



GEORGIA FOUNDATION FOR  
EARLY CARE + LEARNING

# ANNUAL REPORT

## FISCAL YEAR 2025





## WHO WE ARE

The Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning is an independent 501(c)3 that supports the efforts of the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). In 2017, the Georgia General Assembly passed legislation enabling the foundation to form. Shortly after Governor Nathan Deal signed the legislation into law, the nonprofit was created and began making strategic investments to improve and expand high-quality education.

## OUR MISSION

To support access to high-quality early childhood education by Georgia's youngest learners and their families, providers, and teachers through established strategic investments, collaborations, and partnerships to equip Georgia's current and future workforce.

## OUR VISION

To provide the best beginnings possible for all of Georgia's children.

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Research has shown that every dollar invested in high-quality early education saves, on average, \$13 later in reduced crime rates, lower demand for social services, and increased tax revenues. Investing in early childhood education is vital to the success and stability of individuals and our communities.

# A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of the Foundation,

As we reflect on the 2025 fiscal year, I am filled with gratitude for the strides the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning has made in advancing early childhood education across our state. This year has been a testament to the power of collaboration, innovation, and a shared unwavering commitment to Georgia's youngest learners and their families.

One of the year's most inspiring moments was our second annual celebratory luncheon, held on May 2nd at the Metro Atlanta Chamber, where we honored Georgia's 2024-2025 Early Childhood Educators of the Year and Georgia Pre-K Teachers of the Year. Emceed by Emmy award-winning journalist Linda Stouffer and moderated by our dedicated board member Malcolm Mitchell, the event showcased the passion and impact of five extraordinary educators. Their stories remind us that early childhood professionals are the heartbeat of Georgia's early learning system.



In alignment with our mission to support whole-family success, this year we proudly funded the Georgia Children's Cabinet's 2Gen Leadership Academy. Facilitated by the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government, this 9-month-long initiative equips leaders from child- and family-serving agencies with the tools to implement holistic, two-generation approaches. The Academy's outcomes—enhanced collaboration, deeper family engagement, and system-level transformation—affirm our belief that when agencies work together and families are seen as whole, the possibilities for change are profound.

In another new partnership from 2024, together with the Georgia Foundation for Public Education, we launched the Early Literacy Alignment Mini Grants initiative. Through this partnership we distributed \$110,000 to foster collaboration between public elementary schools and Quality Rated child care programs. Rooted in the Science of Reading, this initiative has empowered educators with evidence-based tools and strengthened transitions for young learners. With additional funds earmarked for another grant cycle, we remain committed to ensuring every child in Georgia has the foundation for literacy success – so that children can learn to read; and then read to learn.

In 2024-2025, we also had the opportunity to help a set of childcare programs recover from a devastating natural disaster. Last year, our Foundation was able to support 33 early childhood programs severely impacted by Hurricane Helene. Through a powerful collaboration with The Aspire Difference Foundation and Save the Children US, we distributed a total of \$49,500 in relief funds to help programs restore safe indoor and outdoor learning environments for children to learn and play. This initiative exemplifies the resilience of our grantee partners and the strength of our partnerships. Seeing photos of restored playgrounds and classrooms in these places has been incredibly gratifying.

As we look ahead, we remain steadfast in our mission to elevate early care and learning in Georgia. Whether through honoring excellence, empowering leaders, strengthening literacy, or rebuilding hope, our work is driven by a deep belief in the potential of every child and the importance of those who care for them.

Thank you for your interest and support. Together, we are building a brighter future for Georgia's children.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'LW', with a long, sweeping underline.

**Laura Wagner**



# CELEBRATING GEORGIA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS OF THE YEAR

Early Childhood Educators are the cornerstone of a child's developmental journey, shaping not only academic foundations but also emotional, social, and cognitive growth. These professionals cultivate environments that spark curiosity, build resilience, and foster a lifelong love of learning. Through their daily interactions, they help children develop essential skills such as communication, problem-solving, and self-regulation—skills that serve as the bedrock for future success. As role models and caregivers, their influence extends far beyond the classroom, nurturing positive behaviors and meaningful social connections.

Since 2017, the Foundation has proudly recognized Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the Year from both public schools and private child care programs. In 2021, we expanded this initiative to honor Early Childhood Educators of the Year across three critical categories: Infant, Toddler, and Preschool. Each year, we surprise finalists across all categories who are ultimately considered for one of these coveted top spots. Each finalist receives a check for \$500 for their own personal use.

This fiscal year, we celebrated five outstanding Early Childhood Educators of the Year representing communities in Atlanta, Lincoln, Marietta, Smyrna, and Watkinsville. Nominations were carefully reviewed and scored by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning's Pre-K and Practice and Support teams. Thanks to a generous gift from the Naserian Foundation, each award recipient received:

- \$2,000 for a classroom makeover,
- Up to \$2,500 to support professional development through conference attendance and travel,
- And a \$3,000 personal award in recognition of their excellence.

Through this program, the Foundation continues to elevate and honor a diverse group of educators whose work profoundly impacts the lives of young children. By celebrating their achievements, we not only acknowledge their dedication and innovation but also inspire others in the field to strive for excellence.





# GEORGIA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS OF THE YEAR 2024-2025:

## Zina Hadjaz

The Quadrilingual Academy, Smyrna  
Early Childhood Educator of the Year – Infant Category

## Laura Silva

My Little Geniuses, Marietta  
Early Childhood Educator of the Year – Toddler Category

## Samantha Mullins

Our House at Central, Atlanta  
Early Childhood Educator of the Year – Preschool Category

## Rachel Robertson

Ocone Preschool Academy, Watkinsville  
Georgia Pre-K Teacher of the Year – Private School

## Elizabeth Arthur

Lincoln County Elementary School, Lincolnton  
Georgia Pre-K Teacher of the Year – Public School

## Congratulations to our 2024-2025 Finalists:

### Jaleyah Anderson

Bright Star Daycare, Midway  
Infant Early Childhood Educator  
of the Year Finalist

### Iulia Stoicescu

Seven Oaks Academy, Lilburn  
Toddler Early Childhood Educator  
of the Year Finalist

### LaShonda Revill

Hahira Head Start, Hahira  
Preschool Early Childhood  
Educator of the Year Finalist

### Miranda Brewer

Young Einsteins Academy, Inc., Marietta  
Georgia Pre-K Teacher of the Year Finalist  
(Private School)

### Elisabeth Stratford

The Learning Treehouse, Inc., Rincon  
Georgia Pre-K Teacher of the Year Finalist  
(Private School)

### Heather Tomlinson

Daffodil Pre-K Center, Waycross  
Georgia Pre-K Teacher of the Year Finalist  
(Public School)

### Carol Underwood

Union County Primary School  
Georgia Pre-K Teacher of the Year Finalist  
(Public School)



# GEORGIA'S 2GEN LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



In 2024–2025, the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning proudly deepened its commitment to whole-family support by funding the Georgia Children’s Cabinet’s 2Gen Leadership Academy. This innovative initiative, facilitated by the University of Georgia’s Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG), equips leaders from child- and family-serving agencies with the tools to implement holistic, two-generation (or, “2Gen”) approaches to service delivery.

The 2Gen Leadership Academy convenes 25–30 participants over a nine-month term, guiding them through collaborative learning and a capstone project focused on implementing 2Gen strategies. Participants are nominated by agency heads and represent organizations within the Georgia Children’s Cabinet. The Academy fosters cross-agency partnerships, human-centered design thinking, and practical applications of whole-family support.

Our Foundation’s investment in the Academy reflects a broader strategic alignment with DECAL’s goals. The Academy serves as a cornerstone of our efforts to enhance Georgia’s early childhood services through innovative partnerships. The program’s success has already inspired plans to expand participation beyond the Cabinet and to cultivate new funder relationships for long-term sustainability.

Evaluation reports from CVIOG underscore the Academy’s impact. Participants report increased understanding of interagency collaboration, improved ability to partner across sectors, and meaningful shifts in how they approach family engagement. These outcomes affirm the Academy’s role in transforming not just individual leaders, but the systems they influence.

As we look ahead, the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning remains committed to supporting leadership that centers families. The 2Gen Leadership Academy exemplifies our belief that when agencies work together—and when families are seen as whole—the possibilities for change are profound.





# EARLY LITERACY ALIGNMENT

This year, Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning, in collaboration with the Georgia Foundation for Public Education, was proud to implement a new funding opportunity through the Early Literacy Alignment Mini Grant (ELA Mini Grant) program. This initiative represents a shared commitment to advancing early literacy across Georgia by fostering strategic partnerships between public elementary schools and local child care providers.

Each recipient of the ELA Mini Grant receives up to \$5,000 in funding to support collaborative efforts that align innovative and evidence-based literacy training practices across educational settings. By focusing on professional learning and alignment, the grant also promotes smoother transitions for children moving from prekindergarten into kindergarten, ensuring that rising kindergarten students experience a consistent and effective start to their educational journey.

Funded through generous contributions to both foundations and supported by the PEACH Education Tax Credit program, the ELA Mini Grant empowers communities to build innovative collaborations that enhance literacy development for Georgia's youngest learners.

## 2025 ELA Mini Grant Recipients

### Round 1 Partners:

**Candler County Schools:** Metter Elementary School

Childcare Partner(s): Rashida's Day Care; Candler County Child Development Center

**Evans County Schools:** Claxton Elementary School

Childcare Partner(s): Evans County Head Start

**Hancock County Schools:** Marvin E. Lewis Elementary School

Childcare Partner(s): Hancock County Head Start; Maxine Evans Family Child Care Learning Home

**Madison County Charter Schools:** Danielsville Elementary, Colbert Elementary

Childcare Partner(s): The Learning Train Academy; Madison County Early Learning Center; Easter Seals Head Start

**Meriwether County Schools:** Unity Elementary School

Childcare Partner(s): Greenville Child Development Center

**Mitchell County Schools:** Mitchell County Elementary School

Childcare Partner(s): Mitchell County Child Development Center

**Terrell County Schools:** Terrell County Elementary School

Childcare Partner(s): Terrell County Child Development Center



*"This grant has had a meaningful impact on our school and early childhood partners by strengthening instructional practices and promoting alignment across early learning settings. Teachers gained valuable skills in phonological awareness instruction, leading to more effective, differentiated teaching and improved student outcomes. Collaboration among educators from Head Start and our district Pre-K programs fostered a shared commitment to early literacy goals. Additionally, increased parent engagement through take-home books and activities helped extend learning beyond the classroom and into the home environment."*

**Angie Shirah**  
**Meriwether County Schools**



# EARLY LITERACY ALIGNMENT

## Round 2 Partners:

Laurens County Schools: East Laurens Primary, Northwest Laurens Elementary, Southwest Laurens Elementary  
Childcare Partner(s): Little Hearts CCLC; Little Feet Learning Academy; Belles and Beaus; Intelli-Kids CCLC; Cami's Kids; Humpty Dumpty Learning Center

Brantley County Schools: Nahunta Primary School, Hoboken Elementary School

Childcare Partner(s): Brantley County Head Start / Pre-K

Thomasville City Schools: Harper Elementary School, Jerger Elementary School, Scott Elementary School

Childcare Partner(s): Glad Tidings Academy; Mount Zion Daycare Center; Thomas County Child Development Center Head Start

Gwinnett County Public Schools

Childcare Partner(s): Kids R Kids 19/University Center; Tabula Rasa - The Language Academy

Calhoun County Schools: Calhoun County Elementary

Childcare Partner(s): Calhoun County Child Development Center

Brooks County Schools: North Brooks Elementary School

Childcare Partner(s): Brooks County Early Learning Center

Washington County: Ridge Road Primary School

Childcare Partner(s): Washington County NB & PW Club, Smart Start Learning Center, Little Peoples Paradise Daycare Center

## Round 3 Partners:

Berrien County Schools: Berrien Primary School

Childcare Partner(s): Jesus Loves Me Daycare

Cook County Schools: Cook Primary School

Childcare Partner(s): Nurtured Roots Learning Center

Madison County Charter Schools: Danielsville Elementary School

Childcare Partner(s): Madison County Head Start/Easter Seals; Madison County Early Learning Center



These grantees have implemented, or will continue to implement, their programs over a six-month period. During this time, they will have engaged in targeted professional development and shared their progress and outcomes with other schools and providers, creating a ripple effect of best practices and shared learning across the state.

Selected professional development opportunities from among grantees have included: Cox Campus, Talk2Learn, Strive for Five, and LETRS for Early Childhood Educators, the Basics Insights, Heggerty Phonemic Awareness, and other tailored trainings designed to be centered on the Science of Reading.

**Together, we are building a stronger foundation for literacy in Georgia: one partnership, one classroom, and one child at a time.**

*"The grant made it possible for us to provide quality, research-based curriculum materials to our early childcare centers - materials that are aligned to our K-5 phonics curriculum. This grant also made it possible for us to provide some release time for K4 teachers to observe in kindergarten to see what literacy looks like in kindergarten. Finally, we see the grant impacting our community for years to come, as our early childcare teachers and partners have a deeper understanding of the importance of early oral language development."*

**Dr. Amanda Sailors**

**Madison County Charter Schools**



# REBUILDING HOPE: HURRICANE HELENE RELIEF

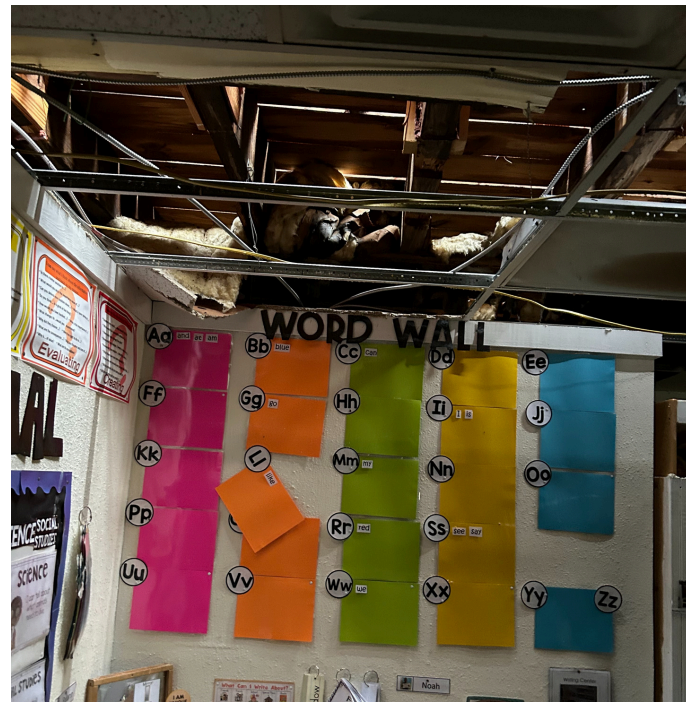
In the wake of Hurricane Helene's devastating impact across Georgia, the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning launched a targeted relief initiative to support early childhood programs in their recovery. After the storm caused widespread damage to facilities and disrupted services for thousands of children and families, the Foundation responded swiftly, mobilizing resources, forging strategic partnerships, and delivering direct financial support to those most affected.

Thanks to a powerful collaboration between GFEC+L, The Aspire Difference Foundation (TADF), and Save the Children US (SCUS), a total of \$49,500 in relief funds was distributed to 33 childcare programs, each receiving \$1,500 to aid in recovery. These grants were made possible through a matching fund structure: GFEC+L contributed \$17,500 in unrestricted funds, matched by \$16,000 each from TADF and SCUS.

The relief grants were designed to be flexible, allowing programs to address their most urgent needs. Based on surveys and documentation submitted by providers, the funds were used to:

- Repair structural damage including roofing, ceilings, fencing, and play structures
- Restore HVAC and A/C systems to ensure safe and comfortable learning environments
- Address interior water damage and replace classroom materials lost to flooding
- Cover food loss and staff wages during closures
- Remove fallen trees and debris to make outdoor spaces safe again

These investments helped programs reopen their doors and continue providing high-quality care to approximately 2,200 children across the state.





# REBUILDING HOPE: HURRICANE HELENE RELIEF

Hurricane Relief grants provided by the Foundation this year not only helped programs recover but also strengthened our network of support for Georgia's early childhood educators.

In future crises, the Foundation may use up to 10% of its unrestricted funds to respond to the needs of impacted providers.

**We extend our deepest gratitude to The Aspire Difference Foundation and Save the Children US, as well donors who made unrestricted gifts in FY25 for their generous contributions and unwavering support. Together, we've helped restore hope and stability for the youngest learners in our state.**

*We appreciate being able to receive this grant. We lost 38 trees and had over \$100,000 dollars in damages to the house, playground, and storage buildings. We were without power for days and we lost refrigerators, an air conditioner, a washer and other electronics due to power surges once the power company started to repair poles and attempt to restore power. We finished repairs on June 25, 2025. These repairs have made it a much safer and healthier environment for our children and the grant made that possible as well as making it possible for us to continue business as usual. I am so grateful for this grant!*

**Connie Pruitt FCCLH, Naylor**



*Due to the funding our children have a brand-new play structure, which will provide them safe and fun stimulation for growth and development. The hurricane took a toll on our business in a number of ways and this funding helped us take one more step back to normal!*

**Love in Action Daycare, Hazlehurst**



*With the help of this Helene Relief Grant, We have been able to restore the playground back to safe conditions. We were also able to replace the fall zone borders, the old ones were broken from where the tree fell on it during the hurricane and made it unsafe to be around. The old swing set was replaced with another one because again a tree fell on it and split it in half. This funding gave us a \$1,500.00 boost that was greatly needed. It has bought so much joy to know that someone out there cares enough to help rebuild when they really did not have to.*

*This grant opportunity has been a major help with this hurricane clean up.*

**Joyful AllStarz, Louisville**



*While the grant did not cover all the costs associated with the damages, it provided timely support that allowed us to act quickly and prevent further issues. Most importantly, it gave our team peace of mind and allowed our children to return to a space that is safe, comfortable, and conducive to early learning and development.*

*This grant opportunity didn't just help us fix a building –it helped us preserve trust with our families, maintain program quality, and continue providing care without disruption. We are truly grateful for the support and hope funding like this continues to be available to small centers who are doing the work but often overlooked.*

**Bright Start Preschool, Valdosta**



# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## REVENUES

Contributions and Grants	484,503.00
Other Revenue	6,322.45

## TOTAL REVENUES

490,825.45

## EXPENSES AND GRANTS

Awards and Grants	584,201.80
Supplies and Maintenance	4,177.59
Other Operating Expenses	22,535.99
TOTAL EXPENSES AND GRANTS	610,914.98

## CHANGES IN NET POSITION

(120,089.53)

## NET POSITION JULY 1, 2024

346,511.24

## NET POSITION JUNE 30, 2025

226,421.71

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

UNITED WAY OF METROPOLITAN ATLANTA VIA THE JOSEPH B. WHITEHEAD FOUNDATION	311,029.14
NASERIAN FOUNDATION DONATION	50,000.00
GEORGIA FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION	50,000.00
THE ASPIRE DIFFERENCE FOUNDATION	18,629.00
SAVE THE CHILDREN US	16,000.00
JOHANNA ELLIS REISINGER AND JONAS REISINGER	7,500.00
GEORGIA LOTTERY CORPORATION	5,000.00
MavQ	5,000.00
MTX	5,000.00
PRIMROSE SCHOOLS IN GEORGIA	5,000.00
UNITED WAY OF GREATER ATLANTA	1,029.14
CARE SOLUTIONS	1,000.00
GEORGIA FAMILY CONNECTION PARTNERSHIP	1,000.00
QUALITY CARE FOR CHILDREN	1,000.00
OTHER MISCELLANEOUS DONORS	8,344.86

## IN KIND SUPPORT

METRO ATLANTA CHAMBER
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