



## **DECAL & GaDOE Foundations Awarding \$100,000 in Early Literacy Alignment Mini-Grants to Local Public Elementary Schools and Child Care Programs**

*Five-Thousand Dollar Mini-Grants designed to facilitate smooth transition for Rising Pre-K and Kindergarten Students in Rural Georgia*

**ATLANTA, Ga., (September 3, 2024)** – The Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning is joining the Georgia Foundation for Public Education this fall in offering twenty \$5,000 mini-grants to rural elementary schools partnering with child care programs to help students transition into Pre-K and Kindergarten. To receive the mini-grant, the schools must show how they collaborate with the child care programs to vertically align their early literacy practices to assist young students.

The program is targeted for schools in rural areas of Georgia, with a county population of 35,000 or less. Local elementary schools will partner with local child care providers who have received a star rating in DECAL's Quality Rated Program.

“Working together to improve literacy in Georgia, schools and child care programs can create a powerful network of support and innovation, fostering an environment where every child has the opportunity to succeed and thrive in their educational journey,” said Laura Wagner, Executive Director of the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning.

Grant applications will be accepted starting September 16, 2024, through October 7, 2024, with winners announced in late October. The selected professional development program must have an early literacy focus that will strengthen vertical alignment in literacy instruction at the child care center and the elementary school, ensuring rising pre-k and kindergarten students are entering school with strong foundational literacy skills.

“Literacy is a key area of focus for both the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Foundation for Public Education,” GFPE Executive Director Paige Buzbee said. “We know that students’ literacy development begins well before they enter a kindergarten classroom, and this partnership allows

us to make direct investments in early literacy that will ultimately support all students' ability to learn to read – and later read to learn.” Each school will receive \$5,000 over a six-month period. Twenty different schools will be selected to receive the Early Literacy Alignment Mini-Grant.

An informational webinar will be held on Tuesday, September 10, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. To register, please visit the following registration link: <https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/b094cc31-63a6-4838-a093-0e42d5356837@b8e0a1a4-a274-4c23-97e9-608b64c12f4e>

For more information on the Early Literacy Alignment Mini-Grants, please visit [www.gaearylved.org](http://www.gaearylved.org) or contact Wagner at 404.823.4062 or [laura.wagner@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:laura.wagner@dec.al.ga.gov).

### **About DECAL**

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program and federal nutrition programs, and manages Quality Rated, Georgia's community-powered child care rating system. The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to [www.dec.al.ga.gov](http://www.dec.al.ga.gov).

### **About the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning**

Founded by Governor Nathan Deal and the Georgia General Assembly in 2017, the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning is dedicated to making strategic investments aimed at enhancing and broadening high-quality early education in Georgia. Our mission is to ensure that every child in Georgia is equipped for success upon entering Kindergarten, irrespective of their family's income or geographic location. As a 501c3 organization, the Foundation is committed to fostering educational excellence through collaborative partnerships with families, communities, the early care and education industry, and stakeholders. For more information, please visit [www.gaearylved.org](http://www.gaearylved.org).

### **About the Georgia Foundation for Public Education**

The Georgia Foundation for Public Education (GFPE) is the philanthropic arm of the Georgia Department of Education and exists for the single purpose of supporting educational excellence for students in Georgia. GFPE provides simple ways for donors to support students in Georgia's K-12 system, by investing in a current GFPE project or working with GFPE to fund their vision.

Georgians can directly support K-12 students through GFPE by purchasing an [“Educator”](#) or [“Support Education” license tag](#), or by applying their tax dollars toward public schools via the [PEACH Education Tax Credit](#).