

# Building a Strong Foundation: Highlighting Georgia DECAL & Foundation for Early Care + Learning

Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner

Laura Wagner, Executive Director



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**

BRIGHT FROM THE START

**Vision:** Every child in Georgia will have equal access to high quality early care and education.

**Mission:** The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning improves outcomes for children and families by strengthening early learning experiences in partnership with early education programs, professionals, stakeholders, families, and communities.



# Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

---



Total Budget of \$938,487,039



One of a few states with an agency **dedicated** to early childhood education



Administers and regulates critical early education programs that support families





# Programs within DECAL

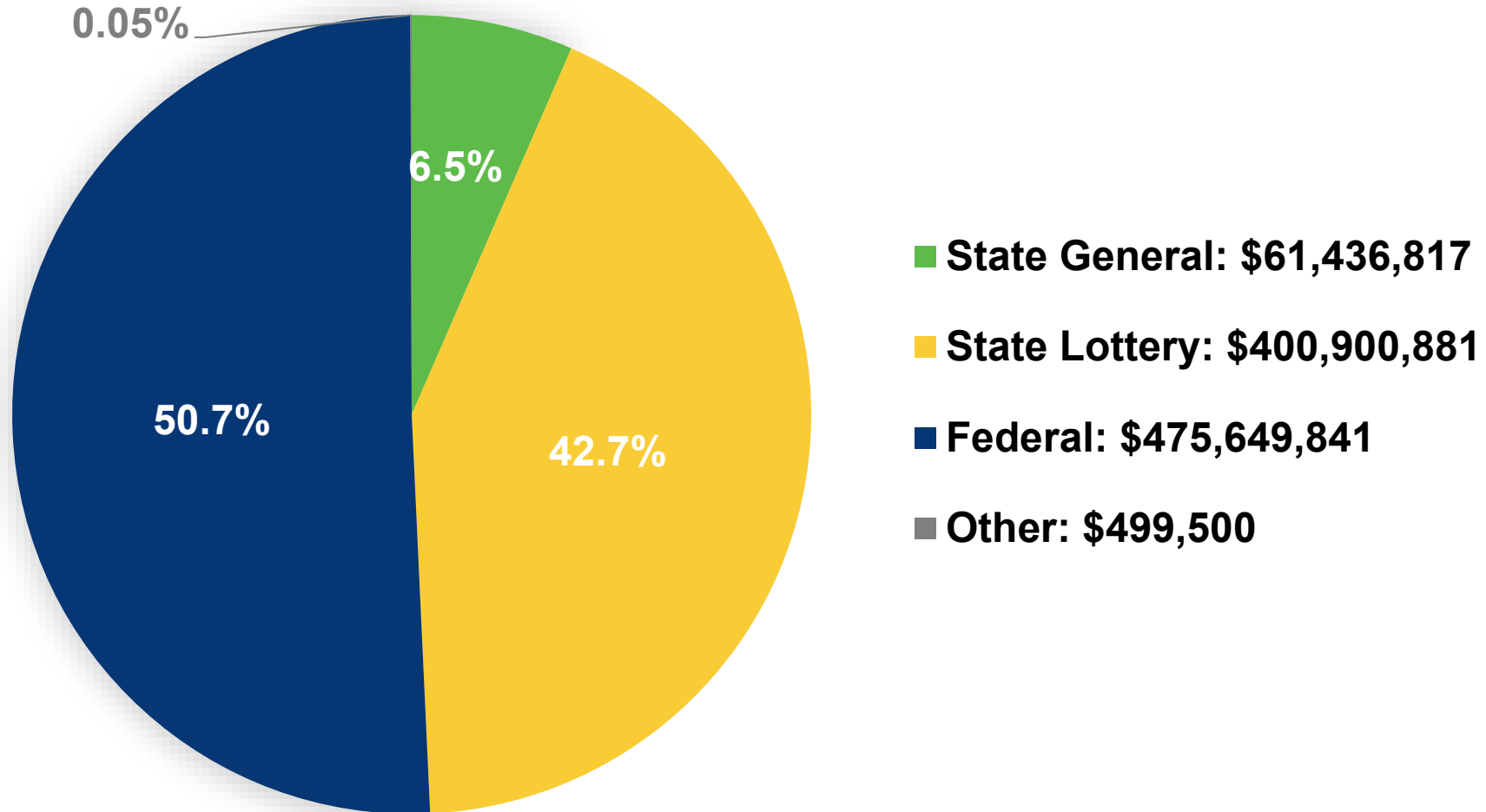
---

- Georgia's Pre-K Program
- Child Care Licensing
- Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS), Georgia's subsidy program
- Quality Rated, Georgia's quality rating and improvement system
- Nutrition Services
- Head Start State Collaboration Office
- Inclusion and Behavior Supports
- Infant and Toddler Program
- Infant Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH)
- Workforce Development and Professional Learning
- Quality initiatives and grants including:
  - Lifting Infants and Toddlers through Language Rich Environments (Project LITTLE)
  - Quality Rated Language and Literacy Endorsement (QRLLE)



# DECAL Budget by Fund Source

AFY 2023: \$938,487,039





# Importance of High-Quality Early Education



90% of brain development takes place from birth to age five

Early education is associated with improved academic achievement, cognitive development, self-regulation skills, and social-emotional development

All children benefit from high-quality preschool, but especially children from low-income families and dual language learners

Children who enter kindergarten ready to succeed are more likely to read on grade level by third grade, graduate from high school, go to college, and be productive members of the workforce


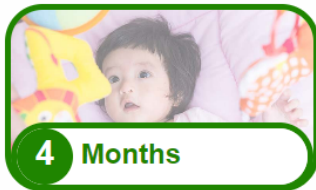



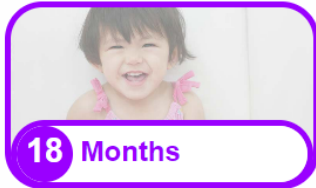
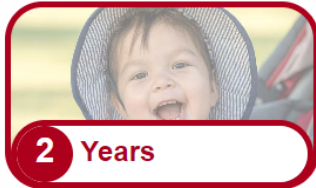
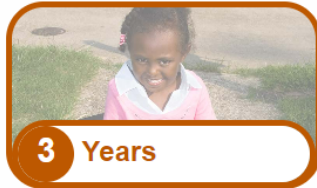
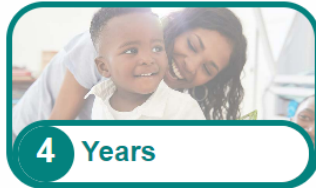



- Licensed and regulates child care programs including child care learning centers and family child care learning homes
- Works to ensure that child care settings are safe, healthy, nurturing, and provide quality early learning experiences
- Provides technical assistance and other supports to programs to help them meet basic health and safety standards



# Understanding Development: Milestones

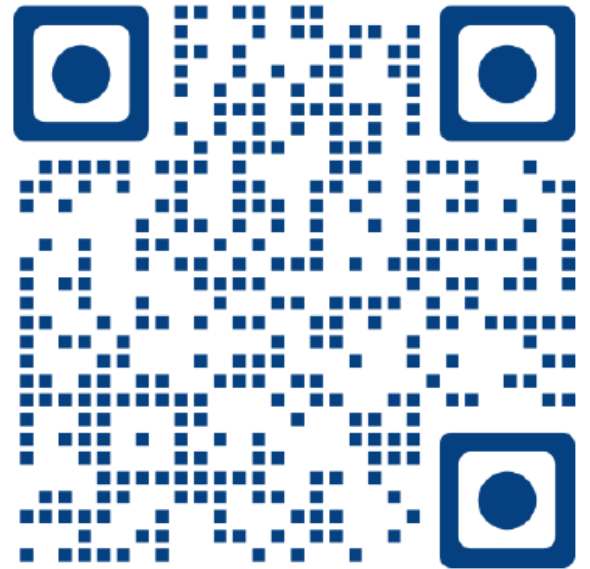
Select up to 3 Age Groups

 <p>2 Months</p>	 <p>4 Months</p>	 <p>6 Months</p>	 <p>9 Months</p>	 <p>1 Year</p>
 <p>18 Months</p>	 <p>2 Years</p>	 <p>3 Years</p>	 <p>4 Years</p>	 <p>5 Years</p>

## Social and Emotional Development

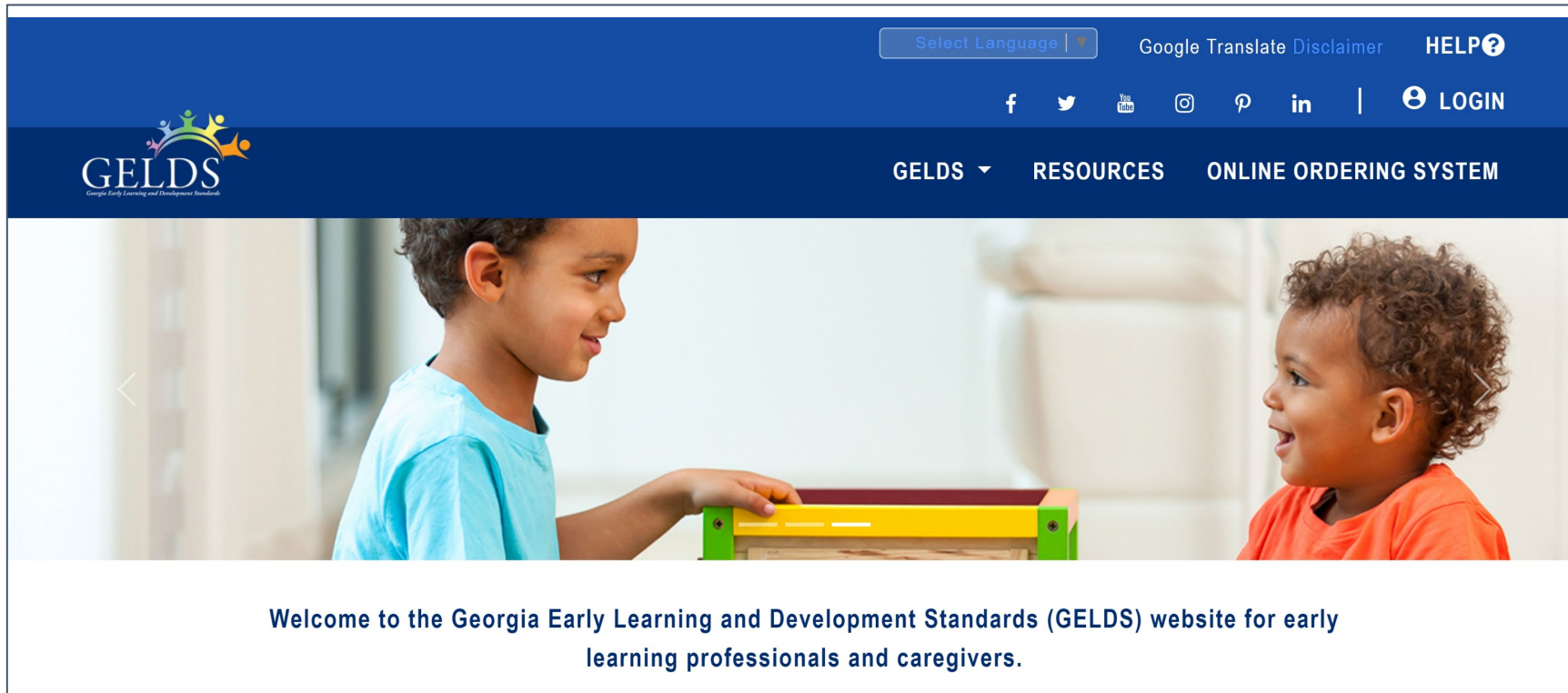
Development of a sense of self, being able to regulate emotions and behavior, and building relationships with adults and peers. Includes feeling safe and nurtured, using manners and conflict resolution skills, being cooperative, flexible, and kind.

## Language/Communication

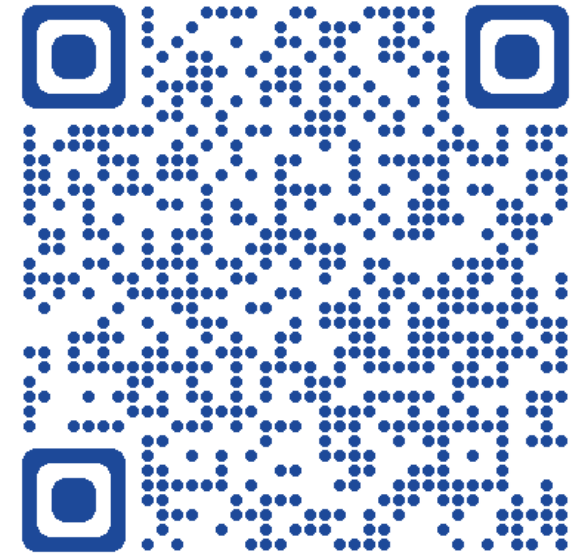




# Understanding Development: Early Learning Standards



The screenshot shows the top portion of the GELDS website. The header is dark blue with the GELDS logo on the left, which includes a stylized sun and the text "GELDS Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards". On the right side of the header, there is a "Select Language" dropdown menu, "Google Translate Disclaimer", and a "HELP" icon. Below these are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, and LinkedIn, followed by a "LOGIN" button. A navigation bar below the header contains the text "GELDS", "RESOURCES", and "ONLINE ORDERING SYSTEM". The main content area features a photograph of two young children, a boy in a light blue shirt and a girl in an orange shirt, looking at each other. Below the photo, a white text box contains the message: "Welcome to the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) website for early learning professionals and caregivers."

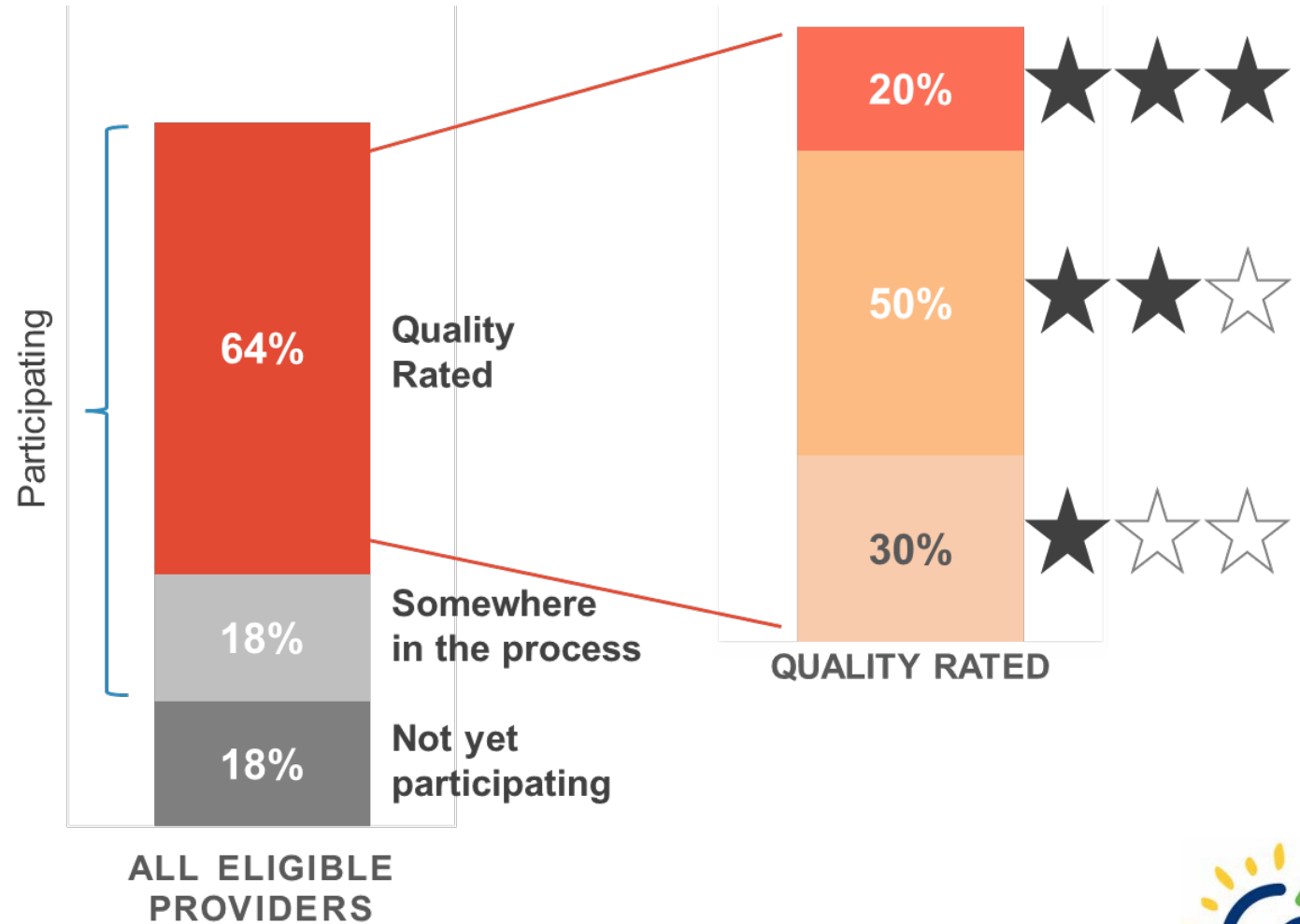


[gelds.dec.state.ga.us](https://gelds.dec.state.ga.us)





- Georgia's system that determines, improves, and communicates the quality of programs providing child care
- Launched in 2012, the program has assigned over 6,000 ratings
  - Ratings include a live 3-hour observation by a trained, independent assessor.
- Of Georgia's 4,520 eligible providers, 2,900 are Quality Rated





# CAPS

CHILDCARE AND PARENT SERVICES

- Assists no- to low-income families with the cost of child care while they work or attend school
- Helps families find high-quality early learning environments
- Utilizes a 2Gen approach
- Serves approximately 50,000 children per week, temporarily 60,000 due to COVID-19 relief funding
- Provides tiered reimbursement rates for Quality Rated providers
- \$280 million total annual federal and state funding; temporarily \$445 million due to COVID-19 relief funding



The logo features two 3D rectangular blocks, one blue and one green, stacked on top of each other.

# Georgia's Pre-K Program

- Funded through the Georgia Lottery for Education
- Since 1992, the program has served over 2M million in a public-private partnerships
  - 50% of classes in child care centers
  - 50% of classes in schools
- Prepares children for kindergarten across all domains of learning
- Additional Summer Transition Program (STP) serves ~5,000 students in a five-week program



# Georgia's Pre-K Program Research

---

- Research consistently shows that Georgia's Pre-K provides a strong foundation that supports children's growth and development across all learning domains and prepares them for kindergarten
- A key strength of Georgia's Pre-K Program is building foundational language and literacy skills for reading
- Children who went to Georgia's Pre-K did significantly better on third-grade End-Of-Grade (EOG) tests than those who did not attend any pre-k





- Beginning in 2017, LITTLE grants support language and literacy instruction in 2- and 3-star infant and toddler classrooms
- High-quality professional development, weekly coaching sessions, and monthly literacy forums for program leaders and infant and toddler teachers
- Also includes literacy resources for classrooms, stipends for participants, funding for a peer coach, and support for credential attainment
- LITTLE has served 159 programs and over 350 classrooms





- Supporting young children's social emotional development and mental health is critical to a strong language and literacy foundation
- Inclusion and Behavior Support Specialists provide training, on-site coaching and technical assistance, and consultation for child care programs, families and teachers.
- SEEDS grants fund child care programs to have an onsite coach, provide intensive training and coaching, and funding for classroom materials to support social emotional development.
- Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation grants provide mental health and self care trainings as well as mental health service coordination for children, families, and staff at child care programs.





GEORGIA FOUNDATION FOR  
EARLY CARE + LEARNING



# Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning

---

- Independent 501(c)3 that supports the efforts of the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.
- Formed in 2017 after the Georgia General Assembly passed enabling legislation.
- Created to expand access to programming, to support childcare providers in Georgia, to provide opportunities to innovate upon existing services, to celebrate the accomplishments of the Early Childhood Education workforce, and more.
- All operational expenses paid for by Child Care Development Block Grant funds.
- All funds raised by the Foundation to be used for programming, not overhead.



# Funded Projects

---

- To Date:
  - Georgia's Pre-K 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration
  - Quality Rated Mini-Grants
  - Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the Year
  - Early Childhood Educators of the Year
  - DECAL Scholars of the Year
  - Disaster Relief for Childcare Programs
  - Covid-19 Response and Recovery
  - Quality Rated 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Projects and Events
  - Ascend Policy Acceleration Partnership Efforts/Two Gen Implementation
- Proposed (adding to projects above):
  - "Last Resort" Scholarships for families ineligible for CAPS
  - Start-up grants for Summer Food Service Program Sponsors/Sites
  - Georgia Children's Cabinet 2Gen Leadership Academy



# Thank You

Susan Adams

Deputy Commissioner  
Pre-K & Instructional Supports

[susan.adams@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:susan.adams@dec.al.ga.gov)

Laura Wagner

Executive Director  
Foundation for Early Care + Learning

[laura.wagner@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:laura.wagner@dec.al.ga.gov)

