

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

1.6 million - Total students served by Georgia's Pre-K Program
3,865 - 2019-2020 classes in Georgia's Pre-K Program

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs



Dear DECALers,

Recently, I attended a luncheon hosted by Governor Kemp for the heads of all state agencies in Georgia. The Governor talked to us about a lot of things...his continued vision for the state, the upcoming state budget, and especially about a topic we hold dear here at DECAL. He stressed the imperative to provide excellent customer service to the citizens of our state.

I hope all of you remember the "official" characteristics we VALUE at DECAL created years ago by the Employee Advisory Group. (If you don't know what I'm referring to, ask your Director or Deputy Commissioner about these important qualities we want to embody every day.) The first value is "Delivering stellar customer service."

Providing stellar, high quality customer service can be hard. Sometimes our customers are calling because they are upset, unhappy or frustrated. (Trust me: My office receives our share of these kinds of calls.) But our response in these situations is critical. Regardless of the behavior on the other end of the line or across our desks or face-to-face in a child care facility, our goal as public servants must be to serve the needs of our customers and to resolve issues thoughtfully, professionally, respectfully, and in a timely manner.

I encourage all of us NOT to give in to an "us versus them" mentality. As DECAL employees, we are partners with, not enemies of, the families, child care providers, other child serving agencies and organizations, etc. that we serve. Following is a paraphrase/modification of a quotation from Mahatma Gandhi that perfectly applies here:

4,540 - Licensed child care programs in Georgia
1,883 - Quality Rated child care programs
1,517 - Summer Food Service Program Sites
48 - Episodes of DECAL Download podcast
3,108 - Georgia child care providers with active CAPS scholarships

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Students are heading Back to School in Georgia!
Listen to this special edition of DECAL Download, where we discuss Georgia's Pre-K Program, Before and After School care at local child care programs, CAPS scholarships and more.

DECAL
Download 
New Episodes Every Wednesday!

Listen on Apple Podcasts  and  Spotify

Customers are the most important visitors to our premises (offices, website, social media or callers on our phones).

They are not dependent on us. We are dependent on them.

They are not an interruption in our work. They are the purpose of it.

They are not outsiders in our business. They are part of it.

We are not doing them a favor by serving them. They are doing us a favor by giving us an opportunity to do so.

As the new state fiscal year begins...as we gear up for the new school year...as we prepare for a new federal fiscal year...I hope we'll remember Gandhi's words and continue to serve Georgia's citizens, all our customers, in a way we would like to be served.

Sincerely,

Introducing New Members of the Board of Early Care and Learning

Since the last issue of *Decidedly DECAL*, Governor Brian Kemp appointed the following seven new members to the Board of Early Care and Learning. The board advises and supports Commissioner Jacobs and DECAL senior leadership in carrying out the mission and vision of the department.

Dr. Kristy Beam (5th Congressional District) is the Principal of Glennwood Elementary School in Decatur City Schools. Her professional achievements include serving as a Principal of the American School of Valencia in Valencia, Spain; assistant principal; teacher in Gwinnett and Rockdale County Schools; and teaching master's level and certification courses for the University of North Georgia.

Jen Bennecke (11th Congressional District) is a community volunteer who also serves on the boards of the Atlanta Speech School and Voices for Georgia's Children and on the Philanthropy Committee of the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta. Mrs. Bennecke's service includes past president of the Junior League of Atlanta, former board member of the Foster Care Support Foundation, University of Georgia Board of Visitors, Atlanta Children's Shelter, and Literacy Action, Inc.

Debra Brock (14th Congressional District) is Principal of Red Bud Elementary School in Calhoun, Georgia. She joined Gordon County Schools in 2006 after she decided to leave her career as a business owner in the private sector. Since Mrs. Brock has been in education, she has served as a teacher, instructional coach, and top administrator.

Drew Hunt (1st Congressional District) is Director of Community Relations for the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce. Mrs. Hunt serves as a liaison between the Chamber and the community through the support of various sectors, including workforce development, education, military affairs, and existing industry.

Dr. Theresa Magpuri-Lavell (10th Congressional District) is Executive Director of the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy at Georgia College and State University. Mrs. Magpuri-Lavell

DECAL Welcomes New Chief Information Officer



Dennis Brice

Dennis Brice recently joined DECAL as Chief Information Officer, bringing with him more than 25 years of engineering, strategic thinking, and broad IT experience.

Before joining DECAL, Brice held various technology leadership roles at McKesson and was most recently the Vice President of HCM & Corporate Applications. At McKesson, Brice led several major IT initiatives including the migration of several enterprise on-premise applications to the cloud that included an international Workday implementation, PeopleSoft HR & Payroll, Kronos WFC, Microsoft SharePoint, Service Catalog, Salesforce HR Helpdesk, company intranet, employee portal plus various others. He was responsible for modernizing numerous applications used by employees and transforming IT and employee applications. Also, his team supported and developed custom applications and provided 24/7 operational support.

Brice's early career included working as an engineering specialist at Lockheed Martin Aerospace division. He received his BS in Industrial Engineering from the University of Tennessee.

He has a private pilot license, and he enjoys flying, playing tennis, and lifting weights in his spare time.

CALi Joins Georgia's First Lady at Recent Events

DECAL's official mascot, CALi, and Georgia's First Lady Marty Kemp spent some quality time together recently. On Monday, June 24, CALi joined Mrs. Kemp for a visit to Little Folks Farm and Childcare in Lyons, Georgia.

The following Saturday, CALi was at the Governor's Mansion for the First Lady's



has spent 20 years advocating for early language and literacy as an elementary school teacher, professor, researcher of literacy education, and university partner with public school districts.

Kristin Morrissey (7th Congressional District) is Chair of the Forsyth County Board of Education. Originally from Rochester, New York, Mrs. Morrissey has worked in corporate training at Eastman Kodak and retired from the Rochester Public Library and Monroe County Library System after she spent 16 years as an automation specialist and trainer.

Dr. Cristina Washell (9th Congressional District) is an associate professor and coordinator of the elementary and special education program at the University of North Georgia. Dr. Washell has taught P-12 students with special needs in traditional and alternative school settings.

We welcome these new board members and look forward to working with them in serving the early care and education needs of children, families, and the early education industry in our state.

The next meeting for the Board of Early Care and Learning is Thursday, August 15, 2019, 9:00 AM, in our Atlanta offices.



An orientation session was held for new members of the Board of Early Care and Learning. Shown above are (L-R) are Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs, Jen Bennecke, Kristin Morrissey, Debra Brock, Kristy Beam, Dr. Cristina Washell, and Board Liaison Quandra Collins. Pictured below are (L-R) Drew Hunt and Dr. Theresa Magpuri-Lavell.

second Pet Adoption Day, where more than twenty furry friends found their "forever homes."



East Tower Renovations Underway

Renovations got underway in early July in the common space and elevator areas of the 6th, 7th, and 8th floors of the East Tower. Walls are being painted and new flooring installed. It is believed that this is the first time improvements have been made to these areas since the building opened in 1980.



DECAL Implements New Way to Access Inclusion and Behavioral Support

DECAL has implemented a helpline so that learning professionals can more efficiently access resources relating to inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood settings. Directors, teachers, families and others can call 1-833-354-HELP or email inclusion@dec.state.ga.gov to connect with one of the Inclusion and Behavioral Support Regional Supervisors.

This single point of entry will be easier for our customers and will allow our Regional Supervisors to quickly connect programs with the appropriate resources they need. These resources include training and professional

Happy 15th Birthday, DECAL

DECAL celebrates its 15th birthday this year. On July 1, 2004, Governor Sonny Perdue (now US Secretary of Agriculture) signed legislation creating the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning with his granddaughters looking on.



Most Popular DECAL Download Podcast Episodes

We are now 48 episodes into the DECAL Download podcast. Most popular topics? Glad you asked.

1. Episode 1 - Chat with Commissioner Jacobs
2. TIE Episode 4 - CAPS, Episode 38 - Quality Rated Peer Support Network
3. Episode 2 - Foundation
4. Episode 29 - Dr. Bentley Ponder
5. TIE Episode 6 - Pam Stevens, Episode 18 - Preview of General Assembly
6. TIE Episode 30 - CCS Inspections, Episode 32 - Language and Literacy, Episode 35 - Early Education Community Partnerships

Pre-K Classes Getting Underway

All over Georgia, school is beginning for over 80,000 four year olds attending Georgia's Pre-K Program. The voluntary, lottery-funded Pre-K program has been recognized as one of the top programs in the nation based on quality standards, teacher qualifications, and

development, referrals to special education services, links to community resources, visits from an Inclusion Specialist to work with staff to support a child with challenging behavior, and much more.

Early Education Community Partnerships: A Unit of the Quality Innovations and Partnerships Division

By Jill O'Meara and Clayton Adams

Summer may be winding down, but our Community Partnership Coordinators are keeping the roads hot as they travel from county to county across our great state. As we move into our third quarter, DECAL's team of six regional coordinators continue to meet with community partners and child care providers to share information and innovative ideas around early childhood education and to learn how we can better serve as a resource for all DECAL programs.

For our Early Education Community Partnership team to meet our goal of exploring each county in Georgia during 2019, we strategically focused our efforts on quarterly targeted counties. Our Community Partnership Coordinators provide statewide community outreach, access, and advocacy for children and families in any community in Georgia that wants to improve outcomes for young children, with a priority on expanding Quality Rated. As of July, our team has successfully reached out to community partners through email, phone calls, or face to face visits in over 80 of Georgia's 159 counties.

Also, the team worked with DECAL's Two-Gen in Georgia (TGIG) grantees to increase collaboration between early education and higher education institutions, attended GEEARS events, escorted DECAL's mascot, Cali, at Pet Adoption Day at the Governor's Mansion, and toured Little Folks Farm and Child Care in Lyons, Georgia with First Lady Kemp.

Continue to look for our community work on DECAL's social media and don't forget to like our posts. If you have any suggestions about how we can support your work in your region, feel free to reach out to us.



enrollment. Entering its 27th year, Georgia will have 3,865 Pre-K classes this school year.

Usually the first day of Georgia's Pre-K Program aligns with the local school system calendar regardless of the Pre-K setting, i.e., for profit and nonprofit child care centers, military bases, colleges and universities, and other facilities.

Commerce City Schools (pictured below) were the first classes to open for this school year on Friday, July 26.



Pictured are (L-R) Edward Rowell, Kati Cosby, Jill O'Meara, Clayton Adams, Glenda Davis-Canteen, Bridgette Washington, and Audrienne Smith.

DECAL Download Listeners Win Passes to Candytopia

Ten DECAL employees and their guests recently enjoyed a treat for their eyes and their sweet tooth at Candytopia, a pop-up interactive experience in Atlanta. The free passes were prizes given away by our DECAL Download podcast. Each episode has a quiz question, and winners are drawn from all respondents with the correct answers. Be sure to listen and respond today!





'Look Again' Campaign Receives Support from Governor and First Lady

For the sixth consecutive year, DECAL and several other state agencies called for families and caregivers of children to have a heightened awareness of the dangers of leaving children unattended in vehicles. In his first year in office, Governor Brian P. Kemp and First Lady Marty Kemp added their voices to this important challenge by issuing a proclamation naming Friday, May 24, 2019, as Look Again Day in Georgia.





Governor Sets 2020 State Holidays

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. §1-4-1, the following is the list of state holidays when the Capitol and state agencies will be closed in 2020:

New Year's Day
 Wednesday, January 1

The flyer is set against a background of various school supplies including pens, pencils, notebooks, and a ruler. The title 'BACK-TO-SCHOOL Supply Drive' is prominently displayed at the top. Below the title, the dates 'July 29-August 23' are listed. The main text explains the purpose of the drive: to support families by donating school supplies for children in need. A list of requested items is provided, including pens, pencils, crayons, colored pencils, folders, binding binders, scientific calculators, notebook paper, spiral notebooks, and backpacks. A yellow starburst graphic contains a raffle incentive: 'When you donate a BACKPACK, you are entered in our raffle to win a SWEET prize! Turn your backpack in to the receptionist to receive a raffle ticket!'. At the bottom, a quote from Keith McDaniel states: 'We give out the school supplies to motivate children and show them the importance of getting a good education,'.

"We give out the school supplies to motivate children and show them the importance of getting a good education," - Keith McDaniel

State Holiday

January 29 - will be observed on Friday, November 27

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday

Monday, January 20

Washington's Birthday

February 17-will be observed on Thursday, December 24

State Holiday

April 26 - will be observed on Friday, April 10

Memorial Day

Monday, May 25

Independence Day

July 4 - will be observed on Friday, July 3

Labor Day

Monday, September 7

Columbus Day

Monday, October 12

Veterans Day

Wednesday, November 11

Thanksgiving Day

Thursday, November 26

Christmas Day

Friday, December 25

Board of Early Care and Learning

Supporting and guiding the mission and vision of Bright from the Start:

Board of Early Care and Learning

Drew Hunt, Savannah
First Congressional District

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District
(Chair)

Kathy Howe II, Carrollton
Third Congressional District



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Sign up for DECAL text messages by texting DECAL to 474747!

**Employee
Suggestion Program**



**Visit the Virtual
Suggestion Box now!**

(Secretary)

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain
Fourth Congressional District
(Vice Chair)

Kristy Beam, Ed.D, Atlanta
Fifth Congressional District

Vacant
Sixth Congressional District

Kristin Morrissey, Cumming
Seventh Congressional District

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner Robins
Eighth Congressional District

Cristina Washell, Ed.D., Cleveland
Ninth Congressional District

Theresa Magpuri-Lavell, Ed.D., Milledgeville
Tenth Congressional District

Jen Bennecke, Atlanta
Eleventh Congressional District

VACANT
Twelfth Congressional District

Melissa Boekhaus, MD., Smyrna
Thirteenth Congressional District

Debra Brock, Calhoun
Fourteenth Congressional District

**Let Us Hear
From You!**

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Clayton Bassett, Chiquita Herndon, Cindy Kicklighter, Kaycee Purvis, Christina Miller, Peggy Sutton, and Elim Tekie.
