

Voices From The Field

*The Atlanta Early Education
Ambassadors Stories*



ATLANTA
EARLY EDUCATION
Ambassadors

About Us



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Session Overview



- Welcome & Introduction
- Origins & Description of the Atlanta Early Education Ambassador Program
- Who's in the Room?
- Meet the Ambassadors
- Voices from the Field: Panel Conversation
- Call to Action: Ticket Out the Door
- Closing

Who's With Us Today?

Works in early
childhood education
(zero to five)?

Works for a
government entity?
(local, state, or federal)

Works as a community
partner and/or non-profit?

Works in the post-
secondary field?

Works in a school
system?

PAACT: Promise All Atlanta Children Thrive

WHO WE ARE

Convened by **GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students**, **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.

MISSION

We're on a mission to improve outcomes for children ages 0-to-5 years old in Atlanta by developing partnerships to secure commitments from Atlanta's leaders in government, education institutions, community, and business sector.

VISION

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.



Our Role

Facilitate Collaboration



Raise & Align Funding



Build Public Will & Advocate



Empty Pre-K classrooms and the broader ecosystem challenges

Atlanta Public Schools Pre-K Landscape

- **55** total Pre-K classrooms across the district in **36** elementary school
- Capacity to serve **1,063** students

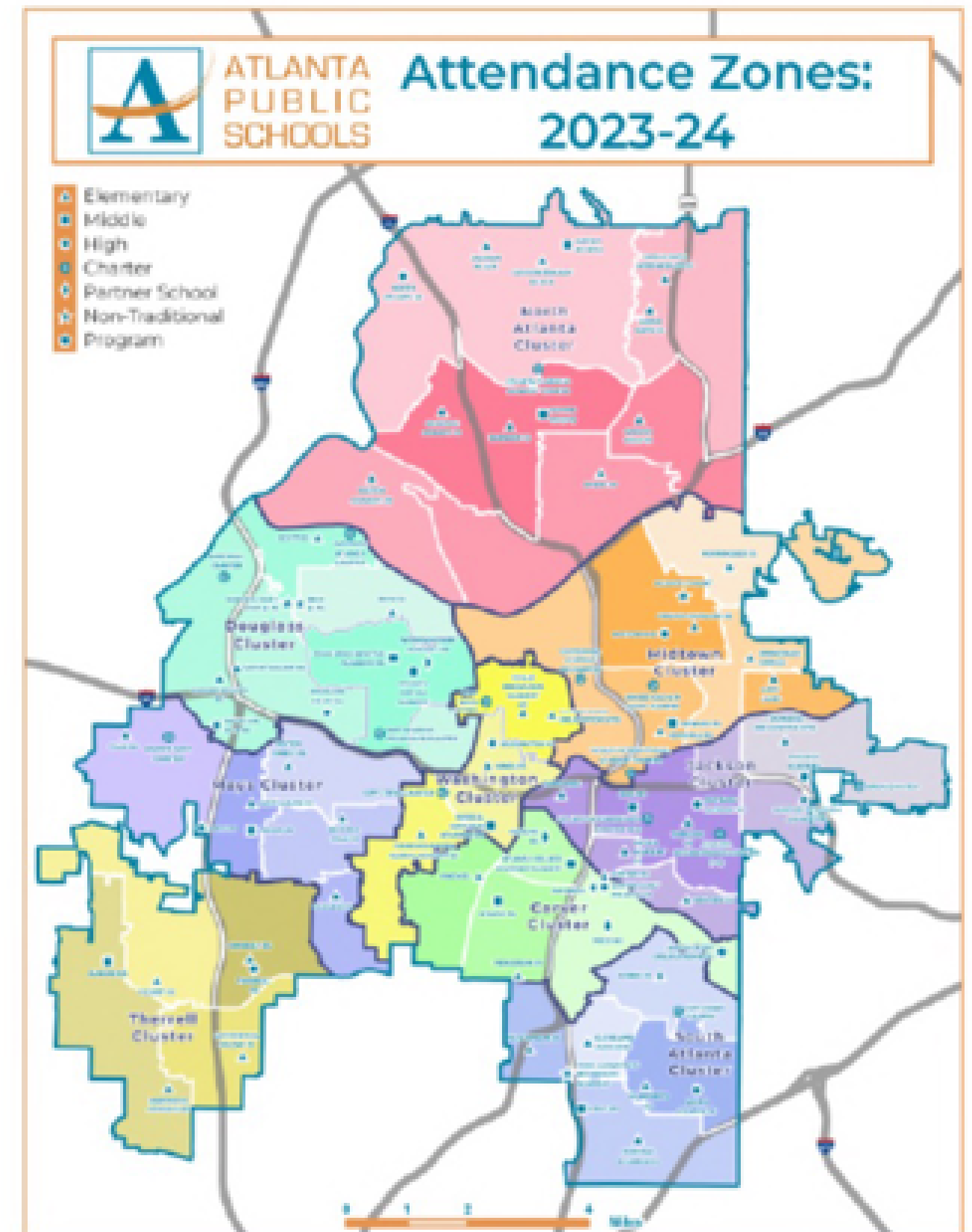
The Challenge in the Beginning

- However, in 2018, nearly **150** Pre-K slots were unfilled - approximately **14%** of our total capacity.
- Most unfilled seats were located in Atlanta Public Schools' Washington and Douglas clusters.
- **More than half** of children under the age of five living in Washington and Douglas clusters live in poverty.

Empty Pre-K classrooms and the broader ecosystem challenges

The Challenge on the Ground

- Real-Life Implications:
 - Trend=Vast majority in existing “child care deserts”
 - Quality Rated providers not accessible
 - Families without transportation
 - Navigation



Source: Atlanta Public School Zones & Boundary Maps

Empty Pre-K classrooms and the broader ecosystem challenges

Empty Pre-K
classroom



Loss of
funding



Classroom loss in
community

Story of F.L. Staton Elementary School

- What happened?
- Why?



Origins of the Ambassador Program

Pre-Early Education Ambassador strategies:

- Active Recruitment
- Strategic marketing
- Strong branding

Pre-K recruitment increased a bit but was still low. What else was going on?

Here's what we learned:

There is an access and knowledge gap; specifically, families and caregivers face several barriers while navigating Pre-K enrollment.



Identifying the Issue



-  **How do we connect families to accessible, affordable child care, and help them make decisions about the options that are right for them?**
-  **How do we ensure that high-quality child care programs are filled to capacity and/or right size the market if needed?**

Origins of the Ambassador Program

What is the Atlanta Early Education Ambassadors program?

The Atlanta Early Education Ambassadors are a group of involved parents, grandparents, teachers, and community members that lead pre-k recruitment and early learning advocacy efforts in targeted communities in Atlanta. This team of Ambassadors serves 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, each cohort of Ambassadors participates in a series of workshops that focus on the value and benefits of high-quality early education for children, their families, and the community.



Origins of the Ambassador Program

Program Goals

- Recruit and invest in Ambassadors
- who reflect the demographics and communities.
- Develop a cohort approach to build a common knowledge base about early brain development and early learning in Atlanta.
- Support Ambassadors in sharing that information with others.

Early Learning Knowledge

Community Building

Leadership

Operationalizing Equity and Community-based Approach:

Underlying principles that guide the program

Important Values and Principles to Consider:

- Community-based participatory approach
 - System disruption where power is **shared** with the community
 - Embrace unique personalities and diverse backgrounds
- Asset-based Community Engagement
 - Embrace the community's expertise
 - Facilitate connections rather than replicating existing
 - Compensation is necessary to foster commitment (does not negate passion)
- Collaborative work can be messy!



Groundbreaking Partnerships:

The collaborative efforts that support the Early Education Ambassadors Program

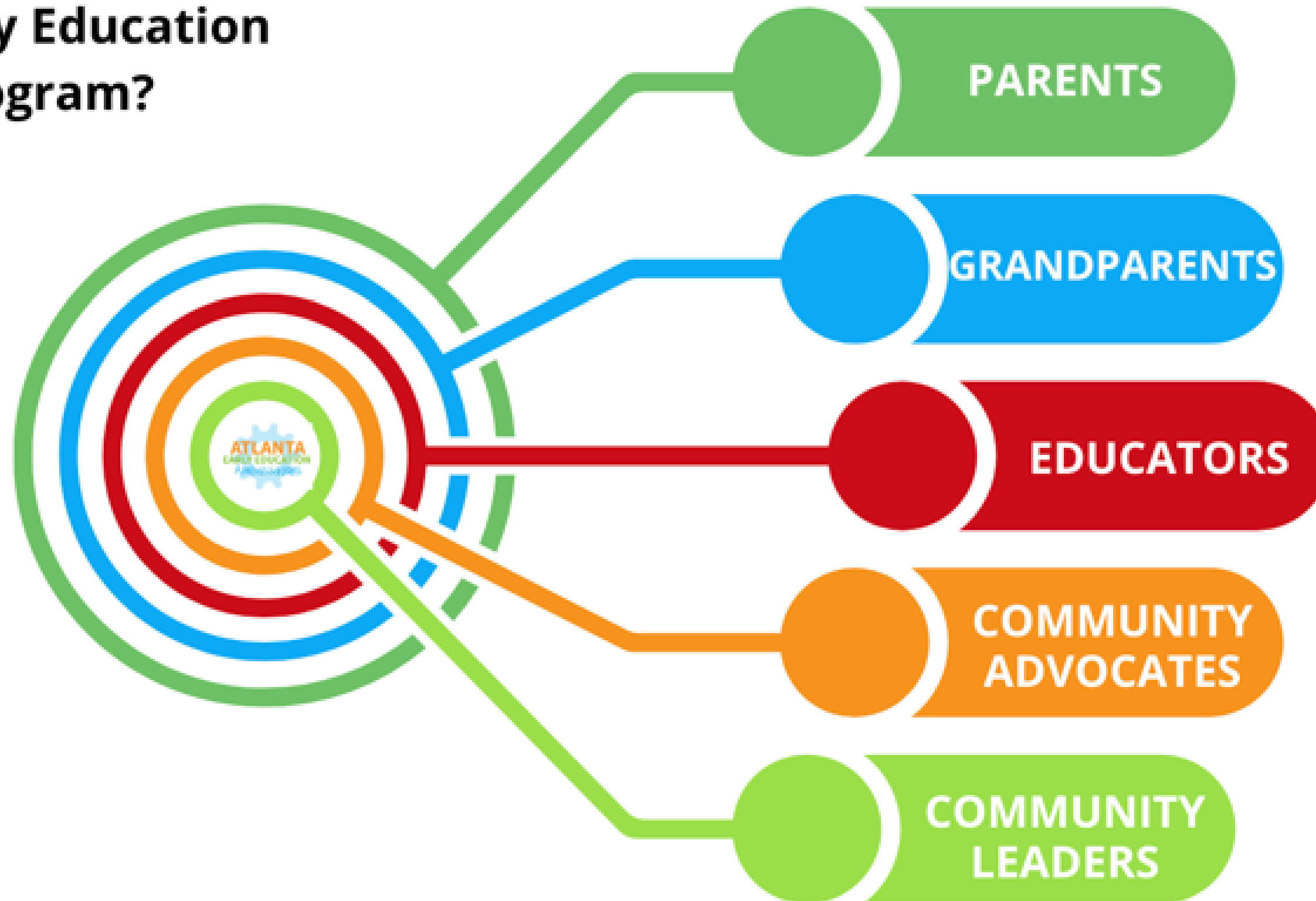
Who are the key players?

- Atlanta Community
 - Philanthropy
- APS Office of Early Learning
- PAACT: Promise All Atlanta Children Thrive
 - Pre-K Recruitment Specialist
 - Shared Data Strategist

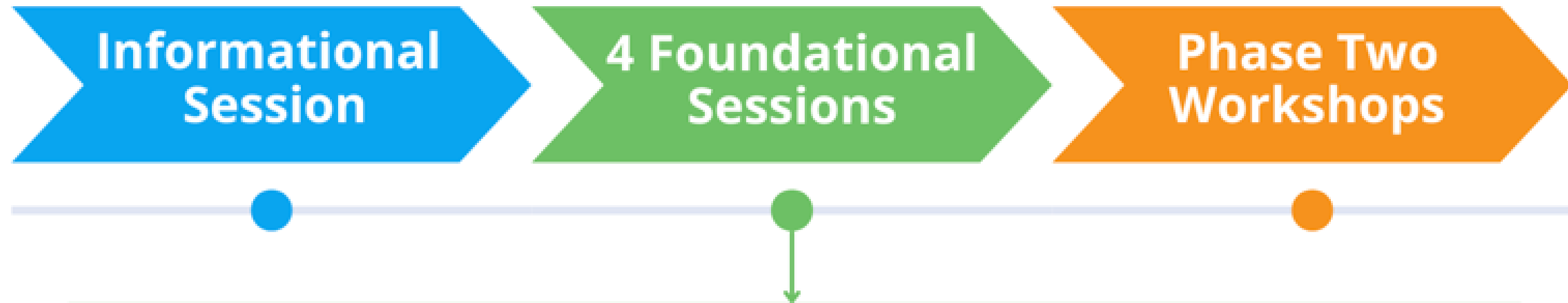


Anatomy of the Early Education Ambassador program

Whose voices are represented in the Atlanta Early Education Ambassador Program?



Program Design Details



The four foundational sessions cover:

- Early Learning and Early Brain Development
- Understanding the Early Learning Landscape
- Early Learning in Atlanta: Getting to Know the Providers
- Ready to launch: Resources, Agencies, and Organizations in ECE

Meet The Ambassadors



Ambassadors In Action

“The Ambassadors live, work, shop,
and socialize in these communities.”



Call to Action



How do ambassadors help families access care and related resources?

Ambassadors reach families in ways that traditional recruitment methods often miss. They act as cultural brokers who “meet families where they are”. Their impact extends beyond Pre-K enrollment to a broader set of family support needs, underscoring their role as holistic community navigators.

“Parents ask about before- and after-care, summer options...Ambassadors are often the first to give them real answers.”

“We were at a church during COVID, shoving books in cars, telling parents about the BOOST scholarship...one told her friend, and both ended up enrolling.”

“They bring it full circle. Some parents can’t even read the flyers. Ambassadors reach them in ways our district recruitment can’t.”

How do ambassadors help families access care and related resources?

“Remembering a family that had just moved here from Louisiana. I had met her in the supermarket. She shared her concerns about not being able to afford childcare and did not even know how to start or where to begin getting her kids into school or the resources that were available to her. That’s when I spoke with a couple of my teammates and we put together programs that she did connect with.”

Ticket Out The Door

What is one action you can take to strengthen early childhood education in your community?





THANK YOU!

