

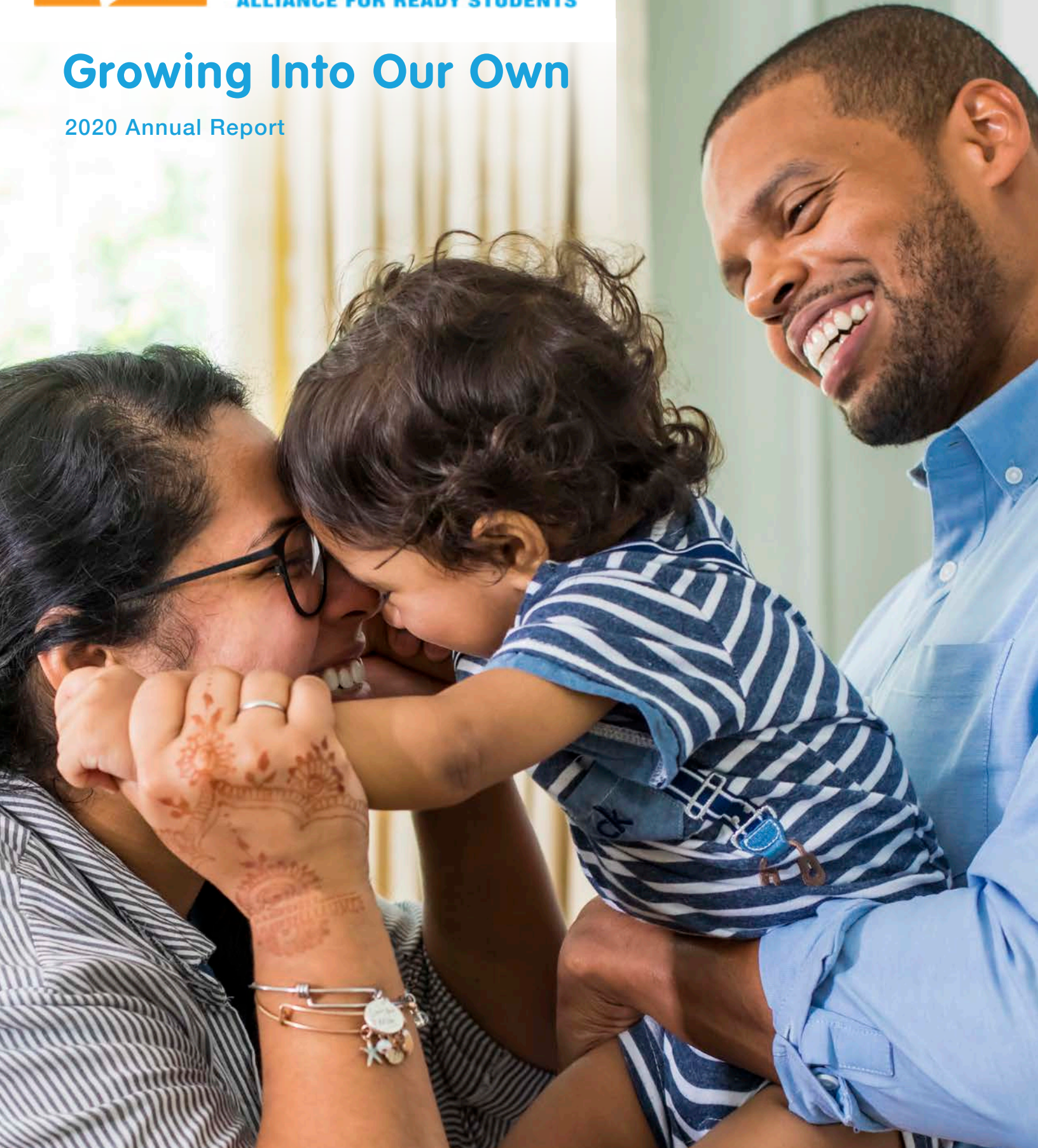



GEEARS

GEORGIA EARLY EDUCATION
ALLIANCE FOR READY STUDENTS

Growing Into Our Own

2020 Annual Report





GEEARS works to inspire and provide leadership for a statewide movement on quality early learning and healthy development for all children ages birth through five. Established in 2010, GEEARS helps business, civic and government leaders maximize the economic return on the state's investments in early care and learning.

Mission

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.

Vision

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

"The cure for some of the toughest challenges we face today are locked away in one of our children. They are our future."

- Georgia parent, 2019 focus group on early childhood development



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Letter from Our Executive Director Mindy Binderman

As GEEARS enters a new decade, we are entering a new stage as a leading advocate for high-quality early learning and healthy development for our state’s youngest children.

From our humble beginnings in 2010, we have grown—in both size and stature. With new staff and focus areas, we are building on previous successes as a champion of innovative and evidence-based policies and practices that help young children throughout Georgia.

This year was one of growth for GEEARS. The support of our Board of Directors, staff members, partners has allowed us to make great strides to achieve our mission.

Our advocacy efforts continued throughout the year. Strolling Thunder Georgia, our event that brings infants, toddlers, and their caretakers to the Capitol, grew once again. The research and policy team has added two new members, allowing us to redouble our efforts around early education, while growing our focus on the healthy development of babies, infants, and toddlers. Our work in the City of Atlanta, whether through our ongoing Mayor’s Summer Reading Club or the progress we made on programs related to our Promise All Atlanta Children Thrive (PAACT) initiative, is allowing us to make a focused impact around early education, literacy, and equity. The Atlanta-based initiatives will offer lessons for us as we look to scale such efforts in other areas of the state.

Meanwhile, we are growing our education and outreach efforts to reach more stakeholders throughout the State of Georgia, through our annual bus journey, P-3 Fellowship, film screenings, and speaker series. We have strengthened our partnerships as well. We are honored to lead the Georgia Infant and Toddler Coalition, and our staff members serve in leadership roles in a variety of organizations and coalitions.

Looking ahead to this next decade, we are excited and ready to continue our advocacy and achieving further progress on initiatives and policies that support all of Georgia’s youngest learners and their families. We’ll continue to need your support to achieve our goals for young children that will have an impact on our state for the years beyond 2020.

Mindy

OUR 9TH YEAR by the Numbers

15k	books distributed through Mayor's Summer Reading Club
3k	people reached by Atlanta Early Education
500+	miles traveled on Bus Journey
100	families at Strolling Thunder Georgia
70	members from 30 organizations joined Georgia Infant-Toddler Coalition
50	Mayor's Summer Reading Club partners
50	new Atlanta Early Education Ambassadors trained
22	P-3 Leaders trained
7 th	Summer for Mayor's Summer Reading Club
2	New Policy Experts Hired
1	Infant-Toddler Social-Emotional Health Study Committee
1 st	PAACT Director Hired

OUR 9TH YEAR by the Awards

ATLANTA **BUSINESS CHRONICLE**



2019 **BEST PLACES TO WORK**

Atlanta Business Chronicle
2019 Best Places to Work Finalist



Phoenix Award of Excellence
Quality Rated Campaign
Public Relations Society of America (PRSA),
Georgia Chapter



**Rev. Robert Ross Johnson
Humanitarian Award**
GEEARS Board Chair Stephanie Blank

OUR FUNDERS



THE ANNIE E. CASEY
FOUNDATION



Alliance for
Early Success
*Advancing State Policies
for Young Children*



Community
Foundation
for Greater Atlanta



JOSEPH B. WHITEHEAD FOUNDATION

THE NASARIAN FOUNDATION

LITERACY
FOR ALL.



THE
goizueta
FOUNDATION



United Way of
Greater Atlanta



W.K.
KELLOGG
FOUNDATION



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime



THE ZEIST FOUNDATION, INC.

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Advocacy

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& Awareness

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Financials

EXTENDING OUR REACH

This year, GEEARS again hosted Strolling Thunder Georgia, bringing more families than ever, along with their young children, to the Capitol to share their stories with legislators. We also expanded our advocacy activities through our Strolling Thunder event in Dalton, as well as our education efforts through the Georgia Early Learning Legislative Academy.

STROLLING THUNDER ROLLS AHEAD

On Friday, February 8th, 2019, in partnership with ZERO TO THREE, we hosted the second Strolling Thunder Georgia event and brought babies and families from around Georgia to the Capitol to meet their elected officials and learn more about advocacy.

We came together for roundtable discussions so families could tell their stories about the joys and challenges of raising infants and toddlers in Georgia and to practice encouraging Georgia's leadership to Think Babies—for stronger families, vibrant communities, and a prosperous state. Senators Mike Dugan and Kay Kilpatrick joined us at lunch to deliver special greetings.

During the summer, GEEARS and ZERO TO THREE partnered with The Community Foundation of Northwest Georgia, to bring Strolling Thunder to Dalton, Georgia. Families pushed strollers from Burr Park to the Whitfield County Courthouse and back to put babies in the spotlight. Dalton Mayor Dennis Mock even issued a proclamation declaring June 1st as “Children’s Day” in Dalton!

THE GEORGIA EARLY LEARNING LEGISLATIVE ACADEMY

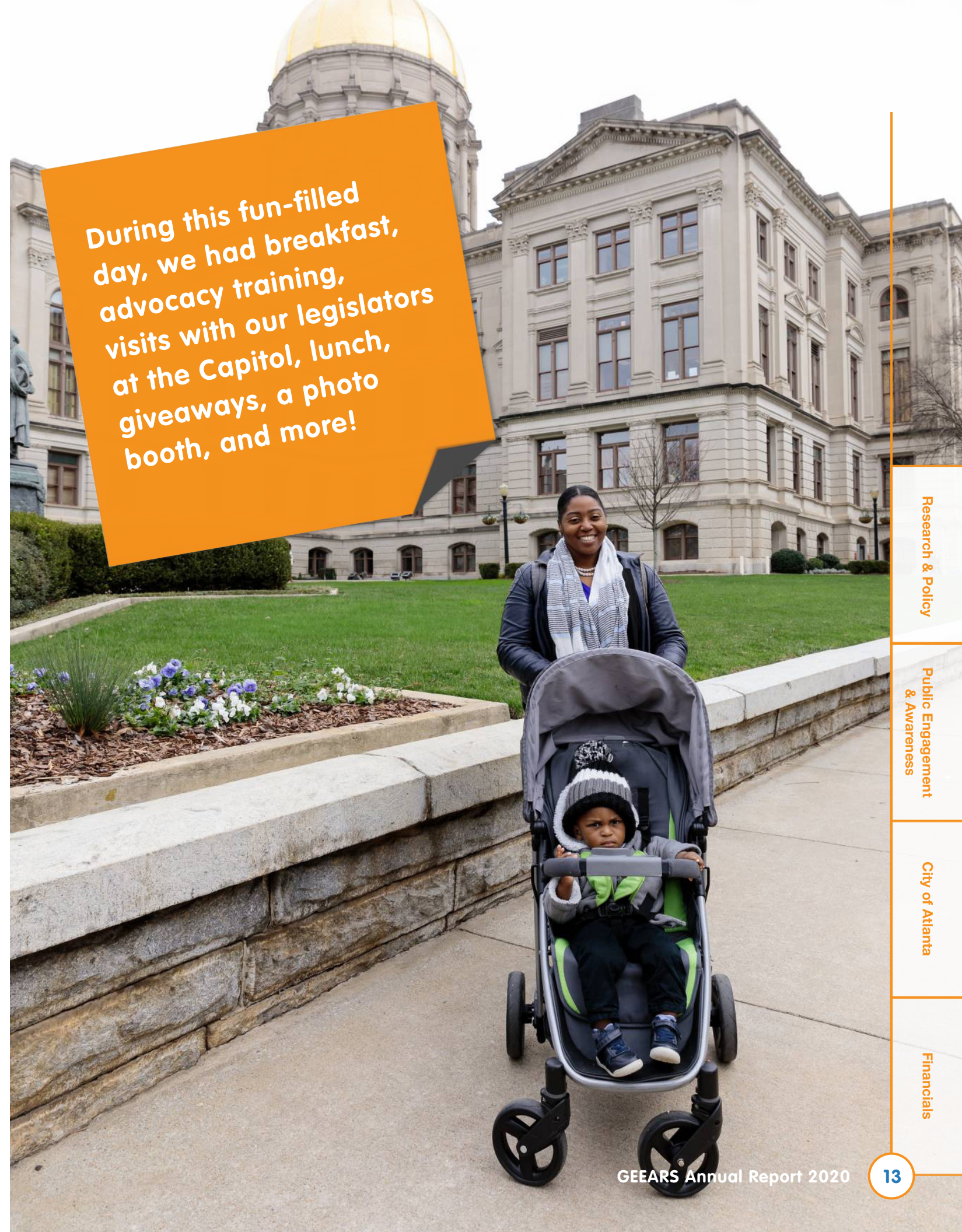
GEEARS and the Metro Atlanta Chamber hosted an educational event exclusively for members of the Georgia General Assembly, Governor’s staff, and state agency representatives. Representatives Katie Dempsey and Robert Dickey served as hosts for the day-long event. The Georgia Early Learning Legislative Academy was inspired by the National Conference of State Legislators’ successful Early Learning Fellows Program. Attendees heard from national and local experts on early learning research crucial to decisions regarding the future of our workforce and opportunities for all of Georgia’s families.

Legislators received district-level early childhood profiles, a Georgia-specific resource guide on high-quality early childhood education and healthy development, and recommendations on investing in our state’s youngest learners.

CRAFTING A CHILDHOOD COALITION

GEEARS convenes and leads the Georgia Infant and Toddler Coalition (GITC), made up of more than 70 individuals from 35 diverse organizations. The mission of the GITC is to advance the health, social, intellectual, and emotional wellbeing of infants and toddlers in the state. With our coalition partners, we began work on several policy priorities, including an increase in the budget for Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) to serve over 1,000 new low-income families pay for high quality childcare, expanded eligibility for the CAPS scholarship up to 65% of state median income, and the creation of a state fund to finance capital improvements to childcare facilities.

During this fun-filled day, we had breakfast, advocacy training, visits with our legislators at the Capitol, lunch, giveaways, a photo booth, and more!



BOLSTERING & BROADENING OUR EXPERTISE

This year was a time of growth for our research efforts. We added two new members of the policy team to join our Director of Research & Policy Hanah Goldberg: Early Childhood Education Policy Manager Jessica Woltjen and Health Policy Manager Callan Wells. The team now has the expertise to expand our efforts around early childhood issues, including solutions for child care challenges, infant and toddler emotional-social health, and maternal mental health.



Jessica Woltjen
Early Childhood
Education
Policy Manager



Callan Wells
Health Policy
Manager

DELVING DEEP TO SOLVE OUR CHILD CARE CHALLENGES

GEEARS and the Metro Atlanta Chamber have partnered since 2018 to analyze the impact of child care challenges on Georgia's parents and the economy. The first report from this partnership, *"Opportunities Lost: How Child Care Challenges Affect Georgia's Workforce and Economy,"* showed how these challenges in Georgia are leading to significant disruptions to parental workforce participation.

In 2019, we conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with Georgia parents to produce "Advancing Opportunity: Parents' Solutions to Georgia's Child Care Challenges." The final report, along with several well-produced videos, outlines specific recommendations for policymakers, employers, and higher education. Each of these stakeholder groups plays an important role in ensuring that Georgia is a top state to do business and raise a family.

SPEARHEADING LEGISLATIVE ACTION ON EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH

GEEARS led advocacy efforts to pass HR-421 during the 2019 legislative session establishing the House Study Committee on Infant and Toddler

GEEARS led advocacy efforts to pass HR-421 during the 2019 legislative session, establishing the House Study Committee on Infant and Toddler Social-Emotional Health.

Social-Emotional Health. The Study Committee, led by Chairwoman Katie Dempsey from Rome, GA, focused on the full spectrum of services that support the emotional well-being of infants and toddlers.

GEEARS worked with Chairwoman Dempsey and House staff to set agendas for the meetings, which dove into topics ranging from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to early intervention services. The Committee heard from pediatricians, child care providers, and various community and agency leaders.

The Committee's final report, issued in December, included several recommendations, including the creation a position in the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) focused on coordinating state resources focused on toddler and infant social-emotion health across agencies. It also recommended extending Medicaid for women up to twelve months postpartum and reimbursing for behavioral health services for children under 4. We are working to get these recommendations enacted in 2020 and beyond.



BEGAN WORK ON LEAD EXPOSURE PREVENTION

The Green and Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) announced a \$120,000 investment to eliminate lead poisoning nationwide, and GEEARS was one of five organizations across the country to be selected for the second cohort of Lead Catalytic Awardees. We received a grant to support efforts to eliminate lead poisoning by implementing lead poisoning prevention policies and best practices, increasing effective

communication and public awareness, and developing strategies that increase lead hazard reduction investments in primary prevention. As part of this effort, we developed the new Parents' Guide to Preventing Lead Exposure and screened "Nor Any Drop to Drink," a film about the impact of the Flint water crisis on children in the area.

"Every child has the right to a fair education and brighter future. Child care should not be a privilege, it should be available for every child."

- Georgia parent, 2019 focus group on early childhood development

www.geears.org/research/publications

Advancing Opportunity: Parents' Solutions to Georgia's Child Care Challenges

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

Child care challenges can affect parents' participation in the workforce and have far-reaching effects for families, employers, and Georgia's economy. Starting in 2018, GEEARS Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students and the Metro Atlanta Chamber set out to better understand the prevalence, nature, and impact of child care challenges through a survey and series of focus groups with parents of young children. The results are alarming.

Child care challenges lead to at least \$1.75 BILLION IN LOSSES in economic activity annually and an additional \$1.75 billion in lost wages.

OVER A QUARTER of surveyed parents of children under 5 reported a **SIGNIFICANT DISRUPTION** to their or a family member's employment (quitting, not taking, or changing a job) in the past year due to child care challenges.

General pressure to meet the child care options, and limited for stakeholders, specifically to do business and

What Policymakers in Georgia Need to Know About Infant-Toddler Social-Emotional Health

THE IMPORTANCE OF INFANT AND TODDLER SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL HEALTH

A child's brain develops most rapidly in the first three years of life, forming more than one million new neural connections every second. Nurturing relationships with caregivers and positive experiences during this time support brain growth, emotional well-being, and social competence, leading to healthier, more successful children, teens, and, eventually, adults.

Healthy social-emotional growth in infants and toddlers also provides an essential foundation for early learning, school readiness, and long-term success. Three key capacities make up infant and early childhood mental health. These are the capacity:

- to form a close, secure relationship with the adults who care for them;
- to experience and express a range of emotions, and over time, learn to manage these (e.g., cope with frustration); and
- to feel comfortable exploring their environment.

IMPORTANT TERMS:

- **IECMH:** Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (also known as Infant and Toddler Social-Emotional Health)
- **DC 0-3:** a system and manual for diagnosing mental health and developmental disorders in young children
- **Screening tools:** questionnaires completed by parents or healthcare providers to determine if a young child has social-emotional challenges
- **Dyadic Treatment:** a treatment approach to addressing social-emotional concerns in which a therapist treats an infant/toddler and caregiver together
- **IECMH Consultation:** a specialist who works with child-serving professionals, such as pediatricians or educators, to promote the social-emotional health of infants and toddlers

Building Awareness of Early Childhood Issues

A growing part of the GEEARS mission has been the education of the public on the issues that affect early childhood. In 2019, GEEARS and Everywhere Agency earned accolades for the digital component of our Quality Rated public awareness campaign. We also continued to expand our reach statewide through our Early Learning and Healthy Development Bus Journey. And our film and speaker series educated community members on how they can work together to make Georgia's infants and toddlers a policy priority.

QUALITY RATED CAMPAIGN EARNS TOP RATING

In partnership with Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), GEEARS continued our work to increase awareness of Quality Rated child care across the state. Quality Rated is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs. We hosted families and social media influencers for dinner, a presentation, and a unique storytelling opportunity.

GEEARS and Everywhere Agency were honored to receive a Phoenix Award of Excellence from the Public Relations

Society of America (PRSA), Georgia Chapter for the digital component of the Quality Rated public awareness campaign.

BRINGING TOP EARLY CHILDHOOD FILMS & SPEAKERS TO BUILD AWARENESS

GEEARS hosted several screening and conversation events around the documentary "No Small Matter," a film about how businesses, policymakers, educators, and communities can work together to make

Georgia's infants and toddlers a policy priority. The events took us from Atlanta to Dalton and brought together influential figures including Mayor of Dalton David Pennington, Dalton Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Tim Scott, Atlanta City Councilperson Matt Westmoreland, and 2018's Georgia Pre-K Teacher of the Year Becky Thomas-Haden.

Another event around "Nor Any Drop to Drink" from Director Cedric Taylor brought attention to the lead exposure in drinking water on maternal and child health. Members of the health, education, and early learning communities as well as other interested professionals joined us for this important conversation.

Our speaker series event featuring Joey Reiman brought inspiration to business leaders, early education supporters, and community leaders. Reiman—an author, consultant, founder of Bright House and Brand New World Studios—spoke about the importance of including young children and their families in creating a better brand and a lasting corporate legacy.

"Expanding early learning educational opportunities helps everyone by securing a future of well-informed, educated, happy, well-adjusted adults."

- Georgia parent, 2019 focus group on early childhood development

the
future
begins
with babies

Overview

Advocacy

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Public Engagement & Awareness

City of Atlanta


A Burgeoning Effort in the City of Atlanta

2019 saw GEEARS redouble our efforts to fulfill our promise to support young children growing up in the City of Atlanta. PAACT: Promise All Atlanta Children Thrive, our initiative to ensure better outcomes for Atlanta’s youngest children and their families, issued its report and Brittany Collins joined GEEARS as PAACT Director. The Atlanta Early Education Ambassadors graduated its third cohort, while the Preschool to Third Grade (P-3) Leaders Fellowship launched with the mission of creating a more aligned and seamless educational experience across the birth-8 continuum. And the Mayor’s Summer Reading Club continued for its seventh summer, with over 50 partners distributing 16,000 books to Atlanta’s children.

PAACT: PROMISE ALL ATLANTA CHILDREN THRIVE

The Atlanta Early Education Leadership Council officially launched PAACT: Promising All Atlanta Children Thrive and a comprehensive report of recommendations for supporting high-quality early childhood education and healthy development for the city’s youngest children.

The group, convened by GEEARS, worked together over the course of six months to develop a shared vision and bold, yet actionable strategies to ensure that all children starting at birth are healthy, learning, and developing so that they enter school ready for success, thrive



Brittany Collins

PAACT Director

once in school and are prepared to reach their full potential as citizens of Atlanta.

New PAACT Director Brittany Collins arrived in December 2019. With experience as Managing Director of Program for OneGoal Metro Atlanta and as a Community Development Advisor at Purpose Built Communities, Brittany is uniquely qualified to work with community leaders, partners and families to drive our vision of a city in which all children, starting at birth, and their families have access to the services, supports and information they need in order to reach their full potential.

ATLANTA EARLY EDUCATION AMBASSADORS

GEEARS and Atlanta Public Schools launched the third cohort of the Atlanta Early Education Ambassadors. The Ambassadors serve as advocates and community leaders for early education in Atlanta Public Schools’ Washington and Douglass clusters. Through this partnership launched in 2018, the Ambassadors work to inform and communicate with members of the community about the value and benefits of high-quality early education for young children, community resources, and the enrollment process for child-care providers in the Atlanta area.

THE MAYOR’S SUMMER READING CLUB (MSRC)


The Mayor’s Summer Reading Club (MSRC) wrapped up its 7th summer of reading and community partnerships in Atlanta, with our community partners have given out more than 16,000 books, Partners have helped increase awareness of the importance of early literacy and family engagement by hosting more than 30 summer enrichment activities.

This year’s featured book, “In My Granny’s Garden” is was produced in partnership with the Alliance Theatre and their playwright in residence, Pearl Cleage, along with Zaron Burnett and illustrated by Radcliffe Bailey, is a work of art that tells the story of a boy and his grandmother and learning how fresh produce is grown.

MSRC is a collaboration between the City of Atlanta, the PNC Foundation, the United Way of Greater Atlanta, the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Speech School, and many other public-private partnerships.

PRESCHOOL TO THIRD GRADE (P-3) LEADERS FELLOWSHIP

Early learning and school system leaders are rarely given the chance to work together to develop solutions and implement coordinated practices for increased alignment. That’s why GEEARS created P-3 Leaders Fellowship. Through this fellowship, leaders are building their capacity to address early education needs and ensure that children are prepared for future school success, all while becoming recognized leaders in early education and distinguished as newly minted experts in the field. The first session began in September 2019.



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GEEARS Annual Report 2020

Financials

Financials

JUNE 2018 - JUNE 2019

	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTION	WITH DONOR RESTRICTION	TOTAL
PUBLIC SUPPORT FUNDS			
CONTRIBUTIONS	\$237,501	\$759,500	\$997,001
FEE FOR SERVICE	85,443	-	85,443
PROGRAM REVENUE	8,050	-	8,050
SPECIAL EVENTS, NET OF EXPENSES	1,875	-	1,875
INTEREST REVENUE	1,205	-	1,205
PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUES	334,074	759,500	1,093,574
TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED FUNDS UTILIZED FOR PURPOSES INTENDED	1,483,157	(1,483,157)	-
TOTAL PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUES	\$1,817,231	(723,657)	\$1,093,574
EXPENSES			
PROGRAM SERVICES	1,513,173	-	1,513,173
MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL EXPENSES	172,593	-	172,593
FUNDRAISING EXPENSES	83,033	-	83,033
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,768,799	-	1,768,799
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	48,432	(723,657)	(675,225)
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	330,202	2,413,835	2,744,037
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	\$378,634	\$1,690,178	\$2,068,812



GEEARS

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ALLIANCE FOR READY STUDENTS

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