

ELPM BUILDING BLOCKS*Building a Future*

A Quarterly publication for our partners, supporters, and friends

GEEARS: WORKING WITH LEGISLATORS TO PROMOTE EARLY EDUCATION

Mindy Binderman, Executive Director



The Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students was established in 2010 to ensure that, by 2020, Georgia will be a leader in ensuring that all children enter school prepared to succeed and on a path to read to learn by 3rd grade. Our mission is to promote school readiness for children birth to age 5 through strategies informed by research, policy and practice, as measured by the developmental skills necessary to be successful in school and reading to learn by 3rd grade.

In support of our mission, GEEARS serves as a bridge for Georgia's families, business community, child care providers and policy leaders to:

- Promote high quality evidence-based programs and systems by raising the bar on quality for child care and Pre-K.
- Engage in a full-scale public education campaign to foster parental involvement and increase public awareness and support.
- Advocate for increased quality, accessibility and affordability of early childhood care and education.
- Build a statewide board of highly respected civic and business leaders who understand the importance of early education to our state's future competitiveness.

The 2011 Georgia legislative session that ended on April 14, 2011 was a busy one as GEEARS worked with our partners and with legislators to ensure that policies to promote early education and school readiness were addressed. On April 12, the Georgia General Assembly passed the FY2012 budget. The \$18.3 billion budget increases spending while cutting state agencies by an average of 7 percent. The budget adds 400 new slots for subsidized child care for children of low-income working families. Despite the new slots, there will still be fewer children served by subsidized child care because of the loss of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds.

The budget also reflects a revised plan for Georgia Pre-K that Governor Deal and leadership from both parties announced on March 7. The revised plan will add 2,000 slots, bringing the total number of Pre-K slots to 86,000. It maintains the program's current full day (6.5 hours), shortens the number of days from 180 to 160, and eliminates funding for Pre-K Transition Coaches. Pre-k teachers will take a 10 percent pay cut due to the shortened year. As an additional way to cut costs, two students will be added to classrooms bringing the maximum number of students per classroom to 22. The Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) made some administrative changes due to the budget cuts. Because of the increased class size, DECAL has eliminated approximately 300 classrooms across the state. To read more about the classroom cuts and GEEARS' response to the revised plan, please visit:

(<http://dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/PreKRIs411.pdf>).

HB 76, which describes the parameters for post-secondary education funding of Georgia Lottery revenues and state sponsored loans, was signed into law by Governor Deal on March 15. The bill made several changes to the HOPE scholarship, including eliminating money for books and fees and giving students only one chance to regain the scholarship if they lose it. Students who maintain a 3.0 GPA will still receive the HOPE scholarship, but the amount could vary annually and is tied to lottery revenue, not tuition. The new rules go into effect this fall. This bill did NOT contain any language related to Georgia Pre-K.

SB 185 requires the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) to close a child care center following the death of a child at the center. Both the Senate and House passed the bill and the bill is awaiting the Governor's signature.

SB 152 would exempt child care learning centers operated as part of a nonprofit religious organization from operating in accordance with the educational curriculum prescribed by the state board. No action was taken on the bill.

For more information or to join GEEARS email list, please visit www.geears.org

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Of Special Interest: NIEER

ELPM CENTERS MAP



Birth to 3rd Grade Summit:

Why the Focus on Birth to 3rd Grade is so Important

Laura Miller, Project Manager - Partners Advancing Childhood Education, UWMA



United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta (UWMA) recently hosted several Birth to 3rd Grade Summits in select metro Atlanta counties with a focus on the awareness and importance of providing children with the tools necessary to succeed in school before they enter first grade.

For the past ten years, UWMA has developed and implemented a set of early learning strategies based on community input, supported in part by local and national funders and endorsed by two early learning commissions. These strategies have been proven to ensure that children have the necessary skills and tools to be successful in kindergarten and beyond.

Based on this initial work, UWMA is now working on a comprehensive plan for education that will further these goals. Towards this end, the Education Department at UWMA has conducted a series of Birth to 3rd Grade Summits with the hope that these events will both inform and engage community leaders about two key areas; school readiness and early grade literacy. These summits brought together stakeholders from DeKalb/Fulton, Gwinnett, Douglas/Paulding and Henry/Clayton who have an impact on and interest in the future of metropolitan Atlanta as a vibrant and successful community.

Summit topics included “Birth – Third Grade Overview, School Readiness and Early Grade Reading,” “How Coaching Promotes Excellence in Education,” “Teaching Young Children in Multicultural Birth – 3rd Grade Classrooms and Settings” and the “National Early Literacy Panel Report: Implications for Birth – 3rd Grade Learners”. In addition, during each summit participants learned about the key indicators for literacy, received local and national perspectives on the current best practices in metro Atlanta and national strategies that impact our communities and discussed how they could shape the future through more effective local collaboration.

www.unitedwayatlanta.org



News Around the Block

BLACK CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE ATLANTA AND MINNIE HOWELL CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER WELCOME COMMISSIONER BOBBY CAGLE



The Atlanta-affiliate of the Black Child Development Institute (BCDI-Atlanta) recently held a reception welcoming Bobby Cagle, newly appointed Commissioner for Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, to office and invited him to address the early care and education community. The event was held at the Minnie Howell Child Development Center in March. The reception for Commissioner Cagle was well-attended with concerned parents, early care providers, child advocates and leaders from major early care and education organizations.

Commissioner Cagle is a strong advocate of Head Start and recognizes the importance of quality early care and education. He understands how valuable early learning programs are to young children. He acknowledged the organizational leaders in the room who battled with legislation to maintain the current structure of Georgia's pre-K program. BCDI-Atlanta President Cindra Taylor shared with Commissioner Cagle how pleased they were to have him accept their invitation and how his presence speaks volume to families and early care advocates. Ms. Taylor further remarked that BCDI-Atlanta will support his work in the community to make education and the future better for Georgia's children.

*For BCDI program information, please visit: www.bcdi-atl.org
Excerpts by permission—Dr. Bisa Lewis (www.dr.bisa.com)*



Bobby Cagle, Commissioner, DECAL & Cindra Taylor, Executive Director, Minnie Howell Child Development Center & President—Black Child Development, Inc.—Atlanta
Minnie Howell Program information visit www.premier-academy.org



Photos courtesy Angelo Byrd, Photographer

News Around the Block

Fashion Designers, Musicians, Artists....Oh, My!



In February 19, 2011, the Artist Trifecta Gallery in Atlanta held *Fashion Uncorked*, an event to benefit **Easter Seals of North Georgia**. *Fashion Uncorked* is a high-profile design competition that featured the works of 10 Atlanta dress designers. The event was hosted by Monica Pearson, Anchor for WSB-TV Action News. “It was a wonderful night of art,” said Ms. Pearson, “the paintings on the wall in the eco-friendly gallery; the artful designs of the contestants and the eye-catching crowds, all for a great cause, Easter Seals, was nothing short of amazing.” The gala affair raised funds to support Easter Seal’s services to ensure that all children with disabilities or other special needs and their families have equal opportunities to live, learn, work and play in their communities.

Please visit www.northgeorgia.easterseals.com and www.elpm.org for information on Easter Seals and Early Learning Property Management child development centers. Article provided by Norma Center, ESNG.



(l to r) Norma Center, Development Coordinator, Easter Seals North GA
Donna Davidson, CEO, Easter Seals
Kaira Akita, Actress, Tyler Perry Show

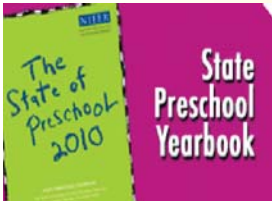


Human Art in Motion



Monica Pearson, Anchor WSB-TV and Jessica Black, Miss USA

Of Special Interest



The Status of Funding for Pre-K

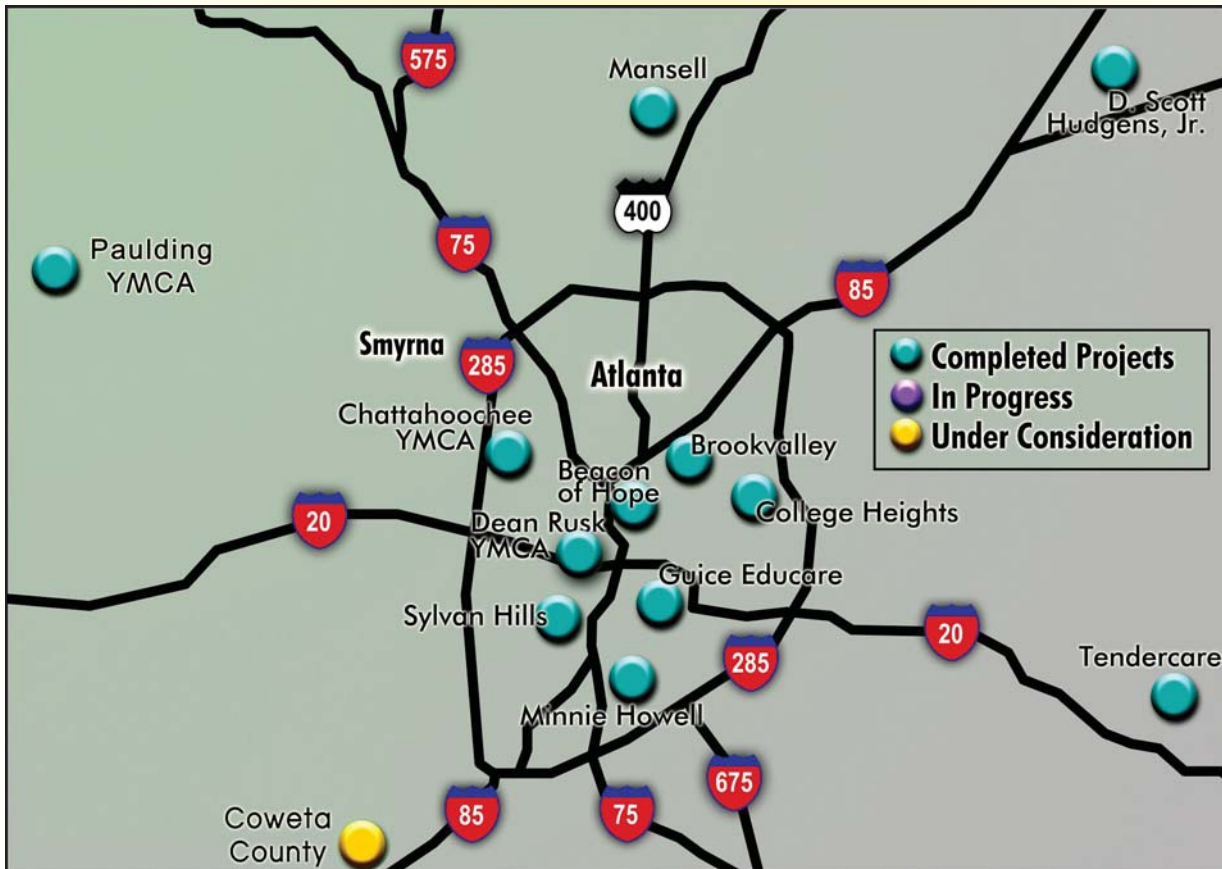
The State of Preschool 2010, a new report by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) shows that states’ preschool funding is declining, which means fewer children will have access to early education, which most agree is essential especially for children living in low-income households. The study looked at the 40 states which fund programs for three- or four-year-olds. “State cuts to preschool funding transformed the recession into a depression for many young children,” says Steven Barnett, author of the NIEER report.

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To read full report, please visit www.nieer.org



Early Learning Property Management Mission Statement

To support and promote early childhood learning and development by providing safe and adequate facilities where early learning programs and activities can be conducted.



ELPM CENTER LOCATIONS

For ELPM center program information, please visit
www.elpm.org



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TO: **Our Partners, Supporters and Friends**

