

Making Sense of Data: Tools and Insights for Stronger Communities



Early Childhood Changers Summit

August 31, 2026

 **Neighborhood
Nexus**

Equity driven. Data informed.

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GEEARS
GEORGIA EARLY EDUCATION
ALLIANCE FOR READY STUDENTS



Today's agenda

1. Introductions
2. Walk through a four-step approach to data
3. Share the Readiness Radar and other online tools
4. Use framework and tools in small groups
5. Discuss our own takeaways and next steps



Introductions

Share your name, community, and why you chose this breakout session (after lunch!) about data



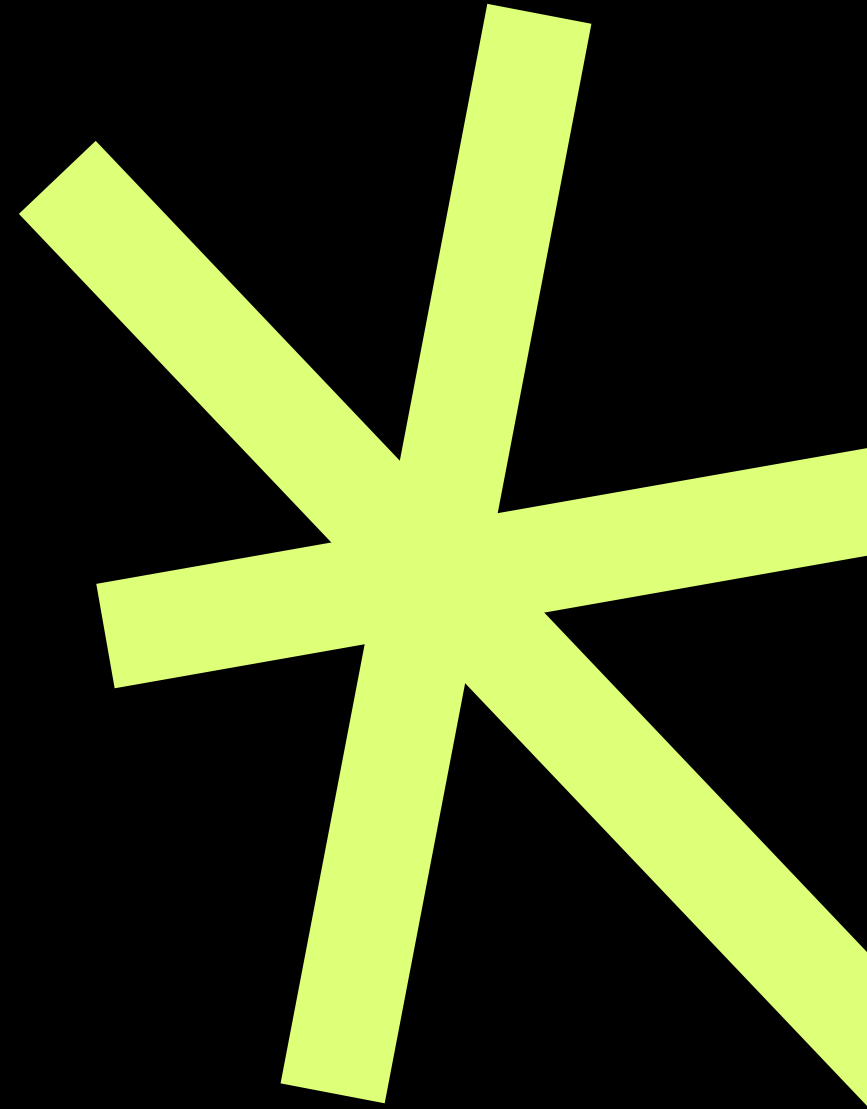
In Your Small Group

Where and how have you used data in the past?

When have you felt overwhelmed by data? Or not known what to do with it?

Four Step Framework

1. Ask the right questions
2. Use the best data
3. Tell a compelling story
4. Make informed decisions



What does that mean?



Ask specific, measurable questions to inform your work



Find and use the best data to answer your organizational or programmatic questions



Define your audience and tell a compelling story that inspires people to action



Create a plan that supports using relevant data to make informed decisions

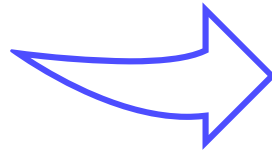


ASK THE RIGHT QUESTION: At a grocery store

*What kind of food
do you have?*

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTION

*What kind of food
do you have?*



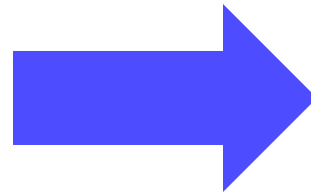
*Where can I find the
items to make a
dairy-free casserole
for a potluck for 10?*

- ①. Data confidence
- 1. Ask the right questions
- 2. Use the best data
- 3. Tell a compelling story
- 4. Make informed decisions



When to use data...

Strategic planning
Market research
Program design
Advocacy & awareness
Fundraising
Partner identification
Volunteer recruitment
Evaluation



...and what it gets you

Where to be
What to offer
Explain an issue
Build a case
Influence action
Improve operations
Tell a story
Know how we're doing

What are you trying to solve right now?



Ask the right question(s)

1. Be purposeful.

- a. What decision are you ultimately trying to make? *Or*, what decision are you trying to influence someone else to make? What problems are you trying to solve?
- b. Not sure where to start? Revisit your program purpose or your organization's theory of change. Where might things be improved?
- c. If you're not going to change a behavior, don't collect/analyze the data.

2. Develop a specific and answerable question

- a. This will make finding and using data significantly easier (and faster)!

3. You'll have more and more refined questions



1. Ask the right questions
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Finding the right data

Type

1. Demographic
2. Community outcomes like education or health
3. Quantitative (numbers) or qualitative (voice)?

Scale

1. Individual data
2. Program data from your org
3. County or school district
4. State or national

Feasibility

1. Is the data free or affordable?
2. How often is it updated?
3. Is the process easy to replicate

Want help navigating data? Join us on Teams for First Fridays Office Hours



Finding the right data

COMMUNITY/POPULATION DATA:

- Federal: Census, American Community Survey
- National/Community: Kids Count
- State: DECAL, GaDOE, GOSA, DPH
- Local: Crime, Housing, Budget
- Proprietary “Big Data”

ORGANIZATIONAL/PROGRAM DATA:

- Intake or registration forms
- Program participant surveys, interviews
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Donor data
- GaDOE, GOSA data for your school/district

Want help navigating data? Email me at LMoore@neighborhoodnexus.org



Pitfalls

Data is supposed to be a helpful tool, not an overwhelming obstacle, so watch out for these pitfalls...

- **Getting too “in the weeds”** – you don’t need to know everything, and you only have so much time. What’s the right-size analysis?
- **Analysis paralysis** – if you get overwhelmed, take a deep breath and go back to your original question
- **Waiting for the perfect data** – even with “perfect” data, it won’t ever perfectly capture lived experience
- **Can’t replicate** – can you (or someone else) do it again next year?



1. Ask the right questions
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“Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts”

Unknown Author

Tell a compelling story

1. Who is your audience?
2. What do you want them to know?
3. What do you want them to feel?
4. What do you want them to do?



DISCUSSION: Who are you trying to convince?

FACTS AREN'T AS MEMORABLE AS STORIES

DATA

COLD, FACTUAL, OBJECTIVE.



Only 5% remembered individual statistics.

VS.

STORY

WARM, EMOTIONAL, SUBJECTIVE.



Yet 63% remembered the stories.



Data *inform* action.
Stories *inspire* action.
We need both.

So, a rule to keep in mind:

No numbers without narrative.
No narrative without numbers.

—Mark Cabaj, Tamarack Institute



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Use the Data....

Use the data to ground your program or project

Use it as a benchmark.

Use it to demonstrate need

Use it to encourage community support.

Let people know you want to see the changes in the community



Make informed decisions (Take Action!)

- **Make a plan** – no matter how simple
- **Manage expectations** – Prepare your audience. What happens if they act? What happens if they don't? Are there barriers you can anticipate?
- **Monitor your progress**, and measure your impact
- Talk to people along the way (That counts as data too!)
- Have a bias toward *action!* Don't wait for perfect data
- Data-informed solutions will save you time in the long-run and will likely be more impactful

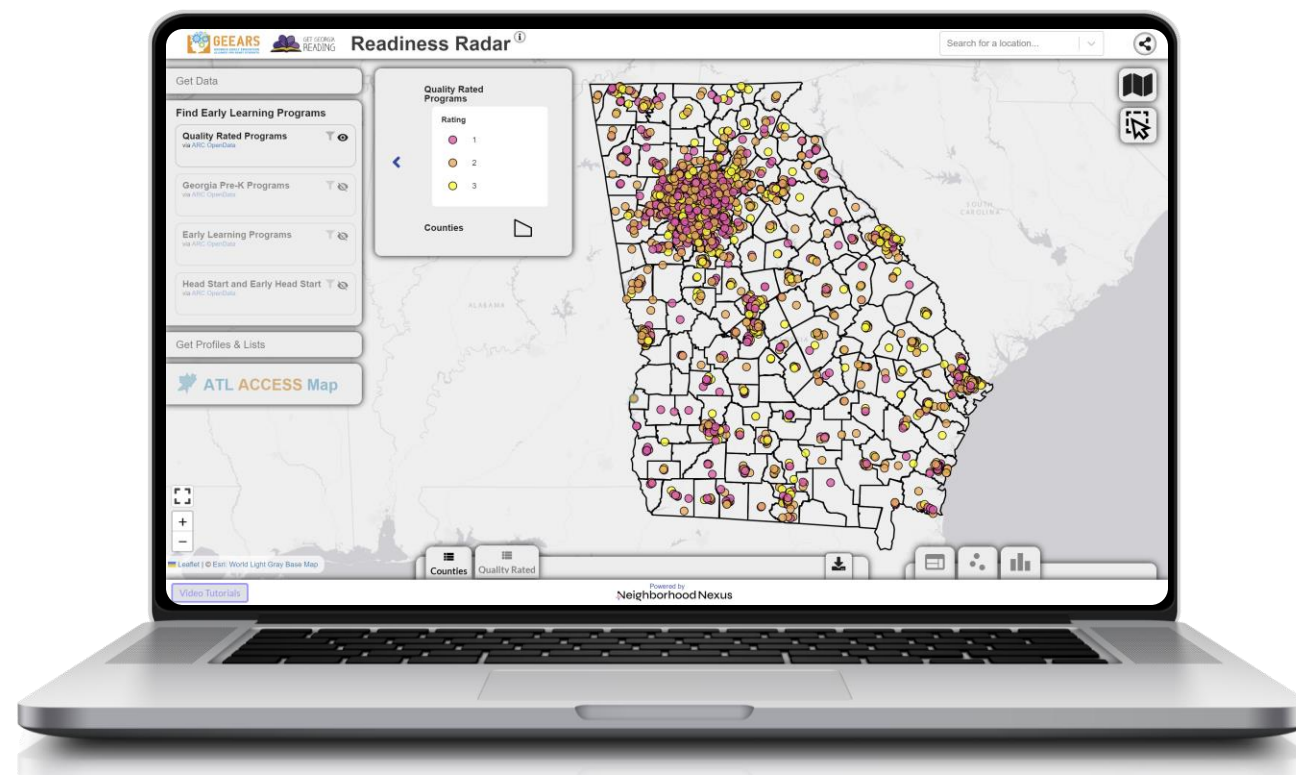


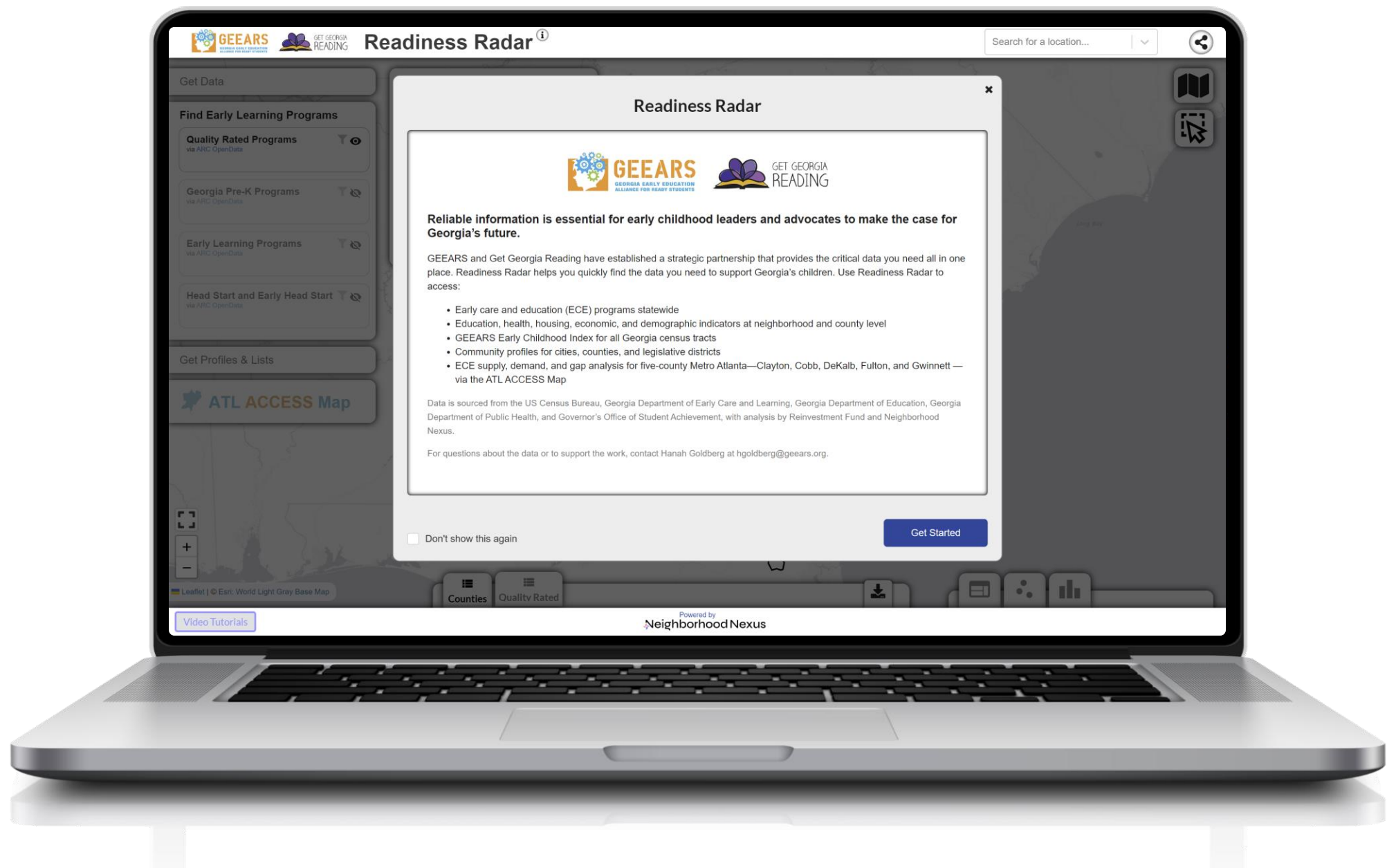
Online Tools & Profiles

Readiness Radar



Readiness Radar



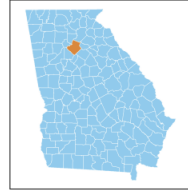




Early Childhood Lists & Profiles

Gwinnett County, Georgia Early Childhood Profile

The Georgia Early Childhood Profiles are produced by GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, with technical assistance from Neighborhood Nexus. GEEARS is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization whose mission is 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. These profiles highlight indicators relevant to early childhood and school readiness. To learn more, please visit www.geears.org.



Early Care and Education Providers*

	County	State
Total Early Learning Providers¹	315	4,941
Child Care Learning Centers	211	2,808
Licensed to serve infants	91%	85%
Licensed to serve toddlers	97%	92%
Licensed to serve preschoolers	100%	100%
Family Child Care Learning Homes	103	1,201
Licensed to serve infants	83%	85%
Licensed to serve toddlers	97%	97%
Licensed to serve preschoolers	94%	96%
Other Providers ¹	1	932
Total Licensed Capacity⁴	33,965	336,526
Quality Rated: [#]	81%	74%
Child Care Learning Centers	33,382	329,369
Quality Rated: [#]	81%	75%
1-star programs	29%	24%
2-star programs	40%	35%
3-star programs	12%	15%
Family Child Care Learning Homes	583	7,157
Quality Rated: [#]	47%	47%
1-star programs	19%	20%
2-star programs	13%	18%
3-star programs	14%	9%

Program Enrollment

	County	State
Kindergarten ²	12,061	121,437
Lottery Funded Georgia Pre-K ^{1,†}	5,813	73,098
At-risk children served [†]	49%	47%
Head Start and Early Head Start ^{3,‡}	258	24,812

[†]The "Other Providers" category represents entities not subject to licensing by The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) such as local school systems. Only providers known to DECAL are included.
[#]Quality Rated is Georgia's Quality Rating and Improvement System for child care and early learning programs. For more information, visit qualityrated.org.

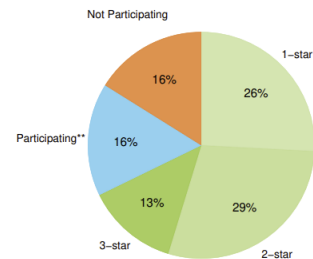
⁴Licensed Capacity indicates the maximum number of children a facility is permitted to serve based on square footage, and is typically larger than the actual number of children served.

* Insufficient data

Third Grade Assessment Results

	County	State
Students Tested, ELA⁴	12,982	122,360
Proficient/Distinguished Learners:	45%	36%
White	67%	51%
Black or African-American	42%	22%
Hispanic or Latino	28%	26%
Limited English Proficiency	18%	15%
Economically Disadvantaged	32%	24%
Students Tested, Math⁴	12,970	122,276
Proficient/Distinguished Learners:	51%	43%
White	71%	59%
Black or African-American	44%	26%
Hispanic or Latino	36%	34%
Limited English Proficiency	31%	27%
Economically Disadvantaged	38%	30%

Quality Rated Licensed Early Learning Providers¹



[†]There may be overlap between Pre-K and Head Start enrollments due to braided and blended funding sources, so these categories are not summative.

** Participating in the Quality Rated process, but not yet rated as of 1/1/2023.



Gwinnett County, Georgia

Program Utilization

	County	State
Babies Can't Wait ^{4,5}	1,860	19,185
Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) ^{4,5}	4,217	59,485
Georgia Home Visiting ^{4,5}	0	1,851

Parental Employment

	County	State
Population under age 6 living with parent⁶	73,067	740,387
Both parents or only parent in labor force	61%	67%
One parent in labor force, one not	32%	24%
No parent in labor force	7%	9%

Family, Health, and Services

	County #	County %	State %
Children under age 6 living below: ⁵			
100% Poverty	10,578	14%	21%
150% Poverty	19,809	27%	33%
200% Poverty	28,453	38%	45%
Children under age 6 without health insurance ⁶	6,109	8%	6%
Limited English-speaking households ⁶	27,536	9%	3%
Substantiated Abuse/Neglect Reports (duplicated) ⁷	179	0.6 [‡]	2.5 [‡]
Births to mothers who are not high school graduates ⁸	939	8%	12%
Births to girls ages 15-19 ⁸	416	11.7 [‡]	18.1 [‡]
Low birth weight babies ⁸	1,012	9%	10%
Preterm babies ⁸	1,165	10%	12%
Asthma-related ER visits (ages 0-4) ⁸	474	79.3 [‡]	83.1 [‡]

[‡] Rate per 1,000 population
[‡] Rate per 10,000 population
^{*} Insufficient data

⁴ All programs ensure the highest quality data to the extent possible. Numbers represent total children enrolled in the program at any time during the year, which is generally greater than the number enrolled at any given point in time. Each agency and program participating in GA CACDS maintains its own data, and each one has protocols for data entry and data quality. GA CACDS does not conduct any additional data quality measures.

Economic Status

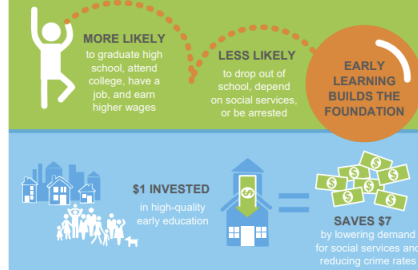


Of every 20 children ages 0-5 in Gwinnett County, Georgia, **8 are economically disadvantaged, including 3 living in poverty.**⁴

Children by Race and Ethnicity

	County	State
Population under age 5⁴	60,778	643,718
White	36%	49%
Black or African-American	28%	33%
Asian and Pacific Islander	10%	4%
Other race or multiracial	26%	15%
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	30%	15%

Children who attend high-quality early education are:



Sources:

- Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, 1/1/2023
- Georgia Department of Education, FTE 2023-1
- The Office of Head Start Program Information Report, 02/2023
- Georgia Governor's Office of Student Achievement, SY 2022
- Georgia's Cross-Agency Child Data System (CACDS), 7/2019-6/2020
- U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2017-21)
- Fostering Court Improvement, 6/2021-5/2022
- Georgia Department of Public Health, OASIS (annual average 2019-21)





Small Group

Use what you learned



In Small Groups, Consider and Discuss

1. What new questions does this data raise?

- a. What decision are you ultimately trying to make? *Or*, what decision are you trying to influence someone else to make? What problems are you trying to solve?
- b. Not sure where to start? Revisit your program purpose or your organization's theory of change. Where might things be improved?
- c. If you're not going to change a behavior, don't collect/analyze the data.

2. What new/different data would you like to see?

- a. This will make finding and using data significantly easier (and faster)!

3. What actions would you like to take?



Takeaways & Next Steps

Report Out



Example if Needed

Ask the right question

Is our program working? → → →

Did we meet our participation targets?

Are we engaging the right students?

Were any of our participants better off?

Is this program sustainable? Scalable?

What are the biggest in-school and out-of-school challenges to kindergarten and first grade success?

DISCUSSION: What questions are you asking?

Finding the right data (used a survey)

QUESTION: What are the biggest in-school and out-of-school challenges to kindergarten and first grade success?

In-school challenges, ranked (n=29):

1. Lack of early childhood education
2. Behavioral issues
3. Attendance

Also: lack of basic knowledge, experienced teachers and school leaders, social skills, understanding of expectations

NOTE: surveys are an art, take your time

Out-of-school challenges, ranked (n=29):

1. Poverty
2. Access to affordable housing
3. Hunger
4. Access to healthcare
5. Unemployment (parents)

Also: parent involvement (by far), parents' education, too much screen/device time, parent understanding of expectations



Use the best data (Readiness Radar)

QUESTION: What are the biggest in-school and out-of-school challenges to kindergarten and first grade success?

DATA: Chronic absenteeism seems to strongly correlate with student outcomes. Family income seems to play a strong role, too.



Tell a compelling story

QUESTION: What are the biggest in-school and out-of-school challenges to kindergarten and first grade success?

DATA: Chronic absenteeism seems to strongly correlate with student outcomes. Family income seems to play a strong role, too.

STORY: Students whose families and communities are supported in ensuring they attend school regularly have better educational outcomes



Make Informed Decisions/Take Action

QUESTION: What are the biggest in-school and out-of-school challenges to kindergarten and first grade success?

DATA: Chronic absenteeism seems to strongly correlate with student outcomes. Family income seems to play a strong role, too.

STORY: Chronic absenteeism seems to strongly correlate with student outcomes. Family income seems to play a strong role, too.

ACTION: Identify and implement best practices. Activate more Superior Court judges to establish a Student Attendance and School Climate Committee

How many students would be “proficient” if attendance improved by 5 percent?

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