



GEORGIA FOUNDATION FOR  
EARLY CARE + LEARNING



**WHAT IF YOU COULD HELP IMPROVE  
THE CHANCES THAT EVERY GEORGIA CHILD  
HAS A BETTER AND BRIGHTER FUTURE?**

# TOGETHER WITH THE GEORGIA FOUNDATION FOR EARLY CARE AND LEARNING, YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

We know that positive early childhood experiences lay the foundation for future success. That's why the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning exists—to improve, expand, and support high-quality early education for Georgia's youngest learners. Created in 2017, the Foundation provides individuals, private foundations, and corporations with a streamlined way to invest in the state's most essential early learning priorities. As the non-profit arm of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), the state agency responsible for the early childhood education system for Georgia's children and their families, the Foundation serves as THE hub for public/private collaboration on all issues related to early childhood education in Georgia.

Philanthropic investment in the Foundation has the power to directly impact the 337,000 children served in Georgia's early care and education programs.

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In the first full year of its fundraising efforts, the Foundation secured more than \$700,000, which was directly invested back into Georgia's early care and learning classrooms.

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## A NEW APPROACH

The Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning was created by the Georgia General Assembly in 2017. Initially formed as the fiscal agent empowered to respond quickly to the needs of early learning centers affected by natural disasters, the Foundation – an independent 501(c)(3) organization – is now the exclusive vehicle for supporting DECAL's most innovative programmatic

priorities, as well as a variety of signature projects.

The Foundation plays a central role in the state's collective network of non-profit organizations, state agencies, and other entities working toward ensuring that Georgia's children have the tools they need to grow and thrive. As the ONLY key stakeholder that is positioned to provide direct investment in the state's entire network of early learning

centers and Pre-K classrooms, the Foundation is equipped to impact Georgia's early childhood education efforts from an unmatched vantage point—working in tandem with a state agency, with the flexibility of a non-profit organization.

Notably, 100% of the Foundation's revenue is directed to programming efforts, with no philanthropic dollars committed to overhead and administrative costs.

**BRIGHT FROM THE START:** Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. DECAL administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program; licenses child care centers and home-based child care; oversees Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program and federal nutrition programs; and manages Quality Rated, Georgia's innovative child care rating system.

# WHY INVEST IN EARLY LEARNING?

It is essential to invest in Georgia's youngest learners because:



Children learn more from birth through age five than at any other point in their lives. In a child's first few years, their brains form more than one million new neural connections every second. This rapid neurological growth lays the foundation for a lifetime of learning, behavior, and physical and mental health.

Georgia's working families depend on the availability of high-quality early childhood education programs.

Approximately 65% of Georgia's children, aged birth through five, have all available parents in the workforce, which means that the vast majority of families in the state must access care for their children in order to provide for their families. The availability of child care in Georgia supports annual parent earnings of at least \$24 billion.

It is the most cost-effective way to address the opportunity gap.

Disparities in knowledge and ability between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers emerge before kindergarten, and, without intervention, can persist throughout school and into adulthood. As economist and Nobel Laureate James Heckman notes, these gaps are difficult and costly to close. It is far more economically efficient to intervene during a child's early years through common sense investments in early childhood education.

Economic development starts with early childhood development. Each year, early childhood education has a \$4.7 billion economic impact in Georgia from annual earnings and economic activity.



# INNOVATIVE PRIORITIES, UNPRECEDENTED IMPACT

As the first state in the nation to offer lottery-funded, universal Pre-K for four-year-olds in 1992, Georgia has long been considered a leader when it comes to addressing the need for quality education in the early years of life. And, with the inception of Georgia's tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS) in 2012 – known as Quality Rated – the state was able to draw upon well-documented, nationwide best practices and cutting-edge early learning research to create one of the country's most effective quality improvement programs.

While Georgia's progress is much to be proud of, there is still work to be done when it comes to improving the overall quality of the state's early childhood education system. DECAL was created to spearhead these efforts, and the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning stands ready to support DECAL in this quest for ever-advancing quality. The Foundation is laser-focused on supporting key priorities in 2019 and beyond, which include:



**Helping Georgia's early learning programs become Quality Rated.** Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, Quality Rated assigns one, two or three stars to early education and school-age care programs that meet or exceed the minimum state requirements. By participating in Quality Rated, Georgia's early learning programs make a commitment to work continuously to improve the quality of care they provide to children and families. To date, nearly 3,600 programs are participating in Quality Rated, and more than 1,800 of those programs have received a one, two, or three-star rating.

In order for centers to continue to receive funding from Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS), the program that assists low-income families with the costs of child care, these providers must be Quality Rated by **95% of early learning programs who receive a technical assistance mini-grant eventually earn a Quality Rated star rating.**



December 31, 2020. Therefore, the Foundation is seeking investments to help centers achieve a star rating before the close of 2020. Many child care and early learning programs need additional support as they work to increase quality and attain an initial Quality Rated star rating. These needs, which often include tangible classroom materials, generally fall outside the realm of what federal funding, administered by DECAL, can cover. Philanthropic gifts to the Foundation will fund technical assistance mini-grants for early learning centers that will be used to purchase the classroom supplies and equipment that can help programs obtain a star rating.

*“As DECAL seeks to provide children in the earliest, and most critical, years of life with the best possible supports and systems, the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning is a powerful partner, generating the resources needed to implement and expand new and innovative initiatives that, in many cases, federal and state dollars could not cover. The Foundation’s efforts are central to the success of our agency, to the success of the children and families we serve, and to the success of our state as whole.”*

- Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs, Bright from the Start:  
Georgia Department for Early Care and Learning

**Launching Project LITTLE (Lifting Infants and Toddlers Through Language-Rich Environments), an innovative outgrowth of Quality Rated.** During the Quality Rated rollout process, evaluators have consistently noted that the Environment Rating Scale scores, which help to determine a center’s Quality Rating, in infant and toddler classrooms are lower than those in classrooms with older children.

To address this disparity, DECAL has initiated Project LITTLE, a unique program designed to provide additional training for teachers in infant and toddler classrooms while increasing language acquisition in very young children. Early learning centers selected to participate in

**The Foundation has provided funding to purchase more than 1,000 Quality Rated outdoor signs for programs across Georgia.**

Project LITTLE receive a year of peer coaching and training from specially trained and qualified Infant Toddler Language and Literacy Specialists for their infant and toddler instructors. That technical assistance is coupled with intensive assessments and classroom observations to ensure that the state’s youngest learners have access to highly skilled, informed, responsive caregivers, and to increase the amount of language the children are hearing in the classroom.

Philanthropic funding for Project LITTLE will supplement an annual \$2 million investment in

**As a key component of Project LITTLE, early learning centers gain access to LENA (Language ENvironment Analysis) technology—wearable “talk pedometers” for infants and toddlers aged birth to 48 months which record the amount of language that a child receives during the day. The recordings are downloaded, and instructors receive a daily report for each individual child that breaks down the amount of conversation that took place with that infant or toddler. Feedback from the LENA devices will help increase the quantity and quality of interactive talk in Georgia’s infant and toddler classrooms.**

this effort from the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, enabling DECAL to expand the reach of the program to more early learning centers throughout the state.

**Helping families identify high-quality early learning options.** DECAL, in concert with GEEARS and other community partners, has worked to raise awareness about the importance of quality early learning since the launch of Quality Rated in 2012. The Foundation is working to support this ongoing multimedia campaign by investing in outdoor signage that helps identify Quality Rated centers – particularly important as families most often look to providers in their own neighborhoods when seeking child care.

**Assisting early learning centers in the wake of natural disasters.** The vast majority of Georgia’s early learning centers do not have the financial resources needed to immediately rebound in the

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**In 2018,  
the Foundation  
administered  
disaster relief aid  
to 43 early learning  
programs – serving  
1,343 children –  
across 20 Georgia  
counties declared in the  
state of emergency.**

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wake of a natural disaster, as the state learned in the aftermath of Hurricane Michael in 2018. Shuttered early learning centers mean caregivers and families left without child care options, and children left without early learning resources in their communities for

days, weeks—even months. The Foundation steps in during these times of crisis, providing direct support for early learning programs that have been negatively affected by natural disasters.



**Establishing a Language and Literacy Endorsement for Georgia’s early learning centers.** Governor Brian Kemp has embraced Quality Rated, and is eager to elevate the program’s impact and reach across the state. At Governor Kemp’s request, DECAL has convened a blue ribbon panel of subject matter experts to establish a Language and Literacy Endorsement for early learning centers who have earned a Quality Rating. The Language and Literacy Endorsement is envisioned as the logical “next step” for centers which are already achieving high levels of quality, pushing them to continue quality improvements in the areas of language and literacy acquisition for Georgia children enrolled in early learning programs. As this effort progresses, the Foundation will play a critical role in supporting the roll-out of this Language and Literacy Endorsement.

**Highlighting the importance of Georgia’s early learning workforce.** More than 67,000 Georgians work in the early childhood education industry, and retaining qualified instructors in the state’s early learning classrooms is a DECAL priority. That is why the Foundation spearheads Georgia’s Pre-K Teachers of the Year program, which celebrates and rewards outstanding Pre-K instructors. Annually, a winner from a local public-school system and a winner from a private child care center serve as ambassadors for the Foundation and as advocates for high-quality early childhood education.



# HOW YOU CAN HELP

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In Georgia, every dollar invested in high-quality early education saves up to \$13 in costs related to criminal justice, public assistance, special education, and grade retention. Making a gift to the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning is a rare opportunity to make a broad, long-lasting impact, with a sound, proven social and economic return on your investment. And, the ripple effects of your contribution will persist for years, because we know that investments in early learning set the stage for a lifetime of success. With your help...more children can receive high-quality care in the early years of their lives, more children will be reading on grade level by third grade, more high school students will be prepared to graduate on time, Georgia's workforce will be more competitive, and our state's economy will be more robust.

What if you could help improve the chances that every Georgia child has a better and brighter future? Now, you can.

Support our state's early learners via a gift to the Foundation, and help our youngest Georgians achieve their full potential in school and in life...now, and for years to come.

For more information about how you can help support Georgia's early childhood education priorities, please contact:

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