atlanta's government, education, community and business sectors.

We invite you to join our PAACT: our promise that all Atlanta children will thrive.

Keisha Lance Bottoms

Mayor
City of Atlanta

Dr. Meria Carstarphen

Superintendent
Atlanta Public Schools

Jason Esteves

Board Chair
Atlanta Public Schools

Felicia Moore

President
Atlanta City Council

Stephanie Blank

Board Chair
GEEARS: Georgia Early
Education Alliance
for Ready Students

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO MANY WHO HAVE PAVED THE WAY.

The State of Georgia made significant investments in early childhood care and education with the establishment of the state's lottery-funded Pre-K program and Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

The Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation and United Way of Greater Atlanta, the Goizueta, Zeist, Annie E. Casey and other foundations, along with their donors, have made significant investments as well, primarily in the metro Atlanta area.

These philanthropies have supported work on school transitions and school readiness; professional development for early learning teachers; the state's Quality Rated system and child care provider quality, infrastructure, capacity and organizational improvements; expanded access to early childhood education; child health and well-being; and early language and literacy initiatives to ensure children are reading on grade level by the third grade.

The Council's goal is to build on, rather than supplant, these investments. Recommendations are designed to take the best practices from these programs and initiatives and implement targeted investments in the City of Atlanta for those most in need as a step toward ensuring all Atlanta children thrive.

We are also grateful for and will build on the strong partnerships we have forged with high-quality providers throughout the city, researchers at Georgia State University, institutions such as the Atlanta Speech School and Quality Care for Children, and parents and teachers who work tirelessly every day in our city.

OUR VISION

Families in the City of Atlanta have what they need to ensure that all children starting at birth are healthy, learning, and developing so that they enter school ready for success, thrive once in school, and are prepared to reach their full potential as citizens of our city.

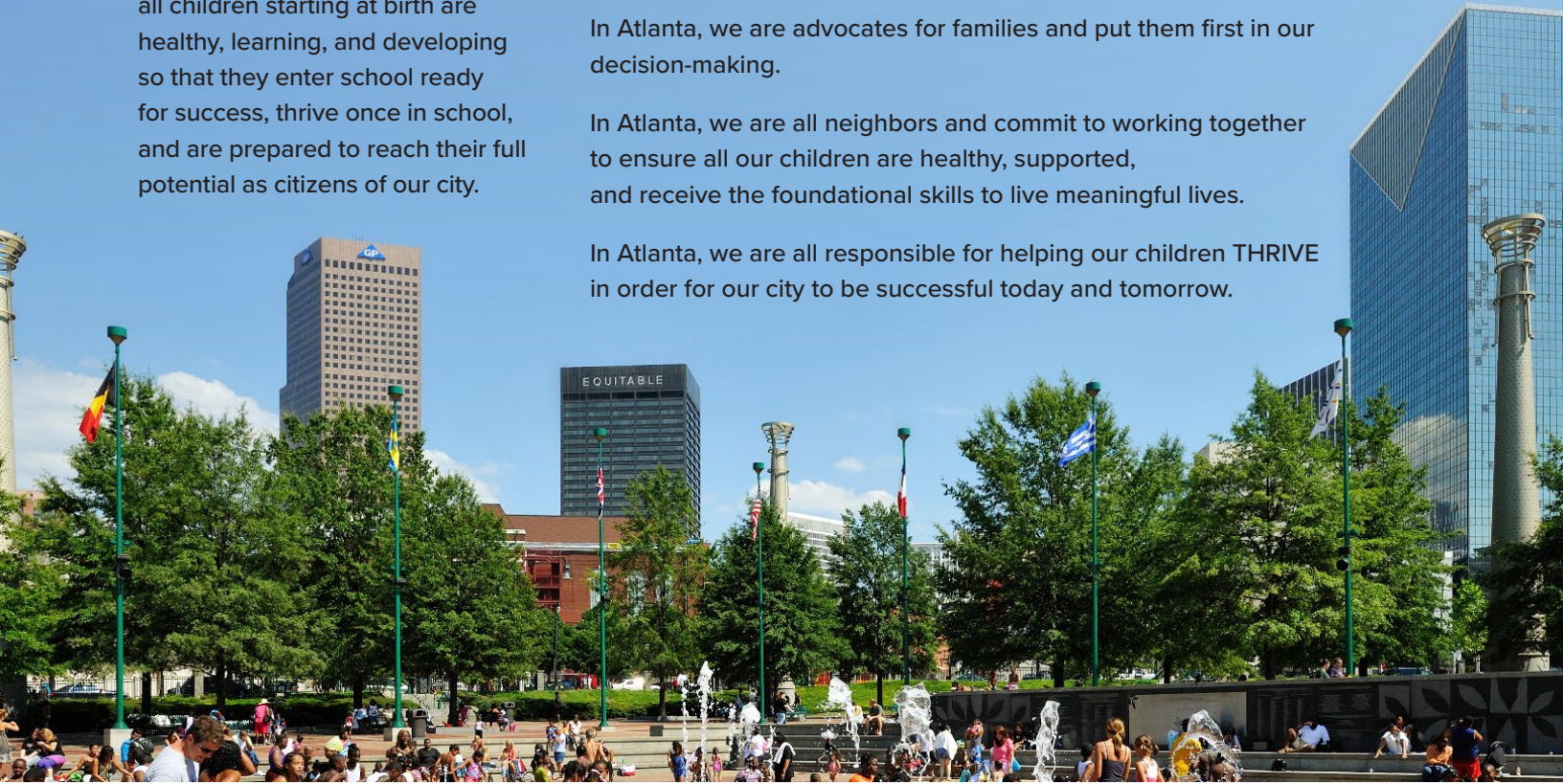
OUR VALUES

In Atlanta, we are champions for children, and we respect and believe in each individual child's potential and promise.

In Atlanta, we are advocates for families and put them first in our decision-making.

In Atlanta, we are all neighbors and commit to working together to ensure all our children are healthy, supported, and receive the foundational skills to live meaningful lives.

In Atlanta, we are all responsible for helping our children THRIVE in order for our city to be successful today and tomorrow.



ATLANTA EARLY EDUCATION LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Dr. Paul Alberto
Dean, College of Education and Human
Development, Georgia State University

Liz Blake
Board of Directors, Westside Future Fund

Stephanie Blank
Chair, Board of Directors, GEEARS

Bill Bolling
Founder and Executive Director,
Atlanta Community Food Bank

Keisha Lance Bottoms
Mayor, City of Atlanta

Dr. Meria Carstarphen
Superintendent, Atlanta Public Schools

Donna Davidson
President, Easter Seals North Georgia (Atlanta)

Jason Esteves
Chair, Board of Education,
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Vice President, Community Development,
Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation

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Executive Director, Celebration Bowl, ESPN

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Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner, Bright from the Start: Georgia
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Felicia Moore
President, Atlanta City Council

Jovita Moore
News Anchor, WSB-TV

Ed Munster
President, YMCA of Metro Atlanta

Blythe Robinson
President, Sheltering Arms

Lizzy Smith
Grants Program Director,
Robert W. Woodruff Foundation

Billie Walker
Parent and Director, Atlanta Children's Shelter

Dr. Raphael Warnock
Senior Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church

Comer Yates
Executive Director, Atlanta Speech School

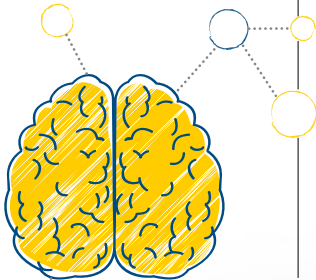
Why Early Childhood?



BRAINS DEVELOP EARLY

In the first few years of a child's life, **more than one million new neural connections** are formed every second.¹

These connections are the foundation upon which all learning, behavior and health depend.²



WORKFORCE AND EMPLOYER NEEDS



Quality early childhood programs

are a critical two-generation strategy, allowing parents to enter the workforce and grow income while their children gain foundational skills that will make them productive members of the future workforce.

26% of Georgia parents and caregivers of children under age 5 reported significant changes to their or a family member's employment within the past 12 months (quitting, not taking, or significantly changing a job) due to issues with child care.⁴

Parents who receive childcare support

are more likely to be employed and have longer employment periods than families who do not receive support.⁵

30%

of millennials said they would change jobs for a child care **reimbursement benefit.**⁶



YOUNG CHILDREN THRIVE WHEN THEY HAVE:

- Safe, stable and nurturing environments;
- High-quality early experiences that promote development in all domains:



Physical: physical health, well-being, and motor skills



Social-emotional, including self-regulation and relationships with peers and adults



Cognition and general knowledge: mathematics and problem-solving



Language and literacy: language understanding and use, emergent literacy, and early writing



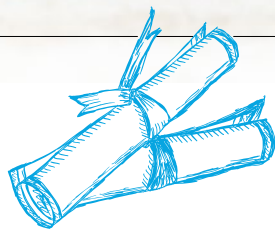
Approaches to learning, including initiative, attentiveness, persistence, and play³



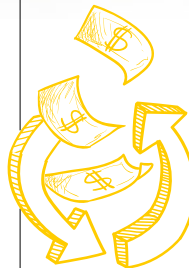
CHILD OUTCOMES

Children who attend high-quality early learning programs are **more likely to:**

- Graduate high school
- Get a job
- Earn higher wages



They're less likely to drop out of school, depend on social services, or be arrested.⁷



RETURN ON INVESTMENT



Every dollar invested in comprehensive, high-quality early learning yields an

annual return on investment of 13%.⁸

Early Childhood in Atlanta

ATLANTA'S YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



30,000+

children ages 0–5
live in the City
of Atlanta.⁹

40%

are living in poverty;
57% are living at or below
200% of the poverty line.¹⁰

73%

have their only parent or
both parents in the workforce;
13% have no parent in the workforce.¹¹



Infant Mortality Rates¹²

(per 1,000 births)

Fulton: **7.4** DeKalb: **6.3**

This number is significantly higher for
children born to African-American mothers:

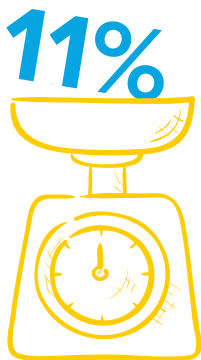
Fulton: **10.0** DeKalb: **11.5**

Georgia has the
7th-highest childhood
uninsured rate in the country.¹³

An estimated **1,765** City of
Atlanta children ages 0-5
lack health insurance.¹⁴



13% of Fulton and **15%** of DeKalb births are to mothers without a high school diploma.¹⁵



11% of Atlanta babies
are born at a
low birthweight.

This is higher than
both the state (10%)
and the country (8%).¹⁶



68% of third
graders
attending Atlanta Public Schools
are NOT reading at grade level.

The numbers are even
higher for those who are
economically disadvantaged (82%)
and African American (81%).¹⁷

ATLANTA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCES



213

full-time, licensed child care programs
in the City of Atlanta, representing a
licensed capacity of 18,504

Does not include programs not subject to licensing, such
as public Pre-k programs in local school systems.¹⁸



78%
participate in Quality Rated,
the state's Quality Rating
and Improvement System
for child care.



38%

have received
a quality rating of
1, 2, or 3 stars.¹⁹



An estimated

32%

of Atlanta's demand
for child care is unmet.

The supply of Quality Rated
child care options is even lower.²⁰



Areas with **large gaps between
child care supply and demand**
can be found across the Atlanta region.

Many communities that
experience such gaps also have
high concentrations of poverty.²¹

STATEWIDE FACTS

Average cost of **center-based infant care** exceeds in-state tuition at a 4-year college or university.²²

Families with low incomes spend a significant portion—in excess of 40%—of their incomes on child care.²³

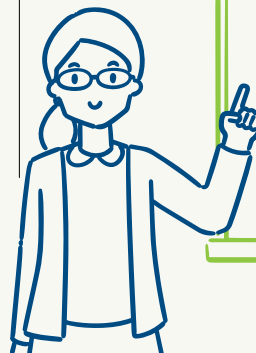


\$4.7B

in economic activity is generated
annually by the early care and
education industry.²⁴

Only 11%

of income-
eligible children
receive child care
assistance.²⁵



Average Wages²⁵

\$8⁸⁵ /hr.
assistant
child care
teacher

\$10¹⁴ /hr.
lead
child care
teacher

Lower wages can make it difficult to
recruit and retain a talented early
childhood workforce and often
lead to high turnover.

ASSESSING NEEDS

Throughout the 2015-2016 school year, GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students and EducationCounsel, LLC worked with Atlanta Public Schools (APS) to identify policy and program shifts that could help increase access to high-quality early childhood programs for Atlanta families and improve alignment across early childhood sectors serving children from birth through early elementary school age.

EducationCounsel looked at current information on early childhood programming within the Atlanta school district and the broader Atlanta community, including availability and quality of early learning slots, to understand concerns related to waitlists, service needs and underserved communities. They held discussions with internal and external stakeholder groups to identify strengths and weaknesses of current approaches to early childhood, with a focus on alignment of standards, curriculum, and professional development. They also looked at best practices across the country.

In its March 2016 report, EducationCounsel noted significant disparities in access to quality early learning settings throughout Atlanta:

- Higher-quality early care and education (ECE) providers concentrated in higher-income communities
- In many communities, insufficient licensed child care or Pre-Kindergarten programs to serve families who might want them
- Insufficient licensed child care slots meeting quality standards²⁷

The report also noted a lack of coordination and information gaps among birth to third-grade stakeholders, including providers, parents, the school district, funders and other community leaders.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In response to the EducationCounsel report, the Atlanta Early Education Executive Team, made up of key early education providers, Atlanta Public Schools, GEEARS and Georgia State University, began meeting in May 2017 to develop a vision, priorities and goals for the early childhood community.

This vision was used to guide the work of the Atlanta Early Education Leadership Council, which was formed in late 2017, chaired by Stephanie Blank, and began meeting in early 2018. The Council is comprised of elected leadership of the City of Atlanta including the Mayor, the City Council President, and the School Board Chair, along with the APS Superintendent and key philanthropic, business, and education leaders. Never before have these groups worked together to focus specifically on the needs of children ages birth to five in the City of Atlanta.

The Council intentionally worked to build on the previous and ongoing efforts of organizations such as the United Way of Greater Atlanta, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and others. This report, including recommendations, represents the results of our learning and deliberations.

The Atlanta Early Education Leadership Council brought many of Atlanta's thought leaders together to exchange information, discuss community assets as well as barriers and collectively develop a bold plan to ensure that "All children living in Atlanta realize their dreams."

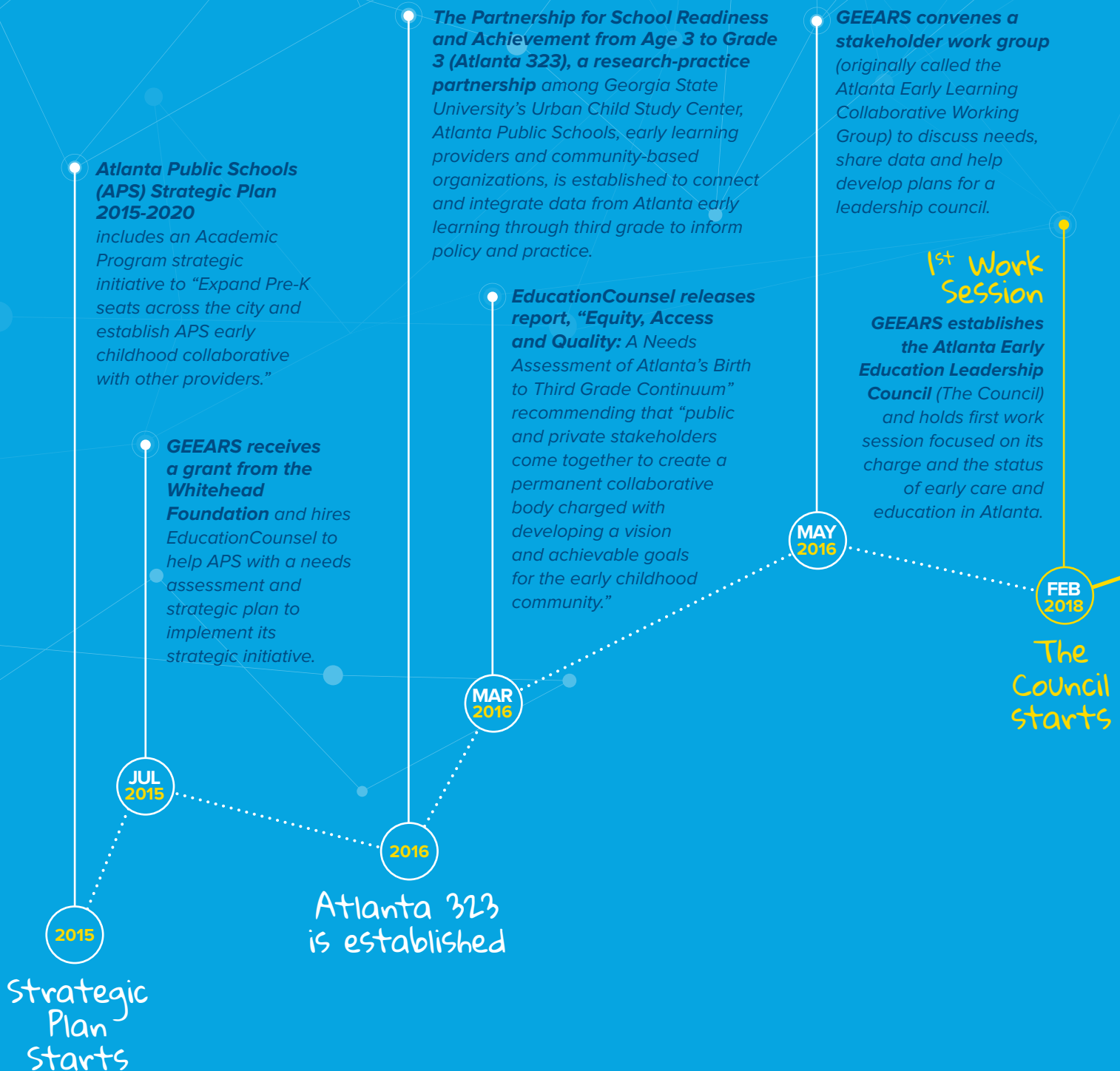
Donna Davidson
President/CEO,
Easter Seals North Georgia

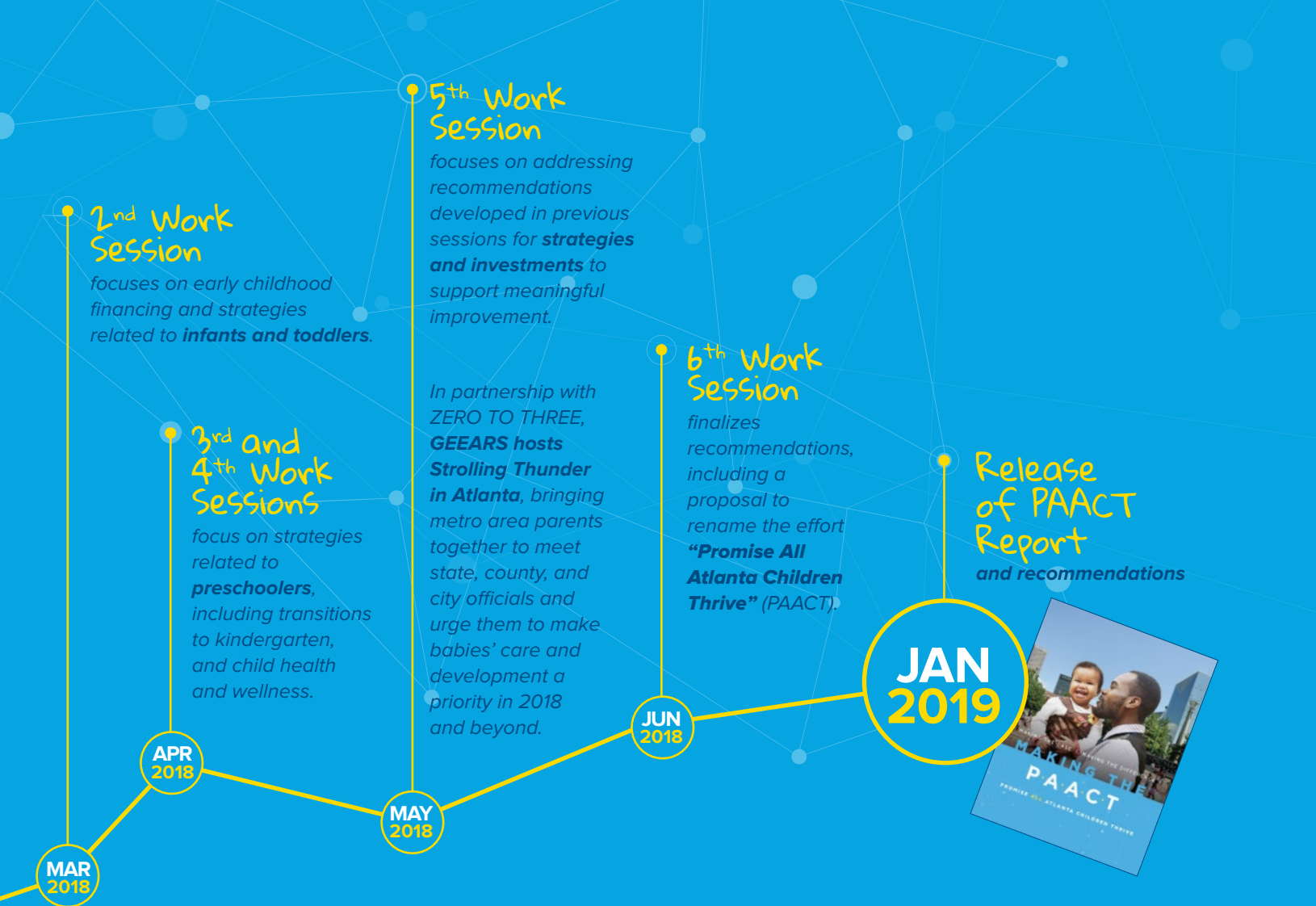
A young child with curly hair is shown in profile, blowing bubbles. The child is wearing a dark blue polo shirt and blue pants. An adult's hand is visible, holding the child's arm. The background is a blurred city skyline under a clear blue sky. The child is holding a yellow and white bubble wand, and several bubbles are floating in the air.

COUNCIL GOAL

Develop a plan to coordinate the resources and services available to children and families in order to minimize duplication of service, ensure that all children have access to high-quality settings from birth to third grade regardless of neighborhood, income or other characteristics, and maximize current and future resources available to Atlanta.

Our Path to PAACT





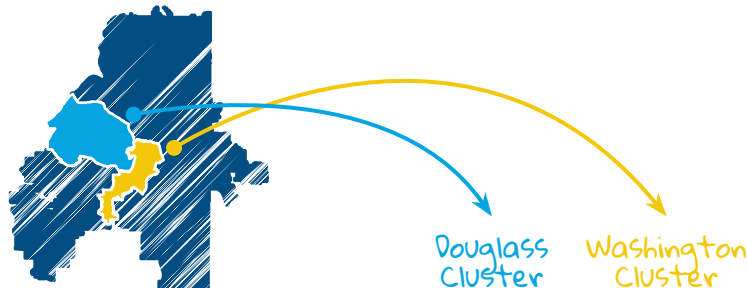
ATLANTA EARLY EDUCATION LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

We held six half-day work sessions from February –June 2018 to learn more about various aspects of early childhood health, development and learning and the implications for overall child and community well-being and outcomes.

We consulted with national, state and local subject matter experts to better understand the early childhood landscape, including current practices, challenges, and potential solutions. Each work session included presentations on specific topics followed by related group discussions. Topics included:

- Strategies to address early learning and child well-being in Atlanta and other cities
- Health care: maternal and child health/well-being, home visiting, nurse navigators
- Early childhood care: two-generation scholarships, quality care, how centers are addressing child and family needs
- Early childhood financing strategies and related challenges
- State efforts to address infant and toddler needs
- The Georgia Pre-K program
- Smooth child transitions into elementary school
- Creating a high-quality pre-kindergarten–third grade continuum of learning for all children

TARGETING SOME INVESTMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT



Throughout this process, we looked at citywide and APS school cluster data to understand the scope of the needs and identify potential citywide efforts as well as areas in which investments could be targeted to maximize impact, with the intent of expanding the targeted cluster work to additional clusters across the city as resources become available.

Based on cluster data and community context, two school clusters were identified as the top priorities for targeted interventions to increase the availability and affordability of high-quality child care.²⁸ We decided to focus on the Douglass cluster, where the data clearly illustrated a stark need for interventions, and the Washington cluster, where investments in young children and their families would leverage community work already in progress in K-12, housing and health care.

At the same time, we sought to balance this targeted approach with universal strategies to engage parents, train leaders, and support teachers throughout the city.

Families with children under 5 in poverty	68.5%	55.5%
Number of children under 5	3,510	1,575
Households without a vehicle	28.2%	29.2%
Regulated and full-time license-exempt facilities/estimated capacity	31 / 1,828	19 / 1,950
Quality Rated facilities/estimated capacity	4 / 226	9 / 1,391
Two- or three-star rated programs/estimated capacity (as of 12/05/18)	2 / 47	6 / 470
Average cluster CCRPI - College and Career Readiness Performance Index* (elementary). ²⁹	52.1	60.2

* CCRPI is the comprehensive school improvement, accountability and communication platform to promote college and career readiness for Georgia public school students.

SUBJECT MATTER CONSULTANTS

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Tiffany Hill
Former YMCA Center Director

Blythe Robinson
President
Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Centers

KEY GEEARS STAFF AND CONSULTANTS SUPPORTING THE COUNCIL'S WORK

Mindy Binderman
Executive Director
GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students

Erin Hames
Consultant

Bill Potapchuk
Facilitator



STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

In work sessions and deliberations, we considered extensive information and data related to early childhood development, care and education, particularly current best practices and promising programs. We discussed, and at times debated, the best strategies to effect real and lasting change for Atlanta children and families.

Our resulting recommendations are all focused on giving children ages 0-5 access not only to high-quality early learning environments but also to the services they need to be healthy in all aspects of their lives. In turn, these recommendations will support Atlanta's working parents, especially those who provide essential services, such as police, firefighters, nurses, and teachers.

We designed these recommendations to direct investments that will build on and expand identified best practices and promising programs to improve child health and well-being, learning and long-term outcomes.



RECOMMENDATION

NUMBER

1

Create a PAACT Fund for Quality to:

- Improve existing child care programs and expand the number of high-quality options
- Ensure that more low-income children have access to high-quality programs

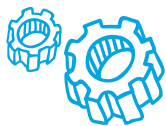
RECOMMENDATION #1

Improve existing child care programs and expand the number of high-quality options by:

- a Supporting the professional development and credentialing of early childhood educators
- b Helping centers become Quality Rated and helping them move up the continuum in the Quality Rated system to achieve 2 or 3 stars
- c Making capital investments to increase the capacity of existing Quality Rated providers to serve more children
- d Funding child care affordability gap scholarships
- e Funding grants to quality rated programs

We believe these strategies will improve the quality of early learning environments and teaching and expand the number of high-quality seats available to low-income families across the city (Strategies d and e are described in more detail on subsequent pages.)

INTENDED IMPACT



Families have increased access to high-quality child care in areas with identified gaps in supply.



More quality seats are available to low-income families.



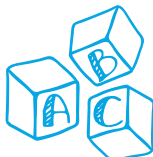
The early education workforce is supported through credentialing and professional development.



Barriers to quality ECE programs are removed.



More ECE programs become Quality Rated and move up the continuum to achieve two- and three-star quality ratings.



Existing Quality Rated providers have the capital funds needed to expand their capacity.



TARGET AREA

City of Atlanta, based on data provided in the ATL ACCESS MAP, which depicts child care supply and demand and identifies gaps.

GEEARS worked with the Reinvestment Fund, which uses investments to revitalize low-income communities, to develop the map, which incorporates data on areas of high-poverty, unmet demand for ECE services and lack of high-quality ECE:

www.atlaccessmap.org

TARGET POPULATION

Low-income families

CASE EXAMPLE

In Philadelphia, once its 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, the Philadelphia Fund for Quality supports high-quality early care and education providers in 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 are eligible to apply for capital grant awards of up to \$300,000 and/or loan funds to support expansion projects.

- d Ensure that more low-income children have access to high-quality programs by funding **child care affordability gap scholarships** for families in the Douglass and Washington clusters and public service employees.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that child care take up no more than 7% of a family's budget. For most of our 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.

For this reason, we are recommending the creation of child care affordability gap scholarships. These scholarships would cover the gap between 10% of a family's income and the average cost of child care and 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 scholarships with existing comprehensive investments for families and other recommended PAACT investments in targeted clusters.

Making sure that all children are ready for public school is one of our region's greatest challenges. Atlanta has what it takes to become a national leader in early education. And the consequences of failure are unacceptable – for our kids and our society as a whole.

Kevin Greiner
President & CEO, Gas South



TARGET AREA

Initially, investments will target two priority areas in the city, areas where investments are most needed and where there is alignment with other relevant initiatives. The first area includes lower-income families in the Douglass and Washington school clusters; the second area is public employees citywide who perform essential services and earn wages below a certain threshold.

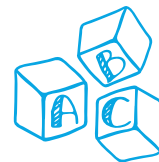
TARGET POPULATION

- Families with children ages 4 and under in the Douglass and Washington clusters making 50% or below the state median income
- Atlanta public employees, including firefighters, police, Atlanta Public School and early education teachers who are eligible due to their income level

INTENDED IMPACT



Families are better able to afford high-quality care for their children.



Quality Rated programs are helped to fill vacancies.



Programs have a greater incentive to participate in Quality Rated.



Parents can work while their children learn.

- e Ensure that more low-income children have access to high-quality programs by funding **grants to Quality Rated early education programs** to expand access to children from low-income families.

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning administers a Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) subsidy grant program to help Quality Rated programs expand access to children from low-income families. The program has been successful in creating affordable access to quality care and helping child care programs achieve and maintain quality. The subsidy grants reimburse centers for child care 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 and improve program quality by directing grant funds be spent on priorities shown to improve the quality of care and stabilize high-quality centers. Our recommendation is that additional grants be made available for Quality Rated child care centers and family child care networks willing to take between 10 and 20 infants or toddlers from low-income families.

TARGET AREA

City of Atlanta

TARGET POPULATION

Families with infants or toddlers and incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty level

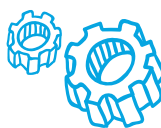
INTENDED IMPACT



High-quality providers are encouraged to serve low-income children.



The early education marketplace is stabilized.



Centers have incentives to be Quality Rated and consistency in quality is supported.



Language and literacy coaching is coupled with grants to centers.



I appreciate the opportunity to participate on the Early Education Leadership Council. As the leader of the Legislative Branch of City government, it is important for us to be engaged with the process. Our children deserve the best chance to have a productive future, and working with these great partners, we have a framework to help them achieve it.

Felicia Moore
President, Atlanta City Council



RECOMMENDATION

NUMBER

2

Expand learning spaces in libraries and other public gathering spots across the city

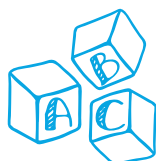
RECOMMENDATION #2

We want to meet very young children and their parents/caregivers where they are to support the developmentally appropriate early learning experiences and interactions that are so critical to brain development.

This recommended strategy includes:

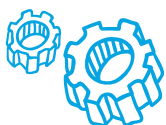
- Partnerships to transform spaces where caregivers eat, play and pray (e.g., libraries, barbershops, faith institutions)
- Facilitated play and learn sessions by early childhood teachers/trainers
- Programming provided at spaces at least once per week
- Curriculum aligned with the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS)
- Screening and referrals grounded in relationships
- Social support networks
- Healthy snacks

INTENDED IMPACT



Children

are screened and referred to ensure those who need additional support are identified and connected to available services.



Child learning

and development is fostered through enriched, guided play spaces.



Parents,

caregivers and family child care providers are supported in developing serve-and-return skills.



Community-

building is fostered through regular gatherings.



Initially nine learning spaces would be established, one in each APS school cluster.

TARGET AREA

City of Atlanta

TARGET POPULATION

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

I have enjoyed being part of this work and seeing a group of people come together to develop solutions. WSB is willing to support this work and the communication efforts that will be needed.

Jovita Moore
News Anchor, WSB-TV



RECOMMENDATION

NUMBER

3

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

RECOMMENDATION #3

Expand the 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 elementary school.

Three specific programs are worthy of replication across the city:

- 1. Summer transition programs for rising kindergartners.**
Administered by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), these six-week, intensive programs take place in child care centers and elementary schools during June and July and offer high-quality instruction with a focus on language, literacy and math. The experience is designed to reduce the opportunity gap by providing additional family support and resources to targeted high-needs populations.
- 2. Summer transition programs for rising Pre-K English language learners.** Also administered by DECAL, these six-week, programs specifically target children registered for 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.
- 3. KinderCamps.** A number of providers, including the United Way of Greater Atlanta, Atlanta Public Schools and Sheltering Arms, 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 children the opportunity 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 rising kindergartners prior to the first day of school. KinderCamps range in duration, from three to four days to six weeks. Most are half-day and may take place any time during the summer but typically occur the last few weeks before school starts. KinderCamps are generally staffed by Pre-K teachers, kindergarten teachers and aides, other school personnel and volunteers.

TARGET AREA

Our initial expansion of the rising kindergartner Summer Transition Program (STP) will be targeted to high-need APS clusters that do not have sufficient STPs: Washington, Douglass, Therrell and Mays. As resources become available, our plan is to increase the number of programs, with a continued focus on children in high-need clusters.

Expansion of the rising Pre-K program for English language learners will be targeted to the North Atlanta and Mays clusters, which have larger numbers of students who are English language learners. DECAL currently offers two programs in the North Atlanta cluster, so we would assess the need for additional programs in that cluster prior to making an additional investment.

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

TARGET POPULATION

- Rising Georgia 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



Atlanta children and their families have easier transitions into elementary school.



At-risk populations have additional supports to reduce the opportunity gap and bolster these children and their families as they enter Pre-K and elementary school.



RECOMMENDATION

NUMBER

4

Develop an Early Childhood
Education Leadership Institute

RECOMMENDATION #4

In the past, misunderstandings between and among elementary school leaders and providers of early childhood education have led to missed opportunities to optimize early education outcomes. It is critical to have shared understanding about child development, what is expected at each educational stage, and 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-five programs and kindergarten through grade three.

The recommendation is 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.

TARGET AREA

City of Atlanta, with a strong effort to ensure cohorts are established in the targeted clusters of Douglass and Washington

TARGET POPULATION

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

INTENDED IMPACT



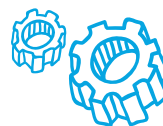
Elementary school principals and child care center directors have team-building experiences.



Teachers have strong, substantive professional development around appropriate instruction, family engagement, language and literacy, and child development.



Children and families have easier transitions from early learning programs to elementary schools.



There is a positive impact on children whose elementary school principals and child care center directors participate in a leadership institute.

Current evidence points to an investment in children – their health and brain development – as the best strategy to achieve an educated and healthy population of Georgians.

Dr. Yasmin Tyler-Hill,
Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Pediatrics, Morehouse School of Medicine;
Medical Director, CHOA at Hughes Spalding; and
Chief of Service, MSM Pediatric Services, Grady Health Systems



RECOMMENDATION

NUMBER

5

Create a multi-platform, citywide messaging campaign

RECOMMENDATION #5

Create a multi-platform, citywide messaging campaign that promotes the importance of early childhood experiences and 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.

INTENDED IMPACT



Atlanta has a culture where children and families are valued and prioritized in decision-making.



Citizens better understand the importance of children and families having affordable access to high-quality early learning environments.



Parents better understand how to support their children in their development and the education journey.



Parents are aware of the resources that are available to support their children and family, and families connect to those services.



Citizens understand that the well-being of Atlanta children and families and the opportunities available to those children will determine the future success of the city.



Parents and citizens value early childhood educators.



TARGET AREA

City of Atlanta

TARGET POPULATION

- Parents
- Atlanta citizens

The recommendations of the Atlanta Early Education Leadership Council are strong and comprehensive. Now, for children and families in the City of Atlanta to benefit optimally from the Council's work, we must remain focused and committed as the recommendations are implemented.

Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner, Georgia
Department of Early
Care and Learning



RECOMMENDATION

NUMBER

6

Build greater capacity to serve the health and well-being needs of children and families across the city

RECOMMENDATION #6

Address current fragmentation in the services available to families who need them in the City of Atlanta.

Too many of our children and families fall through the cracks and do not receive the health and well-being services they need. It is not enough to screen children for developmental delays; we must also ensure that children and families are connected to the services they need. Lack of knowledge about available services and transportation continue to serve as barriers for families.

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 to provide 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 an expansion of the state's existing Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships.

The recommendation is to issue RFPs and invest funds to create teams of specialists to serve children and families. These teams will coordinate: 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 and delivery of services through mobile units could be part of this strategy. These efforts should be coordinated with the Fulton County Public Health Department, care management organizations, and existing providers in the city.

TARGET AREA

City of Atlanta, with initial prioritization of the Washington and Douglass clusters

TARGET POPULATION

Children 0-5 and their families



INTENDED IMPACT



Children and their families are well supported and receiving the services that they need.



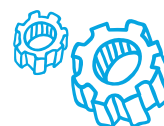
Services are better aligned to meet family and child healthcare needs.



More Atlanta children have a pediatric medical home.



There are fewer visits to emergency rooms.



Health outcomes are improved.



RECOMMENDATION

NUMBER

7

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

RECOMMENDATION #7

Alignment between the city's early learning programs and APS elementary schools is critical to ensure a seamless education 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. To make it clear that early learning providers are an important part of the education system for children, APS cluster maps should include ECE providers.

INTENDED IMPACT



Atlanta has a seamless, high-quality education system for children and families.

TARGET AREA

City of Atlanta

TARGET POPULATION

All Atlanta children, birth through elementary school

We are going to make the City of Atlanta the best place to be a child and to raise a child. We will hold one another accountable for the actions needed to make that a reality.

Mindy Binderman
Executive Director, GEEARS





RECOMMENDATION

NUMBER

8

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 #8

We know a lot about how to serve children and families well. Many best practices are being implemented in pockets around the city. We can use research to inform how best to scale and expand these practices.

Research can help us understand how to better serve children and families 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 4-year-old children living in the cluster and the number of children enrolled in the Georgia Pre-K program. Although additional slots have been allocated in some of these clusters, some of those slots remain unfilled. It is important to determine why this is the case, so we can address barriers for families.

As part of a robust research agenda, a Pre-K needs assessment will be conducted to look at availability of information to all families, ease of registration, availability of transportation, need for extended day/year, etc. The purpose would be to identify barriers, so they can be removed and more children can be served by this program.

We also need to understand how our investments are impacting children and families. Communicating successes and lessons learned will be critical to obtain ongoing support for this work. Currently available data are longer-term and bigger-picture. We need a more granular approach to assess the impact of our investments. For instance, we want to know if child care affordability scholarships and grants to high-quality programs are resulting in greater access to quality for the children who need it most.

For all of these reasons, we propose to develop a research agenda that informs policies and practices, holds us accountable for investments and communicates outcomes to stakeholders. We will need an infrastructure to manage this research. Existing resources at Georgia State University (GSU) and Atlanta 323 should be leveraged to support this work, as GSU has already begun connecting data from ECE providers and APS.

TARGET AREA

City of Atlanta

TARGET POPULATION

Children and families



INTENDED IMPACT



Decision-making is data-driven.



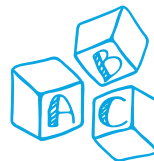
Practices are improved.



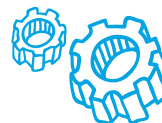
There is accountability for investments being made.



Results are communicated to stakeholders.



Best practices and lessons learned are disseminated to the field.



Future investments support high-quality early education and care for all children.

What Investments do we Need?

Achieving our vision for the City of Atlanta will require investments from all sectors of our community. Our goal is to raise up to \$20M annually from the public sector, philanthropies, and businesses to fund the recommendations detailed in this report. Close to three-fourths of the funds will be devoted to ensuring children from low-income families have access to high-quality early education through investments in quality improvements, the creation of new quality slots, gap scholarships to cover the difference between 10% of a family's income and the average cost of child care, and direct grants to Quality Rated child care centers and family child care networks to expand their capacity to serve these children. The balance will be devoted to funding the additional supports for children and families outlined in this report, including learning spaces, school transition programs, an early childhood education leadership institute, a citywide messaging campaign, and expanding the capacity of those providing health and well-being services to our youngest children.

The following chart presents **preliminary estimates** of funding needed to implement PAACT recommendations for the first three years based on similar work being done in Georgia or around the country. These estimates anticipate a ramp-up period over the first two years as implementation begins. Also included are costs for staffing and hosting the backbone functions of the PAACT, including fund development and management, communications and partnerships, public awareness, and reporting.

ESTIMATES OF INVESTMENTS NEEDED AND POTENTIAL IMPACT

RECOMMENDATION		YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
1a-e	PAACT Fund for Quality	\$6 million	\$10 million	\$15 million
	Increase the quality of existing child care slots	1,000 children	2,000 children	2,000 children
	New quality infant/toddler slots	TBD	250 new slots	Up to 350 new slots
	Scholarships or grant subsidies	Up to 600 children	Up to 1,000 children	Up to 1,250 children
2	Learning Spaces	\$160,000 4 new sites	\$260,000 5 new sites; 4 continuing sites	\$135,000 9 continuing sites
3	Summer Transition Programs and KinderCamps	\$92,000 74 students	\$160,000 148 students	\$228,000 296 students
4	ECE Leadership Institute	\$125,000 40 leaders	\$125,000 40 leaders	\$125,000 40 leaders
5	Citywide Messaging Campaign	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
6	Health and Well-Being Capacity	\$1,350,000 300 children	\$2,700,000 600 children	\$3,375,000 750 children
7	ECE Engagement in APS	No new cost		
8	Research Agenda	Cost TBD		
9	Backbone Costs <i>(management and administration)</i>	\$300,000 per year		
Estimated Annual Totals for Investments Needed <i>(excluding research agenda)</i>		\$9 million	\$14.5 million	\$20.2 million

Work and investments beyond the first three years will be planned based on results in the first three years.

NEXT STEPS

These recommendations are just a beginning—the launch of additional important work on behalf of Atlanta’s children. This work will build on existing efforts and require commitment, capacity, and investments from Atlanta’s government, education, community and business sectors. It will take time to obtain commitments and investments, implement these recommendations, and evaluate results, but we are committed to this effort.

Specifically, our next steps are to:

- Identify leadership/governance to manage the PAACT effort
- Seek commitments and investments from Atlanta-based public and private organizations
- Develop a plan for implementing PAACT recommendations
- Develop a plan for evaluating the results of PAACT investments
- Seek proposals for implementing recommendations and evaluating results
- Fund the work



It was crucial [to serve] as the voice of my peers to ensure the welfare and perspectives of educators were heard. Early childhood educators are often undervalued and overlooked. I appreciate being given the opportunity to help change that narrative in a positive way. The Atlanta Early Education Leadership Council’s recommendations will convey to the community the importance of early education and illuminate the academic power it holds. Early education is critical in improving the social skills, literacy skills, and overall academic achievement of Atlanta’s children – when our kids start ahead, they stay ahead.

**Jennifer Button Henderson,
Pre-K Teacher of the Year,
Atlanta Families Awards
for Excellence in Education,
and Drew Charter School**

Everyone has a role to play in making Atlanta a great city in which to raise a child and to be a child!

WE WILL KNOW WE ARE MOVING TOWARDS THIS GOAL WHEN:

- Our families have the **information and resources** needed to create safe, nurturing and enriching experiences that support children's early learning and healthy development.
- Our children have **access to affordable, high-quality care and education environments**, either in or out of home, that support learning and development.
- Our children receive **health services and proper nutrition** that enable them to thrive.
- Our programs and agencies **share data** and use data to inform policies and practices that create opportunities for all children and to measure and communicate progress to the community.
- Our public and private systems are **interconnected and aligned** to provide effective support for children and families and the programs that serve them.
- Our **resources and funding** are allocated in a way that meets the needs of young children and families.
- The professionals who care for and educate our children are **respected, well-trained and appropriately compensated**.
- There is a **sustained commitment from leaders** across all sectors in the City of Atlanta, and our leaders understand and champion the importance of the first eight years of a child's life.

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COMMIT TO THE PROMISE:

Make a difference for
children, families, working parents,
employers and the future of our city!

P · A · A · C · T

PROMISE ALL ATLANTA CHILDREN THRIVE



Implementing these recommendations will help Atlanta to continue to set the tone with providing a level of high-quality education, helping each child reach excellence by having the keys to success. This plan will make a difference by creating a systemic impact that will eventually help to end generational poverty, close the literacy gap, build partnerships and create safe places for all children.

Billie Walker
Parent and Director, Atlanta Children's Shelter

I want to leave you with a thought from Geoffrey Canada. All families of economic means expect their children to go to college, and yet many criticized him for expecting this same thing for the children he was serving in the Harlem Children's Zone. He did it anyway and succeeded. Let's shoot for the moon and do what no other city has been able to do.

Stephanie Blank
Chair, GEEARS Board of Directors



VISION:

All Georgia students enter kindergarten prepared to succeed and on a path to “read to learn” by third grade.