
Board of Early Care and Learning

Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting

Thursday, February 15, 2018, 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 Conference Room

Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Amy M. Jacobs, Commissioner

Meeting Minutes

Board Members

Susan Harper
Jerri Kropp
Sheri Hooper
Melissa Boekhaus
Phil Davis

Victor Morgan
Kathy Howell
Dr. Luann Purcell
Tangela Johnson

Public Guests

Caylor Johnson, Pam Runkle, Bibi Omar, Jodi McNamara, Kelly Fuqua, Nathan Leatherwood, Pam Tatum, Jorge Verlenden, Lynn Manfredi/Petit, Michelle Lank

Bright from the Start Staff

Amy M. 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
Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and
Administration
Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care
Services
Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer
Jennie Couture, Director of PSS
Bentley Ponder, Senior Director of Research and Policy
Analysis
Allison Setterlind, Head Start Collaboration Director
William Cox, Director of Infrastructure
Jackie Shivers, Quality Initiatives Director

Woody Dover, Budget Administrator
Falita Flowers, Nutrition Services Director
Carol Hartman, Policy and System Reform Director
Sharon McPherson, Director of Finance
Rian Ringsrud, Director of Audits and Compliance
Mark Waits, Special Assistant to the Commissioner
Jessie Bruno, Data and Research Coordinator
Faith Duncan, Field Operations Director
Robin Stevens, Human Resources Director
Nia King, Special Projects & Business Operations
Manager
Rachael Lee, QR Peer Support Network Specialist
Mary Stoklas, Quality Rated Operations Coordinator
Alexandria Williams, Research and Policy Analyst
Christi Moore, Director of Professional Learning
Pam Stevens, Quality Rated Policy and Partnerships
Director
Jasmine Barnes, System Reform Administrative
Assistant
Quandra Collins, Training Logistics Coordinator

1. Call to Order

Board Chair Susan Harper called the meeting to order. She welcomed the board members, Department of Early Care and Learning staff, and public guests.

2. Approval of 2/15/18 Agenda and 11/16/17 Minutes

Harper asked for a motion to accept the day's agenda. Victor Morgan moved to approve, and Phil Davis seconded. The agenda was unanimously accepted. Phil Davis moved to approve the minutes from the November 16, 2017 meeting of the board. Tangela Johnson seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Inspiration

Jennie Couture provided the inspiration that highlighted the importance of including children with disabilities in classrooms with typically developing children and highlighting Inclusive Early Learning Week.

4. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities:

- Susan Harper and Jennie Couture read to a classroom at The Family Tree at the Phoebe Putney Health System.
- Melissa Boekhaus had invited Commissioner Jacobs to speak to the Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The Commissioner shared an overview of DECAL and ways GA-AAP can support the department's work.
- Kathy Howell had lunch with three teachers who taught in Georgia's Pre-K Program when it was piloted 25 years ago.
- Dr. Luann Purcell read to a Pre-K class at the school near her office. She brought cupcakes, and the class sang Happy Birthday to Georgia's Pre-K.

5. Bright from the Start Presentations

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

a. Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Amy Jacobs recognized the events happening this week around Inclusive Early Learning Week. The Commissioner explained that the department is reconvening DECAL's Advisory Committee to provide recommendations on serving the early care and education workforce. The group plans to meet again in April to discuss workforce challenges.

The Commissioner invited the Board to Georgia's Pre-K Birthday Party on March 6th at 5 p.m. The Commissioner announced that Governor and Mrs. Deal will present each Pre-K student a book titled *Behind the Little Red Door* by Coy Bowles, a native Georgian and member of the Zac Brown Band. The department is encouraging Pre-K teachers to participate in a contest to win a visit from Bowles who will read the book to the class.

This year's Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the Year attended the meeting and were introduced by Commissioner Jacobs. Jodi McNamara, Kids R Kids #49, and Nathan Leatherwood, Calhoun city Pre-K, each presented on what opportunities they've had since winning the honor and received official resolutions from the Board of Early Care and Learning.

b. Finance, Administration, and Legislative Update

Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration, presented the budget report for the last quarter; the department is in good financial standing for the time period. "Crossover Day" in the Georgia General Assembly is February 28th. The agency continues to track HB 494 that addresses federal changes to criminal records checks (CRC). HB 740 passed the House. This bill will require school systems to conduct certain

screenings, assessments, and reviews before expelling young children. HB 740 was revised to more directly address the apparent needs of the child. SB 97 calls for changes in the CAPS program.

c. System Reform Update

Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner of System Reform, presented updates on Quality Rated. 62% of centers were participating in the program at the end of 2017, and 30% of all child care programs in Georgia are rated. As of February 2018, approximately 1,500 programs have earned a star rating, and 2,000 are working on becoming rated. Georgia's goal is to have all centers participating in Quality Rated by 2020. The Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs) are making faster progress towards meeting the 2020 goal than the rest of the state. The child care resource and referral agencies provide technical assistance to help child care providers in the Quality Rated process. Child care providers also receive support through the Peer Support Network (PSN) which facilitates learning among providers participating in Quality Rated.

Ms. Bernhard introduced Rachael Lee, DECAL Peer Support Network Specialist, who explained more details about the PSN. The program was created to provide an opportunity for experienced Quality Rated providers to share their experiences with providers interested in Quality Rated, and for the experienced rated providers to receive continued support from their peers. Experienced providers whose programs have a 2- or 3-star rating can become Peer Support Ambassadors. Lee then introduced Michelle Smith Lank, one of the first Peer Support Ambassadors and owner of Kids World Learning Center, a 3-star rated child care center in Statesboro, Georgia. Ms. Lank shared about the benefits of participating in the PSN and her own experience of becoming a Peer Support Ambassador. In 2017 the PSN grew from 7 to 19 cohorts, and today has 27 Peer Support Ambassadors.

d. IT Update

Craig Detweiler demonstrated the newly updated DECAL KOALA system. This system enhances providers' self-service, allowing them to input more detailed information about their programs. Providers who are Quality Rated can post their center logo and photos. Parents will be able to see all this data through the Quality Rated search tool. Over time, the updated KOALA system has the potential to provide more information on the state of child care across Georgia. Detweiler provided a brief demo of the updated website capabilities, including the "download provider data" link at the bottom of the page.

e. Federal Programs Update

Elisabetta Kasfir, Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs and Eligibility, provided updates on the CAPS transition project. The CAPS department has now fully moved into the 2nd and 5th floors of the Agriculture Building. Two hundred new staff members have been hired as part of this transition. DFCS continues to process the pending applications and case renewals that were submitted before the transition began. The number of phone calls received has grown with the number of counties served. The CAPS program is now accepting all calls from CAPS applicants and customers asking for assistance with any part of the CAPS eligibility, application, and renewal processes. The new CAPS structure includes three components: Scholarship Administration, Family Support, and Program Administration, all of which are fully staffed at this time.

f. Child Care Services Update

Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services, presented changes made to the CCS regions going from five to six regions to more accurately assign consultant workloads. Ms. Lewis discussed the methodology which included a weighted caseload analysis and led to three options. CCS consultants were asked to vote on which option they felt was the fairest, and the option presented to the board received the most votes. This change will be effective on July 1, 2018.

CCS is expanding the exemption unit. The increased staff will allow for periodic monitoring of license exempt sites and annual monitoring of a sample of exempt programs that receive funding for subsidized child care through the CAPS program.

Ms. Lewis requested permission to revise the CCS rules to align with proposed legislation and the federal CCDF requirements around criminal records checks. Victor Morgan made the motion, which was seconded by Kathy Howell. The board voted unanimously to grant permission to draft proposed changes, which will be acted on by the board later this year.

g. Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Supports Update

Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner of Pre-K and Instructional Supports, presented the deadlines for applications for Georgia's Pre-K Program and the Summer Transition Programs. The programs serve approximately 800 children over the summer with a focus on dual language learners. Inclusive Early Learning Week, held the week of the board meeting, has focused on promoting inclusive practices at the classroom and state levels. Georgia is ahead of the nation in raising awareness to the importance of promoting inclusive early learning environments.

Adams explained that children are expelled from child care at a rate 3 times greater than that of children in grades K-12. African-American students make up 18% of the preschool population but 48% of suspensions. Boys were 49% of preschool population and yet make up 82% of all suspensions. Research shows that young students who are expelled or suspended are 10 times more likely to drop out of high school. Georgia's SEEDS (Social Emotional Early Development Strategies for Success) is a state initiative that brings together state partners to support and align the state's initiatives related to increased social emotional development and decreased challenging behaviors in early childhood settings. State partners include the Georgia Department of Education, Georgia Department of Public Health, universities, and the technical college system. DECAL's Inclusion Specialist Team, led by Brandi Locchetta, also serves as a resource for providers wishing to improve inclusion practices in the classroom. During the meeting Ms. Locchetta led the board in committing to the People First Pledge which mandates a change in the way people/children with disabilities are referred to. Next year's Inclusive Early Learning Week will be February 11-15, 2019.

Before adjourning for lunch and committee meetings, Susan Harper announced that Kay Ford, board member representing the 1st Congressional District, has resigned from the board. Ms. Ford was board secretary, so her resignation means the board needs to elect a new secretary. Ms. Harper asked board members to think about a replacement for Ms. Ford and said the board would conduct an election before adjourning the meeting.

6. Committee Meetings and Lunch

Ms. Harper dismissed the board to pick up lunch and attend committee meetings.

7. Committees reported on their work.

a. Budget & Finance

The budget and finance committee reported that there were no major updates. The committee discussed SB 97 and the ongoing federal budgetary activity that may affect DECAL. A more detailed budget report was provided.

b. Programs & Rules

Tangela Johnson reported for the program and rules committee that there are 35 centers at risk of having their licenses revoked because of unpaid fees. A CCS priority will be to examine the nationwide trend of a decline in home-based care and what this means for Georgia. Elisabetta reported on the possible policy changes around CAPS. Relating to Senate bill 97, DECAL will be working on a policy change requiring people to be involved in certain activities to qualify for CAPS. The revision will allow for a family to qualify for CAPS if they are pursuing an associate's degree, not only a technical certificate. Falita Flowers reported on nutrition and a new approach to target YMCAs and Boys & Girls Clubs.

