

Board of Early Care and Learning
Meeting Summary
November 17, 2022

Attendees

Board Members:

Kristy Beam, Jen Bennecke, Debra Brock (Vice Chair), Susan Harper, Kristin Morrissey, Kimberly Neville, Luann Purcell, Cristina Washell, Karla Zisook

Guests:

PJ Audenzia, Lauren Brodsky, Janet Cavin, Ife Finch Floyd, Hannah Goldberg, Lisa Hardt, Andie Herrington, Casmin Jenkins, Kimberly McDowell, Richard McElwain, Maria Ramos, Ann Rosenthal, Noni Walton, Jessica Woltjen

DECAL Staff:

Commissioner Amy Jacobs, Rian Ringsrud, Susan Adams, Pam Stevens, Bentley Ponder, Elisabetta Kasfir, Dennis Brice, Reg Griffin, Ira Sudman, Quandra Obi, Chondra Bolton, Jerry Brown, Vanessa Brown, Michelle Davis, Glenda Davis-Canteen, Hayat Dergaga, Faith Duncan, Rhonda Gunn, Iris Janet Herrera, Randy Hudgins, D’Juan James, Jarita Lawrence-Burdette, Laura Lucas, Tyeichia Mason, Ruby McTaggart, Barb McWethy, Christi Moore, Amy Mozo, Amir Nilforooshan, Jill O’Meara, Valerie Perez, Anne Rein, Michael Rodgers, April Rogers, Brittany Sams, Barbara Sanders, Brittany Seltrecht, Allison Setterlind, Jackie Shivers, Nate Smith, Hannah Smith, Sonja Steptoe, Robin Stevens, Amanda Tarpley, Mark Waits, Laura Wagner, Bridgett Walker, Sheryl Wilhite, Sheila Williams, Kiera Willis, Kori Woodward-Dickens, Alexandra Young, Liz Young

Vice Chair Debra Brock called the meeting to order at 9:09 a.m. She asked Board members and DECAL staff to keep Mr. Davis in their thoughts and prayers as he was absent because of a death in his family.

The Board unanimously approved the proposed meeting agenda and the minutes from the August 25 meeting.

For inspiration Ms. Morrissey read a short story adapted from author Ana Morris called *Why are Children So Important to Us?* about how children and adults enrich each other’s lives through the exchange of imaginative playfulness and reassuring optimism.

Ms. Brock invited Board members to share updates on their recent activities. She attended the Quality Rated 10-Year Anniversary celebration in Dalton and reported that it was inspiring. Ms. Zisook reported that her school participated in Pre-K literacy week and the Read-To-Me-A-Thon designed to encourage family reading practices. The week culminated in a book parade. Ms. Beam announced that her grandson started attending a Quality Rated child care program.

DECAL leaders provided updates about their areas of responsibility.

- Commissioner Amy Jacobs reported on the Quality Rated 10th anniversary celebrations, which have so far included Quality Rated Day at the Braves and the regional celebration in Dalton with visits to two “Class of 2012” providers. Former Governor Nathan Deal, who instantiated the Quality Rated program 10 years ago, will be honored at the Atlanta area celebration on November 18. The Commissioner named the Georgia’s Pre-K Teachers of the Year (TOTY), Shannon Gibson from Baldwin Elementary School in Baldwin and Alaina Jones from Akers Academy in Cumming. The Commissioner announced the finalists for Georgia’s Early Educators of the Year, and she reported on the launch of the Georgia Association for Infant Mental Health (GA-AIMH).
- Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration Rian Ringsrud reported on DECAL’s budget and spending. Because of federal COVID-19 relief funds, the budget for SFY 2023 is almost \$1.9 billion. As of the end of the first quarter of SFY 2023, September 30, 2022, expenses are on track with the budget with 76% of funds remaining. Nutrition Services operates on the federal fiscal year which ends September 30. During federal fiscal year 2022 Happy Helpings served 2,833,818 meals at 875 sites in 86 counties. During the same period the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) served 64,940,227 meals at 3,601 sites in 156 counties.
- Deputy Commissioner for Georgia’s Pre-K and Instructional Supports Susan Adams reported on Georgia’s Pre-K enrollment. Based on the first roster enrollment is slightly higher than last year. Georgia’s Pre-K celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. Ms. Adams introduced Director of Professional Learning Christi Moore. Ms. Moore updated the Board about the POWER payments to the early learning workforce. DECAL dispersed over

\$100,000,000 in three rounds of payments to employees of eligible providers. Ms. Moore also gave updates about the Online Learning Library Initiative (OLLI), to which 20 courses were added in fiscal year 2022, and the expansion of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) Facilitator Training Program. Ms. Adams introduced Director of Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Laura Lucas who made a presentation about how an Infant and Early Childhood System of Care functions. She said that between nine and 14% of young children experience mental health issues, and access to treatment was the most urgent issue identified by the cross-agency Infant Early Childhood Mental Health task force. The task force has made considerable progress on this issue Ms. Lucas said. She also announced that Children's Mental Health Week occur place May 1–5, 2023.

Ms. Brock recessed the meeting for a break at 10:07 a.m. and resumed it at 10:21 a.m.

- Deputy Commissioner Adams introduced Maria Ramos, Special Project Manager at Voices for Georgia's Children, who reported on the 12th annual Georgia's Pre-K Week, held October 3–7. During Pre-K week 81 state leaders (including legislators and other dignitaries) made 110 visits to Pre-K programs. A total of 805 Pre-K programs in 143 counties registered and participated.
- Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services Pam Stevens reported on the School-Age Help and Relief Effort (SHARE) grants. DECAL approved 1,382 grant requests. DECAL required all applicants to participate in training about best practices in school-age care and offered several optional training opportunities, all of which were very well received by participants. DECAL also offered coaching and, for providers who completed the coaching, external quality assessments. Ten providers received quality assessments. Ms. Stevens introduced Child Care Services Director of Policy and Enforcement April Rogers to give the Board a preview of the family-friendly licensing dashboard. It is designed to make regulatory data easily accessible to families and is the first of its kind in the country Ms. Stevens said. Ms. Rogers provided an overview of the development process and previewed the screens that families can use to get information about providers. A key feature of the dashboard is providing regulatory information in plain language.
- Deputy Commissioner for Quality Innovations and Partnerships Bentley Ponder gave an update about the Community Transformation Grants (CTG) awarded by DECAL and introduced Janet Cavin, the Executive Director of Communities in Schools Milledgeville Baldwin County and the Project Director for the Baldwin County Board of Education CTG, who made a presentation about her organization's accomplishments under the grant. Mr. Ponder gave an overview about 2Gen work, an approach that designs services for children and families, aligns and coordinates these services, and tracks outcomes for children and adults, and briefly reviewed the research that supports a 2Gen approach.
- Deputy Commissioner Elisabetta Kasfir reviewed the goals and presented the accomplishments of the \$150,000 2Gen Policy Acceleration Partnership Grant made to DECAL by Ascend at the Aspen Institute and the Liz Blake Giving Fund of the Blake Family Foundation. Accomplishments include convening a state 2Gen Advisory Council and community 2Gen Advisory Council, completing an eligibility crosswalk, implementing the FindHelp Georgia resource and referral portal, adding student parents as a CAPS priority group, interviewing student parents, and hosting a 2Gen Summit. Marjorie Simms, Managing Director of Ascend at the Aspen Institute, gave the keynote at the 2Gen Summit on October 19.

Ms. Brock adjourned the meeting for lunch and committee meetings and called the meeting back to order at 1:07 p.m. for the public comment period. There were no public comments.

Ms. Brock called for committee reports. Ms. Beam reported from the Program and Rules Committee about how CCS is working with child care providers to help them stay in compliance especially in the areas of health and safety. She also reported on the \$5,000 Pre-K classroom grants and the LITTLE grants, as well as the CAPS student parent priority group. Ms. Morrissey reported that the Finance Committee received a report of expenses as of October 31, 2022, and expenses are still on track with the budget. She also reported that 94% of the funds DECAL receives are currently passed through. This percentage is higher than normal and will return to 89 or 90% when all federal relief funds have been spent. Ms. Harper reported from the Quality, Innovations and Partnership Committee about Early Head Start enrollment, research about CAPS funded by ARPA, growth of the Quality Rated program, and the Community Transformation Grantees.

At 1:23p.m. Ms. Brock wished everyone happy holidays and adjourned the meeting.