
Board of Early Care and Learning

Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting
Thursday, August 18, 2016, 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 Room
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
Amy Jacobs, Commissioner

Meeting Minutes

Board Members

Victor Morgan, Board Chair
Susan Harper, Board Vice Chair
Kay Ford, Board Secretary
Phil Davis
Kathy Howell
Jerri Kropp
Luann Purcell
Carlene Talton

Public Guests

Hanah Goldberg
Joe Perreault
Brian Lipton
Paul Walker

Joseph Mole
Lynne Manfredi/Petitt
Carolyn Salvador

Bright from the Start Staff

Amy Jacobs, Commissioner
Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Pre-K and
Instructional Supports
Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System
Reform
Christie Bearden, Legal Services Supervisor
Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer
Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and
Administration
Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care
Services
Meghan Dean, Research and Policy Analyst

Michelle Clark, Inclusion Specialist
Lindsey Urry, Inclusion Specialist
Woody Dover, Budget Administrator
Shani Drake, Nutrition Services Program Marketing and
Outreach Manager
Carol Hartman, Policy and System Reform Director
Sharon McPherson, Director of Finance
Laura Wagner, Early Education Empowerment Zone
Director
Bentley Ponder, Research and Policy Analysis Director
Mark Waits, Special Assistant to the Commissioner

1. Call to Order

Board Chair Victor Morgan called the meeting to order. He welcomed board members, Department of Early Care and Learning staff, and guests.

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Phil Davis moved to accept the day's agenda. Kay Ford seconded. The agenda was unanimously accepted. Kathy Howell moved to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2016, meeting of the board. Phil Davis seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Inspiration

Luann Purcell provided the inspiration for the day's meeting by presenting a quick overview of the board's ten-year history. She shared the inspiration she presented from February 2007 and talked about the original board members who currently serve on the board. She said that while commissioners change, the purpose of the board does not. She read the Auburn Creed and related its message to the message of the board.

4. Board Member Updates

Susan Harper discussed her time in Valdosta at an E3Z Summit and the importance of talking to children. She also attended the opening day of Dougherty County Pre-K.

Luann Purcell reported attending an E3Z Summit in Valdosta and mentioned that Lowndes County had over fifty Quality Rated centers. She enjoyed the fellowship and community atmosphere.

Victor Morgan discussed his opportunity to attend a closing activity for the summer Pre-K programs in his area where various principals, teachers, and community members were complimentary of and thankful for DECAL's support.

5. Bright from the Start Presentations

Members of DECAL staff provided updates on their program areas.

- a. Commissioner's Update:** Commissioner Amy Jacobs thanked those on the Board for their hard work. She provided an overview of DECAL's Governance Structure: Governor, Commissioner, Board Liaison, Board, Executive Cabinet, and DECAL Leadership Team that disseminate information throughout the department. She mentioned that Janice Hacker is retiring as Head Start Collaboration Director. She updated the Board on the three recent grant applications (Georgia CCDF Evaluation Project, Quality Rated Incentive/Bonus Packages, and Parents and Children Thriving Together (PACTT): Two Generation State Policy Network). Commissioner Jacobs discussed DECAL's involvement in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that replaces the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Lastly, she gave an update on the Employee Survey that was developed by DECAL and conducted by Georgia State University. She discussed the top five and bottom four responses (below 75%) from the Employee Survey (see slides). The results will be addressed in the upcoming All Staff meetings. Phil Davis asked if we had a major growth in scope and staff compared to prior years. Commissioner Jacobs said that overall the results had improved from last year's survey, but she would like to address the communication pieces. Kay Ford asked if the survey had a place for suggestions and comments. Commissioner Jacobs said there was a place for comments and that the comments were sent directly to her. She explained that she would distribute the substantive comments to members of the Executive Cabinet. She plans to address the lower scores on communication and on the department not functioning as one unit in the All Staff meetings.
- b. Finance, Administration, and Legislative Update:** Ray Higgins presented updates on the department's current finances (see slides). In terms of the department's possible legislative agenda for the next session of the General Assembly, he explained that DECAL is currently drafting proposals to submit to the Governor's Office to 1) Address changes in criminal records check around portability; 2) Change the statute to allow hearsay testimony; and 3) create an early education foundation that will allow private dollars to be raised (e.g., for programs such as Quality Rated). In the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) update, he discussed CAPS eligibility staff transition to DECAL and funding restrictions. Plans are for the staff transition to take place October 2017 with some pilot projects occurring between now and then. Mr. Higgins explained new finding restrictions that have been instituted, in large part, because of state policy and federal guidelines that include increased provider rates and increased tiered reimbursement rates. While these are restrictions, they are not necessarily negative since they aim to improve quality and continuity of care.

- c. **Communications Update:** Reg Griffin provided updates about DECAL’s media coverage. Normally, CCS and Pre-K dominated the department’s media coverage. Since the last board meeting, there were fewer CCS investigations, and Pre-K had the most coverage followed by the *Look Again* campaign, Nutrition (summer food service), and CCS investigations. Mr. Griffin shared three news clips: The first was of a Pre-K teacher who is a finalist for Pre-K teacher of the year. Board member Dr. Jerri Kropp shared that the finalist, Chaney Frazier, was one of her students at Georgia Southern University. The second clip featured the kick off of this year’s *Look Again* campaign at the Capitol. The third clip showcased how *Bright Start*, a program in Valdosta, used a child care expansion grant to remodel their building and to serve more children, especially infants and toddlers. Mr. Griffin then recapped the DECAL social media outreach with a total outreach of 9,588. Phil Davis said that the traffic application Waze reminds users to look in the back seat and wondered if there was intentional coordination. Mr. Griffin responded that he was uncertain about coordination between DECAL and Waze, but there is certainly raised awareness about the dangers of leaving children unattended in cars and warnings about negligence involved.
- d. **System Reform Update:** Carol Hartman provided an update on DECAL’s Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) grant activities (see slides). She explained that the EHS Family Child Care Partners participate in a professional learning community through which they receive mentoring, coaching, and collegial support. Last year, approximately 200 children were served across the metro Atlanta area. She reported demographics on the families, children, and providers who are participating (see slides). Dr. Bentley Ponder presented on two research studies: an EHS-CCP self-assessment and a validation study of Quality Rated (QR). He discussed that we are looking at both of these studies with a different lens. Dr. Ponder discussed the self-assessment process for the EHS-CCP grant. Phil Davis asked if the ability to fill slots was related to the quality of professionals working in the centers. Carol Hartman replied that she thought these two things were related. She assured the board that they have had no trouble filling spots and have a current waiting list of 77 children. Susan Harper asked if the success of filling the slots was due to the locations being close to where the parents live or work. Ms. Hartman explained they did target locations with families that have high needs, and the facilities are close to transportation which helps families get to work. Susan Harper wanted more information about the curriculum for infants and asked if the curriculum was geared toward *Talk to Me, Baby*. Ms. Hartman said they use an evidenced based curriculum that is tied to the GELDS. They are using Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos. DECAL chose that curriculum because there is a version for family providers and child care learning centers, available in Spanish and English. Susan Harper expressed that she would like to see a copy, and Deputy Commissioner Kristin Bernhard said DECAL has a copy she can review. Ms. Harper also wondered if the children were being exposed to English and Spanish. Carol Hartman responded that providers expose children to English and Spanish. Phil Davis asked about other languages with a large number of speakers in Georgia and asked if there was a measure to look at how predominate a language might be in an area to possibly target the language of instruction. Dr. Ponder said we are in the process of looking at that.

Dr. Ponder then presented on the Quality Rated validation study (see slides). Phil Davis asked if we are seeing a decline in the number of programs able to receive the higher quality rating. Dr. Ponder confirmed that we are seeing a decline in programs that receive a higher rating. Jerri Kropp speculated that many of the programs that volunteered to participate in QR the first year were “ready to go” and able to receive that higher rating. Phil Davis asked for a definition of “nationally accredited.” Dr. Ponder explained the process that centers go through to become nationally accredited. Jerri Kropp said her center was accredited while she was there. She said it was a rigorous process, and that nationally, only 6% of centers are accredited. She added that she assumes that a NAEYC accredited center should be able to achieve a star rating.

Kristin Bernhard presented additional updates on System Reform (see slides). She updated the number of CCLCs and FCCLHs currently participating in QR. Currently, 45% of CCLCs and FCCLHs are participating in Quality Rated. The number of rated programs is close to 1,200 programs. The QR campaign continues to help inform parents about indicators of quality child care and what a QR star rating means. Currently, TV airtime about QR has been in the form of PSAs. The targeted online advertisement is directing a lot of people to QualityRated.org. DECAL is working with R&Rs across the state to get the word out about special programming. She introduced Danielle Williams who will be working with Quality Rated on the public awareness campaign. Ms. Bernhard updated the board on round four of child care expansion grants (see slides).

Ms. Bernhard introduced, Joseph Mole, a social worker at Emmaus House, who spoke about his experiences as a Family Engagement Opportunity Grant recipient. Emmaus House focuses on Academic Achievement and Family

Economic Success. The current programing is a two generation approach, *A Great Start for Parents and Children* that started eight years ago to teach parents basic parenting skills with various goals (see slides). The main goal of Emmaus House's grant proposal was to introduce Mindfulness Activities. Luann Purcell said she thought this was wonderful and said that she has heard about using mindfulness with yoga in the community.

- e. **Child Care Services Update:** Kristie Lewis presented updates on Child Care Services (CCS). She reminded board members about the public hearing on the proposed rule revisions to be held later in the meeting and that they will be asked to take action on the proposed rule revisions. The rule revisions relate to Emergency Preparedness Rules and to health and safety training and orientation rules (see slides). These rules enhance current rules pertaining to disaster preparedness and emergencies for all child care programs. Relating to health and safety training and orientation rules, all new staff must take training within 90 days of hire. Kay Ford asked if people were able to do orientation training and first year training together. Susan Adams said the training that DECAL offers for free is online, so people can receive the training in a combination of ways. Carlene Talton asked if providers can be trained (in a train-the-trainer model) and offer the training themselves. Mrs. Lewis responded that some larger providers have gone through the training process and have done that. Ms. Lewis then asked the board for permission to begin revising Criminal Records Check rules to align with federal legislation. Victor Morgan asked for a motion for DECAL staff to move forward with revising/amending the CRC rules. Phil Davis so moved, and Kathy Howell seconded it. Kay Ford asked what the current legislation was. Mrs. Lewis explained that currently, employees can take a 180-day break and their background check remains current. However, the new rules will require employees to have a new criminal records check after a 180-day (or more) break. Mrs. Lewis then provided updates on the Exemption Visit Project (see slides). Victor Morgan asked how DECAL handled a particular issue when an exempt program did not want DECAL at their site. Ms. Lewis said there was past history with that program, but they sent a seasoned consultant over to speak with the provider who eventually allowed the consultant in.
- f. **Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Supports Update:** Susan Adams presented updates on Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports (see slides). Ms. Adams reported that Pre-K started as early as the last week in July and that this year Pre-K will serve about 60% of the state's four year olds. She discussed that the six finalists for Georgia Pre-K Teacher of the Year were visited over the past two months. The two winners (one from a public school setting; one from a private setting) will be announced on September 27, 2016. She announced the dates for this year's Georgia Pre-K Week facilitated by Voices for Georgia's Children and invited board members to participate again this year. Ms. Adams discussed the Quality Rated Inclusion Endorsement program (see slides). She brought copies of the Inclusive Classroom Profile instrument. She listed sites that currently have the Inclusion Endorsement and announced the Inclusive Early Learning Week (see slides). She invited board members to participate if their schedules allowed. Ms. Adams previewed a new resource for early care and education professionals, the **Planning Educational Activities for CHildren (PEACH)**. PEACH aligns with GELDS and allows teachers to search lessons and books to help them create lesson plans. A search tool allows teachers to search by group size, books, topics, etc. PEACH will launch this week. Susan Harper asked for the website and Ms. Adams assured her the board would be notified. Lastly, Ms. Adams reviewed the GELDS Family Engagement Tools, which include a Grocery List Pad, a Placemat Activity Pad, and a GELDS Standards Chart. These are free materials, but people have to pay for shipping and handling.

6. Committee Meetings and Lunch

Victor Morgan dismissed board committees for their meetings. Committee meetings were held in separate rooms over lunch. All committee meetings were open to the public.

7. Committee Reports

Committees reported on their work.

- a. **Budget & Finance:** Carlene Talton, Budget and Finance Committee Chair, turned the report over to Deputy Commissioner Ray Higgins. Mr. Higgins showed slide with FY2018 budget request and reported that the Finance Committee recommended that the board approve the FY2018 budget request. Dr. Jerri Kropp made a motion to approve the budget. The board voted unanimously to approve the budget request.

- b. Programs & Rules:** Jerri Kropp reported for the Programs and Rules committee. Dr. Kropp discussed the new ATLAS system and other nutritional updates. There has been an effort to gather information for teachers surrounding supplemental pay, which coincides with new professional development going on with programs. Additionally, all professional development certificates will be uploaded. There will no longer be paper certificates. Her group discussed the ongoing longitudinal study that allows DECAL to look at Georgia Pre-K and Georgia Kindergarten together.
- c. System Reform:** Susan Harper reported for the System Reform Committee. She discussed the E3Z zones. The emphasis was to target areas that have low level or lack of quality child care and to increase opportunities for these areas. Ms. Harper said money is awarded to people within those four zones. If you live in the zone, you have to apply for the grant. Some of the areas have not had people receive funds in the zones. However, that should change this year. Carol Hartman discussed new grant opportunities for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership funds. DECAL's proposed application for these grant funds focused on the metro Atlanta region to make managing the grant more efficient/effective.

8. Public Hearing/Public Comment Period

Chairman Morgan turned the meeting over to Christie Bearden to convene a public hearing on the proposed rule revisions. Ms. Bearden explained the process for the public comment period. She called the hearing to order and opened the floor to comments on the proposed rule changes 290-2-3 and 590-1-1. Eight written comments were provided to the board regarding the rule changes. Two people spoke regarding the rule changes.

First speaker: Paul Walker from Favorite Time Academy. His daughter distributed a handout to board members. The handout included comments about how DECAL could make the wording of the rule changes clearer. He asked why these changes were necessary. He said the changes to the dates seem fair because most providers are already operating within the 90-day rule. He also requested that DECAL require paraprofessionals to receive 20 hours of training rather than 10 hours.

Second speaker: Carolyn Salvador spoke for the Georgia Child Care Association. She said the proposed regulations and time frame would put the majority of people out of compliance. She is asking for an extension so that everyone has time to be in compliance. She is asking for a variance to work through the 30th of June to get through the proper training. This proposed training puts a burden on providers since providers pay staff to go through the free training.

Public hearing was suspended and public comment period was opened for members of the public wanting to speak about issues/concerns/topics NOT relating to the rule changes. Carolyn Salvador provided general comments about the new CAPS funding. She said the intention to increase subsidy rates is great, but there is no additional money, so this is going to hurt children who are not in the priority groups. Families will have trouble receiving child care and providers will go out of business. The US Department of Labor passed a salary law that impacts minimum salaries. This will cause some providers to put staff on hourly wages.

Next, Paul Walker provided comments, agreeing with Ms. Salvador's economic issues that impact their industry. Mr. Walker said this goes back to paying the paraprofessional. He says the increase in pay for Pre-K assistant teachers for all practical purposes changes the minimum wage to \$10.25/hour. He said if we raise the minimum wage, we should also raise the requirements for these assistant teachers.

Public hearing was then officially closed.

9. Action on Proposed Rule Changes

Victor Morgan introduced proposed rule changes for board approval.

1. Phil Davis moved to approve changes to Rules Chapter 290-2-3-.04, 290-2-3-.07, 290-2-3-.08, and 290-2-3-.11. Kay Ford seconded. The board voted, and rule revisions were unanimously approved.
2. Susan Harper moved to approve changes to rules chapter 591-1-1-.14, 591-1-1-.21, 591-1-1-.27, 591-1-1.31 and 591-1-1.33. Kathy Howell seconded. The board voted, and rule revisions were unanimously approved.

10. Adjournment

Victor Morgan reminded the board that their next meeting will take place November 10, 2016. He provided the proposed dates for 2017 (2/16, 5/11, 8/17, and 11/16). He asked for a motion to approve those dates. Phil Davis motioned to approve the dates, and Kay Ford seconded the dates. The dates were unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 1:36 p.m.