

ABOUT US

GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students

GEEARS inspires and provides leadership for a statewide movement on quality early learning and healthy development for all children ages birth through five.

In 2010, GEEARS was established to help business, civic and government leaders maximize the economic return on the state's investments in early care and learning.

To support high-quality early learning and healthy development for Georgia's youngest children, from birth to five, by championing policies, promoting innovative and evidence-based practices, and building public will.

OUR MISSION

OUR VISION

By 2020, all Georgia students will enter kindergarten prepared to succeed and on a path to read to learn by third grade.



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TAKING A LOOK BACK

GEEAR Up for Georgia's **Children Summit**

held at Georgia Public Broadcasting for business, civic, and philanthropic leadership in Georgia.

BUILD Initiative

Georgia joins the national

on early childhood systems building and serves as the state co-lead.

GEEARS advocates for

Georgia's Pre-K program GEEARS and partners successfully advocate to maintain the full day program, but in order to achieve necessary cost savings due to a slow down of lottery profits, the Pre-K school year is shortened and class size is increased.

Quality Rated, the state's Quality

Rating and **Improvement** System, officially launches.

The Blueprint launches

as an online, interactive data map. Users of the Blueprint are able to review data for each of Georgia's 159 counties.

2010

GEEARS is founded

as an independent successor

group to the United Way of Greater Atlanta's Early **Education Commission chaired** by Dennis Lockhart, the Head of the Federal Reserve of Atlanta, and Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, the President Emerita of Spelman College.

2011

2012

2013

Funding for Georgia's Pre-K program is restored

to a full 180 day school year by the legislature.

GEEARS' work begins

with Stephanie Blank as the Founding Board Chair and Mindy Binderman as the Executive Director.

GEEARS and **Ready Nation**

host the National Business Leader's Summit on Early Education in Atlanta

In partnership with the United Way of Greater Atlanta,

GEEARS leads the development of a Community Action Plan for the City of Atlanta on Grade Level Reading.



AT THE PAST 8 YEARS

KS W

Highlights and achievements since our founding

GEEARS launches the first Mayor's Summer Reading Club

This program, sponsored by PNC and supported by the United Way of Greater Atlanta and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, was comprised of 40 community partners and distributed 12,000 books in its first year.

\$28.5 million in new funding

is added to the state budget to support a new compensation model for Pre-K teachers in order to make their pay more comparable with K-3rd grade teachers.

GEEARS releases A Framework for School Readiness in Georgia after convening key cross-sector state

leadership.

GEEARS launches speaker series, Conversations on Early Childhood,

hosting Linda Espinosa, Paul Tough, and Wes Moore in first year of series.

GEEARS co-hosts a Mayoral Forum

with Atlanta's candidates for mayor, with a focus on cradle to career and supporting early childhood investments.

Statewide polling shows that 87%

of likely Georgia voters support Pre-K and that 67% believe that sufficient funding for education is more important than holding the line on spending.

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

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KEEP READING TO SEE WHAT HAPPENED

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GEEAR Up for the Future event hosts

all three gubernatorial candidates, business, and civic leaders.

EducationCounsel report released.

recommending Atlanta's public and private stakeholders come together to form a collaborative that would develop shared strategies to address the City's early childhood needs.

GEEARS and APS

launch the Atlanta Early Education Ambassadors program with the first cohort of 30 Ambassadors.

GEEARS hosts the first Early Education Bus Journey,

a 2-day bus tour for 40 education, civic, legislative, and community leaders.

Successfully advocated for historic state investment in child care: an additional \$5.5M

for CAPS reimbursements for high-quality providers



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

If I had to name one word that characterized GEEARS' work in 2018 it would be **relationships**.

We often talk about the importance of relationships in the context of early childhood. The science of brain development teaches us that "serve and return" relationships, which emphasize interaction between an adult and child are key to building a **healthy foundation** for learning. In 2018, with the help of our innovation cluster of partners including state agencies, funders, and nonprofit partners, we made the science of early brain development more accessible through an online series of lessons called *Build My Brain*. If you want information on why serve and return relationships are so important and on how to build them, take the free course!

This year, relationships with our **partners** led to new reports, events, and advocacy efforts. The Metro Atlanta Chamber worked with us to engage in groundbreaking research quantifying the economic impact of childcare challenges on the state's economy. We worked with Voices for Georgia's Children to spotlight the importance of the upcoming 2020 Census for Georgia's children. We were also pleased to partner with the United Way of Greater Atlanta to develop a toolkit for women in the workforce as part of United Way's 2018 Women United Event.

Thanks to new relationships with national funders including ZERO TO THREE, the Pritzker Children's Initiative, and the Alliance for Early Success, we worked to amplify our work to support **infants** and **toddlers** by reenergizing our coalition and developing a policy agenda focused on affordable and high-quality infant and toddler care as well as infant and early childhood mental health issues. Most importantly, our infant and toddler work this year created an imperative to reach out directly to families with young children to listen to their dreams and challenges and engage them directly in our advocacy efforts.

We don't take our strong relationships with **state and local leaders** for granted. In 2018, 25 elected, philanthropic, education, and business leaders answered our call to work together to develop a strategy, Promise All Atlanta Children Thrive (PAACT), that will ensure that families of Atlanta's youngest children have the support to achieve their fullest potential. We also marked the end of 2018 by thanking Governor and First Lady Deal for their unwavering commitment to Georgia's youngest children and by working to ensure that Georgia's new leaders understand the value of relationships with the early learning community. We look forward to building new partnerships with Governor Kemp and his administration in the years ahead.

Relationships matter. Our board and staff join me in thanking each of you for your friendship and support in 2018. We are looking forward to all we will accomplish *together* in 2019.

Best,

Mindy





Stephanie Blank

GEEARS Board Chair
President, Nasarian Foundation

Dr. Jay Berkelhamer

Past President, American Academy of Pediatrics

Peter Berg

Senior Rabbi, The Temple

Jackie Gingrich Cushman

Author, Speaker, and Columnist

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Atlanta University Center Consortium

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Sarah-Elizabeth Reed

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Teya Ryan

President & CEO, GPB Media

Judge Wendy L. Shoob

Retired Judge, Superior Court of Fulton County

Dr. Raphael Warnock

Senior Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church



ADVANCING EARLY CHILDHOOD **RESEARCH & POLICY**

GEEARS strives to be a catalyst to ensure stakeholders work together to improve early childhood policy. practice, and research. In 2018, we collaborated with partners to create and share impactful research, empower parent advocates, and connect policymakers with the latest science on early childhood. This past year allowed us to strengthen **relationships** with lawmakers and coalition members and expand our focus on infants and toddlers.







View the full report at geears.org/oppslost

OPPORTUNITIES LOST: HOW CHILD CARE CHALLENGES AFFECT GEORGIA'S **WORKFORCE AND ECONOMY**

Child care challenges, whether a result of systemic barriers to access or the cumulative impact of inconsistent or unreliable care, impact parents' participation in the workforce and can have far-reaching effects for families, employers, and the state's economy as a whole. In 2018, GEEARS and the Metro Atlanta Chamber set out to examine issues among Georgia parents of children under age five. The results are alarming. Child care challenges in Georgia are leading to significant disruptions to parental workforce participation—both in the short (e.g., missed days at work or school) and long (e.g., leaving the workforce) term—and to the state's economy. The report gained the interest of policymakers, business leaders, and the media after the release of the findings and GEEARS plans to continue research on this topic in 2019.

POLLING

GEEARS regularly surveys Georgia voters to better understand attitudes and opinions on early learning. Support for the expansion of Georgia's Pre-K program has been strong and consistent over the last 8 years. In September 2018, we conducted our latest poll and, again, found voters overwhelming support expanding funding for child care scholarships for infants and toddlers. You can view the polling results by visiting geears.org/research/polling

expanding the amount of state funding that provides child care scholarships for infants and toddlers of low-income, working parents. To learn more, visit geears.org

eorgia voters agree that all Georgians have a shared responsibility in helping Georgia children grow up healthy and ready-to-learn.



GUBERNATORIAL SUMMIT ON EARLY EDUCATION

On October 9th, we held our signature event, the 2018 Gubernatorial Summit on Early Education. We heard from candidates for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and State School Superintendent on a range of topics impacting Georgia's youngest children and their families. Governor and First Lady Deal were honored for their dedication and service to Georgia's youngest learners over the years. Attendees received a copy of the GEEARS 2018 Voter Guide, available for viewing here: geears.org/voterguide18/

ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

STROLLING THUNDER: A STORM OF ADVOCACY FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

On Saturday, May 12, GEEARS, in partnership with ZERO TO THREE, brought babies and families from around Metro Atlanta to meet their state, county, and city officials during Strolling Thunder. We gathered together for roundtable discussions so families could share their stories about the joys and challenges of raising infants and toddlers in Metro Atlanta. We asked Georgia's leadership to *Think Babies* TM—for stronger families, vibrant communities, and a prosperous state.





INFANT-TODDLER SPEAKER SERIES EVENTS AND LISTENING SESSIONS

In partnership with ZERO TO THREE, GEEARS hosted two speaker series events in 2018 and held listening sessions to hear about the joys and challenges of raising families in Georgia:

In September, GEEARS hosted Dr. Alison Gopnik, a professor of psychology and affiliate professor of philosophy at the University of California at Berkeley, in Gainesville, GA. The audience explored the fascinating minds of infants and toddlers, and how much we understand before we realize we do. Later that month, GEEARS hosted Dr. Ross Thompson, professor of psychology at the University of California-Davis and director of the Social & Emotional Development Lab, in Columbus, GA. Attendees enjoyed a presentation about the powerful impact that trauma has on the young brain, even among infants.





EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFILES BY LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

The latest addition to the Readiness Radar suite of tools, these profiles include a range of data relevant to early childhood, including education- and health-related indicators, making it easy for legislators to understand the early childhood landscape in their districts. Each State Senator and Representative received their customized profile in advance of the 2019 legislative session.

REENERGIZED INFANT-TODDLER COALITION

Prior to the beginning of the Think Babies ™ campaign, GEEARS supported an existing coalition on child care affordability and quality, and in 2018 this coalition transitioned to become the Georgia Infant and Toddler Coalition. This group expanded to include new partners and state agency representatives. The coalition met monthly and created two subcommittees: one on infant and toddler mental health and one on child care. Our updated, shared policy goals reenergized long-term coalition members and encouraged new partners to get involved.



SHIFTING THE PUBLIC'S AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

GEEARS provides opportunities for business and philanthropic leaders, policymakers, practitioners, and families to deepen their understanding of current early childhood issues. In 2018, GEEARS continued and expanded efforts to convene stakeholders and communicate key messages around the critical importance of a child's earliest years, the value of high-quality early childhood education, and the economic impact of investments in young children and their families. We've also identified and recruited new **messengers** to communicate the importance of Quality Rated child care.

BUILD MY BRAIN COURSE

With support from leadership at the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), and Better Brains for Babies, GEEARS collaborated with the Rollins Center for Language and Literacy at the Atlanta Speech School and the Harvard Center on the Developing Child to create Build My Brain (BMB). BMB is a cross-disciplinary, video-based online course focused on the science and importance of early childhood development. The course features three topics: early brain development, the role of responsive caregivers and other adults, and the effects of adverse childhood experiences and "toxic stress." The course connects state agency employees to the science of early childhood development so that all staff, regardless of role, can see themselves in the broader statewide effort to support children's healthy brain development and lifelong well-being.



The free course is available at coxcampus.org/georgia-bmb/



GEORGIA FIRST 2000 DAYS AND THINK BABIES™ CAMPAIGN

ZERO TO THREE created the Think Babies™ campaign to make infants and toddlers a national priority. As a trusted partner of this national campaign, GEEARS brought together stakeholders from across the public and private sectors to advance policies that ensure infants, toddlers, and families have what they need to thrive. We incorporated the Think Babies messaging and materials into our Georgia First 2000 Days Campaign, where more than 75 partner organizations and individual champions help share the importance of high-quality early learning and healthy development in a child's first five years of life. GEEARS utilized both public awareness campaigns to expand our reach across the state and nationally, through presentations, resource distribution, and engagement with stakeholders.



QUALITY RATED PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

In 2018, we continued our partnership with DECAL on a new phase of the Quality Rated campaign that included innovative social media strategies and an influencer campaign. We worked with more than 30 social media influencers (parents of young children) to share the Quality Rated tool with their audiences. These influencers utilized blog posts, Instagram and Facebook posts, and original photos of their children to share their experience using the Quality Rated search tool with their networks. Quality Rated also received 9 in-kind ad placements in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. where some of the influencers' photos were displayed. Finally, we created new, captivating videos to share how Quality Rated benefits participating families and providers and to explain how the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program aligns with the goals for Quality Rated.





CONTINUATION OF SPEAKER SERIES

As a part of the Leadership Academy for Better Brains (LABB) umbrella initiative, GEEARS continued to host speakers and opportunities for discussion in 2018. In July, GEEARS screened the film "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" and convened a conversation following the film on how stakeholders can work together to build neighborhoods where all children thrive. The film explored America's favorite neighbor, Mr. Fred Rogers, and how he inspired generations of children with compassion and limitless imagination.

Teya Ryan, CEO & President of Georgia Public
Broadcasting and GEEARS Board Member, moderated
the discussion, which included panelists Ryan Shepard,
President of Purpose Built Schools of Atlanta, and
Rev. Scott Tucker, Associate Pastor of Peachtree
Presbyterian Church.

2020 CENSUS: IMPLICATIONS FOR GA'S CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

In September, we partnered with Voices for Georgia's Children to host a special speaker series event that included presentations from the Atlanta Regional Commission and KIDS COUNT, as well as a panel of experts that addressed the community, business, and policy impact of the proposed 2020 Census. The event, held at Georgia Public Broadcasting, brought awareness to the importance of an accurate 2020 Census.



INNOVATING AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

GEEARS understands that community-level innovation and engagement are critical to achieving statewide success. In 2018, we traveled around the state to engage with different communities through listening sessions, convening stakeholders, giving presentations, and discussing opportunities for **collaboration**. While some of our current initiatives may be focused on a particular community or region, GEEARS leads these initiatives with plans for replication and statewide models in mind.

PAACT (PROMISE ALL ATLANTA CHILDREN THRIVE)

In response to an EducationCounsel report, the Atlanta Early Education Executive Team, made up of key early education providers, Atlanta Public Schools (APS), 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. The PAACT (Promise All Atlanta Children Thrive) launch report, included recommendations and represented the results of the Council's learning and deliberations.





View the full report at atlearlyed.org

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COUNCIL

- 1 Creating 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;
- 2 Expanding learning spaces in libraries and other public gathering spots across the city:
- 3 Expanding 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;
- 4 Developing an Early Childhood Education Leadership Institute;
- 5 Creating a multi-platform, citywide messaging campaign;
- 6 Building greater capacity to serve the health and well-being needs of children and families across the city;
- 7 Creating formal structures for Early Childhood Education (ECE) engagement in APS, including adding an ECE representative to the APS Cluster Advisory Teams and including ECE providers on the APS cluster maps; and
- 8 Developing 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.



SCHOOL READINESS COMMUNITY CONVENINGS

In late 2017, GEEARS released a Framework for School Readiness in Georgia. The Framework outlines the central tenets of school readiness and the specific roles various stakeholders—including educators, education leadership, policymakers, and others—play in promoting it. In 2018, GEEARS partnered with education and community leaders in four locations across the state to help the Framework come to life. Through strategic community conversations in Carrollton (Carroll County), Columbus (Muscogee County), Brunswick (Glynn County), and Gwinnett County; early childhood and elementary educators and education leaders worked together to explore the Framework, identify opportunities for collaboration and birth-eight alignment, and develop guidance for early childhood and local school systems across Georgia.

ATLANTA EARLY EDUCATION AMBASSADORS

The Atlanta Early Education Ambassadors are a group of involved parents, grandparents, teachers, and community members that lead early learning recruitment and advocacy efforts in targeted communities in Atlanta. This team of Ambassadors served as advocates and community leaders for early education in Atlanta Public Schools' Washington and Douglass clusters. The program launched in early 2018, in partnership with Atlanta Public Schools. In preparation for their work in the community, the first cohort of Ambassadors participated in a series of workshops that focused on the value and benefits of high-quality early education for children. The workshops were geared toward communications training, leadership development, and educating the Ambassadors about the early learning options that are available in Atlanta.

The inaugural cohort consisted of 34 dedicated members of the community. They participated in 13 events, including back-to-school rallies, parent expos, community gatherings, and door-to-door canvassing, reaching over 1,300 people. The second cohort of 65 people have graduated and are excited to educate Atlanta's families about the benefits of enrolling in early learning.







MAYOR'S SUMMER READING CLUB

The Mayor's Summer Reading Club (MSRC) is a program for children ages birth to five and their families that takes place in various locations throughout the City of Atlanta each summer. In 2018, GEEARS convened 59 partner organizations and Atlanta's Office of the Mayor to host book reads and literacy engagement events across Atlanta where more than 20,000 free books were distributed. This year's book choices were Tumble Bumble by Felicia Bond (birth to 2) and Seed Magic by Jane Buchanan (ages 3 to 5). This year, the program was replicated in the city of Columbus and Newton County, with GEEARS supporting both sites.

BY THE NUMBERS

More than 7,000 views of GEEARS' videos and live streams

16,000+ website views for geears.org Almost **4,000** followers on social media

publications produced & distributed

Mayor's Summer Reading Club partners

100+ partnerships



20+ mentions in national and local press

32 cities visited

family listening sessions hosted



We $\mbox{\bf advocated}$ throughout the year on behalf of the

790,000+

children under age 5 in Georgia and their families



presentations given across the nation, about early childhood learning & healthy development



300 +

fact sheets, early childhood profiles, and custom cookies distributed to Georgia legislators

6,000 email subscribers

1,397 event registrants

99

Atlanta Early Education Ambassadors 104,976 emails delivered (newsletters, action alerts, event invitations, and press releases)

4,285+ visits to the online Build My Brain course Available at coxcampus.org/georgia-bmb/



2 Board Members

442,245+

social media impressions across all platforms

GEEARS is proud to receive funding from national, state and local funders including:

Alliance for Early Success

Annie E. Casey Foundation

Community Foundation for Greater
Atlanta

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation

Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation

Literacy for All

Nasarian Foundation

PNC

The Goizueta Foundation

United Way of Greater Atlanta

W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Zeist Foundation

ZERO TO THREE

And many other foundations, corporations, and individuals.





OUR 2018 PARTNERS



GEEARS thrives because of our relationships with our **partners** in the early childhood sector and beyond. We are thankful for our 2018 partners listed below and look forward to more opportunities for collaboration in 2019.

Advocates for Children Alliance for Early Success Alliance Theatre **Ambitious Initiatives Apostles Learning Center** Atlanta Area School for the Deaf Atlanta Community Food Bank Atlanta Children's Shelter Atlanta First Day School

Atlanta Police Department Atlanta Public Schools Atlanta Regional Commission Atlanta Speech School

Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System Atlanta Regional Commission Bemiss Academy Preschool Black Rose Foundation for Children

Brain Trust for Babies Brownieland Pictures

Bulloch County Schools Pre-K CC Educational Training Services CDF: A Collective Action Initiative Center for Civic Innovation Center for Working Families Centers for Disease Control Chestnut Mountain Academy

Child Trends

Child Welfare Training Collaborative Childcare Network Childcare Center Children's Development Academy Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Children's Museum of Atlanta

City of Atlanta City of Atlanta Police

Clayton County Library System Communities in Schools

Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

Creating Connected Communities

Crisp County Pre-K Decoding Dyslexia Georgia DeKalb County

DeKalb County Board of Health DeKalb County Public Library **DeKalb County School District**

Digital Divas

Diversity in STEM Outreach Project Corporation

Dominion Education Consulting Dream It Forward Foundation Druid Hills Development Center Early Learning Property Management Education Policy Fellowship Program

Educationally Speaking Center for Learning, Inc.

Elite Academy Emmaus House **Emory University**

Endurance Project Management

Everywhere Agency

Fade-A-Way Cutz

Family Connection – Communities in Schools of

Athens

Father's Incorporated

Fernbank Museum of Natural History

Ferst Readers First Book Fit Learning Frazer Center

Friends of Lillian Cooper Shepherd Park

Friends of Refugees

Georgia Association for the Education of Young

Children

Georgia Budget & Policy Institute Georgia Center for Nonprofits

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Georgia Department of Education Georgia Department of Public Health

Georgia Division of Family and Children Services

Georgia Education Climate Coalition Georgia Grantmakers Alliance Georgia Mental Health Commission

Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education

Georgia Public Broadcasting Georgia Public Library Service Georgia State University Get Georgia Reading Campaign Grade Level Reading Campaign Grayson UMC Preschool & Pre-K **Gwinnett County Public Schools**

Hands on Atlanta

Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child

Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies

High Museum of Art Home Visiting Institute Horizons Atlanta

Institute for Educational Leadership Interaction Institute for Social Change Jumpstart for Young Children, Inc. KPMG Family for Literacy Lanier County Family Connection

LEAD Atlanta Leadership Atlanta Leadership Sandy Springs

Learn4Life

Lina Lane's Learning Center

L.I.T. Literacy Ignites Transformation (Columbus)

Literacy Alliance Literacy For All

Little Ones Learning Center Macedonia Church of Grovetown

MailChimp

Marietta City Schools Metro Atlanta Chamber Mission: Readiness

Muscogee County School District

Nana Grants

National Association for the Education of Young Children

National Black Child Development Institute

National Institute for Early Education Research (NIERR)

National Women's Law Center NC Early Childhood Foundation

Neighborhood Nexus

Newton County Community Partnership

Oasis Atlanta Odyssey Inc. Office of Head Start Our House, Inc.

Page Turners Make Great Learners

Park Pride

PNC

Premier Academy Inc.

Professional Family Child Care Alliance of GA

Project LAUNCH Quality Care for Children Reach Out and Read Georgia Real Dads Read

Region IV Head Start Association, Inc.

Regional Leadership Institute Reinvestment Fund

Rex Childcare and Early Learning Center

Rotary Club of Atlanta

Sheltering Arms Early Education and Family Centers

Strengthening Families Georgia

Strong4Life

Teach for America - Metro Atlanta The Junior League of Atlanta The Junior League of DeKalb

The Learning Tree Center of Georgia, Inc.

United States Attorney's Office, Northern District of Georgia

United Way of Greater Atlanta United Way of Hall County University of Georgia US Army Fort Benning Urban Leaders Fellowship Voices for Georgia's Children West Atlanta Watershed Alliance Westside Education Collaborative

YMCA of Metro Atlanta

YMCA/Early Childhood Development Co. LLC

YWCA of Greater Atlanta

ZERO TO THREE

112+ partners & collaborators

