

For Immediate Release

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GEEARS and State Partners Launch Build My Brain Course

Free, online course on early brain development supported by state leaders and available to public

Atlanta, GA (October 1, 2018) - GEEARS: Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students announced today the launch of ***Build My Brain***, a cross-disciplinary online course focused on the science and importance of early childhood development. The Build My Brain course was inspired by a collaboration between GEEARS, the State of Georgia's child-serving agencies, and the **Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University**. The goal of this collective impact initiative is to identify how the science of early childhood development can be applied to policies and services for the birth-to-five population to advance the Governor's goal of having every Georgia child reading on grade level by the end of third grade.

"We are thrilled to launch the Build My Brain course to help create more awareness about the key concepts in early brain development for professionals who may not interact directly with young children, but play key roles in state agencies that impact children and families as well as for community leaders and others in the general public," said Mindy Binderman, Executive Director of GEEARS. "The design, implementation, and distribution of Build My Brain has been extremely collaborative, and we are thankful for the support from the Fuqua Foundation, the United Way of Greater Atlanta, and Better Brains for Babies as well as the expertise of our partners."

With support from leadership at the **Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)**, the **Department of Public Health (DPH)**, the **Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS)**, and **Better Brains for Babies**, GEEARS collaborated with the **Rollins Center for Language and Literacy at the Atlanta Speech School** and the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University to create ***Build My Brain***.

"Children's brains develop in an environment of relationships, and the experiences we all provide in the earliest years shape brain architecture, laying a strong or weak foundation for lifelong learning, behavior, and health," said Al Race, Deputy Director and Chief Knowledge Officer at the Center on the Developing Child. "When early learning professionals, parents and

caregivers, policymakers, teachers, and community leaders understand how we all can support healthy child development, more children will have the opportunity to thrive.”

The three-lesson course is housed on the [Rollins Center’s Cox Campus](#), a free, universally accessible online professional development platform and community of practice with more than 42,000 members including educators and other child-serving professionals and features topics including early brain development, the role of responsive caregivers and other adults, and the effects of adverse childhood experiences and “toxic stress.”

“The science tells us what to do,” said Comer Yates, Executive Director of the Atlanta Speech School. “When more people understand how brains are developed, and how early we have an opportunity to influence that development, the better our chance at meeting our common goal – to provide each child a chance to decide their own future and to lead a choice-filled life.”

The Build My Brain course will connect state agency employees to the science of early childhood development so that all staff, regardless of role, can see themselves in the broader statewide effort to support children’s healthy brain development and lifelong well-being. Agencies can utilize the course for employee onboarding and as training or professional development for existing employees.

“DECAL programs and services focus on creating positive experiences, supporting responsive caregivers, and enhancing nurturing environments for children birth through age five,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “We are excited to work with GEEARS to provide DECAL employees valuable information on brain development and how it contributes to the well-being of Georgia’s youngest learners.”

In the first few years of a child’s life, more than one million neural connections form every second. Employees at child- and family-serving state agencies can play an important role in shaping children’s experiences during these critical early years.

“Early brain development is the number one priority for the Department of Public Health. We have the opportunity through our various programs to reach families in the first three years of a child’s life,” said J. Patrick O’Neal, M.D., commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public

Health. “With this training, we are partnering with other state agencies and organizations to advance the Governor’s goal of having every child in Georgia reading on level by the end of third grade. We are all in this together.”

The knowledge that employees will gain from completing Build My Brain will deepen their understanding of the development of the young children they serve and how a supportive cross-sector ecosystem helps Georgia’s families thrive.

“Through research, we know that the first few years of a child’s life are critical for their development,” said Keith D. Bostick, Deputy Director of Child Welfare at the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. “The Division is proud to partner with GEEARS in spreading the word about the new Build My Brain training. As the state’s child welfare agency, our mission is to promote the health and wellbeing of all children so that Georgia’s families and communities can thrive. This training is especially important for employees and partners who work with children in foster care.”

The ***Build My Brain*** course is available free of charge, and accessible to the public.

Click [here](#) to access the ***Build My Brain*** course.