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### Georgia's Pre-K Week Turns 10!

**ATLANTA**—Georgia's Pre-K Week is turning ten! And we are celebrating this milestone anniversary!

For the past 28 years, Georgia's nationally-recognized Pre-K Program has provided quality early education to the state's youngest learners. Launched in 1992 as a pilot program serving 750 four-year-olds, the lottery-funded Georgia's Pre-K Program has laid a solid foundation for academic excellence and future success in the lives of approximately 1.6 million children.

Voices for Georgia's Children, the state's only comprehensive child policy and advocacy organization, coordinates Georgia's Pre-K Week and is excited to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this annual celebration of early learning. Georgia's Pre-K Week emphasizes the importance of quality early childhood education by providing opportunities for leaders to engage with Pre-K classrooms in local communities. Due to the coronavirus pandemic and the new landscape in which the state's children are learning, this Pre-K Week will look different from years past.

"This year's celebration is bittersweet," said Dr. Erica Fener Sitkoff, Executive Director of Voices for Georgia's Children. "Safety precautions at many Pre-K centers are forcing us to celebrate virtually this year. While our state and community leaders won't be in classrooms in person, many are still marking the occasion by reading a book to students in their district and introducing those critical early literacy skills via video."

Nearly three out of every four state legislators, and nearly half of Georgia's congressional delegation, have participated in Georgia's Pre-K Week by reading to kids since it began in 2011. This year, they'll be reading *Behind the Little Red Door*, written by Georgia native Coy Bowles. We're excited that WSB-TV's Fred Blankenship and Linda Stouffer, CBS46's Karyn Greer, and former WSB-TV news anchor Monica Kaufman Pearson will join in the celebration by reading Bowles' new book *Can You Touch a Color?* as well.

"Georgia's Pre-K looks a little different this year," said Amy M. Jacobs, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), which administers Georgia's Pre-K Program and licenses and monitors the state's child care learning centers. "Because of COVID-19, some of our classes are engaged in full distance learning, while others are meeting in person by implementing strict safety protocols. But regardless of the way Georgia's Pre-K is being delivered, our teachers are providing quality education to prepare children for Kindergarten. And by participating in Georgia's Pre-K Week activities...virtually or in person...state and local leaders can demonstrate to parents and the public their support of quality early education."

Once again, Georgia Power and Reach Out and Read Georgia are returning as sponsors of Pre-K Week, which is supported by Governor Brian Kemp, state commissioners, state and local elected officials, and other longstanding community partners, making this year's virtual event and 10-year anniversary a special one.

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#### About Voices for Georgia's Children

Established in 2003, Voices for Georgia's Children is a nonprofit child policy and advocacy organization that envisions a Georgia where all children will thrive because they are safe, healthy, educated, connected to family and community, and prepared to be productive and responsible citizens. Our mission is to promote equity, quality, and accessibility in systems created to serve children's needs. We are dedicated to advancing policies and implementation actions that ensure the best possible outcomes for children. For more information, visit [www.georgiavoices.org](http://www.georgiavoices.org).

#### About Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages Quality Rated, Georgia's community powered child care rating system. The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to [www.dec.al.ga.gov](http://www.dec.al.ga.gov).