



GEEARS

GEORGIA EARLY EDUCATION
ALLIANCE FOR READY STUDENTS

**2023-
2024**



ANNUAL REPORT



WHO WE ARE

Since 2010, the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students has led a statewide movement on quality early learning and healthy development for all children ages birth through five. GEEARS rallies business, civic, and government leaders maximize the economic return on the state's investments in policies and programs that support young children and families.

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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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President, Naserian Foundation

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Past President, American Academy of Pediatrics

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VP Customer Experience & Marketing, Kimberly Clark Professional

Steve Labovitz
Partner, Denton's





LETTER FROM GEEARS' LEADERSHIP

Dear Friends,

Every year in our annual report, Mindy Binderman checks in with you as GEEARS' Executive Director—our organization's leader and often, our public voice.

But this year, this letter is from two of us—Mindy and our Board Chair, Stephanie Blank. That's fitting because GEEARS has always been, emphatically and proudly, a “we.” We're a growing group of staffers, of course. But we're also a community of Georgians who pool their passions and efforts to ensure that every young child in our state can thrive.

We are a convener, a statewide force that brings together stakeholders and galvanizes them to invest in families.

We are collaborators, working with the brain trust we bring together to maximize our efforts—and our results.

We are a trusted resource for the latest in early childhood research and data.

At the heart of all these roles is that of advocate. Everything we do at GEEARS strives to change the fundamentals of young children's experiences in our state, along with those of their families and educators.

We advocate to change policy and to change culture.

We advocate to change the present—the number of children receiving CAPS funding, for instance, or reaping the full benefits of Georgia's Pre-K program. We also advocate for the future, one in which generations of Georgians who've benefited from high-quality care and early learning succeed in K-12 school, in higher education, in our workforce, and society.

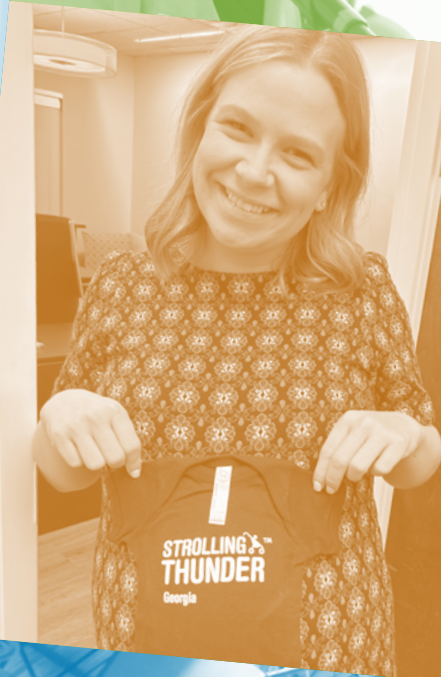
Our holistic approach this year earned validation and true progress for Georgia's families. It also matched the complexity of the early childhood landscape. Just as young children and their needs contain multitudes, so does GEEARS.

That's why GEEARS will always be a “we,” not an “I.” After almost 15 years together at GEEARS' helm, we're proud to show you all our “we's” in this report. We are Advocates, Conveners, Collaborators, Researchers, PAACT, and of course, we are you—our invaluable funders, donors, sponsors, cheerleaders, and fellow advocates.

We thank you for supporting all that we do and all the ways that we do it.

With gratitude,

Mindy & Stephanie





**WE LIFT
FAMILY VOICES**

GEORGIA STROLLING THUNDER



Raising young children is joyful. It's also a lot of hard work. It's important for lawmakers to keep both of those things—the joys and the challenges—in mind when they are considering policies that impact young children, their parents, and their caregivers.

This is why, for Strolling Thunder 2024, parents and caregivers put immense effort into sharing their experiences and needs with their state senators and representatives. First, they attended a pre-event letter-writing training so they could express their “asks” to their legislators. Then they woke up very early on February 22nd to bring their children to a chaotically busy day under the Gold Dome. They fought through crowds to get face time with their legislators, 15 of whom made the effort to meet with them “at the ropes” during session. They schlepped strollers and diaper bags through the Coverdell Legislative Office

Building so they could deliver goodie bags and lunch invitations to lawmakers’ offices. And they set a wonderful example of activism for their kids, who spent downtime at the Georgia Freight Depot swimming through ball pits, playing dress-up, dancing to a DJ, and digging into a Southern lunch spread.

Strolling Thunder 2024 hosted more than 100 attendees and 16 partner organizations who set up tables with resources for families. It was a forum to discuss critical policies like increased funding for CAPS, the elimination of the state sales tax on diapers, and paid family leave. And it proved that children really do make an incredible statement when they speak up for themselves—with the ample help of their parents and caregivers.

NATIONAL STROLLING THUNDER

In late April, GEEARS’ Senior Policy Manager for Early Education, Jessica Woltjen, traveled to Washington, DC with Dolisha and Jared Mitchell and their two-year-old son, Emory. The McDonough-based family joined 49 others, each representing their home states, at National Strolling Thunder, ZERO TO THREE’S annual day of action.

Dolisha has been an online activist throughout her little boy’s life. “As the daughter of two parents who dropped out of high school, education is a non-negotiable for me,” she says.

And yet, in multiple places—first Portland, OR and then in Atlanta and McDonough—Emory was never admitted to any of the high-quality child care programs where he was waitlisted. The one time Dolisha did get a call from an Atlanta program, the tuition amounted to half of her monthly income, so she had to forgo professional child care for Emory.

“Luckily, we both worked from home,” Dolisha notes, “but the level of stress we felt trying to balance full-time work with a baby at home was tremendous.”



That’s exactly what she shared during her family’s day at the Capitol. The Mitchells met with the offices of Senators Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, as well as Representative Mike Collins. They asked their lawmakers to support policies that help families access high-quality, affordable child care. We know Emory’s sweet presence drove their message home. Given how well the little guy took to his political play behind a lectern, perhaps the outing will have an impact on his future plans. Senator Emory Mitchell’s got a nice ring to it!



**WE ARE
ADVOCATES**



GEORGIA INFANT-TODDLER COALITION

We continue to lead the [Georgia Infant-Toddler Coalition](#), a sprawling statewide group working to advance policies that address the needs of Georgia's infants and toddlers. The Coalition now numbers 139 individuals representing 75 different organizations and agencies.

It uses committees to organize [advocacy priorities and an ongoing storytelling campaign](#). Currently, these are:

- **The Child Care Affordability Committee** seeks to promote access to high-quality, affordable child care.

- **The Early Intervention and Family Well-Being Committee** envisions a system with a spectrum of trauma-informed and culturally competent services that meet the social-emotional health needs of Georgia's infants, toddlers, and their families.

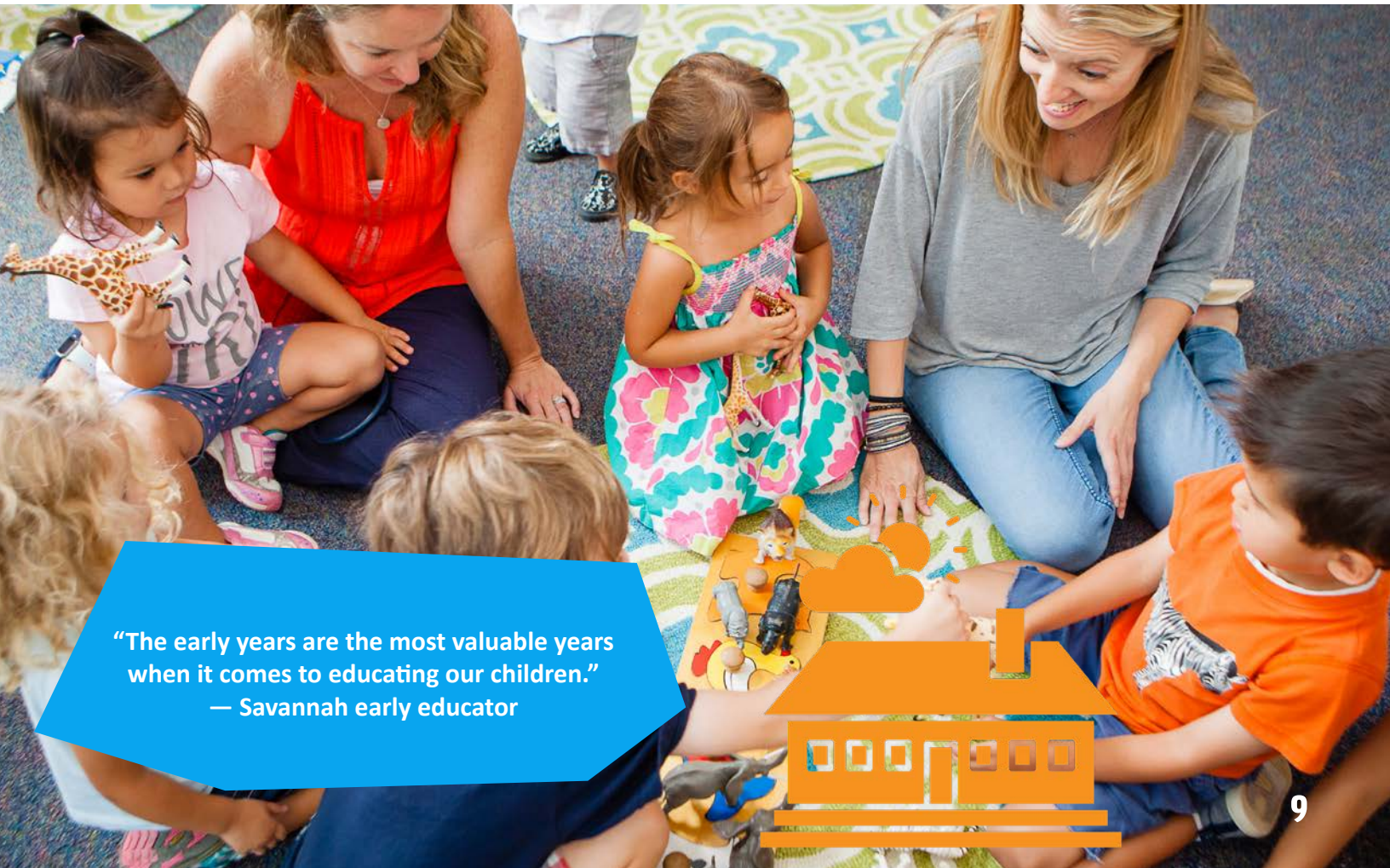
At the end of Georgia's 2024 legislative session, when every day of advocacy was critical, the Coalition's child care task force mobilized two high-impact actions within just a week: A virtual town hall for early educators and a #GANeedsChildCare "tweetstorm."

#GANEEEDSCHILDCARE STORY BANK

When we tell the story of child care challenges and triumphs, the most valuable voices are those of parents, providers, and teachers. That's why this year, we created the #GANeedsChildCare Story Bank, an easy-to-use platform where people can follow prompts to record their own stories. The resulting videos and audio recordings have been powerful. We're already sharing them with changemakers and stakeholders. They've tremendously strengthened our advocacy efforts.

*"By the time that your child is off of the waitlist, your child is now two- or three-years-old."
— Georgia parent*

*"The early years are the most valuable years when it comes to educating our children."
— Savannah early educator*



GEEARS AT THE CAPITOL

This year, we met with more than **45** state legislators.



Earlier this year, GEEARS board member, Steve Labovitz, gave us a wise reminder: “When you’re trying to work with the government, you must be relentless. You’ve got to keep going back and going back and going back, because governments do not move quickly.”

Well, we took that advice to heart. Relentless best describes our approach to advocacy this year. We were particularly dogged as we asked legislators for critical improvements for Georgia’s Pre-K program:

- We [made our case on our blog](#), noting the abundant funding (\$1.4 billion, to be exact) available in an unrestricted reserve account.
- We [testified](#) for Pre-K enhancements before the House Working Group on Early Childhood Education. And when the committee recommended almost all our suggested improvements, we *still* didn’t rest.
- We [continued to fight](#) for Georgia’s preschoolers and their teachers.

Our relentlessness paid off. In the final hours of the legislative session, \$97 million was budgeted to raise the salaries of lead

and assistant Pre-K teachers and restore class size to 20 students, along with several other improvements.

This was only one of many wins we achieved by joining forces with our advocacy partners, building thoughtful relationships with legislators, and relaying our messages over and over. We’re also proud, for instance, of the budget increase of more than nine million dollars for Georgia’s Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program and the establishment of the Georgia Commission on Maternal and Infant Health. ([We spoke out about Georgia’s dismal maternal mortality rate](#), particularly amongst Black mothers, over the summer.)

GEEARS’ protracted efforts to promote Infant-Toddler Courts also gained traction this year. We saw the [Center of Excellence for Children’s Behavioral Health at the Georgia Health Policy Center](#) begin implementation of a five-year grant from the federal [Health Resources and Services Administration](#). They issued requests for applications from judges, agencies, community organizations, and collaboratives who want to work together using the Safe Babies approach for families in the judicial system.

Thanks to our action alerts, 302 GEEARS supporters sent 684 messages to 165 state legislators and the Governor this session.



LEGISLATIVE SUCCESSES

Budget

- Almost \$100 million to make critical improvements to Georgia's Lottery-funded Pre-K program. This figure is essentially the entire amount requested by the [House Working Group on Early Childhood Education](#).
- \$9.3 million for Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program to support increasing reimbursement rates for CAPS providers.
- An additional \$2,500 in the base salary of teachers of preschool-aged children with disabilities (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B) (total: \$1.55 million).
- A 4% increase for full-time state employees' salaries (capped at \$3,000), including those in child-serving agencies like the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) and Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS).

Early Childhood Education

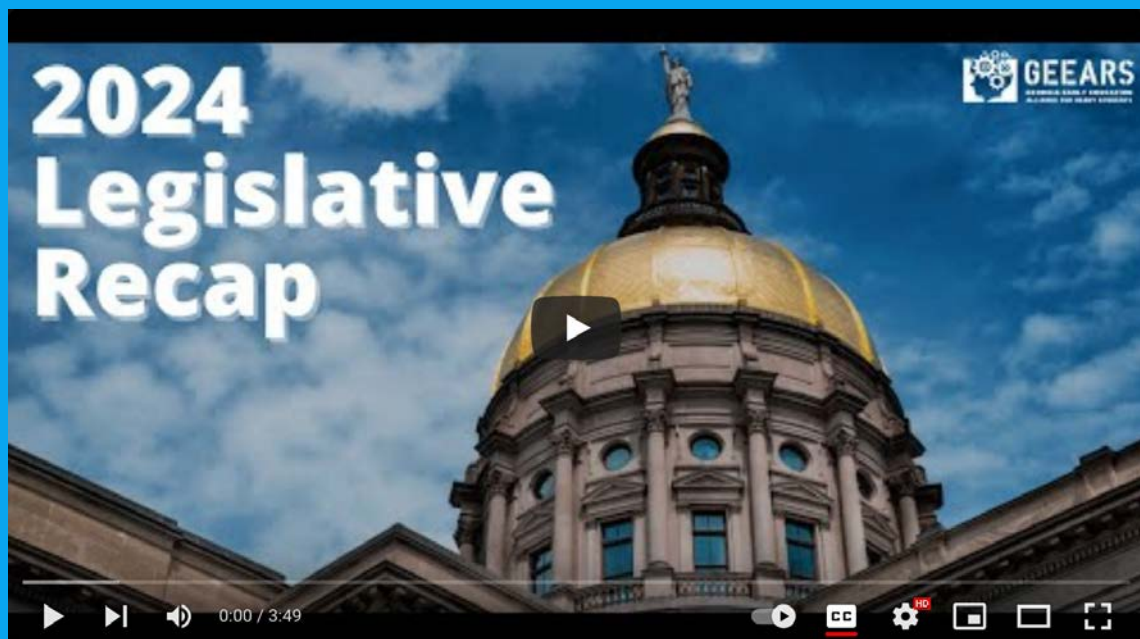
- [SR 471](#) creates a Senate Study Committee on Access to Affordable Child Care.
- [SB 233](#) included provisions to allow local school districts to use capital outlay funds for educational facilities for Georgia's Pre-K classrooms.
- [SB 464](#) establishes a program for the Georgia Department of Education to allocate funds for eligible educators to purchase school supplies.

Child and Family Health

- [HB 1037](#) creates the Georgia Commission on Maternal and Infant Health.
- The final budget included:
 - \$1.1 million to increase reimbursement rates for Babies Can't Wait providers.
 - \$1.1 million to expand the pilot to provide home visiting in rural Georgia.
 - \$979,000 to add two additional disorders to newborn screenings.
 - \$2.7 million to increase select primary care and OB/GYN codes within Medicaid.
 - \$200,000 for autism early screening and care training in rural counties.
 - \$6.3 million to cover the full cost of breakfast and lunch for reduced-paying students in public schools, including those in public Pre-K.

Family Supports

- [HB 1010](#) doubles the number of weeks (from three to six) of paid parental leave for state employees and public school teachers.
- [HB 404](#) (The Safe at Home Act) in part protects the rights of renters by mandating a warranty of habitability in certain rental agreements.
- [HB 1021](#) increases the amount of the dependent exemption (i.e., as an allowable deduction on Georgia taxable income) from \$3,000 per dependent to \$4,000 per dependent.





**WE ARE
CONVENERS**

One of the roles that we at GEEARS hold most dear is that of convener—of coalitions, of experts and actors, of brilliant minds and passionate organizations. We pool our power and work together to ensure a brighter future for Georgia’s youngest learners and their families.

HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN WORKSHOP ON THE WORKFORCE



In the fall, GEEARS and long-time partner [Quality Care for Children](#) co-hosted over 50 early childhood professionals from 22 cities across the state—most of them teachers—for a [Human-Centered Design](#) Workshop at a leafy retreat center in Peachtree City.

Facilitators led discussions about challenges like the public perception of the early childhood field, how to support child care directors who can, in turn, better support their teachers, and workforce training, recruitment, and retention.

The attendees said they found each other’s companionship to be cathartic. They were moved by the facilitators’ eagerness to

listen to their stories and the chance to share with each other.

“I think it’s great that we can be here and get other people’s perspectives,” said Dasima Hill from Decatur’s Little Linguists International Preschool. “One of the common things that everybody has experienced is the challenge of maintaining staff, or just getting staff period. I heard some different ideas about how we can find a happy place that makes us *all* happy.”

GEEARS and QCC also heard some fresh ideas about how Georgia can better attract and retain early educators. Thanks to the participation of these teachers, we are equipped to share their perspectives with policymakers, funders, and program leaders.

GEEARS’ ANNUAL LUNCHEON WITH JEN HATMAKER

At [GEEARS’ Annual Fundraising Luncheon](#) on Giving Tuesday in November, Jen Hatmaker swooped from hilarity to heartbreak to hope as she spoke about the unique post-pandemic stressors facing young children and their families and educators.

She shared encouragement for “littles” parents, “Keep going,” and invited audience members to voice their challenges—from caring for parents with dementia to 3am parental worry loops. Then she led all in a chorus of, “Same.”

At this sold-out event at The Whitley Hotel—our largest ever—audience members responded to Board Chair Stephanie Blank’s challenge to support GEEARS in multiple ways: “Your support enables us to bring families down to the Capitol, so their stories can be heard by our legislators . . . Oftentimes, that’s what will move legislation. It enables us to conduct research that highlights where the challenges are, and where the solutions are as well. And it allows us to bring engaging speakers to Georgia, who help us continue to educate leaders, not just at the legislative level but also business leaders, philanthropic leaders, folks like yourselves, on the importance of the birth-to-five space.”



PRESCHOOL TO THIRD GRADE LEADERS FELLOWSHIP



The Preschool to Third Grade (P-3) Leaders Fellowship brings together early learning directors, elementary school administrators, and district leaders to get to know one another and collaborate on projects across the systems serving children birth through age eight. Why is this collaboration so important? Because, during this critical period, children develop at an unparalleled pace neurologically, physiologically, and socially.

What's more, not all early childhood experiences are equal. Opportunity gaps before kindergarten often result in achievement gaps across the P-3 continuum.

There are different, and siloed, systems serving early childhood educational settings and the K-12 years. These systems have differing vocabularies, professional standards, governance, and funding streams. P-3 leaders, therefore, have an outsized opportunity to set children on a path to academic success through connecting, sharing, and aligning resources and practices in systematic, research-based ways.

Last March, the virtual graduation ceremony for the 2024 Fellowship class featured an impressive array of graduates

presenting their work in various Zoom breakout rooms. For the first time in five years, the program had four cohorts from the City of Atlanta, Fayette County, Clayton County, and Gwinnett County.

The presentations were chock-full of methods for bringing their early learning and elementary school communities together and addressing the challenges many of them face.

“This makes us better able to support children’s families and engage their kids during those critical early years,” said one elementary-based participant.

In fact, the success of the P-3 Leaders Fellowship’s fifth year can exponentially increase that support. As GEEARS Executive Director, Mindy Binderman, noted early in the ceremony, the P-3 Leaders network now has more than 100 active alumni, who continue to strategize and implement P-3 principles within their communities.

“As site level leaders,” she said, “you are closest to the levers of change.”



GEEARS BUS TOUR: EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERSECTIONS

In April, nearly 30 education professionals joined us for a field trip around Atlanta on a school bus! We actually skipped the classic-but-clattery yellow bus in favor of a comfortable tour bus, but we did visit an amazing quartet of schools for children ages zero to five. Our passengers included a majority of early learning providers gathering intel to bring back to their own businesses, as well as civic and K-12 school system leaders.

According to the Bus Tour's theme, *Early Childhood Intersections*, we visited innovative early care and learning sites to get a hands-on impression of the ecosystem of community supports that help them build and maintain high-quality early learning environments.

We saw fascinating variations on this theme at all the programs we visited, exploring connections with entities ranging from Atlanta Public Schools to a neighborhood planning unit to a dedicated health center. Incidentally, all the programs referenced the GEEARS-led [PAACT: Promise All Atlanta Children Thrive](#) and

its grant program for repairs and renovations as a partner in their success.

The Bus Tour's sociable format allowed participants to chat and network, forging their own early childhood intersections.

But this journey was also a vital way for participants to get outside of their own walls and absorb, say, the Montessori teaching techniques at Premier Academy, the relationship-building that helps KIDazzle acquire free produce for their in-house chefs, and the way Northwest Youth Power @ Magnolia integrates community health into its mission. That's a lot of efficient impact from just two days trekking around town!

And that's why GEEARS is committed to chartering our big bus every year, recruiting a diverse crew of early childhood professionals, and making this journey toward raising the quality bar for young students and their families and educators.





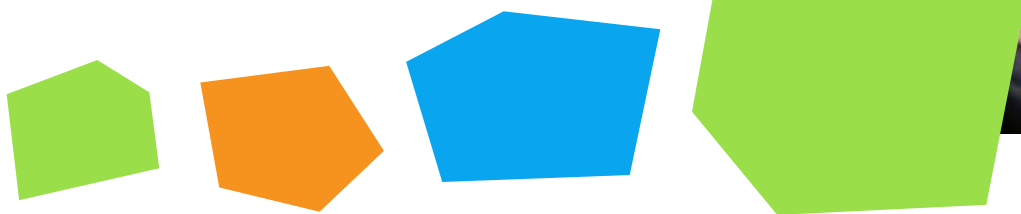
**WE ARE
COLLABORATORS**

A close cousin to our role as a convener is that of collaborator. Collaboration is the alchemy that happens when impassioned early childhood professionals with diverse skills and expertise, but similar goals and values, pool our resources and get busy! For example. . .

A DIALOGUE ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTICES, VOCABULARY, AND THEIR POLITICIZATION

It's no secret that language matters. Even in the early childhood world, commonly used terms and practices are in danger of being politicized. These terms include words and phrases like *diversity*, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice*, *social-emotional learning*, and *inclusion*.

GEEARS and the [Black Child Development Institute-Atlanta](#) teamed up to lead a conversation among members of the Infant-Toddler Coalition. Under the guidance of a neutral, professional facilitator, participants dove deeply into the complexity of such terms, the ways our partners understand and define them, and recent events that catalyzed them. We also discussed a path forward for both our approach to crucial developmental practices and our vocabulary for them as we continue to work toward an equitable future for Georgia's children and families.



CHILD CARE IN RURAL GEORGIA: GEEARS AND SEF JOIN FORCES



Child care providers and families in rural communities can face vastly different issues and challenges than those in more densely populated, urban ones. To serve all Georgians, we must listen to rural stories, gather data from every corner of the state, then craft tailored recommendations for policy and practices.

GEEARS has partnered with researchers in Mississippi and Missouri to ascertain how local stakeholders experience and view their child care ecosystems. In our three states, we've embarked upon a multi-year research project in 12 rural communities.

The data we'll gather will be particularly useful to state and federal decision-makers as they consider how to address ongoing child care policy challenges in the South, where a significant portion of young children live in rural areas and many live in poverty.

This project is a component of the Southern Early Childhood Education Justice (SECEJ) network, an initiative funded by the [Southern Education Foundation](#) (SEF).

MAYOR'S SUMMER READING CLUB

Every summer, the [Mayor's Summer Reading Club](#) (MSRC) engages children and their families, while also cultivating language development and a love of reading. How does GEEARS pull this off? Every year, we select a board book for children ages zero to two and produce an original picture book for three- to five-year-olds. Then dozens of community partners, including child care providers, summer camps, museums, and libraries, host programs oriented around these stories. Every family goes home with their own free copies of the MSRC books.

2024's board book was written by 13-year-old Michaiah Booker, who came to us through our exciting new partner, [Young Authors Publishing](#). *Noah's Family Farm* is a sweet tale of a young boy's

exploration of his grandfather's farm, knowing that it will someday be his own.

The MSRC's longtime partner, the [Alliance Theatre](#), has again created and produced our picture book. *Bina's Harvest* includes a READ Guide from the [Rollins Center for Early Learning and Literacy](#) (Atlanta Speech School) featuring research-based read-aloud methods that help adults maximize the benefits young children get from reading with their caregivers.

We are thankful for the generous funding support of [PNC](#), the [United Way of Greater Atlanta](#), the LuluMa Foundation, and WorldReader.

**"The MSRC is the collective effort of myriad partners, from Mayor Andre Dickens to our funders to the creatives who produce the books to the educators and other community leaders who stage literacy-rich programming all summer."
- Mindy Binderman
Executive Director, GEEARS**

The Mayor's Summer Reading Club staged a public kickoff celebration at the Woodruff Arts Center on June 6, 2024.



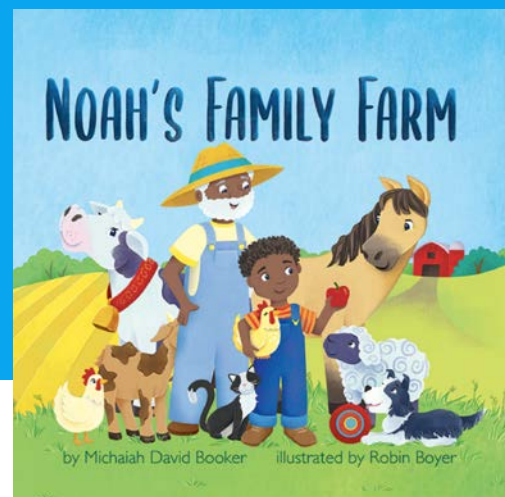
Bina's Harvest

It's harvest time at Bina's family's apple orchard and this year, she's finally old enough to join in. As Bina eagerly picks apples, she discovers that there's a right time for everything and patience is sometimes the most important part of the process.



Noah's Family Farm

Noah's Family Farm is a sweet tale of a young boy's exploration of his grandfather's farm, knowing that it will someday be his own.





**WE ARE
RESEARCHERS**



GEEARS
 GEORGIA EARLY EDUCATION
 ALLIANCE FOR READY STUDENTS

Voices from the Field

www.geears.org/Voicesfromthefield



CENTERING VOICES FROM THE FIELD

This year, we gathered a trove of research into a new web page called [Voices From the Field](#). These are the voices of Head Start Teachers, Georgia parents contending with the pandemic, and overstretched Pre-K teachers. Over the years, in focus groups and surveys, they've provided GEEARS with stories and data that we use every day in our work on behalf of Georgia's youngest children and their families.

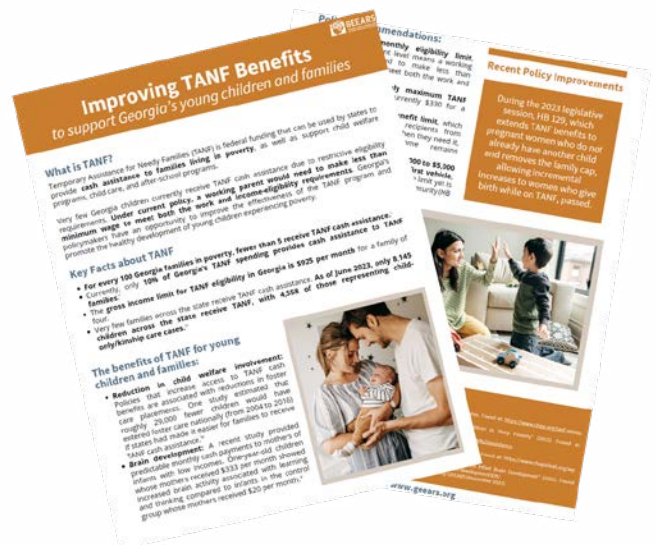
IMPROVING TANF BENEFITS TO SUPPORT GEORGIA'S YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Under current policy, adult recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are required to participate in work-related activity or training for at least 30 hours weekly and working parents need to make less than minimum wage. Working parents need to make less than minimum wage to receive the cash assistance provided by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Few Georgia families meet these restrictive work and income-eligibility requirements.

GEEARS set out to change that with the publication of [Improving TANF Benefits to Support Georgia's Young Children and Families](#). This two-pager provides insight into the benefits of TANF and policy recommendations on how Georgia's leaders can strengthen the program.

"Your staff should know where their food's gonna come from, how they're gonna pay that car note. Your employees should not be sitting in their classrooms on the last day of school . . . filing for food stamps, filing for unemployment."

— Metro Atlanta Head Start teacher



SERVING GEORGIA'S CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

Under any circumstances, raising a baby or toddler can be daunting. Parents whose children have disabilities face the “usual” baby challenges and more. They have to forge through a maze of referrals, evaluations, diagnoses, and treatments or therapies. They must master the bureaucracy of making insurance and state agency claims—or paying for those costs out-of-pocket. And, of course, the emotional toll of this new reality can be profound.

That’s why it’s vital that policymakers, funders, and all who care for young children with disabilities understand the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a federal law that outlines critical services to improve the educational experiences of children with disabilities.

This year, GEEARS developed a [two-pager](#) distilling IDEA’s intricacies and a [Thought Leaders](#) column personalizing the challenge families face when their little one receives a diagnosis.



In 2021, Babies Can't Wait served 17,151 families, which is approximately 3% of Georgia's 0-4-year-old population. Preschool Special Education served 3.25% of Georgia's 3–5-year-olds.



EARLY CHILDHOOD CHECKUP

The [Early Childhood Checkup](#) provides a snapshot of how well our state is meeting the needs of our youngest children—ages birth through five—and their families. The Checkup includes key indicators across three general categories: Early Learning, Health, and Family Supports. These reflect the wide variety of factors that contribute to child and family well-being.

GEEARS will release the Early Childhood Checkup annually to help policymakers, community leaders, and others measure progress, considering both year-to-year changes and general five-year trends.

The inaugural Early Childhood Checkup (2023) showed that while Georgia has a long way to go in its efforts to meet the needs of its young children and families, we have seen improvement, most notably in access to Quality Rated child care and WIC.



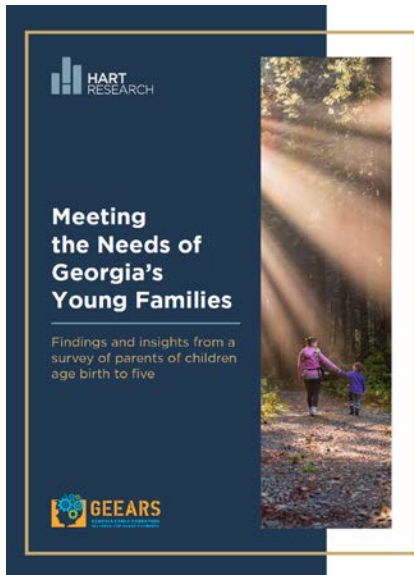
2023 PARENT SURVEY: MEETING THE NEEDS OF GEORGIA'S FAMILIES

In late 2023, GEEARS commissioned Hart Research Associates to conduct a poll of Georgia parents with children ages birth to five. The [findings](#) revealed that families with young children face overwhelming challenges. More than four in 10 report that their overall economic situation, stress levels, and ability to pay weekly and monthly bills have grown more challenging over the last few years. Financial difficulties disproportionately affect mothers, parents in lower-income or single-adult households, and those in small towns or rural areas.

- **44%** of respondents indicated they or their partner had to turn down a job opportunity because of problems with child care.
- **46%** of families indicate things are going well in terms of their stress levels and mental health.
- **89%** support increasing funding for CAPS so that more families with low incomes can afford care.

Most families feel underserved by the state government and want policymakers to prioritize issues affecting parents' day-to-day lives, such as access to food, diapers, high-quality child care, paid parental leave, and consistent healthcare coverage. Families' support for such policies is robust and bipartisan.

"Investing in children is not only the right thing to do from a humanitarian perspective, but it also pays off really well in the future. Think more than a couple years ahead!"
— Georgia mother





**WE PROMISE
ALL ATLANTA
CHILDREN
THRIVE (PAACT)**



Convened by GEEARS, [PAACT: Promise All Atlanta Children Thrive](#) is a city-wide alliance of public and private partners collaborating to improve learning, health, and well-being outcomes for Atlanta’s youngest children and their families.

A collaborative alliance with collective impact goals requires a leader; a backbone. As the backbone of PAACT, this is the role GEEARS plays for partners like the City of Atlanta, Quality Care for Children, Low Income Investment Fund, and many more. We lead this diverse and talented crew in myriad ways. . .

- We bring our partners together to pull them out of their siloes and empower them to share resources and avoid duplication.
- We raise funds for implementation partners to put to work.
- We advise, connect, and otherwise support implementation partners as they do their work in the field.
- We collect and evaluate data to measure our programs’ impact and support evidence-based decisions.
- We convene our advisory board, which plays a key role in PAACT’s decision-making and partner support.

PAACT’s Vision: That 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 residents of our city.

THE MAYOR’S PAACT COMMITMENT IN IMPLEMENTATION

In 2022, PAACT’s longstanding relationship with the City of Atlanta led to Mayor Andre Dickens’ visionary announcement—the promise of an investment of five million City dollars in early education. Mayor Dickens paired that commitment with a \$15 million fundraising challenge to other public and private entities.

A year later, the Mayor’s PAACT Commitment has raised more than \$20 million. Members of PAACT are now implementing high-impact projects with those funds. The projects address three priorities for early education: Quality and Capacity-Building, Affordability and Access, and Early Childhood Education Workforce Development.



PAACT REPAIR AND RENOVATION GRANT PROGRAM



The PAACT Repair and Renovation Grant Program supports Atlanta's early care and learning system by funding improvements to child care facilities. These improvements might range from the addition of a playground fence to a roof repair to an entire kitchen or bathroom renovation. The common factor is this: in improving the functionality of the child care facilities, the repairs and renovations increase quality for young students. They make children and staff more safe and comfortable and thus better able to learn and teach. The grants also bolster providers' success by connecting them with business coaches and expert consultants. PAACT's partners in this program are the City of Atlanta, [Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta](#), [Reinvestment Fund](#), [Low Income Investment Fund](#), and [Early Learning Property Management](#).

74

Atlanta-based child care programs received PAACT Repair and Renovation Grants.

UP TO \$75,000
for program grantees.

NEARLY HALF

of grantees have opted in for the business coaching and technical assistance from expert consultants provided at no cost to them.

PAACT SCHOLARSHIP INITIATIVE

In partnership with [Quality Care for Children](#) and [Atlanta Public Schools](#), as of May 2024, PAACT's scholarship initiative has provided funds to help alleviate the cost burden of child care for Atlanta's families.

OVER 200

families served

OVER 300

children received scholarship funds



EARLY CHILDHOOD CHAMPIONS

Georgia’s child care workers are among the lowest paid in the nation. In 2022, our early educators earned a median wage of \$11.71 per hour—\$2 less than the national average.

In partnership with the [Rotary Club of Atlanta](#), the Early Childhood Champions Teacher Bonus program provides compensated professional development to help teachers add new skills and curricula to their educational arsenal, increasing the quality of students’ experiences and cash bonuses to show teachers that they are valued and essential.

As of May 2024, 759 teachers out of approximately 1,500 eligible individuals in licensed centers enrolled in the program. Participants completed over 3,100 hours of state-approved literacy-centered professional development courses.

\$1.75 MILLION

to train and retain early childhood educators.

\$500

cash bonus and a “Mayor’s Award for Early Literacy” awarded to educators that complete state-approved literacy-centered professional development courses.

ADDITIONAL \$500

bonus for remaining employed at the same child care program for at least 12 months.



ATLANTA EARLY EDUCATION AMBASSADORS



The [Atlanta Early Education Ambassadors](#) fan out across Atlanta, canvassing in neighborhoods and attending events to support families as they navigate Georgia’s Pre-K, high-quality early learning programs for babies and toddlers, health and wellness options, and more.

The key to the ambassadors’ success? They are trusted neighbors serving their own communities, raising awareness about the importance of early learning. When they sign on for their one-year terms, ambassadors . . .

- Participate in mandatory trainings about early childhood development.
- Get an inside look at Atlanta’s early childhood landscape.
- Earn a stipend for their time.





THANK YOU

Our funders, donors, and sponsors are passionately committed to Georgia's youngest learners, their families, and their teachers and caregivers. Your support makes GEEARS' work possible. It makes a palpable and profound impact on our state's early childhood landscape.

FUNDERS

Alliance for Early Success

American Family Mutual Insurance Company

Annie E. Casey Foundation

Community Foundation for the Central Savannah River Area

Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

Georgia Diaper Bank Coalition

Georgia Health Initiative

Goizueta Foundation

Jessie Parker Williams Foundation

Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation

Liz Blake Giving Fund

LuluMa Foundation

Naserian Foundation

PNC Bank

Southern Education Foundation

United Way of Greater Atlanta

WorldReader

Yield Giving (MacKenzie Scott)

The Zeist Foundation, Inc.

The following donors made restricted grants to support PAACT:

Aetna Better Health

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Around The Table Foundation

Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation

AT&T

Atlanta Hawks Foundation

Bank of America

Carter's Inc.

Chick-fil-A

The Coca-Cola Company

Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta

Cousins Properties Foundation

Delta Air Lines

Fitzgerald Foundation



Georgia Pacific
The Home Depot Foundation
Invesco, Ltd.
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Koch Companies Community Fund
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NCR

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Ressler Gertz Family Foundation
Sartain-Lanier Family Foundation
Tull Foundation
United Way of Greater Atlanta
UPS
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The Zeist Foundation, Inc.

EVENT SPONSORS & HOSTS

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The Early Years Matter
Erin Meyer
Evelyn Wedge
Eydie Koonin
Georgia Association for the Education of Young
Children (GAEYC)
Georgia Budget and Policy Institute
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition of GA
Helping Mamas
Jay & Jackie Berkelhamer
The John & Maria Upchurch Family Foundation

The Junior League of Atlanta, Inc.
Lauri Strauss
Liz Blake Giving Fund
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Our House
The Pipes Family Foundation
Professional Family Child Care Alliance of
Georgia
Quality Care for Children
Rashida Winfrey
Reach Out and Read Georgia
Resilient Georgia
Sheri & Steve Labovitz
Stephanie Langford
The Southern Center for Choice Therapy
Southern Education Foundation
Voices for Georgia's Children



FINANCIALS

FINANCIAL STATEMENT FY2024

INCOME

Contributions	
Private Foundation Grants	953,457
Corporate Grants	10,000
Donations	111,786
Corporate Sponsorships	65,000
TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS	1,140,243
Fundraising Events	12,273
Interest Income	54,075
Fee for Service Revenue	84,203
Program Income	
Other Income	1,540
Unrealized Gain/(Loss) on Investment	227,937
TOTAL INCOME	1,520,270

EXPENSES

Personnel	1,521,869
Office Operations	158,145
Outside Services	894,208
Program Expenses	114,825
Conferences and Meetings	101,791
Travel	27,363
Staff Development	28,386
Sub-grantee Disbursement	409,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	3,285,533

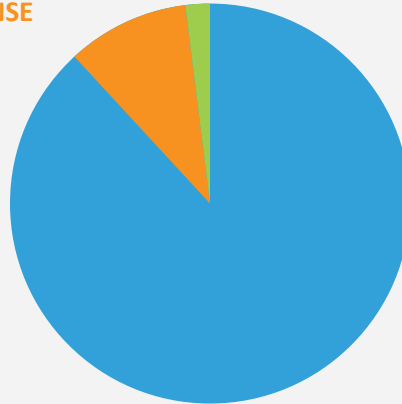
****Unaudited Income Statement***

*****Note: GEEARS has many multi-year grants but practices a balanced budget. There is a new accounting practice that requires revenue to be recognized in one fiscal year, but the grant is budgeted in subsequent fiscal years.***

EXPENSE ALLOCATION

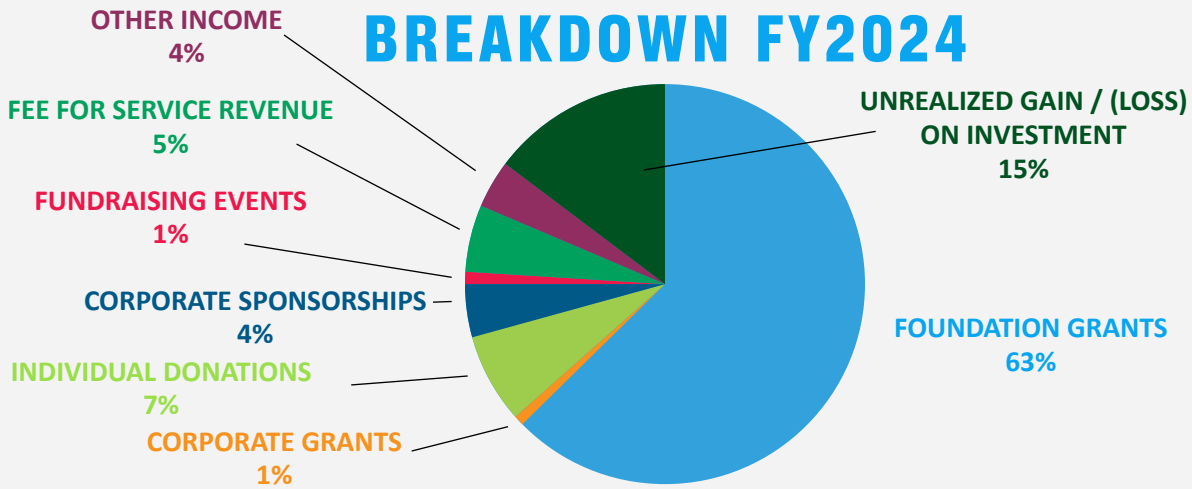
MANAGEMENT
& GENERAL EXPENSE
10%

FUNDRAISING EXPENSE
2%

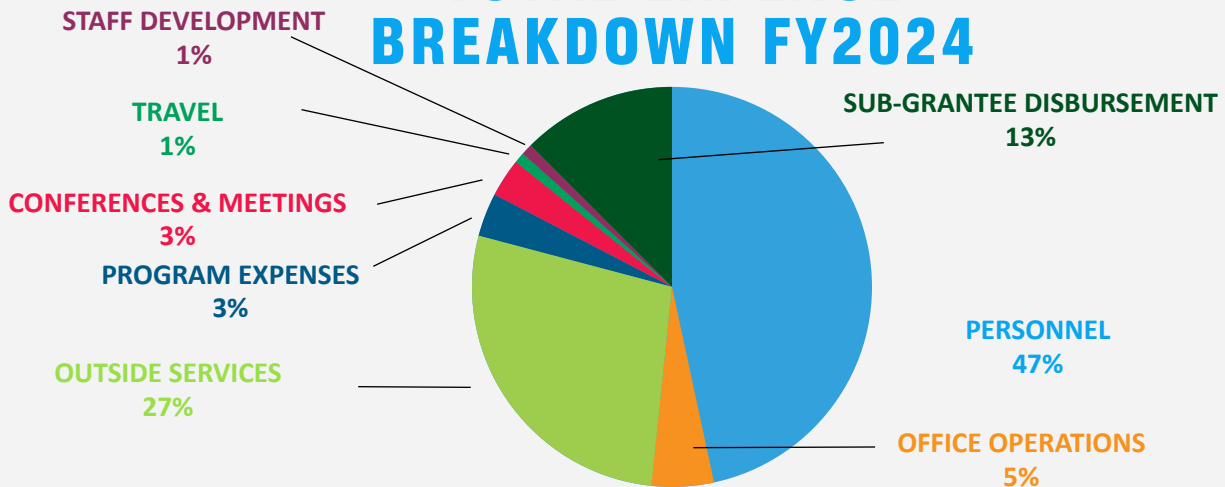


PROGRAM EXPENSE
88%

TOTAL INCOME BREAKDOWN FY2024



TOTAL EXPENSE BREAKDOWN FY2024





GEEARS

GEORGIA EARLY EDUCATION
ALLIANCE FOR READY STUDENTS

WWW.GEEARS.ORG

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