



2016 Policy Agenda

GEEARS: The Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students works to ensure that all Georgia's children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed and on a path to read to learn by third grade.

Georgia must preserve, protect and increase support of early childhood care and education programs. These programs are essential to our children's success and our state's future workforce.

During the 2016 Legislative Session, GEEARS will work to:

Improve Quality

- Improve pay structure for Pre-K lead and assistant teachers
- Reduce Pre-K class size from 22 to 20
- Promote *Quality Rated*, Georgia's quality rating and improvement system for child care providers

Increase Access

- Increase eligibility levels for the subsidy program to allow more hard working low income parents afford quality child care
- Better align the subsidy rates for Quality Rated providers with the true cost of tuition

Support Healthy Development

- Support programs that ensure children and families have access to ongoing prenatal, pediatric, mental health and oral health care

IMPROVE QUALITY.

Research suggests that children who receive high-quality early care and education experiences have better developmental outcomes than their peers who do not have such experiences. GEEARS supports federal and state legislation and policies that increase the quality of Georgia's universal Pre-K program and early education programs, including:

- **Increasing the quality and funding of Georgia's universal pre-K program.**
 - Reducing class size from 22 students to 20 students per classroom.
 - Adding additional slots to ensure all four year-olds have an opportunity to participate in Georgia Pre-K.
- **Promoting Quality Rated, Georgia's quality rating and improvement system, which incentivizes quality and helps parents easily identify the quality level of a given provider.**



INCREASE ACCESS.

We must increase funding for early care and education programs to sustain quality improvements, fulfill the promise of universal pre-K, and ensure that hard working, low-income families can access subsidized child care. GEEARS supports:

- **Adopting a package of tax credits for parents who choose high quality child care and teachers who work at high quality child care.**
- **Providing funds to increase Georgia’s subsidy level, which is currently far below market rates.**
- **Increasing funding for CAPS to allow more low-income working parents to choose high-quality providers.**

During the early years of a child’s life, their experiences and environment build the foundation for all subsequent development, learning and success. Negative early experiences can impair children’s mental health and effect their cognitive, behavioral, and social-emotional development. The physical and mental health of a child during this time has significant effects on child and adult outcomes. Policies that promote early identification of risk and the healthy development of children enable critical opportunities for development to be maximized and ensure that a strong foundation is set for all future development. GEEARS supports:

- **Programs that ensure children and families have access to ongoing prenatal, pediatric, mental health and oral health care.**
- **Community based programs targeting sources of toxic stress such as violence, crime, substance abuse and mental illness, combined with supports for parents and caregivers who need them.**
- **Using developmentally appropriate screening and assessment of very young children.**
- **Increasing investments in Home Visiting programs that provide high-quality, home-based support and coaching programs to address the needs of children and their families.**

**For more information, please contact Mindy Binderman, Executive Director,
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SUPPORT HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT.

