



# Moving the Needle: Georgia's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge

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**Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning**

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# Successful State Systems Grant Overview

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# Background Information

- Grant provides funding for states to create an early learning agenda that builds and strengthens **existing** early learning and development systems.

The grant required states to detail how they will:

- Improve program quality and outcomes for young children.
- Increase the number of children with high needs attending high-quality early learning and development programs.
- Help close the achievement gap between children with high needs and their peers by supporting efforts to increase kindergarten readiness.

# Georgia's Early Learning Challenge (ELC) Grant

- Georgia's application was a culmination of what the state has done in early care and education and a plan for what the state will do to improve and to increase access to high quality early care and education.
- Georgia's application received the second highest score among 16 applicants.
- Georgia received **\$51.7M**, the largest dollar amount given to any winner.
- Funding runs for four years, beginning January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2017



# Early Learning Challenge Projects

## 1. Successful State Systems

- Grant Management
- Early Education Empowerment Zones (E<sup>3</sup>Zs)

## 2. High Quality Accountable Programs

- Quality Rated Access and Availability
- Quality Rated Validation

## 3. Promoting Early Learning Outcomes

- Early Learning and Development Standards
- Statewide Family Engagement and Community Grants
- Supporting Families

## 4. Building a Great Workforce

- Workforce Knowledge and Competencies
- Supporting Early Educators

## 5. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

- Comprehensive Assessment System
- Kindergarten Entry Assessment
- Unified Data System

# Successful State Systems: Early Education Empowerment Zones

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# Early Education Empowerment Zones (E<sup>3</sup>Zs)

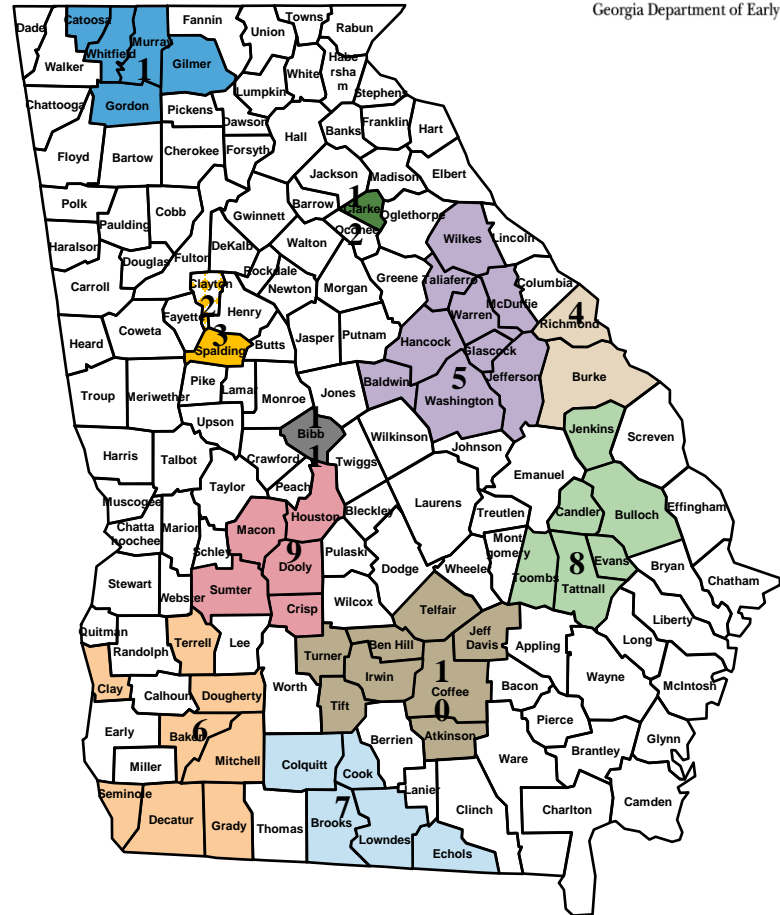
- DECAL will support efforts to create four Early Education Empowerment Zones (E<sup>3</sup>Zs).
- Selected based on data that indicate areas that have:
  - Populations of children with high needs who are underserved
  - Community capacity and willingness to devote resources toward delivering services to help reduce the achievement gap.

# What will the E<sup>3</sup>Zs receive?

- A community coordinator to work with communities to implement the projects
- Home Visiting services through Great Start Georgia
- Economic development incentives to attract high quality early care and education providers
- Quality improvement grants for early care and education providers
- Enhanced child care subsidy payments
- Subsidy grants for high needs children
- Family engagement grants
- GA Program for Infant and Toddler Care Mentors and Specialists
- Pre-K Summer Transition Program
- Specialized professional development for early care and education professionals
- Comprehensive assessment and referral services

# Potential E<sup>3</sup>Zs based on quantitative data like...

- Education
- Poverty levels
- Capacity
- Quality
- Family characteristics



# So how do you get from 11 potential zones to four?

We will conduct community visits in all 11 zones and consider factors like...

- Local foundation/business support
- Home visiting programs
- Family Connection Collaborative with ECE as selected goal
- Civic club commitment
- Capacity to support new business
- Public school partner

# High Quality Accountable Programs: Quality Rated Access and Availability

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# Quality Rated Access and Availability

- What is Quality Rated?
  - Quality Rated is a **Tiered Quality Rating & Improvement System (TQRIS)**
    - Assess early care and learning programs using the Environment Rating Scale
    - Improve quality through professional development and technical assistance
    - Communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs by issuing programs a one, two or three star rating



# Quality Rated Access and Availability

## ● Quality Rated

- Significantly increase Quality Rated provider participation in all program types
  - Child Care Centers
  - Family Day Care Homes
  - Head Start
  - School System based programs
  - Department of Defense child care programs
- Significantly increase Quality Rated access for each and every child
  - Focus on children with high needs

# Quality Rated Access and Availability

- Increase the availability of high quality early care and education
  - Support and increase provider participation through incentives, technical assistance, and professional development
  - Support and increase family participation through consumer education
  - Modify the Quality Rated process for unique populations

# Quality Rated Access and Availability

- Increase the number of children with high needs in high quality programs
  - Tiered subsidy reimbursement for Quality Rated programs
  - Reduce the parent tuition co-pay in Early Education Empowerment Zones
  - Establish subsidy grants in Early Education Empowerment Zones

# Quality Rated Access and Availability

- Improve the quality of early care and education programs
  - Increase the capacity and strengthen the model for Child Care Resource and Referral agency technical assistance
  - Expand the Georgia Program for Infant and Toddler Care
  - Implement Quality Rated inclusion designation (QRi) for 3 star programs

# High Quality Accountable Programs: Quality Rated Validation

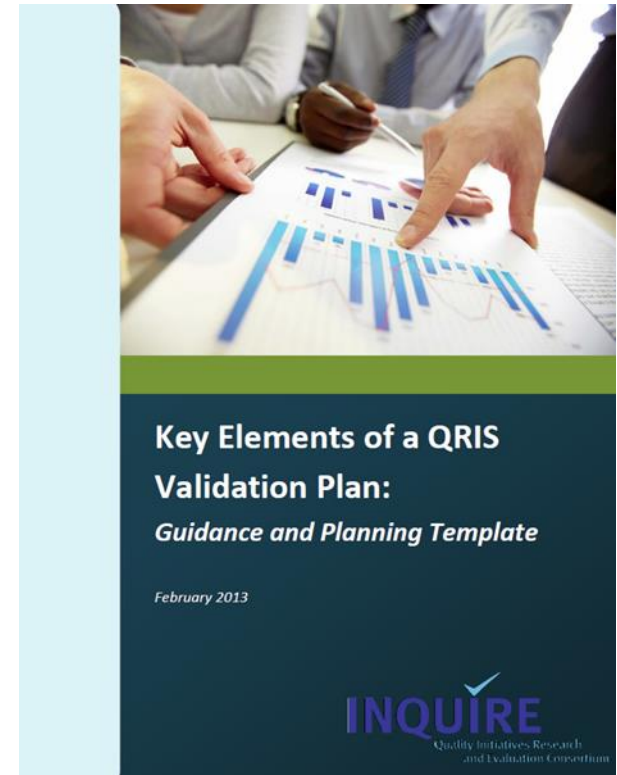
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# Elements of a Validation Plan

- QRIS context and status
- Engaging QRIS stakeholders in the process
- QRIS data infrastructure
- Planning validation research questions and approach
- Selecting data collection and analytic approach
- Dissemination of findings to stakeholders



Adapted from Maxwell and Tout presentation: “QRIS Validation: A Journey, Not a Destination”. (2014). Child Trends.



# Validation Activities

- Ensure Tiers Reflect Differential Levels of Quality (In Process – thru 2015)
- Compare tiers of Quality Rated to external instruments of quality – internal analysis (2015-2016)
- External study: Validating tiers, ensuring tiers reflect differential levels of quality, and connecting to child outcomes (2016-2017)

# Promoting Early Learning Outcomes: Early Learning and Development Standards

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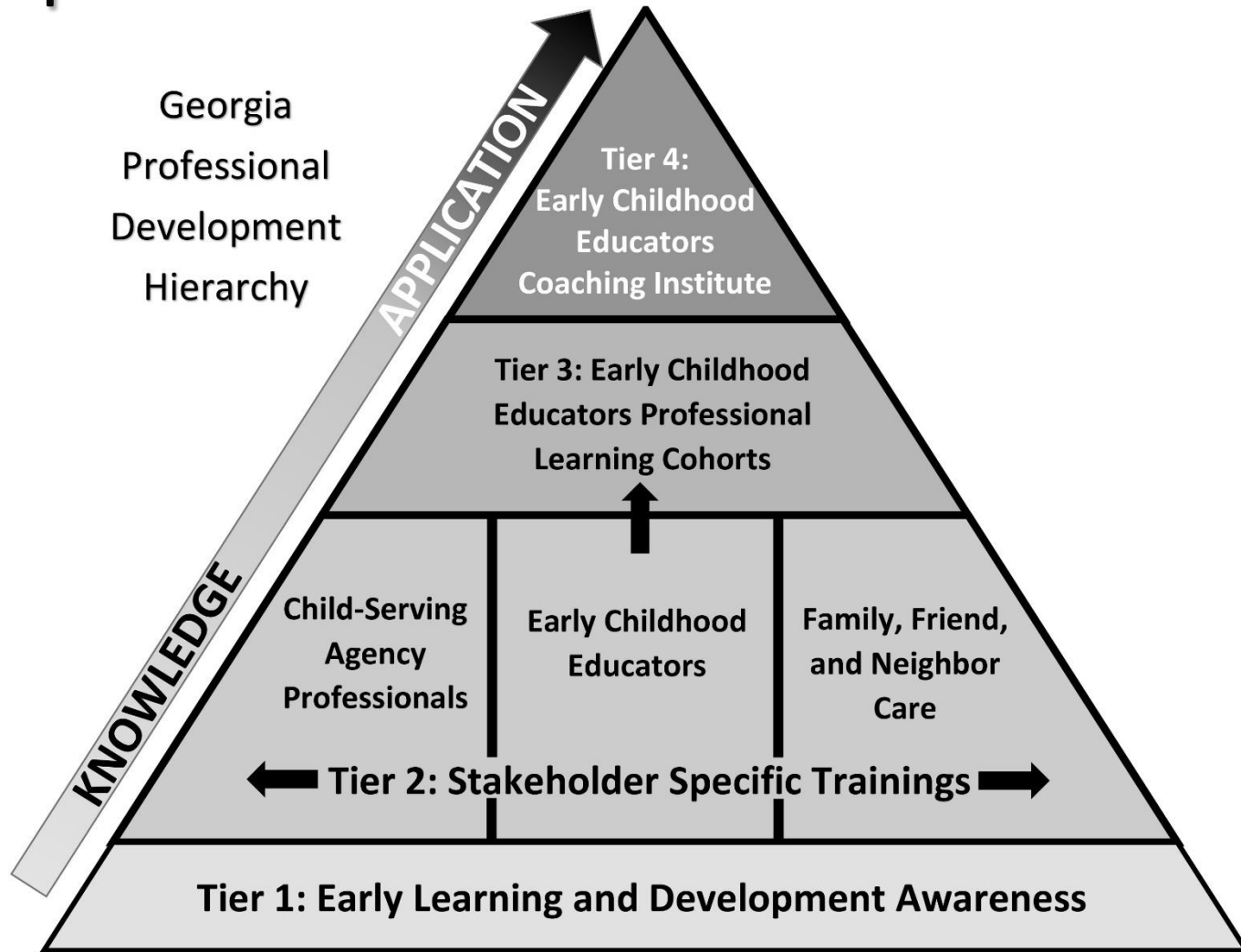
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# Statewide, high-quality early learning and development standards

- Continue the expansion and implementation of the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) throughout Georgia.
- Produce and disseminate print and digital resources for all stakeholders:
  - “Play to Learn” TV Spots
  - Web Series for families and teachers
  - Teacher Activity Tool Box
- Create tiered professional development opportunities for teachers, providers, and families that will be tailored to their knowledge level and current expertise of the GELDS

# Statewide, high-quality early learning and development standards



# Statewide, high-quality early learning and development standards

- Partner with World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium to develop training and resources to support Georgia's Dual Language Learners.
- Develop content and enhancements for DECAL's Online Learning Library (OLLI), a collection of short training courses and video podcasts.

# Statewide, high-quality early learning and development standards



“Play to Learn” 30-second spots began airing on July 1, 2014. There are 12 spots that will rotate over the next year; each spot focuses on a different skill. <https://www.youtube.com/user/GeorgiaELDS>

# Promoting Early Learning Outcomes: Statewide Family Engagement & Community Grants

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# Statewide Family and Community Engagement Grants

To increase knowledge and use of family engagement principles, strategies, and parenting support throughout the state with a particular focus on Early Education Empowerment Zones.

- Review Quality Rated Program Standards for cultural and linguistic appropriateness and alignment with best practices in family engagement
- Train Family Connection Collaboratives and community partners on family engagement tools and strategies
- Provide community-based grants to embed family engagement strategies into local plans

# Statewide Family and Community Engagement Grants

Establish the principles, values, and strategies to guide state-wide family engagement efforts

- Facilitate a Family Engagement Task Force
- Articulate the supports necessary to ensure statewide implementation of family engagement practices
- Provide recommendations for the revision of the Quality Rated Family Partnership Standard

# Statewide Family and Community Engagement Grants

Launch a campaign focused on the Strengthening Families Protective Factor: Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

- Deliver four regional trainings across Georgia
- Distribute non-competitive grants to the four Early Education Empowerment Zones (E<sup>3</sup>Zs)
- Award 40 competitive grants to Family Connection Collaboratives and partners across Georgia
- Embed family engagement strategies into local plans

# Promoting Early Learning Outcomes: Supporting Families through Center- Based Home Visitation and in Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care

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# Center-based Home Visiting

- **Project Goal:** To promote family support and engagement by implementing the Great Start Georgia (GSG) framework in the E<sup>3</sup>Zs.
- **GSG Mission:** To provide services for families and children to ensure that families have the information and support needed to provide their children with a great start in life.
- **Outcomes:**
  - School readiness
  - Maternal, infant, and early childhood health
  - Child safety
  - Community and family safety
  - Family economic self-sufficiency
  - Strong and nurturing parent-child relationships



# Center-based Home Visiting

- Activities to engage all families
  - Parent cafes
  - Community events
- Developmental screening for all children
  - Referrals to community services
- Voluntary home visits for eligible families
  - Evidenced-based models
- Resources and supports for teachers

# Building a Great Workforce: Workforce Knowledge and Competencies

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# Building A Great Workforce - Workforce Knowledge and Competencies

- Georgia's Professional Development Competencies
  - Developed in 1994 -95 by statewide leaders and stakeholders
    - Early Care and Education Professionals
    - School – age Care Professionals
    - Program Administrators
  - Revised in 2006
    - Technical Assistance Providers
    - Trainers
    - Levels of Competencies – Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced

# Building A Great Workforce

- Revise Georgia's existing Early Childhood Education Professional Development Competencies
  - Ensure alignment with the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards
  - Add "Home Visitor/Family Support" role
  - Specifically address competencies required to serve culturally, ability, and linguistically diverse, high need, young children and their families

A statewide WKC framework that promotes learning and development and improves outcomes for children

# Building a Great Workforce: Supporting Early Educators

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# Supporting Early Educators

- Supporting Early Childhood Educators in Improving their Knowledge, Skills and Abilities
  - Expand access to effective professional development opportunities (through our scholarships program, through mentoring, coaching)
  - Implement policies and incentives (salary/wage/compensation) designed to promote continued professional improvement and opportunities for career advancement
  - Increase the number of early educators who earn higher credentials that align with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework

# Supporting Early Educators

## Awards for Early Educators

- Acknowledges the achievement of practitioners working in the field
  - **1<sup>st</sup> Level** - Awards \$1200 for CDA or TCC
  - **2<sup>nd</sup> Level** – Awards \$1500 for a Technical College Diploma or Associate Degree
  - **3<sup>rd</sup> Level** – Awards \$2500 for a Bachelor's or Master's Degree

\*Eligible applicants must earn their credential between Jan, 2014 and June 30, 2017

Full eligibility requirements and additional information

at: <http://www.decalscholars.com/>



# Measuring Outcomes and Progress: Comprehensive Assessment System

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Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

# Comprehensive Assessment System

- Comprehensive Assessment System Task Force
  - Joint effort with Department of Public Health
  - Review current screening and formative assessment practices across the state
  - Review and strengthen professional development resources
  - Inform statewide policy, coordinate child assessment efforts, and support effective professional development
  - Identify and create resources to support families

# Measuring Outcomes and Progress: Kindergarten Entry Assessment

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# Kindergarten Entry Assessment

- Georgia will augment the Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS) to provide a KEA within the first six-weeks of the kindergarten year.
  - The purpose of the KEA will be to highlight knowledge and skills critical for student success in learning.
  - The KEA is aligned with Georgia's Pre-K Program Content Standards and is solely to guide instruction.

# Kindergarten Entry Assessment

- Development of the GKIDS KEA will be a joint effort of GaDOE and DECAL.
  - Georgia's Pre-K, Kindergarten, and 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers will inform and guide the development.
  - The GKIDS KEA will be built to be developmentally appropriate, reflecting research-based best practices for young students.
    - Within the naturalistic Kindergarten classroom, both indirect (observational) and direction measures will be utilized.
    - The KEA is similar to Georgia's Pre-K Work Sampling System

# Kindergarten Entry Assessment

- The GKIDS KEA will be developed to:
  - Provide information allowing Kindergarten teachers to individualize instruction;
  - Inform our understanding of the skills of children entering the Kindergarten; and
  - Provide the early childhood system information about the supports and resources needed to ensure that every Kindergarten student starts school with the skills needed to be successful.

# Measuring Outcomes and Progress: Unified Data System

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# Unified Data System

- Build and enhance early learning data systems to improve instruction, practices, services, and policy
- Three activities:
  - 1) Expand the Cross Agency Child Data System (CACDS) to include additional data from other agencies about children with high needs
  - 2) Increase the quality of data collected in the Licensing Data System through Provider Self Service
  - 3) Complete Georgia's vision of a seamless Professional Development Data System

# Cross Agency Child Data System

- Expand CACDS to include additional data from other agencies about children with high needs
- Additional data sources include:
  - DPH - IDEA Part C and birth registration data about children with developmental risk factors
  - DHS – TANF and SNAP data
  - DOE – IDEA Part B data
  - GOCF – Home visitation data
  - Head Start/Early Head Start – child assessment data
- Create a governance structure that ensures adherence to state and federal requirements

# Child Care Provider Self-Service

- Ease the administrative burden on child care providers by offering the ability to perform functions online
- Provider Self Service
  - Fee payments/Enforcement fine payments
  - Site information updates
  - Criminal Records Check maintenance
  - Accident/Incident reporting
  - Variance and waiver requests
  - Exemption requests
  - Closure requests
- Enhanced data collection by Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
- Enhanced provider search for public

# Training Registration System

- Complete Georgia's vision of a seamless Professional Development System
  - Allow verification of state-approved training in the Professional Development Registry without having to mail certificates
  - Provide teachers and public with a statewide training calendar
  - Increase understanding of what and where trainings are offered





# Questions?

Please complete the notecard located at your  
seat and pass to the moderator  
OR

email to [Kristin.Bernhard@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:Kristin.Bernhard@dec.al.ga.gov)



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# Thank you!

For more information and to sign up for our  
Early Learning Challenge mailing list, visit:

<http://dec.al.ga.gov/BftS/EarlyLearningChallenge.aspx>

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