

Board of Early Care and Learning

Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting

Thursday, May 16, 2019, 9:00 a.m.

Bright from the Start

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE – East Tower

Oak Conference Room

Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Amy M. Jacobs, Commissioner

Meeting Minutes

Board Members

Susan Harper

Dr. Melissa Boekhaus

Carlene Talton

Jerri Kropp

Phil Davis

Kathy Howell

Victor Morgan

Public Guests

Uzma Azhar, Charlotte Collins, Emily Dore, Charlotte Pelz, Kayla Washington, Jessica Woltjen

Bright from the Start Staff

Amy Jacobs, Commissioner

Rian Ringsrud, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration

Elisabetta Kasfir, Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs

Bentley Ponder, Deputy Commissioner for Quality

Innovations and Partnerships

Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner for Pre-K and

Instructional Supports

Pam Stevens, Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services

Dennis Brice, Chief Information Officer

Randy Hudgins, Director of Research and Policy

Allison Setterlind, Director of Head Start Collaboration

Christi Moore, Director of Professional Learning

Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer

Robin Stevens, Director of Human Resources

Denise Jensen, Quality Rated Operations Director

Faith Duncan, Director of Pre-K Field Operations

Jackie Shivers, Director of Quality Initiatives

Donna Johnson, CAPS Family Support Director

Catherine Broussard, CCS Director of Process and Policy

Jennie Couture, Director of Instructional Supports

William Cox, Director of Infrastructure

Sonja Adams, Nutrition Program Administrator

Kori Woodward-Dickens, Legal Services Officer

Farouk Baksh, Senior Director of Technology

Bridgette Washington, Quality Rated Assessor Supervisor

Ben Appling, Audit Project Coordinator

Jill O'Meara, Community Coordinator

Demetrius Wilburn, IT Helpdesk Specialist

Quandra Collins, Executive Administrative Assistant

Sonja Steptoe, Departmental Editor and Writer

Anita Hasni, Intern

1. Call to Order

Board Chair Susan Harper called the meeting to order at 9 a.m.

2. Welcome

Ms. Harper welcomed the board members, Department of Early Care and Learning staff, and public guests.

3. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Ms. Harper asked for a motion to accept the day's agenda. Phil Davis moved to accept, and Victor Morgan seconded. The Board accepted the minutes unanimously.

Ms. Harper next asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the February 21, 2019, meeting of the Board. Dr. Melissa Boekhaus moved to approve, and Carlene Talton seconded. The Board approved the minutes unanimously.

4. Inspiration

Ms. Harper read a poem about cherishing the important things in life.

5. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities.

- Ms. Harper read to a Pre-K class in Lee County during Inclusion Week. She also read to a Pre-K class in Dougherty County as part of the Dr. Seuss Read Across America Program.
- Dr. Boekhaus attended the Early Care and Learning Safety Summit in Macon co-sponsored by DECAL and the American Academy of Pediatrics Georgia Chapter in March.

6. Bright from the Start Presentations

Members of the executive staff provided updates on their program areas:

a. Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Amy Jacobs announced that DECAL is directing the implementation of Governor Brian Kemp's new Language & Literacy Endorsement initiative. She explained that the Governor is very committed to increasing literacy rates and helping students read at grade level by the end of third grade. Literacy development begins even before a child is born and continues through a child's formal education, which is why it's so important. The Commissioner said DECAL is uniquely positioned because of its work with almost 5,000 child care providers to increase their quality and help them with language and literacy instruction in their classrooms. As a result, DECAL has been given the charge to develop a language and literacy endorsement that will sit beside Quality Rated, which looks at all elements of quality. The endorsement will become the next step in the Quality Rated process for higher rated programs to focus more intentionally and specifically on raising child care literacy instruction and supporting teachers in doing that. The intent is twofold: moving the needle in terms of supporting Quality Rated programs in increasing their practices around responsive caregiving and appropriate instruction around language and literacy development; and providing additional recognition to programs that have already made these investments and are showing higher levels of support in their child care every day. She explained that the initiative grew out of meetings of the Governor's transition team group on literacy and policy recommendations that she participated in. The group developed three core actions for every child: parents will talk to their babies to deliver language nutrition to every baby in Georgia; parents will continue to follow the science from infant/toddler through Pre-K, qualifying all early learning professionals to prepare the youngest learners for literacy and adjusting Quality Rated to create a language/literacy endorsement; and parents and teachers will measure and act on what matters from kindergarten through 3rd grade to build expertise in teachers to determine language abilities and reading skill development to each child's needs to ensure the necessary brain development occurs. To create the endorsement properly, the group advised the Governor to appoint a review panel of state and national experts including representatives from Georgia State University, University of Georgia, University of North Carolina's Frank Porter Graham Institute, and the Child Trends research organization to work alongside DECAL staff. They will review existing research and provide recommendations about what a language and literacy endorsement for Quality Rated should look like. They will make recommendations about the appropriate instruments to measure language and literacy levels and about how to create an endorsement that both recognizes and supports improvements in appropriate language and literacy instruction. The expert advice will help ensure that DECAL is moving the needle on supporting the workforce to make improvements. She characterized the timeline as "aggressive." The panel will meet from April to July 2019 and spend August and September finalizing the recommendations. A public comment period for stakeholders will follow and the panel will finalize the endorsement based on stakeholder comments by the end of November. Under the plan, DECAL will begin implementing and issuing the endorsements in January 2020.

The Commissioner introduced Dennis Brice as the new Chief Information officer. She also announced that Kaela Tustin, Beth Adcock, and Jonathan Hines are the public school Pre-K Teacher of the Year finalists and Teresa Dixon, Kaysha Smith, and Heather Williams are the finalists in the private center category, with the winners to be announced in September, following classroom observations and interviews.

Mr. Morgan asked about the efforts DECAL is undertaking to improve retention among the early care and education workforce while maintaining quality and affordability. The Commissioner said she recognized that it is an issue and the topic keeps her up at night. She also said it's an issue nationally. She noted that DECAL is investing millions of dollars in technical assistance and professional development to improve quality and yet teachers, who have a hard job, are making about \$9 an hour, and they are leaving. She believes retention is at low levels also because employment rates are low. DECAL is trying to determine how to use its resources more strategically, how to utilize

money from the state, how to use its federal resources and how to work with private foundations more closely. She believes DECAL can be more creative in utilizing the available resources to improve teacher salaries and retention.

b. Finance, Legislative, and Administrative Update

Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration Rian Ringsrud began by telling the Board that DECAL is partnering with Georgia Organics to sponsor a Farm to School and Early Care and Education Summit at Helms College in Macon on June 7-8. The event will educate providers on strategies to get healthy, locally sourced farm-raised food in the classrooms to help ensure that students are well nourished and ready to learn, and ways to improve the youngsters' relationship with locally sourced and raised food. Mr. Davis made Mr. Ringsrud aware that Georgia Power is participating in a program to address the problem of food deserts in the metro Atlanta area.

Mr. Ringsrud's presentation included an update on the agency's state fiscal year (SFY) 2019 budget and expenditures, which are on track. As of the end of the state fiscal 2019 third quarter on March 31, 2019, with 25% of the fiscal year remaining, DECAL has 24% of its budgeted funds remaining. He also announced that the SFY 2020 budget was approved by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Kemp. It totals \$847.5 million, and includes an \$11.7 million increase over the previous year, composed of \$11.4 million for Pre-K teacher raises and a smaller portion, 326,586, for the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program. He also provided details on the acquisition of additional office, cubicle, and conference space in the West Tower of the Floyd Building for the Legal Services and Audits & Compliance divisions. The new space was needed to accommodate additional staff and programs and overall agency growth; and it covers over 9,000 square feet, 12 offices, 40 cubicles, 2 conference rooms, and a breakroom. He also offered to give Board members a tour of the new space. Mr. Davis asked how many different locations DECAL has. Mr. Ringsrud said DECAL occupies three floors in the East Tower, one floor on the West Tower, and two floors in the Agriculture Building.

c. System Reform/Quality Innovations & Partnerships

Deputy Commissioner Bentley Ponder announced that the division formerly known as System Reform has been renamed as Quality Innovations & Partnerships to reflect its adjusted focus on community outreach, Early Head Start and community partnerships, the Quality Rated Program, and research and policy analysis. He also summarized the current work in each of those areas. In Community Outreach and Partnerships, the six Early Education Community Partnership Coordinators have begun outreach with partnerships and collaborative meetings. They also have established a caseload of child care programs in their regions and will be contacting them throughout the year. The unit has also awarded four Two-Generation Innovation Grants, consisting of two capacity-building awards the Northwest and Spalding County and two implementation awards in Macon and Clayton Counties. The unit has also concluded its yearlong partnership with Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) that developed a social media influencer campaign consisting of videos and other digital content that increased total followers by 42%. The division's Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CCP) director recently retired and DECAL is currently searching for her successor. DECAL has applied for a continuation of the 2014 EHS-CCP grant to deliver ongoing services and supports to the children from families with low incomes through its Quality Care for Children hub. The hub agency will coordinate support, care, and services to the program's child care center and family child care learning home partners and periodically report back to DECAL. Mr. Ponder also reported that during the first quarter of 2019, the Quality Rated team issued program ratings at an impressive rate. Overall, the team conducted 17 days of reliability recheck observations, 31 days of initial reliability observations, and 448 observations that led to a total of 249 program ratings. As of May 1, 2019, there were 4,702 eligible programs in the state, with 3,465 programs participating in Quality Rated and over 1,800 participants, or 38%, had earned star ratings, with another 36% of the participants still completing the process. The data also show that nearly 60% of children receiving subsidies are in Quality Rated child care and nearly 50% of CAPS providers are Quality Rated, indicating that DECAL continues to make progress toward the goal of having all eligible providers Quality Rated by December 31, 2020. Mr. Ponder pointed out that the agency has a pretty good representative sample of child care centers participating in Quality Rated but far fewer child care learning homes among the participants. He feels more work needs to be done in recruiting the learning homes to participate in Quality Rated. The division's Research team continues to provide research, evaluation, and data support throughout DECAL, to administer DECAL's CCDF Research and Evaluation Grant, and to support Georgia's Preschool Development Grant. Among its accomplishments, the Research group has concluded the Georgia's Pre-K waitlist

study, the study of second grade performance as part of Georgia's Pre-K Longitudinal Evaluation, and the four-part Quality Rated Validation study.

Mr. Ponder introduced Denise Jenson and Randy Hudgins, who shared the results of the fourth and final phase of the Quality Rated Validation Study. The fourth part examined whether Quality Rated star ratings are related to independent measures of quality, children's development over the school year, and work climate. The key findings were that center-based programs and family child care learning homes with the highest star ratings were generally of higher quality than lower-rated programs. The study did not find evidence of differences at every level of star rating or on every independent measure of quality. Mr. Davis observed that some of the differences between lower and higher rated programs seem very small and he asked whether the findings on classroom quality indicators show that DECAL is getting the expected return on its investment. Mr. Ponder explained that although the differences were small, they were statistically significant. Mr. Davis also asked if the small differences mean that a 2-star program might be of sufficient quality for children and parents might not need to aspire to 3-star care. Mr. Ponder said the study wasn't designed to answer that question. But it did show that in all measures of classroom quality, the 3-star programs scored higher than the lower star-rated programs and in many cases the differences were statistically significant. Susan Adams, the deputy commissioner who leads Georgia's Pre-K Program, provided another explanation of why the numerically small difference between the scores of 0-, 1-, 2-, and 3-star programs is nevertheless highly significant. She pointed out that in the validation study, the 3-star programs on average scored above 5 on emotional support and classroom organization while the 0-star and 1-star programs either failed to or barely scored a 5 in most cases. She said a large body of research shows that in Pre-K classes, scores of 5 or above on those domains are linked to better student outcomes, indicating that students in those higher-rated programs are getting a better experience and are more likely to achieve better learning outcomes than those in lower rated programs that scored below or at 5. In response to a request from Mr. Davis, Ms. Adams also clarified that while none of the rated programs scored at the benchmark of 3.5 on instructional support quality that is linked to better outcomes, the 3-stars got closer to it and that they continue to strive for it. She added that Georgia's Pre-K Program classrooms, on average, score about a 3.4 on the instrument and DECAL continues to invest in coaching and professional development to try and reach the benchmark. Ms. Harper noted that teachers in center-based programs spoke fewer words per minute than those in learning homes and attributed it to the differences in class size between learning centers and learning homes. Ms. Jenson said the study couldn't answer why the scores might be higher. She also said the study didn't reveal what the spoken words were; however, the results showed that toddler teachers in 3-star settings did utter more complex phrases to students than those in 0- to 2-star programs. Ms. Kropp suggested that the results might align with reports showing that reading to children at home leads to big increases in literacy and other outcomes. The study also concluded that preschool children in higher-rated programs had stronger social-emotional skills than children in lower-rated programs in some, but not all, domains. These findings mostly mirrored those in other states. But Georgia also found a correlation between higher star rating and strong early math skills. But, the star rating was not associated with infant or toddler outcomes. Mr. Davis noted a consistent roll off between 1-and 2-star programs and then a rise at the 3-star level. He also noted that the difference between a 1-and 2-star was greater than that between a 2- and 3-star. Mr. Ponder explained that the statistically significant difference was between the 1-star and 3-star programs. The third key finding was that center-based staff in the higher rated 2- and 3-star programs tended to have higher indicators of a positive work environment, particularly turnover, wages, and benefits. Job commitment was also very high on average, and preschool teachers in 3-star programs were significantly more committed than 0-star preschool teachers. Based on these findings, the researchers have recommended that DECAL continue current revisions to the rating system, move to ITERS-3 and FCCERS-3, focus quality improvement efforts on infants and toddlers, continue supporting programs once they are rated, continue efforts to improve compensation for the early care and education workforce, and continue to focus on all areas of children's development.

Ms. Harper recessed the meeting at 10:23 a.m. and resumed it at 10:33 a.m.

d. Child Care Services Update

Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services (CCS) Pam Stevens provided an update on the division's two-year data collection and research project examining the relationship between quality and compliance in School-Age programs, which provide educational care before and after school and during school vacation for pre-k, kindergarten, and elementary school students. The results could inform the development of a set of quality and

licensing standards for all School-Age programs in the state. There are more than 2,700 providers in the state serving the School-Age population. Quality Rated, which is designed for infant, toddler, preschool and Pre-K classrooms, doesn't currently cover School-Age programs for the kindergarten through 5th grade population, so there's no quality measure for that group. The study will give DECAL information to help the agency understand how to support them and improve their quality. In any given month over 45% of CAPS scholarships are serving children in school age programs. Because of the huge investment DECAL makes in this age group, ensuring that they are supported is important. As part of the School-Age Quality Improvement Project, DECAL distributed surveys to 241 child care centers with afterschool programs to which 41 providers responded with perceptions about them. From that group of respondents, DECAL conducted focus group interviews. The focus group findings showed that more training and technical assistance specifically geared toward the School-Age population. They also showed that finding a skilled workforce to provide consistent, professionalized care for the age group is difficult. The group responses also revealed that behavioral challenges within the School-Age group hinder quality and teacher retention and that teachers in the classrooms rarely have time to plan. Most identified Pinterest and the Internet as the most utilized resources if activities are planned. In collaboration with the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network, DECAL also piloted a November 2018 training session in standards compliance and best practices for six participating 2- and 3-star Quality Rated providers as part of the project. The providers received initial quality assessment observations in December 2018. Between January and June of 2019, the group received quality relationships training, technical assistance, family, and community partnerships training. Final quality assessment observations followed that. The School-Age Data Project begins in summer of 2019, with evaluation of 50 School-Age classrooms by Quality Rated assessors using SACCERS and CCS licensing consultants using DECAL's child care licensing rules. As an incentive participants will receive \$200 to be used for classroom materials. CCS expects to receive the final results, which will be used only for data-gathering purposes, by September 1, 2019. Ms. Stevens said CCS hopes to learn more about what quality looks like in the programs, how licensing compliance relates to quality, and what the next steps should be. Ms. Harper said she is concerned about the lack of outside time children in general and those in afterschool programs are getting. In incorporating Quality Rated into after school programs, she wondered how much structured free play time should be included in the after school programs when the standards are created, because the students have been inside in classrooms so much of the day already. Ms. Stevens said she shared that concern but noted that homework is a priority in afterschool care among parents. She said the study will help CCS find out what's happening in the programs and how much time is spent on various activities. Ms. Harper said she favors no homework in grades 1-5 and she would like to see in the planning and oversight of afterschool programs that children get a chance to express themselves and participate in outside activity. Ms. Kropp said her experience has been that afterschool programs vary greatly. In Statesboro some programs hire college students with no background in child development and they are mostly babysitters, and the student-caregiver ratios are high. Ms. Stevens concurred and said in many cases the programs are money makers for the centers and some programs are very successful while others are not. She said she is excited about finding out more about what's happening in the space.

e. Head Start State Collaboration Update

Head Start State Collaboration Director Allison Setterlind informed the Board that the Collaboration Office is funded to DECAL from the Office of Head Start and is about to begin the third year of its five-year grant. The Head Start Act of 2007 requires state directors to assess the needs of programs and she is working with the Research Team on that project. She hopes it will yield good data on where the Head Start programs are with certain state initiatives, including licensing, and Quality Rated, mental health, and behavioral support. It will be helpful as she prepares the grant application for the beginning of year three that's due in June. This year she is also focusing on homelessness outreach as part of a national effort to increase the enrollment of children experiencing homelessness in Head Start programs. Other new areas of focus include a partnership with the Department of Education to help local Head Start agencies transition children from preschool to kindergarten seamlessly with supports, and strategies to improve literacy and school readiness. She also discussed the successful Georgia Head Start Association Conference, which she helped to organize. She explained several child health-related initiatives in which Head Start is involved. Head Start and Early Head Start offer comprehensive health services for every child enrolled to ensure they have a medical home, are up to date on immunizations, are tested for lead exposure, and get body mass index/obesity tests and tracking, so that they have all required health checks by the time they enter school. This year Head Start doubled the number of Georgia children who are on schedule with immunizations and age-appropriate preventive and primary health care. Last August at the start of the enrollment year, only 45% of children in the program had received the shots, exams, and tests. As part of the child health focus, Ms. Setterlind is collaborating with Georgia Organics and DECAL's Nutrition Services team on Farm to Early Care initiatives that reach into rural

communities to help combat food insecurity and increase healthy-food access. Several Head Start programs are piloting procurement programs and farming initiatives. All of these activities and more will be discussed during the upcoming Farm to School and Early Care Summit in June. Head Start is also working with the Women Infants and Children (WIC) program on a pilot to expand access to healthy foods for families, through farmers' markets at Head Start properties that accept SNAP coupons in payment for purchases. The two programs also collaborate on neonatal care around substance use and prevention. Ms. Setterlind shared details of the recent Georgia Child Care Safety Summit with the American Academy of Pediatrics Georgia Chapter that featured Dr. Boekhaus and included training and information on safe practices in child care for over 150 providers. She thanked Dr. Boekhaus for her support.

f. Federal Programs Update

Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs Elisabetta Kasfir provided a snapshot of CAPS data and activities related to children served, providers delivering those services, applications processed, and new initiatives to serve and communicate with families. She informed the Board that as of May 1 there were over 64,000 children with an active CAPS scholarship, which corresponds to more than 50,000 children paid for on a weekly basis. She explained that the discrepancy between those numbers reflects the fact that not all families authorized to receive scholarships are utilizing them. A little more than half of those children are in full-time care and nearly 60% of them are in Quality Rated programs. An additional 3,000 children receive Quality Rated Subsidy Grants (QRSGs) to finance their care and education at Quality Rated facilities. A little over 3,000 providers serve the children receiving CAPS Scholarships. Nearly 90% of those CAPS providers are licensed, almost half of them are Quality Rated, and 137 of the CAPS providers have also been awarded QRSG slots. Just over 70% of the children receiving CAPS scholarships are in center-based care, with 16% in family child care learning homes, 10% in exempt providers and 3% in informal arrangements. All of this activity keeps the CAPS staff very busy, Ms. Kasfir said. She reported that the team processes over 8,000 applications per month and over 1,800 redeterminations. Almost a quarter of all applications and a little over 80% of renewal applications win approval. To help CAPS serve families even faster and to get information to them more quickly and efficiently, CAPS has developed a new texting service that sends updates, reminders, and CAPS contact information to all families. In two weeks CAPS staff will be able to communicate with individual families. In terms of the trends among families receiving CAPS, she provided data showing that those with very low incomes are the fastest growing priority group. Mr. Morgan asked for clarification about what standard providers must meet by the 2020 deadline and Ms. Kasfir confirmed that all CAPS providers must be 1-, 2-, or 3-star rated. Ms. Harper asked why Pre-K students need CAPS scholarships and Ms. Kasfir explained that CAPS has money allocated for Georgia's Pre-K students that provide scholarships to cover the wraparound care their families need during afterschool and other times.

g. Pre-K and Instructional Supports Update

Deputy Commissioner for Pre-K and Instructional Supports Susan Adams reported on results of the division's recent waitlist study involving Pre-K director focus groups and waitlisted family focus groups that examined enrollment practices as well as perceptions, concerns, and preferences regarding the waitlist process. The study was conducted by University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government. The 39 participants came from private child care centers in Clayton, Chatham, DeKalb, and Fulton counties which have the highest waiting lists in the state and from the Rockdale/Newton/Walton county area which has the highest enrollment rates but not long waiting lists. They also included families from private centers and public school programs. Families on waiting lists applied for a program where there wasn't a slot available for their child and have chosen to wait for one. Providers enter the waiting list names into a DECAL database, which the agency uses to examine statewide trends. Ms. Adams reported that focus group participants perceive that parents think that public school systems provide higher quality education than private child development centers. They also note that some parents and caregivers are misinformed about the cost of Georgia's Pre-K. They expressed three types of concerns: that the waitlists are inaccurate or out of date, that Pre-K directors don't have access to the lists, and that the waitlist information might be used to determine Pre-K locations. Ms. Adams confirmed that DECAL doesn't give directors access to the lists for privacy and other reasons. She also confirmed that DECAL does consider the waitlist information in deciding where to add new classrooms. The waitlist parents also desired joint professional development between private and public Pre-K centers, waitlist sharing and access for families, and more community collaboration to ensure that slots are filled. She said the responses have given her team a read on parents' perceptions. The study also included a survey of 625 families who had applied for Pre-K but had been waitlisted. The surveys covered their waitlist status, their preferences and selections, and their demographic information. They were asked about their perceptions of the

wait list experience and the effectiveness of two modes of contacting them about the process. Ms. Adams reported that half of them still had children on the waiting list and half did not. Of those no longer waitlisted, half had gotten a slot in Georgia's Pre-K, while a smaller number chose a different form of preschool. A few were no longer interested. Of those that were still waiting, only 16% were on more than one list and 74% said they had never received updates about their child's waitlist status. When asked why they wanted to enroll in Georgia's Pre-K, 66% said they were seeking a high-quality program and 51% said they wanted to save on costs. For 29%, the most important reason for selecting it was location close to their home. The number of parents who found out about the program from their local elementary school and from a friend, provider, or family member were nearly equal, 47% and 45% respectively. About a third of the parents cited previous experience with Georgia's Pre-K. The results yielded recommendations that DECAL will use to increase support for collaboration among public and private Georgia's Pre-K providers, strengthen communication among the public and private providers and families, and encourage joint professional development on the local level, while also providing opportunities for professional development at the state level. In terms of next steps, Ms. Adams preliminarily plans to post the study and share the findings with Pre-K program providers and other stakeholders; to work with DECAL's IT team to create a 'help ticket' for families searching for a slot; and to develop more effective waitlist communication resources for use both by families and providers. She explained that DECAL continues to feel it's not appropriate to share waitlist information with families and have them communicate with providers directly. But through help tickets and added communications tools, families will be better informed about their status and the process from DECAL. Mr. Davis asked if there's a correlation between the low use of the existing tools and the length of time families had been in Georgia. Ms. Adams said the study didn't cover that question. She attributes the low usage rates partly to the fact that the agency hasn't promoted them aggressively enough to help families connect. He then asked if the waitlists are provider-specific. She confirmed that they are. He asked if it would be helpful and appropriate to compile a statewide list and allow parents to have their information shared. Ms. Adams pointed out that families already have the ability to search for Pre-K providers and find out where vacancies are on the DECAL website but it isn't being widely used. But privacy is a big concern and makes the agency reluctant to share parent information. She agreed that families need to be trained and encouraged to use the website search function and to connect. Some local communities and some school districts have formed collaborations with child care programs to share vacancy information with families, which is why she believes strengthening those partnerships and lines of communication could make the biggest impact.

Ms. Harper adjourned the meeting for lunch and committee meetings at 11:30am.

7. Committee Meetings and Lunch

Ms. Harper called the meeting back to order at 12:55 p.m.

8. Public Comment Period

When the meeting reconvened, Ms. Harper invited speakers to come forward during Public Comment Period. No one came forward and the Comment Period ended.

9. Committee Reports

a. Programs & Rules

Ms. Howell reported that the Programs & Rules Committee heard about the creation of online resources for CAPS families, the status of preparations for this year's Summer Food Service Program beginning May 25. Nutrition Services has recruited 92 new organizations as sponsors to provide services and meals at the program's 1,200 feeding sites statewide that will serve 5 million meals this year. Kick off events will be held in June in Douglas, Bibb and Chattooga counties. More than 640 institutions are participating in the child and adult food program at almost 2,500 child care learning centers with 20 sponsors and 1,200 family child care learning homes. Members also received information on the Farm to School and Early Care Summit. Federal Programs are working with the IT team to create a resource repository that will assist CAPS with the referral process. Because the new comprehensive background check process is resulting in some license revocations, children in some areas have to be relocated to other places and parents have to deal with that. DECAL is working on a process to make it less stressful for families and reduce the uncertainty. The committee also heard about summer transition programs for rising Pre-K and kindergarten students, the addition of resources including a 1-833-354-HELP hotline and staff for the

Inclusion Support and Behavioral Services team, and a plan for closer collaboration between CCS and Quality Rated on provider visits.

b. Finance Committee

Ms. Talton reported that the Finance Committee received a budget update that showed DECAL's spending is on track with the agency's available funds.

c. Quality Innovations and Partnerships Committee

Mr. Davis said the System Reform Committee is now the Quality Innovations and Partnerships Committee, reflecting the division's restructuring and name change, which it heard about in detail. It also received updates on activities of the units within the division. DECAL will submit the final Progress Performance Report on May 31 to end Georgia's Early Learning Challenge Grant. The division received a 1-year extension to complete the 12 projects of the grant. This extension ended December 31, 2018. Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Director Carol Hartman, who spearheaded DECAL's successful grant and helped propel the partnership as a national model, retired May 1. DECAL is finalizing the first five years of the partnership. Over 1,000 children were served in the partnership with many more benefitted from the family and program supports. DECAL applied for a five year non-compete grant on April 1, 2019. DECAL was not awarded an expansion grant, but the agency may be able to apply for expansion funds later this year. In Quality Rated for the first quarter of 2019, Quality Rated staff rated 249 programs. This encompasses 448 distinct observations. Quality Rated staff are participating in a project to collect quality data for 50 School-Age classrooms this summer. This will help better incorporate School-Age classrooms into Quality Rated. Researchers from Child Trends completed the final report of the Quality Rated Validation Study, a requirement of Georgia's Early Learning Challenge Grant. The research demonstrates the strength of the program while also highlighting areas of potential change. Quality Rated staff are currently engaged in proposing revisions to the process and structure of Quality Rated. In June, Denise Jenson, Quality Rated's director, will be a part of a team of five cross-sector individuals attending a meeting, sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), focused on integrating child obesity prevention into state early care and education (ECE) systems. Quality Rated continues to review staffing and resources needed to meet the 2020 goal. After the fourth Quality Rated validation report is published, the Research Team will continue to work with the Quality Rated team on validation activities, including analyses that will ensure Quality Rated has the information needed to meet the 2020 goal. The Early Education Community Partnership Team, including six Community Partnership Coordinators, developed a prioritization plan for their outreach efforts in each of DECAL's six regions. During the first quarter, the Early Education Community Partnership Team met with community partners in 42 counties. Community partnership coordinators are currently designing, in coordination with CCS, a licensure orientation meeting (LOM) and preparatory training. This training will be offered and facilitated by community partnership coordinators in each DECAL region beginning July 2019. The Quality Innovations and Partnerships division has awarded the 2019 Two-Gen Innovation Grants to four Georgia communities. The two new funding opportunities are Capacity Building Grants and Implementation Funding Grants. The grants began on March 1st, 2019 and will continue through February 28, 2020. Rob O'Callaghan has rejoined the research team as a Senior Analyst to lead the Needs Assessment for Georgia's Preschool Development Grant B-5. The team continues to make progress on Georgia's Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Implementation Research & Evaluation Grant (Phase II). This includes conducting research on three interrelated aspects of infant-toddler services: classroom quality, workforce, and access. The Research team also has developed and is delivering a data visualization training to increase the agency's capacity to develop and communicate research and policy in visually engaging formats. Over the past two years DECAL has been in discussion with Georgia State University (GSU) to join the Child and Family Policy Lab. GSU and partners of the lab will work together to develop questions for inquiry that cannot be answered by one agency alone. DECAL will be contributing Pre-K and CAPS data to the lab. Four other state agencies will contribute data: DHS (TANF and SNAP data), DOL (unemployment insurance records), DFCS (child abuse and neglect data), USG (higher education data). This works aligns closely with Georgia's Cross-Agency Child Level Data System (CACDS).

Following the committee reports, the Board elected new officers to serve 2-year terms. Ms. Harper announced that Ms. Kropp, the Vice Chair, plans to step down from the Board after this meeting and a new Vice Chair must be elected. Mr. Davis moved to proceed with the elections, with Mr. Morgan seconding, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Morgan nominated Ms. Harper as Chair, seconded by Mr. Davis. She was unanimously re-elected as Chair.

Mr. Morgan nominated Mr. Davis as the new Vice Chair, seconded by Ms. Talton. He was unanimously elected as the new Vice Chair.

Mr. Morgan nominated Ms. Howell as Secretary, seconded by Mr. Davis. She was unanimously re-elected as Secretary. The officers will begin service at the August Board meeting.

In her farewell speech, Ms. Kropp, who has served two 3-year terms on the Board, commented on the agency's growth and expressed her joy in working with Board colleagues and DECAL staff over the years. Commissioner Jacobs thanked Ms. Kropp for her service and wished her luck in her retirement. She also congratulated the elected Board officers and thanked all the members for their service.

Ms. Harper announced that the next Board meeting will be held on August 15, 2019. She adjourned the meeting at 1:21 p.m.

Suzanne H. Harper 8-15-19 Kathy B. Howell 8/15/19
Board Chair, Signature Date Board Secretary, Signature Date