

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



May 2013 - In This Issue

[By the Numbers](#)

[Important Links](#)

[Quality Rated Update](#)

[May Birthdays](#)

[Board of Early Care and Learning](#)

[Arby's Promotes Summer Food Program](#)

[DECAL, AAP Collaborate](#)

[Early Learning: A Smart Investment](#)

[DECAL Welcomes Judy Neal](#)

DECAL By the Numbers

1,810 - Georgia's Pre-K sites in 2012-2013 school year

1,215 - Total child care programs participating in Quality Rated

15 - Emergency closures since July 1, 2012

80% - Compliant child care programs since July 1, 2012

1 in 88 - Children born with autism in the United States

5% - Cuts in Head Start under 2013 federal budget

\$663,772,123 - DECAL 2013 budget

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Bobby Cagle

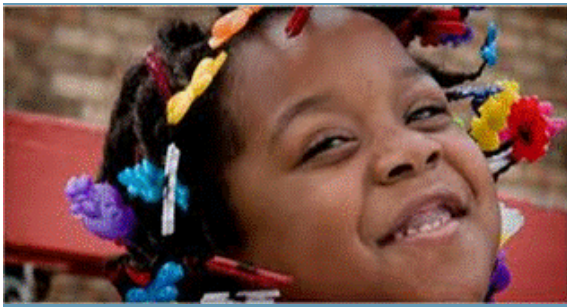


The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) has released its *State of Preschool 2012* yearbook, showing Georgia still among the top programs in the nation, despite tough budget decisions in 2011 and 2012. We ranked 6th in the nation in access to programs for four year olds and 25th in the nation for spending per child.

In last year's report, we were proud to meet ten out of ten in NIEER's 10 Quality Benchmarks. This year we met eight out of ten, including early learning standards, teacher education levels, and monitoring. Areas for improvement include maximum class size and staff-child ratios, something we had already identified as focus areas through the study conducted by FPG Child Development Institute at UNC Chapel Hill.

As DECAL employees, you should be proud of these results, even though our rankings are not as high as last year. This was not unexpected. The NIEER report is a snapshot of preschool services across the states in a given year; however, we should be careful in comparing states because preschool services vary widely. It is hard to compare a state like Georgia serving 60% of its four-year-old population to other states that may be serving only 15% or 20%. Georgia has spent 20 years establishing a statewide universal program, and research shows a significant increase in child outcomes.

Governor Deal's commitment to early childhood education and Georgia's Pre-K Program has been unwavering. He showed great leadership in taking steps in 2011 to solidify the finances for both Georgia's Pre-K Program and the HOPE scholarship.



Quick Links

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Quality Rated Milestone

The Quality Initiatives Division of DECAL reached a major milestone on May 2, 2013 when it rated the 100th Quality Rated program.

"The next few months promise to be very busy as we work toward rating hundreds of more programs before our tiered reimbursement program begins on July 1st," said Laura J. Johns, Ph.D., Director of Quality Initiatives. "A huge thanks to Janine Joseph and the Quality Rated Assessor team who have been working tirelessly on rating programs and to Craig, Connie and the IT team for creating an online database that streamlines the Quality Rated process."

Quality Rated, which launched in January 2012, is Georgia's voluntary system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. Quality Rated uses one, two, and three stars to indicate programs that meet defined program standards beyond Georgia's minimum licensing requirements.

Below is a breakdown on Quality Rated programs as of May 2.

Over the past two years Governor Deal and state legislators have taken steps to bring the pre-k school year back to 180 days beginning this fall with the 2013-2014 school year. As the availability of lottery revenues becomes clearer, additional strategic decisions will be made concerning future investments in Georgia's Pre-K program.

Remember Georgia's Pre-K Program is one of only two Pre-K programs highlighted by President Obama in this year's State of the Union address and is the program he chose to visit when he spoke at College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center in Decatur.

Georgia's Pre-K Program is preparing students to enter into the K-12 program and is placing them on a trajectory for success that will have them reading on grade level by third grade, graduating from high school and going on to college or career. At the end of the day, our focus continues to be building better learners for a better Georgia!

DECAL Priority:

Health & Safety

Gov. Deal Signs Bill to Improve Child Safety

On May 1 at St. Andrews Montessori School in Macon, Gov. Nathan Deal signed into law House Bill 350, legislation that requires employees in Georgia's 6,000 child care facilities to undergo national fingerprint-based background checks. Previously, only state and local background checks were required, thus allowing people with criminal backgrounds in other states to be cleared to work in Georgia child care programs.

"Georgia children are our most precious assets," said Deal. "This legislation puts criminal checks in the hands of law enforcement agencies rather than private companies, ensuring that those processing the checks actually have the information and tools needed to protect our children."

An employee hired after January 2014 will undergo a fingerprint-based background check, and all current child care employees must be fingerprinted no later than Jan. 1, 2017. This timeline will lessen the burden on child care providers. Normal

Type	Total # of Participating Programs	% of Programs	100 Rated Programs			
All	1,215	20.45%	100			
			NR			
CCLC*	825	27.41%	1	20	28	12
FDCH	303	11.39%	0	12	14	10
GDCH	38	15.02%	0	0	1	1
Other	49	3.7%	0	1	0	0

May Birthdays



Best wishes go out to the following DECAL employees who celebrate birthdays this month:

- 2 - Sharon A. Aston
- 4 - Taurus Jackson
- 11 - Reg Griffin
- 11 - Kathryn B. Ritz
- 13 - Melissa K. Davis
- 14 - Lindsay C. Miller
- 14 - Niya R. Randolph
- 14 - Judy M. Steigele
- 15 - Crystal A. Hoffman
- 15 - Maria A. Reznik
- 16 - Jennifer M. Bridgeman
- 18 - Sandra M. McNeal
- 19 - Robyn M. Parham
- 21 - Marian T. Brown
- 22 - Angelette T. Anderson
- 23 - Heather C. Reeves
- 24 - Iko J. Ezell-Blackmon
- 24 - Lakeyshia D. Tucker
- 29 - Amy J. Browder
- 30 - Sonya T. James

Board of Early Care and Learning

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

Board of Early Care and Learning

Kay Ford, Savannah
First Congressional District

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District
(Secretary)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton
Third Congressional District

industry turnover is expected to expedite this process and a recheck is required every five years.

"In Georgia, we entrust the health and safety of hundreds of thousands of our youngest learners to the employees of child care facilities daily," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "Now we all will know with greater certainty that those working in the facilities are worthy of that sacred trust. With overwhelming support in the General Assembly and Governor Deal's signature, HB 350 becomes a landmark child protection law for the state."

The bill allows day care centers to immediately hire a short-term employee after a satisfactory name-based Georgia records search. This provision allows child care providers to employ staff quickly if needed to ensure proper child ratios and oversight for safety reasons.



Deputy Commissioner of Administration and Finance Ray Higgins, Director of External Affairs Dee Bolden, Governor Nathan Deal, Assistant Commissioner of Child Care Services Kristie Lewis and Board of Early Care and Learning Vice Chair Dr. Luann Purcell at May 1 signing of HB 350.

Arby's Foundation Promotes Summer Food Service Program

DECAL welcomed the Arby's Foundation Hungry for Happiness mobile tour to Atlanta this month. Georgia Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle and DECAL Deputy Commissioner of Programs Keith Bostick helped welcome the program to Hapeville

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain
Fourth Congressional District

Carlene Talton, Decatur
Fifth Congressional District

Dawnn Henderson, Marietta
Sixth Congressional District

Sherron Murphy, Lawrenceville
Seventh Congressional District

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner Robins
Eighth Congressional District
(Vice Chair)

Tammy Lenkeit, Flowery Branch
Ninth Congressional District

Janice Gallimore, Greensboro
Tenth Congressional District

Victor Morgan, Cartersville
Eleventh Congressional District
(Chair)

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro
Twelfth Congressional District

Judy Neal, Stockbridge
Thirteenth Congressional District

Vacant
Fourteenth Congressional District

*We are committed to nurturing
Georgia's youngest children, keeping
them safe and healthy, and to enriching
their lives.*

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Shyreeta Hicks, Dextral Austin, Laura Evans, Roslyn Coleman, Jennifer Popadiuk, Jennie Couture and Wilda P. Pipkin.

Elementary School in Atlanta on Wednesday, May 1, 2013.

The mobile unit is designed to help raise awareness about the issue of childhood hunger and increase participation in free summer meals sites for children located in the area. In Georgia, only 14% of school children who rely on free or reduced-price school lunches during the school year currently participate in summer meal programs. These free programs are available to kids and teens age 18 and under at thousands of summer meals sites across the country. Sites are registered with USDA and are held at safe local places such as schools, churches and community centers.

The Hungry for Happiness mobile tour has partnered with the Atlanta Community Food Bank, the Georgia Food Bank Association, and DECAL to connect more Atlanta children to local organizations that will provide healthy food for them during the summer months. **Families in Georgia can find a free summer meals site near them by visiting NoKidHungry.org/summer, calling 1-866-3HUNGRY, or texting FOODGA to 877-877.**



DECAL Priority:

Quality

DECAL Collaborates with Academy of Pediatrics

On Wednesday, April 10, 2013, DECAL staff from the Georgia Program for Infant and Toddler Care (PITC) and Child Care Services collaborated with the Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) by providing medication training to state approved early care and education trainers. As part of the Healthy Futures: Improving Health Outcomes for Young Children project, the AAP provided a comprehensive overview of medication administration and managing infectious diseases in child care programs.



Pictured (L-R) are Shawnell Barlow, Quality Improvement Coordinator for CCS; Fozia Eskew, Coordinator for GAAAP; Dr. Terri McFadden, M.D.; Jacquice Jones, GAPITC Training and Mentor Program Coordinator; Brandi Swain, GAPITC Supervisor.

Early Learning: A Smart Investment

On March 31, 2013, WSB-TV, the ABC affiliate in Atlanta, took an in-depth look at the benefits and challenges of quality early education in Georgia. The primetime "Family 2 Family" special was called *Early Learning: A Smart Investment*. This program highlighted how DECAL is working with private and non-profit partners to improve the quality of early care and learning. According to WSB-TV, the special was seen in more than 72,000 households, placing third in its time slot behind "The Voice" and NCAA basketball. The station will air the program again on Sunday, May 12, 2013, at 12:30 PM. It has also been posted on the DECAL website. [Click here to view it.](#)



DECAL Priority:

Organizational Excellence

DECAL Welcomes New Board Member

Judy B. Neal, of Stockbridge, has been named as the newest member of the Board of Early Care and Learning. Governor Deal appointed Neal to represent the 13th congressional district.

Neal has worked in numerous capacities



in Georgia state government. She retired as the executive director of the Children and Youth Coordinating Council (whose offices were housed in 10 Park Place where DECAL was previously located). Prior to the council, Neal served as the executive director of the Georgia Agrirama Development Authority. She is a member of the board of directors of McDonough Arts and a member of McDonough Presbyterian Church. Neal has two sons and four grandchildren.

Through her various leadership roles, Neal has learned the following lessons about the importance of staff. "I have learned from past experiences and positions that the quickest way to be effective is to engage with staff. They teach, inspire, guide and support! Meeting and working with the DECAL staff will add enjoyment to my new adventure of serving on the board. Whatever the tasks, we'll achieve at the highest level if we focus on Georgia's youngest children together."

Neal will visit DECAL's offices soon for board orientation in preparation for her attending the board meeting on May 16. We welcome her as a strategic partner in serving Georgia's children and families.