
Board of Early Care and Learning

Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting
Thursday, February 16, 2017, 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
Phil Davis
Sheri Hooper
Jerri Kropp
Melissa Boekhaus
Dawn Henderson
Kay Ford, Board Secretary

Public Guests

Hanah Goldberg
Joe Perreault
Lynn Manfredi/Petitt
Brian Lipton
Michelle Lank
Paige Pushkin

Melissa Johnson
Melvin Anderson
Cheryl Hearn Smith

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
Elisabetta Kasfir, Assistant Commissioner for Federal
Programs
Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer
Craig Detweiler, Chief Information Officer
Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer
Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and
Administration
Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care
Services
Jennie Couture, Director of Practice & Support Services
Allison Setterlind, Head Start Collaboration Director
Meghan McNail, Summer Transition & Outreach
Manager

William Cox, Director of Infrastructure
Jackie Shivers, Pre-K Director for Quality Support
Bentley Ponder, Research and Policy Analysis Director
Woody Dover, Budget Administrator
Falita Flowers, Nutrition Services Director
Carol Hartman, Policy and System Reform Director
Sharon McPherson, Director of Finance
Danielle Williams, System Reform Communication &
Outreach Specialist
Rian Ringsrud, Director of Audits and Compliance
Mark Waits, Special Assistant to the Commissioner
Jessie Bruno, Data and Research Coordinator
Titus Dyson, Helpdesk Supervisor
Faith Duncan, Pre-K Director for Field Operations
Robin Stevens, Human Resources Director
Amy Page, Process and Policy Manager
Randy Hudgins, Sr. Research and Policy Analyst

1. Call to Order

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

2. Approval of 2/16/17 Agenda and 11/10/16 Minutes

Susan Harper moved to accept the day's agenda. Phil Davis seconded. The agenda was unanimously accepted. Davis moved to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2016 meeting of the board. Dawnn Henderson seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Inspiration

Morgan provided the inspiration. He also thanked Mark Waits for being an inspiration as a faithful board liaison and wished him a happy upcoming birthday.

4. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities:

- Melissa Boekhaus has had a first-hand look at licensed child care programs since researching preschool and kindergarten classes for her child. She is disappointed with the use of technology in the classrooms that she saw. She asked if DECAL has any oversight or regulations on the use of technology in the classroom. She noted that the American Academy of Pediatrics does have guidelines on technology use by children.
- Phil Davis was encouraged to see a child care center van that had a Quality Rated sign on it.
- Susan Harper attended a consultant training and was encouraged by the support. She shared her concern for her community which has been ravaged by two recent storms that have destroyed homes and displaced families, leaving children far away from their schools. She's curious about how often child care facilities review and practice their emergency plans. How do these centers help families and children deal with the trauma? We should be aware of this issue and understand what these families are going through and help teachers be aware of the trauma with which families are dealing.

5. Bright from the Start Presentations

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

a. Commissioner's Update:

Commissioner Jacobs gave an overview of Governor Deal's fiscal year 2018 budget proposal as it relates to early childhood education. His proposal includes \$5.5 million for tiered reimbursement for Quality Rated child care programs. This is the department's top recommendation and will help increase access to high quality child care for Georgia's most vulnerable children. \$2 million has been proposed for early language and literacy classroom grants that will enable the department to work with 50 classrooms during the year to support the Governor's goal of Georgia's children reading on grade level by the end of the 3rd grade. These grants will allow DECAL to coach infant and toddler teachers on ways to build pre-language and literacy skills. \$2.7 million has been proposed for the Georgia Center for Language and Literacy. The center, located at Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville, will provide resources for infant to 3rd grade teachers, act as a research based think tank, and facilitate implementing strategies to teach literacy.

The Commissioner introduced the first two Pre-K Teachers of the Year to the board: one from a private child care center and one from a public school system, and asked each of the winners to speak to the board. Channie Frazier, the winner from a private child care program, currently teaches at Kids World Learning Center in Statesboro/Bulloch County, a 3-star Quality Rated program. Ms. Frazier has been a Pre-K teacher for 11 years, and if she could change one thing about Pre-K, it would be to decrease class size back to 20 students. The public Pre-K winner, Connie Ellington of Bethlehem Elementary School in Barrow County, expressed her gratitude for the award and thanked First Lady Deal, Stephanie Blank, and the department for this opportunity. If she could change one thing in Pre-K, she would pay higher salaries for her teacher assistants. Ellington and Frazier will continue to serve as advocates for Pre-K and young children and will help select the next year's winners who will be announced in September. The 25th anniversary of Georgia's Pre-K Program is next year, and a birthday celebration for the program is expected.

b. Finance, Administration, and Legislative Update:

Ray Higgins reported on the department's budget and expenditures to date, the current audit, and the legislative session. The budget looks favorable for this time of year. Additional funding is expected for the Pre-K budget, including a 2% salary increase for Pre-K teachers and assistants. The audit is almost finished with more to report at the next board

meeting. To date, a few bills relating to DECAL have been introduced in the Georgia General Assembly. SB 97 deals with the work requirements for the CAPS program. SB 98 is related to the Pre-K waiting list and would affect the Georgia Department of Education, local school boards, and capital outlay. Kay Ford asked for confirmation that if this bill passes, it will be up to local boards to allocate the money to solve capacity issues if they choose. SB 24 would expand exemptions to lower age levels. HB 250 relates to Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) child welfare issues including allowing DFCS to use DECAL's background check. Phil Davis asked for clarification on how DFCS would adopt DECAL's background check policy. Since this bill is not related to DECAL specifically, it is just being monitored. Planning for the CAPS transition is continuing. The state agriculture building is being renovated to house CAPS staff.

c. Human Resources Update:

Robin Stevens provided an overview and update of the division's organizational structure (see slides). DECAL has grown in size over the past five years. Currently, DECAL has 418 employees, including full time, hourly, vendor temps, and contractors. The largest division is CCS. Over 90% of employees have undergraduate degrees; 39% also have post-graduate degrees. DECAL's turnover rate is at about 10%, which is good for a department of its size. Phil Davis asked if contractors are full employees of DECAL or not. Ms. Stevens answered that contractors are not DECAL employees. They are independent of the state's payroll and do not participate in state benefit or pension plans. Most employees (65-70%) work throughout the state based in home offices.

In 2017 HR has four focus areas. The CAPS transition is currently underway with 150-180 new positions being filled in the next year. HR has worked closely with Reg Griffin to ensure that job postings are advertised and communicated well. Employee Education and Development is the second priority, and there has been a strong effort to deliver more employee training classes. To accomplish training across DECAL units, DECAL University was created. Ms. Stevens is happy with the participation level, and webinar participation has increased. The third area of focus is updating policies in the employee handbook, which should be released before the onboarding of CAPS employees. Lastly, implementing FLSA regulations, now halted by a federal injunction, has taken much of the division's time.

All of the DECAL University classes will be posted on the POLAR website, and login information for board members will be sent to the board.

d. Federal Program Updates:

Elisabetta Kasfir explained the CAPS stakeholder engagement plan in greater detail. DECAL has decided to delay the changes to raise base rates for providers, decrease family fees and increase tiers. The only change implemented was the increase to tiered reimbursements for Quality Rated programs, and base rates remain the same. DECAL has delayed these other changes, and has held multiple community meetings to hear feedback from stakeholders. The purpose of these meetings is to find out which cost driver has the greatest importance. The Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG) helped the department develop a comprehensive plan and is facilitating each stakeholder session. All providers were sent a survey in the fall. The DECAL Advisory Committee will develop recommendations based on the results of all the stakeholder feedback. From January through March staff from CVIOG and the CAPS Program team will conduct family forums from child care sites with a high number of CAPS families. One community meeting took place on February 7 in Macon. The next will be in Clarkston on February 23.

Ms. Kasfir then reviewed the details of transferring the CAPS eligibility function to DECAL. The CAPS unit will now have three areas of focus: Scholarship Administration; Program Administration; and Family Support. The Family Support focus is new; staff working in CAPS Family Support will be field based. Staff working in Scholarship Administration and Program Administration will be based in Atlanta in the state Agriculture Building. Having Scholarship Administration centralized will streamline the eligibility process and address the previous customer service concerns.

The CAPS transition will happen in three stages to gain experience through gradually increasing workload and to minimize disruption to client services. Webinars and monthly newsletters will keep people affected by the changes to CAPS informed on the process.

e. System Reform Update:

Kristin Bernhard presented updates on the Quality Rated (QR) program. The goal is that 100% of licensed child care programs will participate in QR. Currently, 63% of all child care learning centers and 43% of family child care learning homes are participating in QR. Ms. Bernhard explained that, as expected, there are more 2-star programs than 1- or 3-star programs, and that a 1-star rating still indicates a program's quality is above and beyond the state's licensing requirements. Ms. Bernhard then reviewed the network of Georgia's child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies

that provide technical assistance to child care programs seeking a Quality Rated star rating. DECAL provides annual grants to four community agencies to provide free resources through the CCR&Rs to child care programs in six geographic regions. These programs are held accountable to four performance measures. DECAL also awards an annual contract to a CCR&R to operate a statewide call center to help families locate child care.

f. BREAK

g. Report on Child Care Statewide Call Center:

Cheryl Hearn Smith, Director of Parent Services, Quality Care for Children (QCC), discussed the All GA Kids call center. QCC is the nonprofit that operates the statewide call center and the child care referral system. The call center is funded by DECAL to ensure access to child care for families. They receive 8,000 calls every year from families searching for care. They use these calls as opportunities to promote quality care in all 159 counties.

Call center staff regularly contact child care providers to ensure information is as current as possible. Last year the team updated 14,000 records.

The call center is located in Atlanta, but they support families statewide and frequently travel to local communities. They visit every CCR&R region at least twice a year, especially Title 1 schools to ensure they have resources. The call center is available from 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Friday. While call center representatives are available only during regular business hours, all calls go to voicemail and are returned the next day. Ms. Smith also pointed out that the largest call volume is during the middle of the day from 12 p.m.-3 p.m.

h. Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Supports Update:

Susan Adams and Bentley Ponder presented updates on the Pre-K Longitudinal Study. See slides for full results. The study was requested in 2011-2012 by the state legislature, and first looked at specific outcomes. The study is in its third year, and the children are currently in 2nd grade. The study used random selection to create a representative sample of students. The study, using the CLASS to measure the quality of children's experiences, found that quality does vary across domains, but the patterns are similar in Pre-K and Kindergarten. The main findings show that children made significant gains on most measures from Pre-K through Kindergarten. The growth on standardized measures indicates children progressed at an even greater rate than expected for typical developmental growth.

i. Head Start State Collaboration Report

Allison Setterlind shared the federal Office of Head Start's priorities for the Head Start State Collaboration office. She, who has worked with Head Start for over 15 years in the southeast region, has enjoyed the transition into this new role as Georgia's Head Start State Collaboration Director.

Ms. Setterlind recently completed the annual report due to the Office of Head Start every January outlining the previous year's work. Georgia's Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSCO) is coming up on the end of a five-year grant; Ms. Setterlind will be developing a new five-year grant application this spring, which must be submitted to the Office of Head Start for approval by the end of June 2017. Feedback from Head Start grantees will be used to develop goals for the HSCO five-year plan. Ms. Setterlind captured individual and aggregate data from each Head Start grantee using a needs assessment tool developed by DECAL's Research and Policy Analysis team. Ms. Setterlind also provided information regarding Head Start services for children in foster care and children experiencing homelessness in Georgia. These two vulnerable populations are categorically eligible for Head Start services, and the new Head Start Program Performance Standards are expected to increase access and participation in Head Start.

Phil Davis asked if Head Start is working with any faith based programs. Setterlind responded that there is a MOU at the state level with the McKinney Vento Liaison with the Department of Education. Included in the MOU is the expectation that Head Start grantees throughout Georgia will partner with their local homeless coalitions. Many faith based groups are part these coalitions, and there is a renewed focus on improving this work.

j. Child Care Services Updates

Kristie Lewis reminded the Board that they will be voting on proposed rule changes at the May meeting. In November 2015 Ms. Lewis asked for, and the board voted to approve, permission to revise the state's enforcement process when child care programs violate rules. The new policy was implemented in July 2016. Some rules do not completely align with this policy. The major changes on which the board will be asked to act involve renumbering rules – separating some rules and combining others and cleaning up language and grammar. The public will be given opportunities to comment on the

proposed rule changes in writing and orally at a public hearing at the May meeting. If the board votes to approve the rule changes, the rules will go into effect July 1, 2017. See slides.

Amy Page and Randy Hudgins reported on the 2016 Exemption Visit Project (EVP). Programs exempt from licensing that receive CAPS funding are now required to be monitored annually. The purpose of the EVP was to update files on exempt programs to determine if the programs were still operating and, if so, if they were operating within the parameters of their original exemption rule(s). Additional data from the project are currently being analyzed by Child Trends. See slides for data tables and maps.

BREAK FOR LUNCH

6. Committee Meetings and Lunch

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

7. Public Hearing/Public Comment Period

Lynn Manfredi/Petitt, Family Child Care Learning Home provider, commented about HB 166 that would exempt Family Child Care Home providers from serving on jury duty. She explained the rationale behind the bill and voiced her support of the bill. She asked DECAL staff and the public to call their legislators to support the legislation. She also brought free calendars to distribute to anyone interested.

Since no one else had signed up to make public comment to the board, Chair Victor Morgan recessed the public comment period and continued with board business.

k. Communications Update:

Reg Griffin updated the board on the department's communication efforts. DECAL communicates with about 500 media outlets around the state. Griffin works to strike a balance between proactive media and reactive media. Georgia's Pre-K Program received a lot of coverage due to the most recent results from the longitudinal study. Mr. Griffin's showed television news clips from WSB and WALB, Albany. He asked the Board and others present at the meeting to actively share and support all of DECAL's social media platforms.

8. Committee Reports

9. Committees reported on their work.

a. Budget & Finance:

Kay Ford reported for the Budget and Finance committee. She went over the budget covered during meeting, and had no further matters to report.

b. Programs & Rules:

Jerri Kropp reported for the Programs and Rules committee. Bentley Ponder and Susan Adams continued their presentation on the Pre-K longitudinal study including additional conclusions. Students who were behind at the beginning of the year made the most progress over the year. The gap begins to close by the fall of the kindergarten year. Dr. Ponder emphasized that language proficiency is a priority. Ms. Adams distributed a handout of application timelines for Georgia's Pre-K Program Summer Transition Program and Pre-K Teachers of the Year. She reported that the summer transition program will be ramping up soon. More information is posted on the website. Next, Kristie Lewis talked about federal money that funds national technical assistance systems. Georgia is seen as a leader in interrater reliability, rules process, how to manage caseloads, and how to gauge and support compliance with state licensing rules/regulations. DECAL has been asked to present to other states about Georgia's child care licensing processes and procedures. Falita Flowers announced that National CACFP week is the week of March 12. DECAL is partnering with metro Atlanta YMCA, United Way, and the Boys and Girls Club. She also mentioned that the Nutrition Services unit is partnering with Georgia Organics to target childhood obesity.

c. System Reform:

Susan Harper reported for the System Reform committee. She distributed a handout from Kristin Bernhard about activities in the Early Head Start, Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs), and Quality Rated units within the System Reform division. From that handout, she highlighted that Mathematica has selected Georgia to participate in an Early Head Start case study. She commented that much is happening with the E3Zs. An early learning summit was held in the southern E3Z that was well attended including the local college president and the mayor. It was staffed by volunteers. DECAL would like to hold other summits in other parts of the state. In addition Quality Rated (QR) has recruited rated providers to serve as peer ambassadors for the QR program.

10. Public Hearing/Public Comment Period

Board Chair Morgan opened the floor for any further public comments. No one else requested to speak, and Morgan adjourned the public comment time.

11. Closing Remarks/Adjournment

Board Chair Morgan reminded the board they would be acting on proposed rule changes at the May board meeting. He also announced that board elections would be held at the May meeting. As per the board bylaws, his tenure as board chair is over, so a new board chair will be elected. It is not time to elect a new Vice Chair or Secretary.

Mark Waits asked board members to check their state ID and, if it expires before May 11, to send it to him to be renewed.

Morgan thanked staff for all they do for Georgia's children. The next meeting of the board will take place May 11, 2017. Phil Davis moved to adjourn the board meeting. Kay Ford seconded. Victor Morgan adjourned the meeting at 1:11 p.m.