

# Board Meeting Welcome

*Dr. Kristy Beam*



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**

**BRIGHT FROM THE START**

# Approval of Agenda and Minutes

- Approve 05/21/26 agenda
- Approve 02/19/26 minutes



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Inspiration

*Maria Franklin*



Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Board Member Updates

# Honoring Susan H. Harper



# Commissioner's Updates

*Amy M. Jacobs, Commissioner*



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START



# NIEER Recognition of Georgia's Pre-K



NEW AT 4PM

# GEORGIA PRE-K

2

▶ WENDY CORONA

▶ KARYN GREER

# Pre-K Press Conference at the Capitol

- Georgia's Pre-K program was recognized by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)
- First universal Pre-K program to meet all 10 quality benchmarks



# Georgia's Pre-K Meets All 10 Quality Benchmarks

---

**First universal program**

**Largest program**

**One of six states**

“Georgia proves that state-funded preschool with **well-qualified teachers, pay parity with K-12, small classes, and strong continuous improvement** systems can be scaled as a universal program,”

– Steve Barnett, NIEER director

“Only high-quality early care and education programs support children’s development enough to result in lasting academic and other gains that ultimately deliver savings for taxpayers. **Georgia is a national leader in both quality and access.**”

– Allison Friedman-Krauss, NIEER report lead author



# What Led to This Achievement?

---



Reduced class  
size from 22 to 20



Lowered ratios  
from 1:11 to 1:10



Strengthened  
classroom quality  
and learning  
environments



Increased lead  
and assistant  
teacher salary



# Pre-K Teacher of the Year Finalists

---

## Public Schools

- Lacy Parrish, Robinson Elementary, Dawson County
- Leah Mays, Jefferson Elementary, Jackson County
- Marisol Rivas, West Green Elementary, Coffee County

## Child Care Centers

- Kellie McCormick, Cedars Preschool at Hudson Bridge, Henry County
- Shawn Meyers, Sunrise Learning Academy, Gwinnett County
- Skyla Holmes, Angel's Paradise Learning Center, Fulton County



# Finance, Legislative, & Administrative Updates

*Rian Ringsrud, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration*



Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# FY 2026 Budget Comparison – Quarter 3

As of March 31 <sup>st</sup>	Budget	Expenditures*	Remaining Balance	% Remaining
<b>By Programs</b>				
Child Care Services	\$436,859,739	\$307,753,791	\$129,105,948	30%
Nutrition	\$170,124,874	\$127,557,264	\$42,567,610	25%
Pre-Kindergarten + (HS)	\$580,586,020	\$452,541,167	\$128,044,853	22%
Quality Initiatives	\$79,308,328	\$69,731,122	\$9,577,206	12%
Totals	\$1,266,878,961	\$957,583,344	\$309,295,617	24%
<b>By Funding Sources</b>				
State General	\$78,758,056	\$18,970,373	\$59,787,683	76%
State Lottery	\$580,411,020	\$452,443,776	\$127,967,244	22%
Federal	\$607,659,885	\$486,153,382	\$121,506,503	20%
Other	\$50,000	\$15,812	\$34,188	68%
Totals	\$1,266,878,961	\$957,583,344	\$309,295,617	24%

\* Includes encumbrances.



# HB973 - AFY 2026

	Original FY 2026 Appropriations	Amended FY 2026 Appropriations	Change
<b>By Programs</b>			
Child Care Services	\$457,646,206	\$458,859,739	\$1,213,533
Nutrition	\$170,000,000	\$170,124,874	\$124,874
Pre-Kindergarten + (HS)	\$563,215,616	\$580,586,020	\$17,370,404
Quality Initiatives	\$57,243,738	\$57,308,328	\$64,590
Totals	\$1,248,105,560	\$1,266,878,961	\$18,773,401
<b>By Funding Sources</b>			
State General	\$77,355,059	\$78,804,028	\$1,402,997
State Lottery	\$563,040,616	\$580,415,326	\$17,370,404
Federal	\$607,659,885	\$607,659,885	\$0
Other	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$0
Totals	\$1,248,105,560	\$1,266,929,239	\$18,773,401



# HB973 - AFY 2026

State General Funds Change			
FY 2026	AFY 2026	Increase	% Change
\$77,355,059	\$78,758,056	\$1,402,997	1.81%

## Changes

### Child Care Services, Nutrition Services and Quality Initiatives

- Increase funds to provide a one-time salary supplement of \$2,000 to full-time, regular state employees= \$1,414,521



# HB973 - AFY 2026

State Lottery Funds Change			
FY 2026	AFY 2026	Increase	% Change
\$563,040,616	\$580,411,020	\$17,370,404	3.09%

## Changes

### Pre-Kindergarten

- Increase funds to provide a one-time salary supplement of \$2,000 to full-time, regular state employees= \$146,404
- Increase funds to provide a one-time salary supplement of \$2,000 for formula earned teachers and assistant teachers= \$17,224,000



# HB974 - FY 2027

	Original FY 2026 Appropriations	FY 2027 Appropriations	Change
<b>By Programs</b>			
Child Care Services	\$457,646,206	\$457,800,119	\$153,913
Nutrition	\$170,000,000	\$170,000,000	\$0
Pre-Kindergarten + (HS)	\$563,215,616	\$591,068,485	\$27,852,869
Quality Initiatives	\$57,243,738	\$57,243,738	\$0
Totals	\$1,248,105,560	\$1,276,112,342	\$28,006,782
<b>By Funding Sources</b>			
State General	\$77,355,059	\$77,508,972	\$153,913
State Lottery	\$563,040,616	\$590,893,485	\$27,852,869
Federal	\$607,659,885	\$607,659,885	\$0
Other	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$0
Totals	\$1,248,105,560	\$1,276,112,342	\$28,006,782



# HB974 FY 2027

---

State General Funds Change			
FY 2026	FY 2027	Increase	% Change
\$77,355,059	\$77,508,972	\$153,913	0.20%

## Changes

### Child Care Services

- Utilize existing funds to expand CAPS slots to an additional 1,288 children



# HB974 FY 2027

State Lottery Funds Change			
FY 2026	FY 2027	Increase	% Change
\$563,040,616	\$590,893,485	\$27,852,869	4.95%

## Changes

### Pre-Kindergarten

- Reduce formula funds for annual update of teacher training and experience = \$(125,304)
- Increase formula funds to reflect an increase in the health insurance employer contribution per-member-per-month (PMPM) rate for eligible employees from \$1,885 to \$1,935 effective July 1, 2026 = \$892,200
- Increase funds for year three of a four-year phase in to reduce classroom size from 22 to 20 students to improve instructional quality = \$12,001,234
- Increase funds to expand the extended day program to the Pre-K priority group = \$9,713,072



# HB974 FY 2027 - Continued

State Lottery Funds Change			
FY 2026	FY 2027	Increase	% Change
\$563,040,616	\$590,893,485	\$27,852,869	4.95%

## Changes - Continued

### Pre-Kindergarten

- Increase funds to expand Rising Pre-K program and add 25 new classes in the 2026-2027 school year = \$708,500
- Increase funds to provide five days of leave for Pre-K lead and assistant teachers= \$1,229,400
- Increase funds to reflect enrollment growth in the State Health Benefit Plan= \$3,325,140



# DECAL Legislative Update

**HB 1123:** Requires public schools that offer both Pre-K & afterschool programs to allow Pre-K students to participate in afterschool.

**HB 1193:** GA Early Literacy Act aims to improve literacy across the state by establishing literacy coaches in all public K-3 schools.

**SB 589:** Allows parents to enroll their children in Pre-K if they turn four or five by Sept. 1, while also permitting parents to enroll their children who are eligible for first grade, into kindergarten instead.

**HB 1097:** Changes the mechanism on how the state receives federal criminal record history to allow agencies to continue background checks.



# Quality Innovations and Partnerships Updates

*Bentley Ponder, Deputy Commissioner for Quality Innovations and Partnerships*

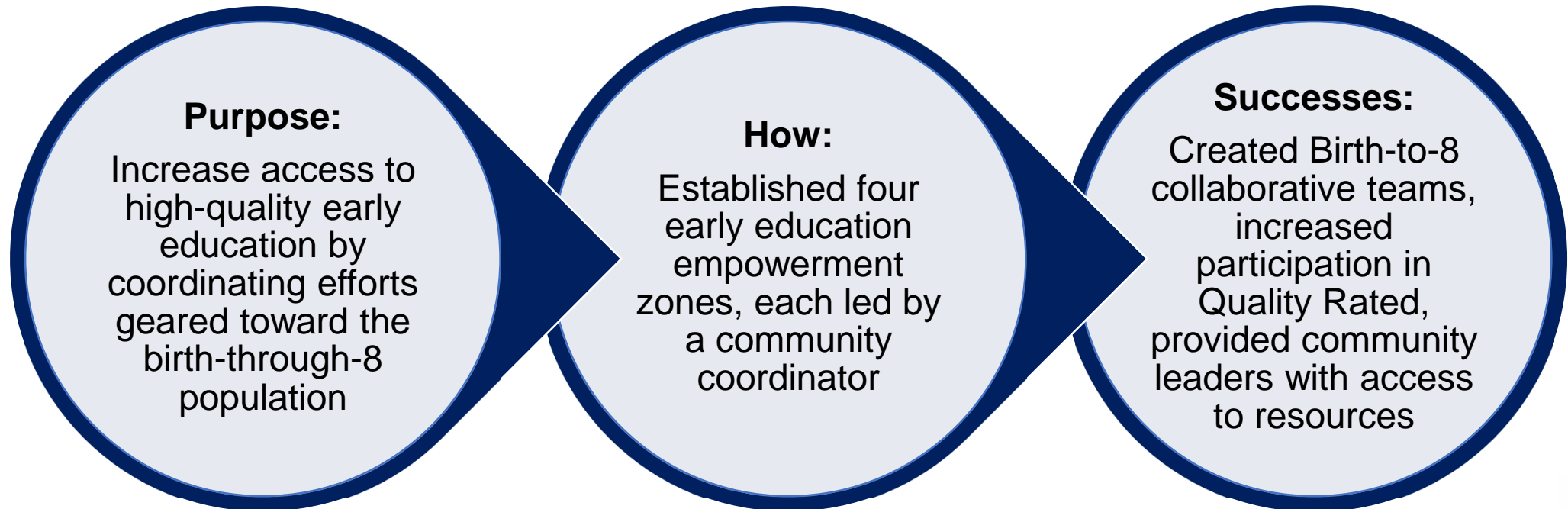


# Community Partnerships & 2Gen Outreach

---

## Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs)

2014–2018



# Community Partnerships & 2Gen Outreach

---

## Early Education Community Partnership Team 2018 – Present

Continue the work started by the E3Zs and expand support statewide

### Each community coordinator:

- **Works within their region to expand access to high-quality early care and education.**
  - Lisa Pitts (SW) conducted visits to pediatric offices to share DECAL resources, specifically how to find Quality Rated child care programs.
- **Engages with community stakeholders to strengthen local early childhood systems throughout the state.**
  - Bridgette Washington-Collier (CW) worked to build relationships with the Mayor of Mableton and the South Cobb Lions Club to provide free vision screenings to 4-year-olds in child care programs in Cobb County.
- **Serves as a resource for and referral to all DECAL programs and services.**
  - Clayton Adams (NE) presented to Franklin County Family Connection and shared information about DECAL's services.



# Community Partnership Team

Glenda Davis-Canteen,  
Northwest

Clayton Adams,  
Northeast

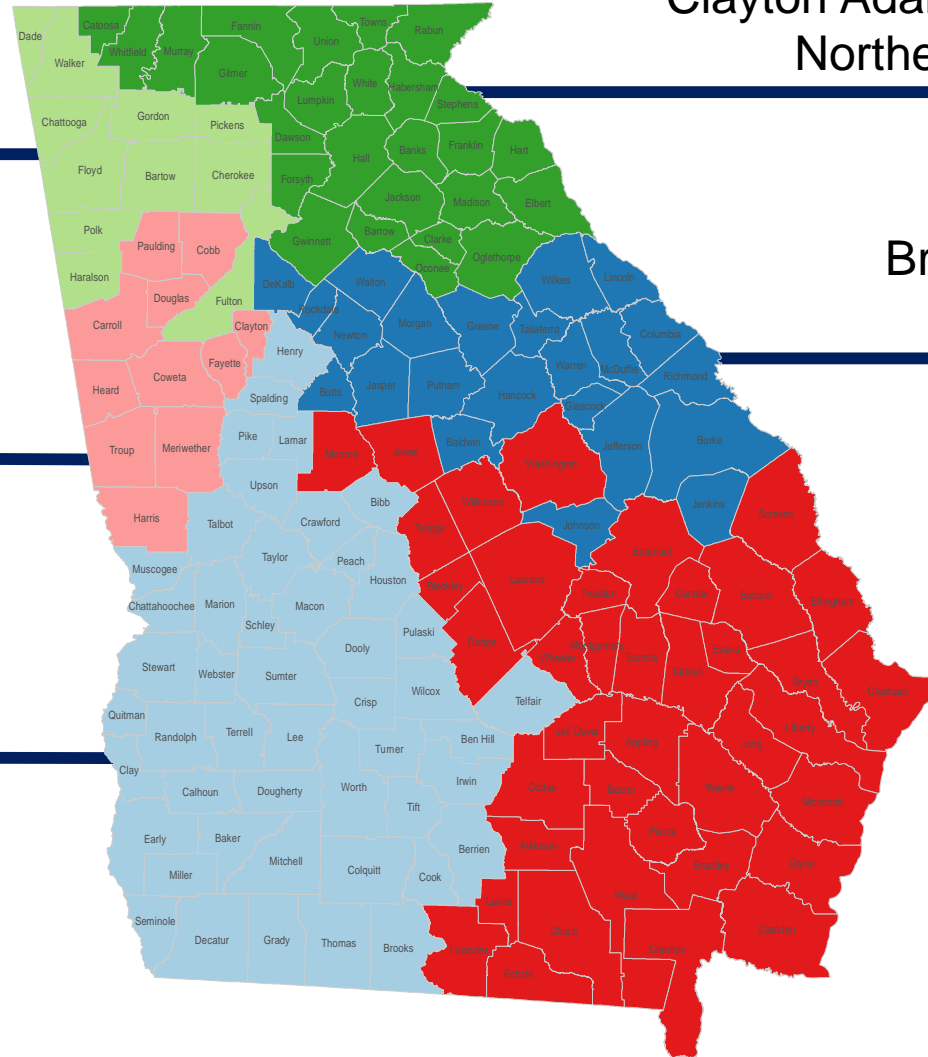
Bridgette Washington-Collier,  
Central West

Brittany Marks,  
Central East

Lisa Pitts,  
Southwest

Tomisher Campbell,  
Southeast

Dajuana Robinson,  
Community Engagement and  
Partnerships Manager



# Purpose of Community Impact Grants

- Support community-specific solutions and innovations that:
  - Address critical local needs
  - Help families access resources related to high-quality early learning
  - Build strong community support systems
  - Close opportunity gaps
  - Enhance the well-being of families with children from birth to 8 years old.



**Community Impact Grantee Meeting**

November 2025



# Community Impact Grants 2025-2027

---

Three types of 2-year grants:



## **2Gen Community Literacy Grants**

- Award Amount: Up to \$75,000
- Number of Grantees: 4



## **2Gen Innovation Grants for Student Parent Success**

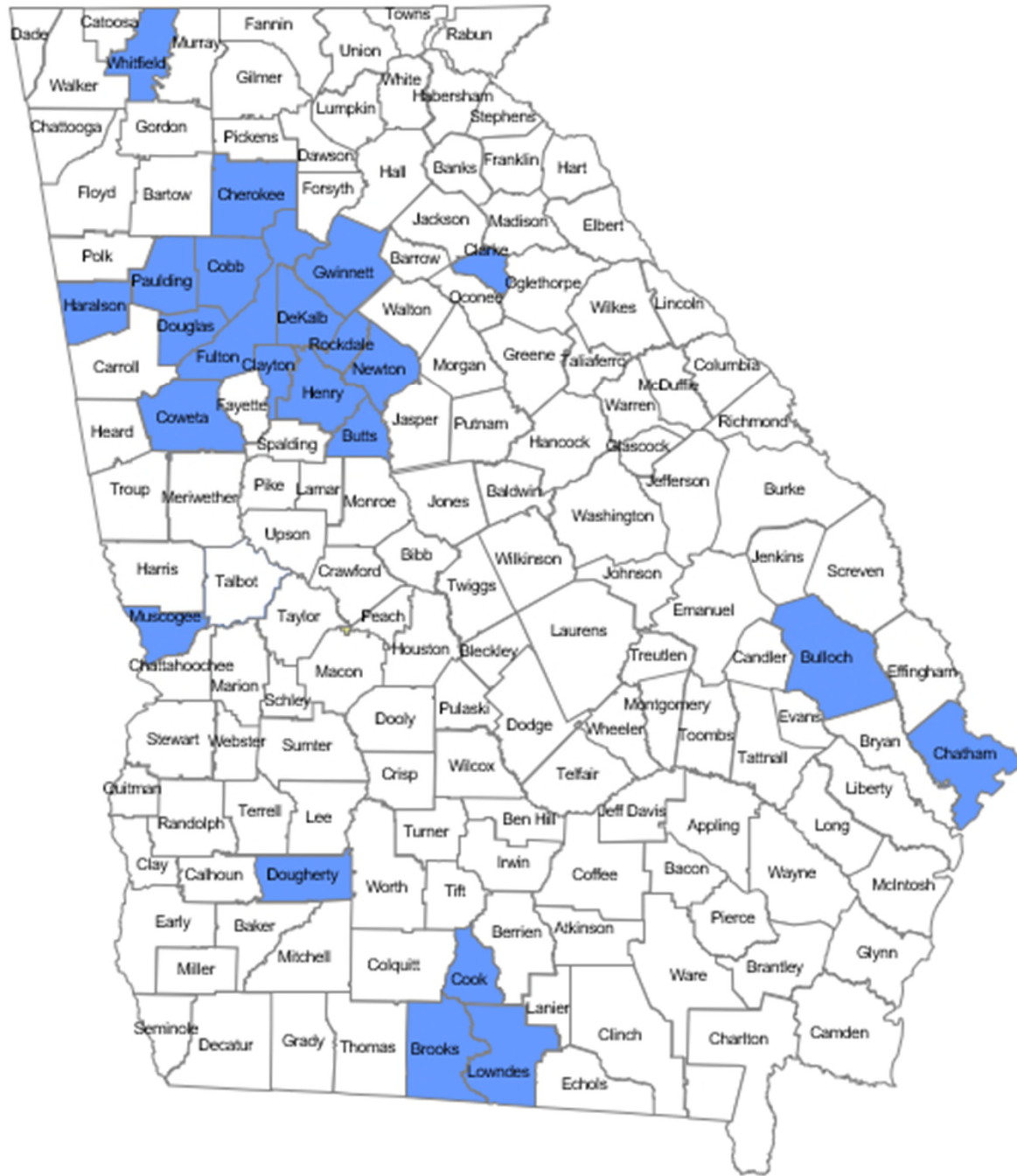
- Award Amount: Up to \$75,000
- Number of Grantees: 5



## **Community Transformation Grants**

- Award Amount: Up to \$125,000
- Number of Grantees: 6





# Community Impact Grants Reach



# Grantee Site Visits

---

**June 1 – June 16**



Visit with our grantees around the state -  
learn about community needs being  
addressed and the innovative ways they're  
helping families

Board members are welcome to see these  
grants in action!

Please contact Jill Taylor ([Jill.Taylor@decal.ga.gov](mailto:Jill.Taylor@decal.ga.gov)),  
Director of Community Partnerships and 2Gen Outreach,  
if you are interested in joining us.



# Quality Rated by the Numbers

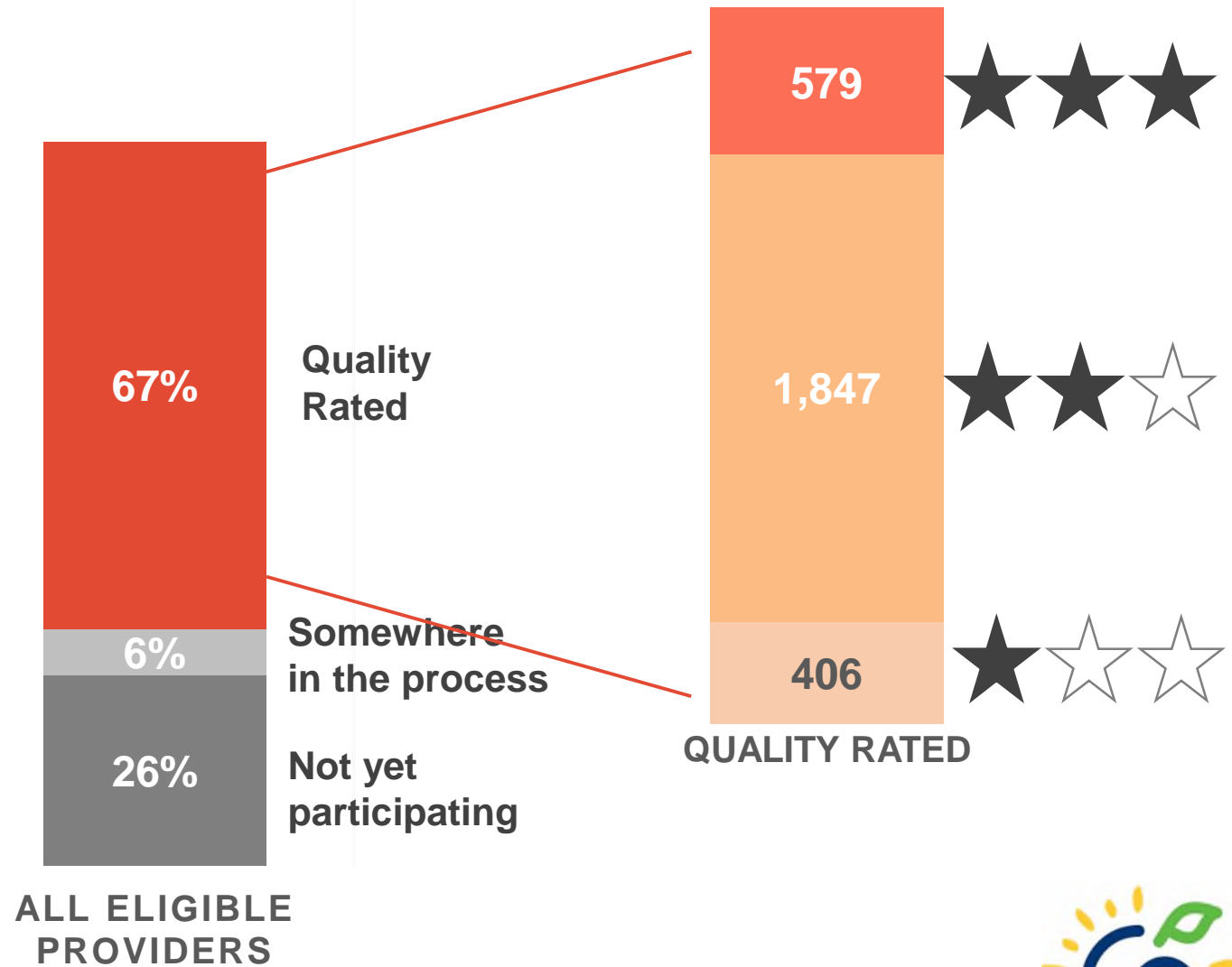


**CALi Says:**

*All Quality Rated providers meet or exceed demanding care and education standards. Learn more at [www.QualityRated.org](http://www.QualityRated.org).*



QUALITY RATED CHILD CARE  
[www.QualityRated.org](http://www.QualityRated.org)



# Quality Rated Workforce Bonus

## 2026 QRWB Bonus Update (Jan – Apr 2026)\*



**8,796**

Applications



**6,080**

QRWB recipients



**95%**

of eligible providers  
have had staff apply for  
QRWB so far in 2026



**\$3 million**

distributed

*\*April applications are still being processed.*



# Commitment to Quality (C2Q)

---

## Overview for 2026 Year-to-Date

TOTAL PAID

**\$3.7M**

AVERAGE  
PAYMENT

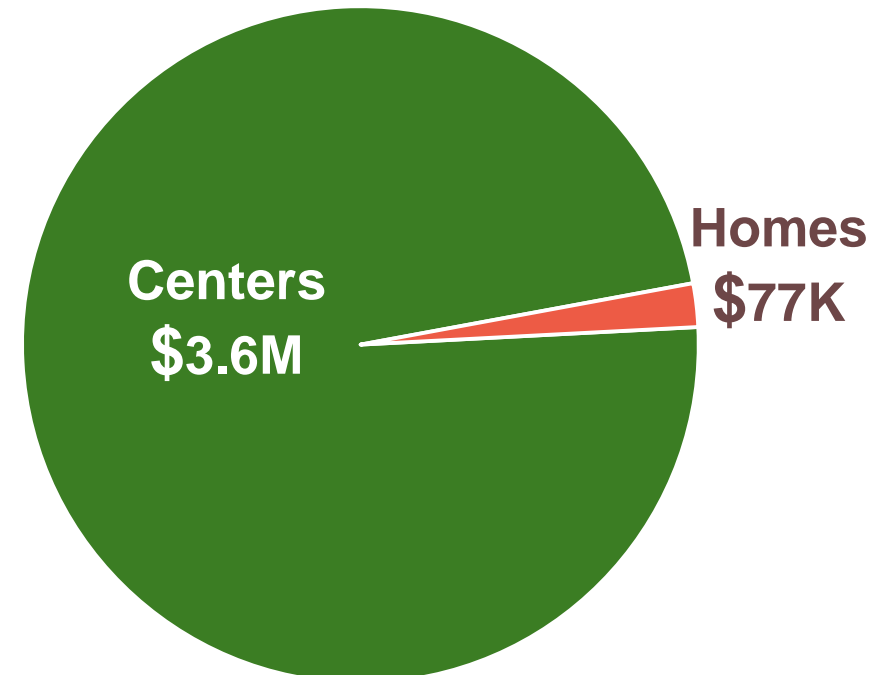
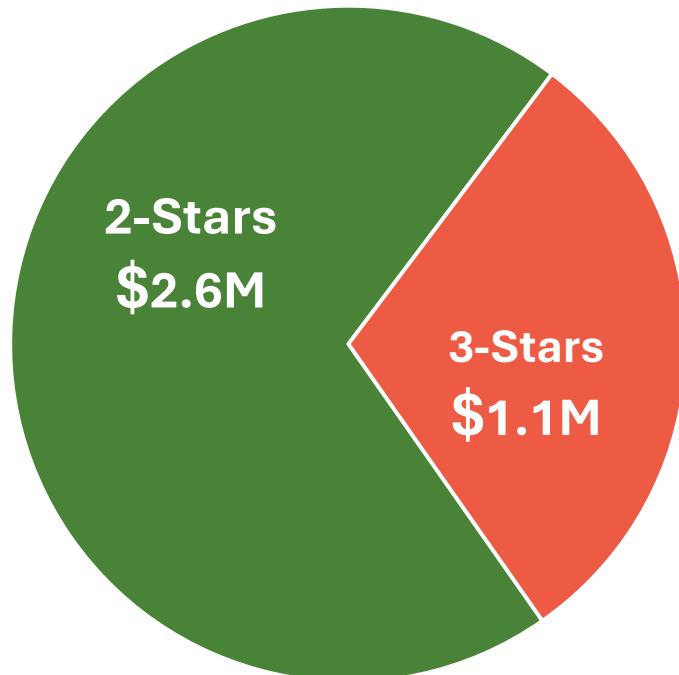
**\$1,929**

TOTAL  
PROVIDERS

**1,934**

# Commitment to Quality (C2Q)

## Overview for 2026 Year-to-Date



# QR Probationary Status Coaching Model

Hands-on Coaching & Classroom Support



Data-Driven Action Planning



Monitoring & Accountability



Key Supports



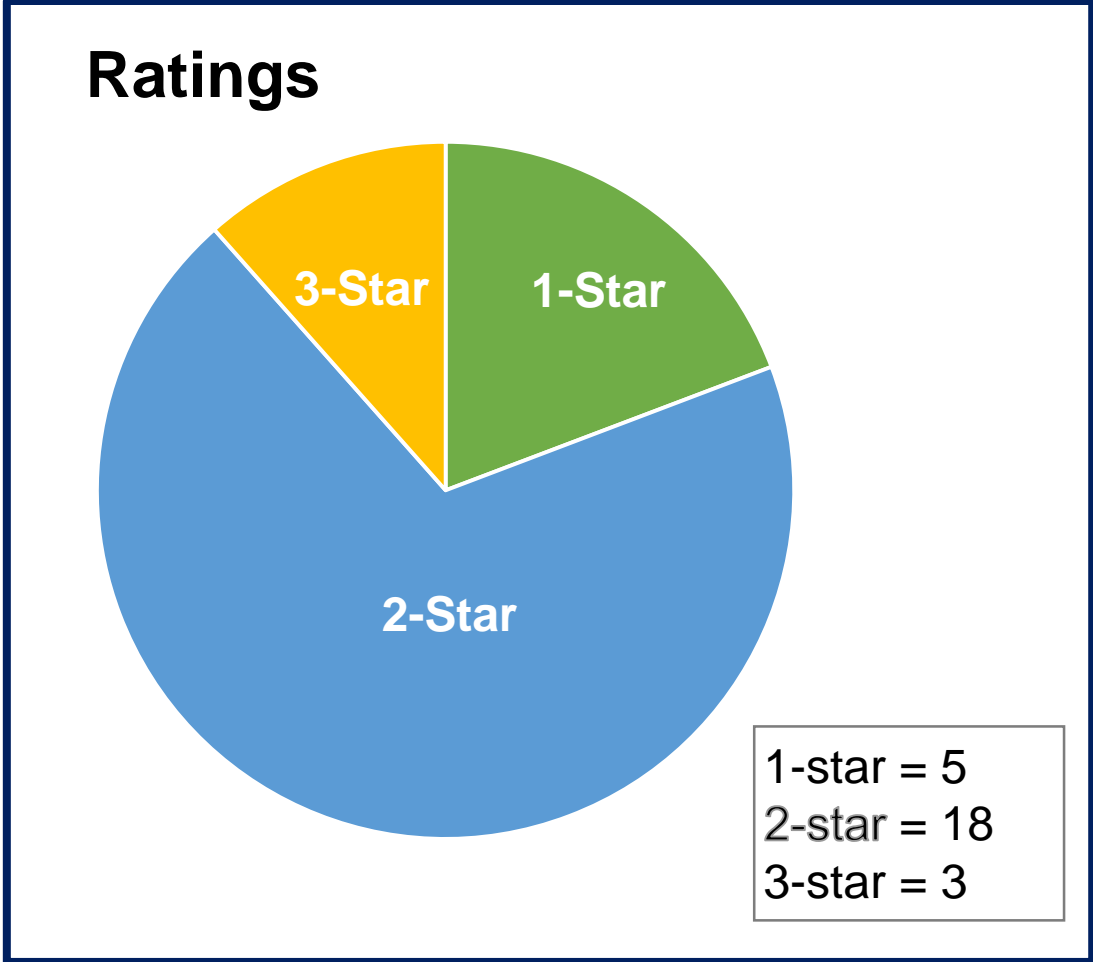
**Support for CAPS providers in jeopardy of losing their ability to remain CAPS eligible**



# QR Probationary Status Results

## October 2024 – May 2026

- 26 out of 29 programs have received a rating
- 89% success rate



# Quality Rated Advisory Committee



- First meeting of the newly reorganized QR Advisory Committee, March 11
  - 25 providers/owners
  - 8 community partners/advocacy organizations
  - Feedback on a proposed Integrity and Accountability Framework (IAF) for QR



# Research Study Updates

---

## 2022–2024 Economic Impact Study

**Research partners: UGA and GSU**

Analyzes the size, structure, and economic impact of Georgia's early care and education (ECE) industry from 2022–2024.

Report is in design phase and will be released soon.

## CAPS Family Experiences Study

**Research partner: The Urban Institute**

Uses surveys, interviews, focus groups, and DECAL data to examine families' experiences with CAPS.

Data collection is ongoing. Reports expected in FY27.



# Research Study Updates

---

## Quality Study

**Research partner: Child Trends**

Examines the quality of early care and education programs across Georgia.

Recruitment goals were exceeded for CCLCs and stand-alone afterschool programs, but not for FCCLHs.

FCCLHs were invited to participate in a survey without observations, and over one-third completed the survey.

Data collection wrapping up soon. Reports expected in FY27.



# Georgia's Pre-K Evaluation: Study of Language Development in Pre-K

*Dr. Sandra Soliday Hong, Senior Research Scientist  
Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute  
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Study Background

---

- Preschool oral language skills predict later reading proficiency (*Language & Reading Research Consortium & Chiu, 2018*).
- Complex language use supports oral language development (*Burchinal et al., 2015*).
- Georgia's Pre-K improves oral language skills, particularly phonological/ phonemic awareness. Language growth was not linked to specific program features in previous studies (*Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2014; 2015*).
- This study further explores key features of Georgia's Pre-K that may promote language skills.



# Study Goals

---

- Understand what practices and contextual factors support children's language development in Georgia's Pre-K classrooms.
- Determine if there are teacher, classroom, and child/family characteristics associated with differences in classroom interactions and language and literacy practices.
- Examine variability across rural and urban counties in classroom interactions and language and literacy practices.



# Study Overview

---

- Randomly selected 146 Georgia's Pre-K classrooms
  - Recruited 812 children, 4-6 per classroom.
- Conducted classroom observations with two nationally validated instruments: CLASS and ELLCO.
- Conducted child assessments of vocabulary knowledge, phonological awareness, and understanding and listening to directions.
- Surveyed teachers and families.



# Classroom Quality Results

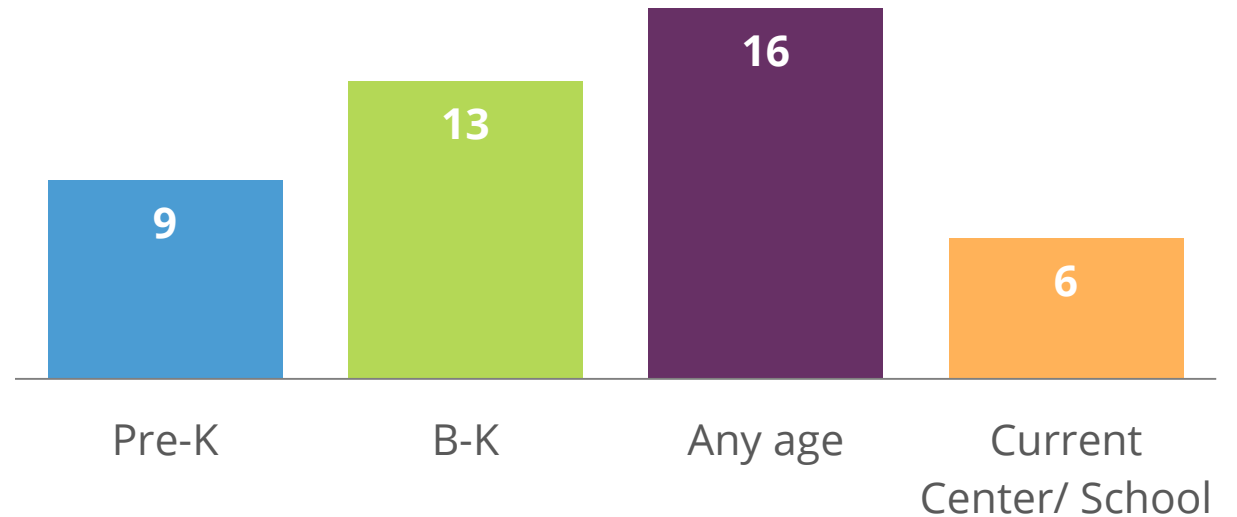


**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Study Demographics: Teachers

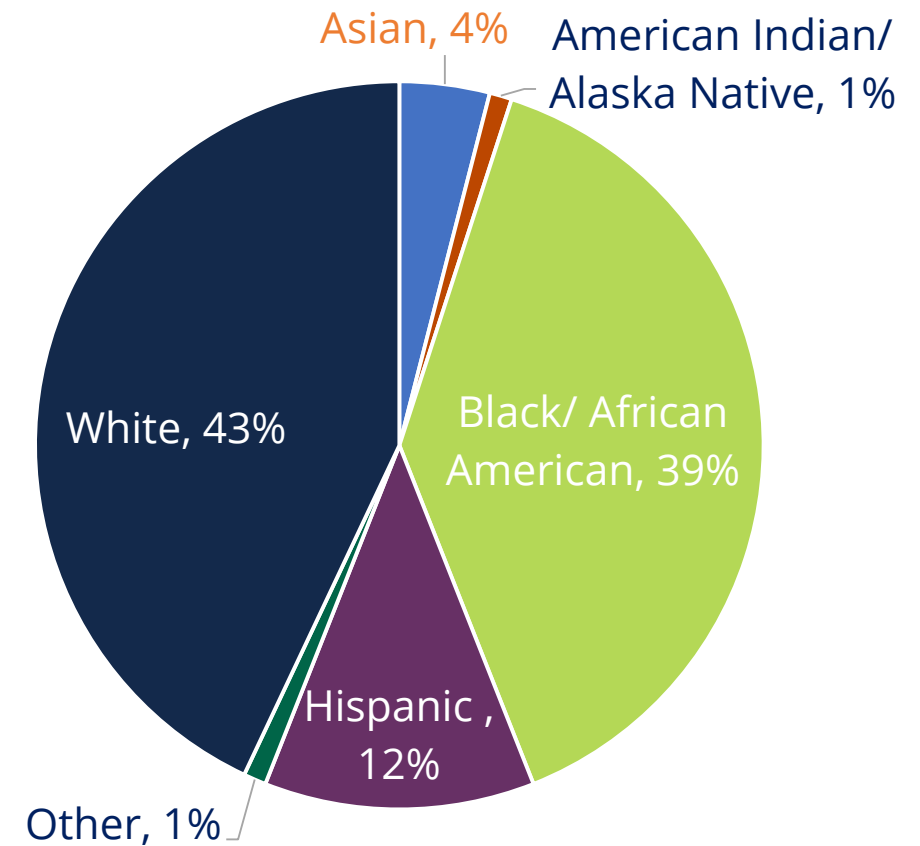
- 96% Female
- 98% Hold Bachelor's Degree or Higher
- Race/Ethnicity
  - 61% White
  - 36% Black/African American
  - 2% Hispanic/Latino
  - 1% Asian
- Primary Home Language
  - 97% English
  - 1% Spanish
  - 2% Other

Average Years of Teaching Experience

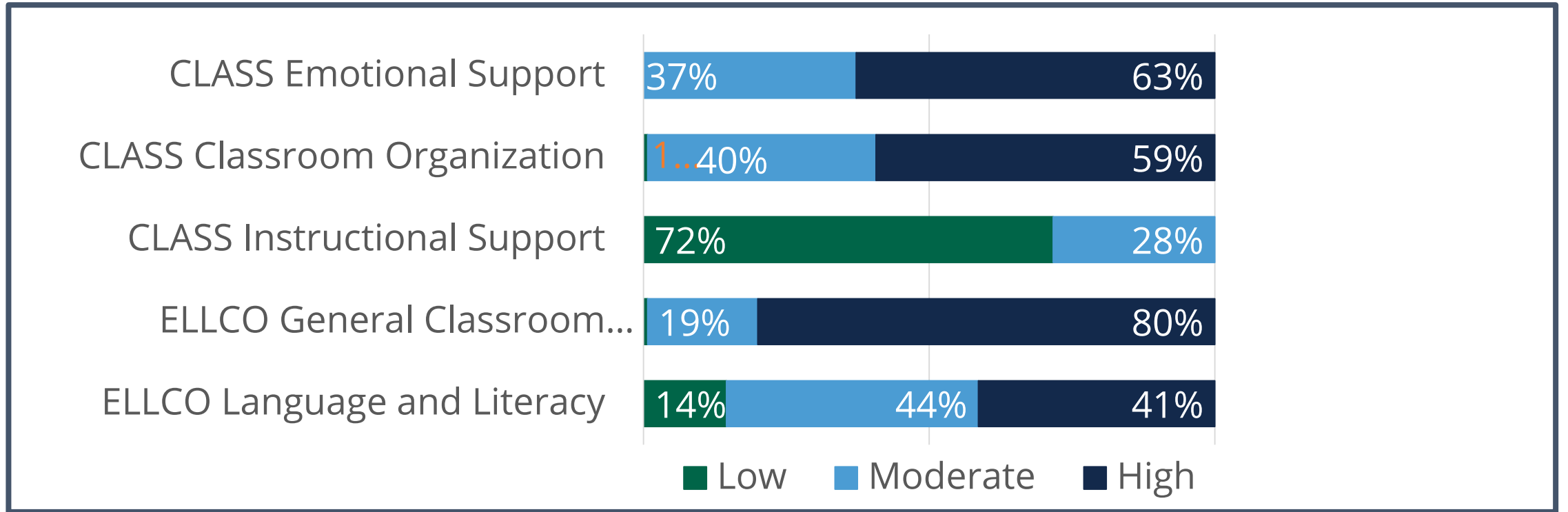


# Study Demographics: Children/Families

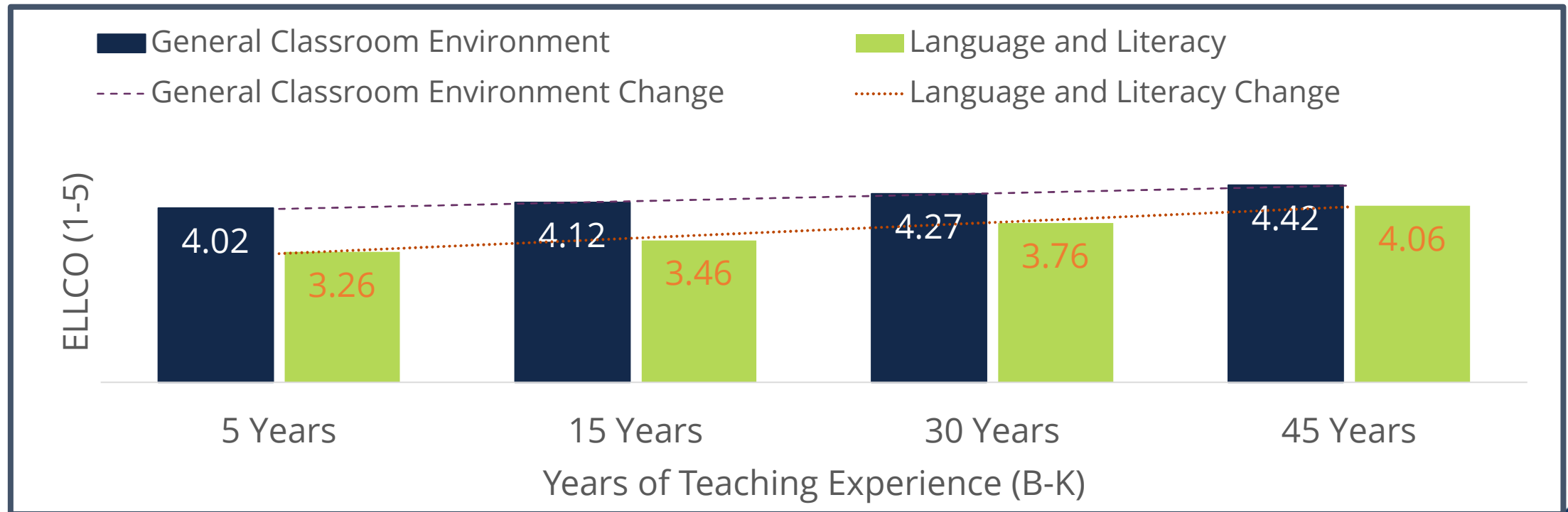
- 51% Female
- 6% IEP
- 11% Dual Language Learners
- Primary caregiver education
  - Most have a high school diploma/GED (45%)
  - Or BA/BS or higher (31%)
- 25% report family history with reading and/or spelling difficulties



- Classroom Quality was in the Moderate-High Range
- Instructional Support in the Low-Moderate Range – Similar to National Trends



# More Years of Teaching Experience Associated with Better Classroom and Language & Literacy Practices



# Child Language Skills Results



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

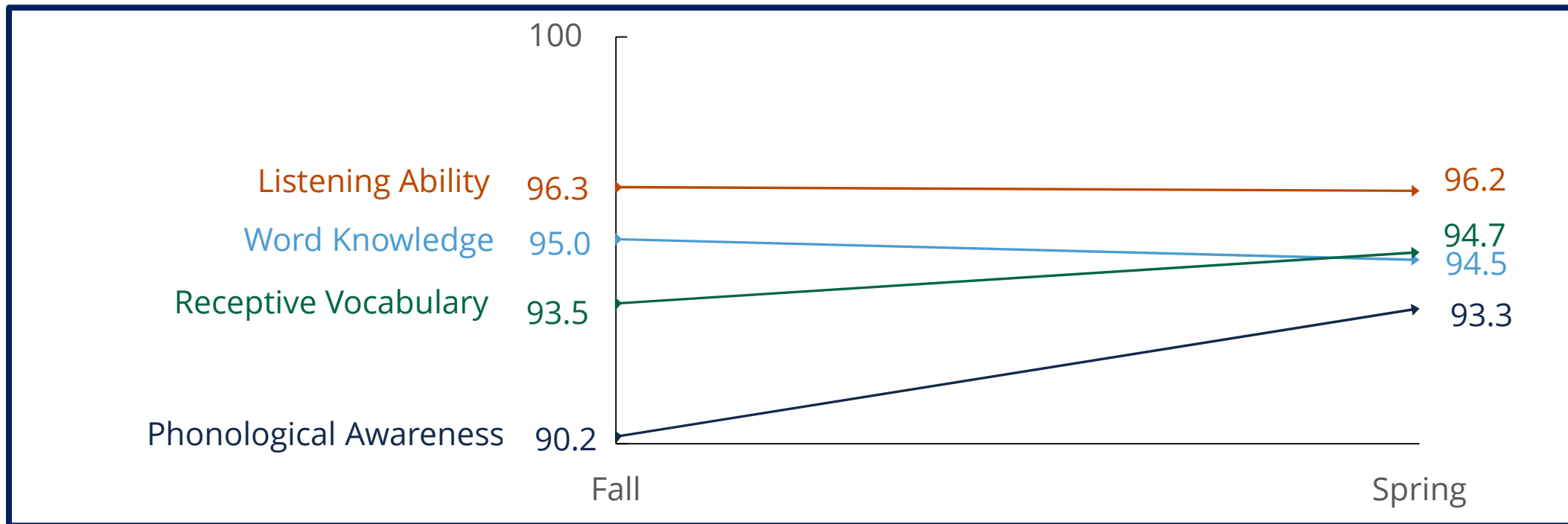
# Child Language Skills Results

---

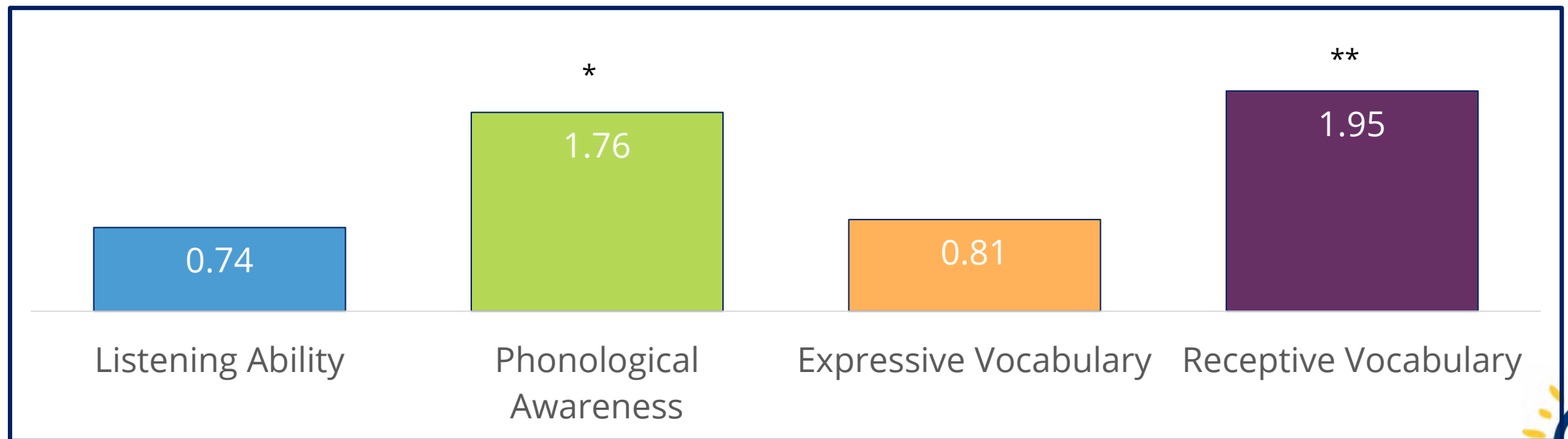
- Children demonstrated age-appropriate growth, but less growth and lower average scores than national norms and prior studies of Georgia's Pre-K.
  - Cohort was assessed with updated assessment tools
  - Toddler years coincided with pandemic
- Children in classrooms with higher-quality language and literacy practices exhibited greater-than-expected gains in vocabulary and phonological awareness.



- Children’s mean oral language skills were within the typical range, but slightly below the national average score of 100.
- Most scores stayed the same (*within 1 point*) or increased by up to standard 3-points during the school-year relative to children of the same age.



- Higher-quality language/literacy practices associated with improved language skills.
- Every 1-point increase in ELLCO Language and Literacy scores associated with vocabulary and phonological awareness skills ~2 points higher at end of year.



- All children’s language skills were stable or improved relative to children of the same-age, but some children improved more than others.

<b>Group Growth Comparison</b>	<b>Language Outcome</b>
Females < Males	Phonological Awareness
Dual Language Learners < Monolingual Peers	Phonological awareness Listening to and Following Instructions
White Children > African American/Black children	Vocabulary Knowledge
More Primary Caregiver Education > Less Education	Vocabulary Knowledge Listening to and Following Instructions



# Summary of Findings

# Overall Findings of Language Development Study

---

- Georgia's Pre-K teachers demonstrated and reported strong language practices:
  - Encouraging children to speak & engaging children in multi-turn conversations
  - Introducing and discussing new vocabulary during book reading
- Georgia's Pre-K classrooms provide enriched learning environments, facilitating interactions with children that are warm, responsive, and rich in language.
- Experienced early childhood (B-5) teachers provide higher quality interactions and language supports.
- Children's language scores in Georgia's Pre-K are typical for their age, but slightly below the national average. Greatest growth in phonological awareness skills. There were differences in outcomes for children from diverse backgrounds.



# Overall Conclusions

---

- Georgia's Pre-K classrooms are providing interactions with children that are warm, responsive, and language rich within enriched learning environments.
- Enhancing language and literacy practices in Georgia's Pre-K shows promise for supporting greater improvements in children's vocabulary knowledge and phonological awareness skills. Specific training and support are needed, particularly for working with racially/ethnically and linguistically diverse children and families, and children with caregivers with lower levels of education.
- Georgia's Pre-K teachers have experience and expertise that is valuable to informing future quality improvement efforts.



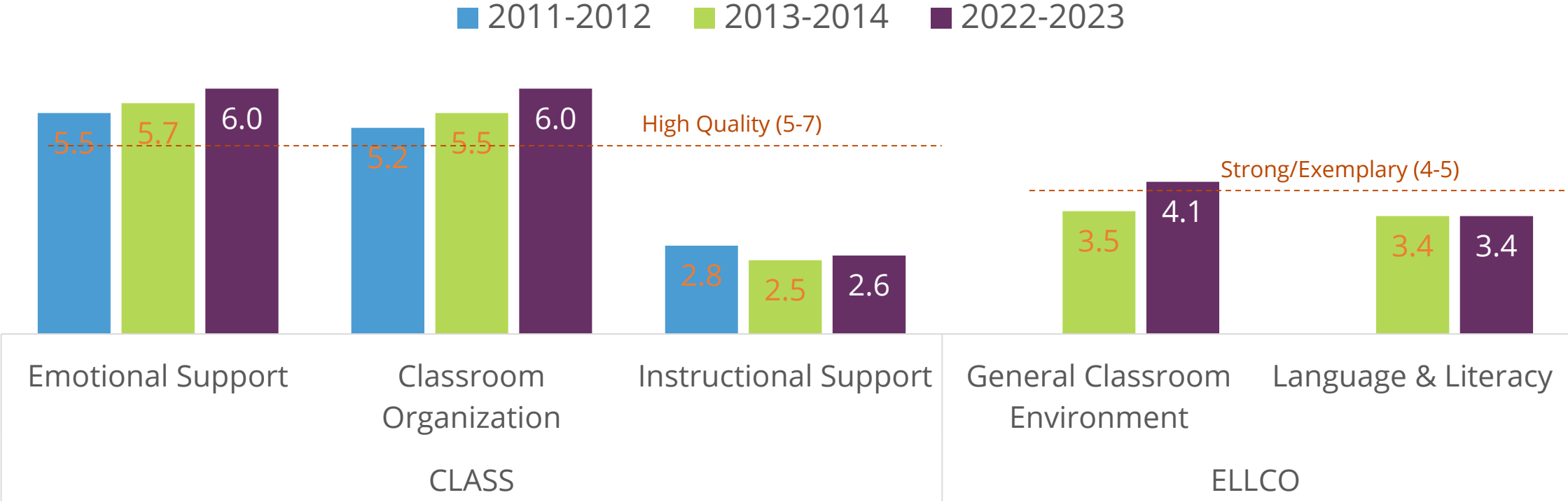
# Results Across Multiple Georgia's Pre-K Studies



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

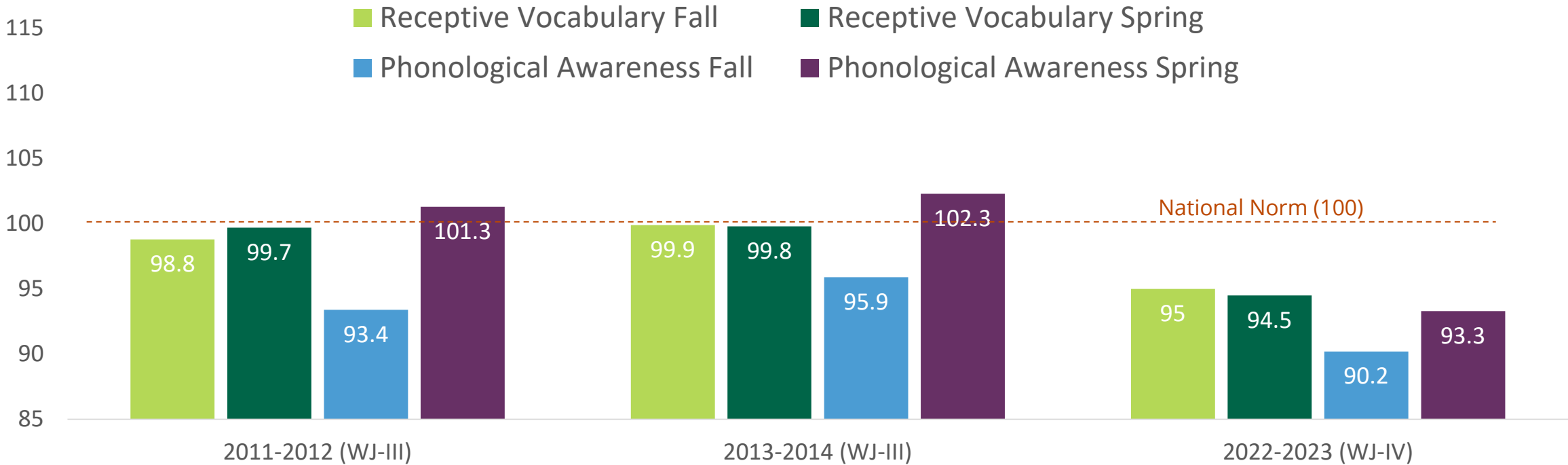
# Quality Scores Across Studies

Quality improved over time, particularly the CLASS Emotional Support and Classroom Organization domains and ELLCO General Classroom Environment.



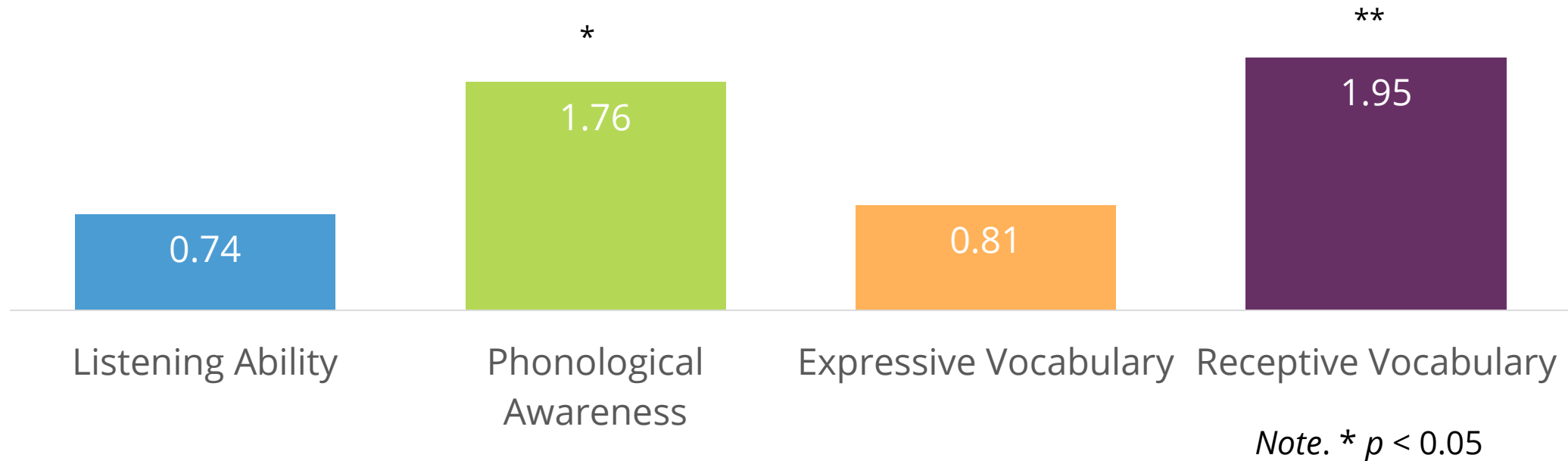
# Language & Literacy Outcomes Across Georgia's Pre-K Cohorts

Phonological awareness improved across all cohorts, with the largest gains in 2011–12 and 2013–14. Vocabulary growth was minimal, and overall scores were lower in 2022–23.



# Pre-K Practices and Children's Language Skills

- Higher-quality language/literacy practices associated with improved language skills.
- Every 1-point increase in ELLCO Language and Literacy scores associated with vocabulary and phonological awareness skills ~2 points higher at end of year.



# Contextual Factors and Children's Language Skills

## Overview of Results

All children's language skills were stable or improved relative to children of the same-age, but some children improved more than others.

<b>Group Growth Comparison</b>	<b>Language Outcome</b>
Females < Males	Phonological Awareness
Dual Language Learners < Monolingual Peers	Phonological awareness Listening to and Following Instructions
White Children > African American/Black children	Vocabulary Knowledge
More Primary Caregiver Education > Less Education	Vocabulary Knowledge Listening to and Following Instructions

# Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Supports Updates

*Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K & Instructional Supports*



# Implications of the Language Development Study

---

- Continued focus on the retention of Pre-K experienced lead and assistant teachers
- Emphasized vocabulary development and early writing in the revised Georgia Early Learning & Development (GELDS)
- Provided Science of Reading course for Pre-K specialists
- Expand the Rising Pre-K Summer Transition Program focused on dual language learners
- Implementing a training course on the Science of Reading for Pre-K lead and assistant teachers
- Conduct ongoing analysis of child language skills by child and program demographics





- Program Models
  - Rising Pre-K
  - Rising Kindergarten
- Five-week Program
  - 23 instructional days
  - 6.5-hour day

- Class Size
  - Rising Pre-K: 12
  - Rising K: 14
- Staffing per classroom
  - Lead Teacher
  - Assistant Teacher
  - Transition Coach
- Summer Partners
  - Alliance Theatre
  - Hatch Ignite
  - Rollins Center for Language & Literacy







# Inclusion Classrooms- New Materials



# RPK Dual Language Classrooms- New Materials



# School Year 2026-2027

---

- Year 3 of 4-Year Rollout of the Class Size Reduction
  - Funds approximately 100 new classrooms
- Operating funds increase to support Paid Leave for Leads & Assistants
- Roll-out of the updated Language & Literacy domain of the Georgia Early Learning & Development Standards (GELDS)



# Break

*Ten Minutes*



Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Updates

*Laura Lucas, Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Director*



# Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Updates

---

- New strategic plan with **Caregiver Voice Workgroup** input
- Continued national recognition for our **IECMH Medicaid Billing Guides** from the national Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
- Georgia included in a national project to increase screening and effective referrals for **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**
- Positive impacts from the **IECMH consultation pilot**
- **Children's Mental Health Week** continues to grow



# Children's Mental Health Week Visits



# Children's Mental Health Week Visits



# Children's Mental Health Week Visits







**CHILDREN'S  
MENTAL HEALTH WEEK**  
Celebrating  
6 years!  
May 4th-8th



DECAL Presents:  
**Take a PAWS**  
for grounding

**Grounding**  
is a way of bringing your mind and body back to the present moment. It helps us feel steady, safe, and in control — even when our emotions feel big or overwhelming.

**PAUSE**  
Taking a PAWS (CALi's playful way of saying *pause*) means stopping for a moment to notice how you feel.

A quick PAWS helps children understand their feelings — and helps adults stay grounded instead of joining the chaos.

Take a PAWS with CALi



**PAWS FOR ADULTS**  
Grounding So You Can Share Your Calm

**PAWS FOR KIDS**  
Understanding Feelings & Calming Big Emotions

**P**ause your body  
**A**cknowledge your feeling  
**W**atch your breath  
**S**ettle your body

**P**ause your body  
**A**sk how you feel  
**W**iggle your fingers and toes  
**S**tretch your arms like a tree

"When little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it's our job to share our calm, not to join their chaos."  
—L.R. Knost, award-winning author and parenting advocate



We can use tools like the **Feelings Meter** to check in with our emotions and name what we're feeling. When we know our feeling level, it's easier to choose a calming tool and bring ourselves back to steady and calm.



  P . A . W . S



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Child Care Services Updates

*Pam Stevens, Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services*



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Proposed October 1, 2026 Rule Changes

# Changes Needed to:

---



**Change the definition of school age children**



**Better align with and meet compliance with CCDF requirements**



**Remove duplication and provide clarification**



**Clean up: code reference corrections, matching language, and rule alignment for Secretary of State**



**Create a new rule chapter for an Exemption category for Family Child Care Learning Homes**



# Summary

---

- Changes would be made in licensed program rules & regulations for:
  - **Child Care Learning Centers**
  - **Family Child Care Learning Homes**
  - **Support Centers**
- Planned indicator manual clarifications, informational webinars, and resource/training development as needed
- Mirror changes in Health & Safety Standards for License-Exempt & Informal Providers for CCDF compliance



# Child Care Learning Centers: Proposed Rule Changes

---

- **591-1-1-.02 Definitions**

- **Correct O.C.G.A. code reference within the definition of “crime”**

(h) “Crime” means

4. A violation of O.C.G.A. § ~~16-21-1~~16-12-1, relating to contributing to the delinquency of a minor;

- **Change the definition of “school-age children”**

(kk) "School-age Children" means children who are at least ~~five (5)~~ four (4) years old by the first of September of the current school year ~~and who are eligible to attend public school~~



# Child Care Learning Centers: Proposed Rule Changes

---

- **591-1-1-.21 Operational Policies and Procedures**

- **Rule clarification for CCDF requirements**

(1) The policies and procedures shall include the following:

(p) A written plan for handling emergencies, including but not limited to severe weather, fire, and other emergency situations (i.e., loss of electrical power or water and death, serious injury or loss of a child, a threatening event, or natural disaster) which may occur at the Center.

- **591-1-1-.35 Swimming Pools and Water Related Activities**

- **Rule clarification for water that is 2 feet deep**

(3) Supervision of Children in Water ~~Over~~ Two (2) Feet Deep and Over. For water-related activity (such as swimming, fishing, boating or wading) in water ~~over~~ two (2) feet deep and over, continuous supervision of children must be provided as follows:



# Family Child Care Learning Homes: Proposed Rule Changes

---

- **290-2-3-.03 Definitions**

- **Correct O.C.G.A. code reference within the definition of “crime”**

(f) “Crime” means:

4. A violation of O.C.G.A. § ~~16-21-116-12-1~~16-12-1, relating to contributing to the delinquency of a minor;



# Family Child Care Learning Homes: Proposed Rule Changes

- **290-2-3-.07 Staffing and Supervision**

- **Remove requirements for personal information in staff files**

(4) A Home must maintain a personnel file on the Provider, all Employees, Provisional Employees, Personnel, Staff, Students-in-Training, Volunteers, Clerical, Housekeeping, Maintenance and other Support Staff for the duration of the term of employment plus one (1) calendar year, and it shall contain the following: identifying information to include: name, date of birth, ~~social security number~~, current address and current telephone number;...

- **Rule separation and realignment**

(7) Health and Safety Orientation. The Provider, Employees and Provisional Employees with direct care responsibilities shall complete health and safety orientation training within the first 90 days of employment. The state-approved training hours obtained will count toward required first year training hours. The training must address the following health and safety topics: ...

(i) precautions in transporting children; ~~recognition and reporting of child abuse and neglect; and~~

(j) recognition and reporting of child abuse and neglect; and

~~(j)~~(k) child development to include all major domains: cognitive; social and emotional; physical development and motor skills; communication, language, and literacy; and approaches to play and learning.

- **Rule clarification for water that is 2 feet deep**

(20) If Children are allowed to participate in water activities where the water is ~~over~~ two feet in depth or over, the Provider or an Adult shall supervise such activities and must have successfully completed a training program in lifeguarding offered by a water-safety instructor certified by the American Red Cross or YMCA or other recognized standard setting agency for water safety instruction.

(a) For water-related activities where water is ~~over~~ two feet in depth or over, the following Staff: Child ratios shall be maintained:



# Family Child Care Learning Homes: Proposed Rule Changes

- **290-2-3-.08 Children's Records**

- **Remove duplicative rule and provide clarification for CCDF alignment**

(b) The policies and procedures shall also include written procedures for the following:

.....

2. Handling medical emergencies ~~emergency medical care~~, including where the Children will be taken for emergency medical care;
3. Administering medication, ~~and recording noticeable adverse reactions to medication, and notifying parents of these adverse reactions;~~
4. Notifying Parent(s) in writing of their Child's: illness, injury, and exposure to a notifiable communicable disease or any cases or suspected cases of viruses or illnesses (COVID-19, etc.) identified during a public health emergency, within twenty-four (24) hours after the Home becomes aware of the illness or the next working day;
5. ~~Noticeable adverse reaction to medication(s);~~

- **290-2-3-.12 Equipment and Supplies**

- **Remove duplicative rule**

~~(3) Furniture and equipment shall be kept clean and in a safe usable condition.~~

(43) All indoor and outdoor furniture, activity materials, and equipment shall be: used in a safe and appropriate manner by each Provider, Provisional Employee, Employee and child in attendance and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, recommendations, and intended use.

~~(54)~~ All indoor and outdoor furniture, activity materials, and equipment shall be free from hazardous conditions such as, but not limited to, sharp rough edges or toxic paint and kept clean and in a safe usable condition.



# Family Child Care Learning Homes: Proposed Rule Changes

- **290-2-3-.22 Exemptions**
  - **Creating a new rule chapter**

## **290-2-3-.22 Exemptions**

1) All programs providing group care for children shall obtain either a License, Permit, or a Commission for an early care and education program or an exemption from the Department, as applicable. Any person or entity operating or planning to operate a program that meets the criteria for exemption from licensure, as listed below, shall complete an online self-assessment through the Department to determine eligibility.

### (a) Requirements for Exemption Self-Assessments

1. The following exemption category shall complete an online self-assessment through the Department: Category DoDF – Department of Defense Regulated Family Child Care Learning Home.
2. Programs that self-assess, do not affect the authority of local, regional, or state health department officials, the state fire marshal, local fire prevention officials, local or regional building officials or zoning officials to inspect and approve facilities and locations. Programs must operate in a residence, and the self-assessment is only valid at the address listed and for the services indicated.
3. A program that completes a self-assessment and deems itself exempt but has subsequent material changes in the operation of the program, such as, but not limited to, a change of physical location, a change in operating months, days, and/or hours, or a change in the ages served, shall complete a new self-assessment.

### (b) Exemption Category. The following type of program shall be exempt from licensure:

1. Category DoDF – Department of Defense Regulated Family Child Care Learning Home that meets all of the following:
  - (i) Program is regulated by Department of Defense or a military service to include the U.S. Coast Guard.
  - (ii) Program serves military families only, on or off base.
  - (iii) Program will not participate in the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program.



# Support Centers: Proposed Rule Changes

---

- **591-3-1-.03 Definitions**

- **Correct O.C.G.A. code reference within the definition of “crime”**

(e) “Crime” means

4. A violation of O.C.G.A. § ~~16-21-1~~16-12-1, relating to contributing to the delinquency of a minor;

- **Update definitions of “Comprehensive Records Check Determination” and “Valid Evidence” to align with current Department definitions**

(d) “Comprehensive Records Check Determination” means a satisfactory or unsatisfactory determination by the Department, based upon a Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint based criminal record check, a search of appropriate sex offender registries, repositories, or data bases, compliance with relevant state and federal law, the National Crime Information Centers National Sex Offender Registry, and a search of the following registries, repositories or databases in the state where the actual or potential employee or director resides and in each state where such individual resided during the preceding five years: criminal registry or repository, ~~with the use of fingerprints being required in the state where the individual resides and option in other states;~~ state sex offender registry or repository; and state based child abuse and neglect registry and database.

(q) “Valid Evidence” means ~~either paper or~~ electronic proof of a satisfactory Fingerprint Records Check Determination or a satisfactory Comprehensive Records Check Determination as follows:.....



# Support Centers: Proposed Rule Changes

---

- **591-3-1-.04 Support Center Requirements and Registration Applications**
  - **Update language to align with current Rules and Regulations for CCLCs and FCCLHs – only allowing electronic evidence for records check information.**
    - (1) Support Center Requirements
      - .....
      - (i) Valid Evidence of a satisfactory Fingerprint Records Check Determination or a satisfactory Comprehensive Records Check Determination must be maintained at the Support Center for each Eligible Employee for the duration of employment or residency plus one year, and such ~~paper or~~ electronic evidence must be made immediately available to the Department upon request.



# The Role of Licensing in Early Care and Education Multi-State Study

Georgia's Participation in a National Licensing Study



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**

BRIGHT FROM THE START

# About the TRLECE Study

---

- Through the TRLECE project, Child Trends partnered with three states, including Georgia, to examine the relationship between Quality Rated levels and licensing violations
- The study explored whether higher Quality Rated levels were associated with fewer licensing violations in child care learning centers and family child care learning homes
- Researchers also examined whether similar patterns were observed across participating states
- The study demonstrates how states and researchers can partner to analyze administrative licensing and Quality Rated data

*Georgia participated anonymously in the study as “State E.”*



# Licensing Violations by Quality Rated Level

Quality Rated Level	Additional Violations Compared to Highest QR Level	
	Child Care Learning Centers	Family Child Care Learning Homes
1 <sup>st</sup> Level	+1.64	+1.69
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level	+1.55	+0.61
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level	+0.89	+0.82
4 <sup>th</sup> Level	Reference Group	Reference Group

**Compared to programs at the highest Quality Rated level, programs at lower Quality Rated levels had more licensing violations on average.**



# Georgia Findings

---

- Lower Quality Rated levels were associated with more licensing violations
- Higher Quality Rated levels were associated with fewer high-risk violations
- Findings were observed in both centers and FCCLH programs

**Programs with higher Quality Rated levels in Georgia generally demonstrated stronger licensing compliance outcomes.**

Source: [TRLECE, \*Licensing Violations and Program Quality in Child Care and Early Education\* \(2024\)](#)



# Federal Programs Updates

*Elisabetta Kasfir, Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs*



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# CAPS Advisory Councils

- The CAPS Provider and Family Advisory Councils provide feedback and perspectives from families and providers on policies, systems, and program operations.
- Their input drives updates and continuous improvement across CAPS.



# Family Advisory Council Outcomes

---



- **CAPS Scholarships:** Simplified process with a new summary section to clearly display parent payments
- **Income Policy Update:** Clarified how income is reviewed using recent verification documents
- **Child Learning Impact Form:** Updated form and policy to allow for simpler submission criteria



# Scholarship Update

Type of Care	Actual Provider Weekly Charge	CAPS Weekly Rate	FAMILY Fee	CAPS Weekly Amount to Provider	Parent Weekly Responsibility	Begin Date	End Date
Variable Before and After Care	\$95.00	\$68.00	\$39.00	\$29.00	\$66.00	03/10/2025	03/30/2025
Variable - Full Time Care	\$150.00	\$150.00	\$39.00	\$111.00	\$39.00	03/31/2025	04/06/2025

 **Before**

**After** 

Begin Date	End Date	Type of Care	Provider Rate	CAPS Maximum Rate	CAPS Pays	You Pay (this amount includes your family fee)
03/10/2025	03/30/2025	Before/After	\$95.00	\$68.00	\$29.00	\$66.00
03/31/2025	04/06/2025	Full Time	\$150.00	\$150.00	\$111.00	\$39.00



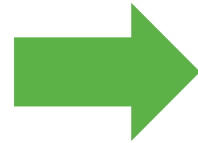
# Scholarship Update

## Important note about the Parent Weekly Responsibility:

- If the “Provider Rate” is higher than the “CAPS Weekly Amount to Provider,” providers may charge families the difference. This rate difference plus the “Family Fee” is the “Parent Weekly Responsibility.”
- The total amount you owe your provider each week may be less, depending on any discounts the provider offers at their discretion.
- The amount you owe may go up if your provider increases their rate. The “Provider Rate” reflected here is current as of the day this scholarship was issued.
- Your provider may charge other fees not covered by CAPS.
- Please confirm your total weekly responsibility with your provider.

 **Before**

**After**



**Parent Payment to Provider:** If your provider’s weekly rate is higher than what CAPS covers, that extra amount is already included in the amount **you pay**. If your provider chooses not to charge you the full difference, the amount you pay each week will be lower.

- This difference, plus the **Family Fee**, is what you will pay directly to your provider each week.
- Your cost may be **lower** if the provider offers discounts.
- Your cost may **increase** if the provider raises their rates.
- Providers may charge **additional fees** not covered by CAPS.
- Always **confirm your weekly payment** with your provider.



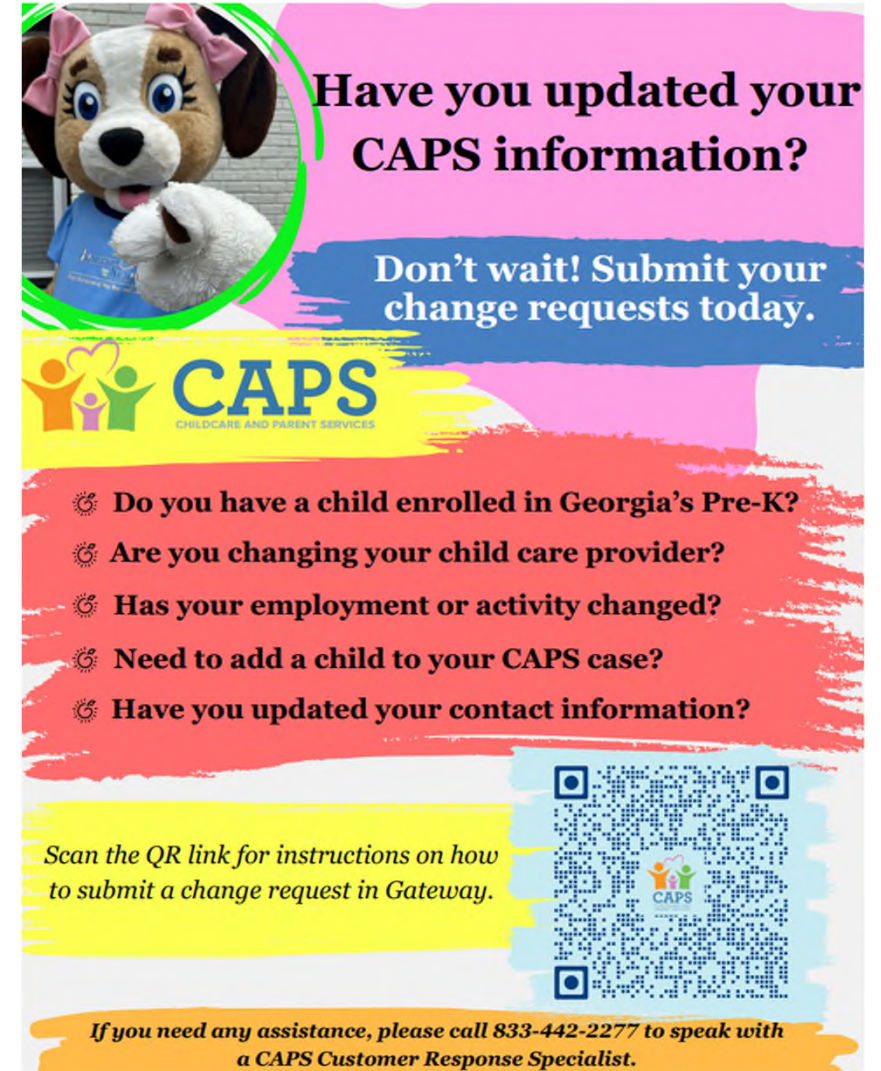
# Provider Advisory Council Outcomes

- **Provider Support & Communication:** CAPS Policy team attends Provider Office Hours and enhancements to Provider Relations Newsletter with tips, FAQs, and training schedule
- **GA CAPS Provider Renewal Enhancements:** Improved communication (center-specific emails), streamlined and simplified document upload, and added more intuitive dashboard navigation for applications, requests, and payments
- **System Improvements:** Ongoing enhancements including expanded provider notifications (receipt of new and updated scholarships), system fixes, improved tools and navigation, and options for providing feedback



# Transition of Georgia's Pre-K Scholarships

- **Georgia's Pre-K Scholarship Workgroup:**  
Improving the process for a child with a full-time scholarship transitioning to a variable scholarship in Georgia's Pre-K
- **Communication:**
  - Flyer placed in CAPS Newsletter (March)
  - Bulk email of flyer to families (Quarterly)
  - Bulk email of flyer to providers (Monthly)
  - Targeted SMS text & robocall to families with potential rising Georgia's Pre-K students (Monthly)
  - Bulk email of the Scholarship Change Checklist to providers (April)
  - Banner reminder in GACAPS (May)



**Have you updated your CAPS information?**

**Don't wait! Submit your change requests today.**

**CAPS**  
CHILD CARE AND PARENT SERVICES

- Do you have a child enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K?
- Are you changing your child care provider?
- Has your employment or activity changed?
- Need to add a child to your CAPS case?
- Have you updated your contact information?

Scan the QR link for instructions on how to submit a change request in Gateway.

If you need any assistance, please call 833-442-2277 to speak with a CAPS Customer Response Specialist.



# CAPS Income Limits Increased March 2, 2026

---

## Initial Eligibility:

The income limit to first qualify for CAPS has increased from 40% to 50% of the State Median Income (SMI).

## Very Low Income (VLI) Priority Group:

The income limit has increased from 30% to 50% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). This means more families in this group may now qualify for the CAPS program.



# Why the Market Rate Study Matters

---



A market rate study is required as part of our state plan cycle and CCDF requirements

This study provides insight into the current child care market across Georgia

Findings are used to inform CAPS rates and payment zones as well as reveal the cost of quality



# Enhancing the Market Rate Study Approach

---

Partnered with the GSU Policy Lab to support this year's market rate survey

First market rate survey to ask for cost data alongside collecting rates and enrollment

Builds on STABLE grant reporting; we are now assessing the true cost of quality care





**Market rate survey** to assess current pricing of child care industry rates across the state

Narrow cost analysis to better understand the **cost of care**



Determine whether child care **providers charge families the differential**

Identification of provider **barriers to participating in CAPS**



# Required Components of the Market Rate Study



# Georgia's Market Rate Survey Approach

---



Georgia is conducting two market rate surveys: one for all licensed providers (rates, enrollment, CAPS participation) and one for a sample of QR CAPS providers (detailed cost data)



The general survey was released in April and remains open through August, and the detailed cost survey released in waves starting in April, and going through August



Provider participation is strongly encouraged, as results directly impact CAPS rates and payment zones



# Head Start Collaboration Office Updates

*Allison Setterlind, Head Start Collaboration Director*



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Head Start in Georgia

---

## ✓ **Federal Funding and Local Implementation**

Head Start is federally funded by the Administration for Children and Families. The grants are operated locally through community organizations, non-profits, and school systems. Head Start is funded to serve approx. 20,000 children and their families in Georgia. The largest age group is 3-year-olds.

## ✓ **Comprehensive Child and Family Services**

At no cost to the enrolled family, the program provides education, health, mental health, nutrition, and family support for children, birth to age 5, and pregnant women.

## ✓ **Eligibility and Prioritization**

Eligibility must include one of the following criteria for families: Meeting the federal income guidelines for poverty, the child is in foster care, the family is experiencing homelessness, the family is receiving public assistance like SNAP or SSI benefits. Programs must prioritize services for children with disabilities.

## ✓ **State Coordination and Collaboration**

State agencies like DECAL coordinate efforts to align Head Start with broader early childhood systems through the Head Start Collaboration Office. Allison Setterlind is the Director for this office in Georgia and reports to Commissioner Jacobs as part of the Executive Division.



# Head Start Promotes Preventive & Primary Health Care





The following Committee meetings are in session:

**Programs and Rules** – Hickory Conference Room

**Budget and Finance** – Cypress Conference Room

**Quality Innovations and Partnerships** – Oak Conference Room

*The Public Comment Period will commence at 1:00 pm.*



Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

Welcome to the Board of Early Care  
and Learning

# Public Comment

May 21, 2026



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**

BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Committee Reports



Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Board Meeting Dates 2026

- 
- ~~February 19, 2026~~
  - ~~May 21, 2026~~
  - August 27, 2026
  - November 19, 2026

