

Foundations for Learning

The Big Bet for 2033

Creating a Statewide Birth-to-Eight Strategy to Improve the Health and Learning Outcomes of Young Children

Why This Big Bet?

To reach the North Star goal of 65% post-secondary attainment Georgia must address the literacy gaps that emerge before young children enter kindergarten and that widen in elementary school. Too many children are unable to read on grade level because of nonacademic factors like low parental education, community poverty, and lack of access to health care. A comprehensive framework would deliver integrated education, health, and family support services to reduce access and opportunity gaps for vulnerable children and families.

Benefits of a Statewide Child Development Framework

- **Coherence and coordination:** state agencies deliver services and supports in more aligned and integrated ways.
- **Investments in evidence-based strategies:** leaders at all levels identify the policies and practices that result in more positive outcomes for children and families.
- **Focus on parent engagement and education:** programs increase the capacity of parents and families to support child development and well-being.

Power Strategies State Leaders Should Prioritize

<i>Early Care and Child Development</i>	<i>Family and Community Supports</i>
<p>Greater access to evidence-based strategies, such as home visiting, comprehensive health screenings, and early interventions for children with developmental delays, that promote school readiness and parental engagement.</p>	<p>Championing policies that support economic mobility and mitigate family poverty, e.g., Medicaid expansion, paid family leave, state earned income tax credit programs, and expanded access to childcare subsidies.</p>
<p>Creation of a statewide early learning workforce strategy focused on improving working conditions, strengthening professional preparation, and achieving compensation parity relative to similar professions.</p>	<p>Supporting multi-generation strategies that increase parental engagement and encourage the integration of services across Georgia’s education, health, and economic and workforce development sectors.</p>

How Can State Leaders Get Involved

The EdQuest Georgia Coalition recommends:

1. State agency leaders draft the statewide framework by (1) identifying high-impact interventions and supports, (2) determining how, when, and where to deliver services, and (3) setting performance metrics and benchmarks to assess the quality and impact of services.
2. State leaders and local leaders jointly evaluate the reach, impact, and effectiveness of early learning and public health strategies funded by federal pandemic-relief funds to incorporate promising practices into existing state-level strategies.
3. Members of the General Assembly make early education and health services more accessible and affordable by exploring ways to supplement federal and lottery funds with increased state investment.

Four Ways Practitioners Can Support the Big Bet

Gather Local Input

The pandemic disrupted the early care industry. The pandemic also contributed to a decline in the number of infants and young children who received preventative healthcare services. With federal pandemic-relief funds set to expire on September 30, 2023, state agencies should use provider, family, and community feedback to guide investments and to inform the delivery of services and supports.

Create a Comprehensive Screening Schedule Using Existing Models

State and local advocates should use existing early learning and pediatric health resources to develop a schedule of education and health screenings that would result in targeting support to children exhibiting developmental delays or identified as having one or more learning disabilities. Frequent and intensive interventions, especially for vulnerable populations, could narrow health and learning gaps over time.

Assemble a Task Force to Develop a Cross-Sector Plan to Integrate Services and Supports

Education, health, and nonprofit leaders should convene a working group to recommend a new program framework for executing a unified child development and family support strategy.

Demonstrate the Social and Economic Value of Expanded Support for Families with Young Children

State leaders, nonprofits, and the private sector should create a statewide communications campaign that demonstrates the value of increased investment in early learning and care for young children and their parents.