

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

84,000 - Four year olds attending Georgia's Pre-K Program

3,894 - Classes funded by Georgia's Pre-K Program

24 - Years Pre-K has been available in Georgia

4,983 - Licensed child care programs in Georgia

54,465 - Active registrants in Georgia Professional Development System

1,132 - Quality Rated child care programs in Georgia

Quick Links

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Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs

Dear Fellow DECAL Staff,

As we enter the "dog days of summer," the Summer Food Service Program is winding down...Georgia's Pre-K Program is gearing up...and the rest of you are busy administering our other programs and services or are providing the support needed to keep the department moving forward to fulfill our mission and vision. Thank you for your efforts.

Following are some of what I've been involved in since our last Decidedly DECAL:

On July 21, I attended a press event at the Capitol at which the Georgia Lottery Corporation presented a record-breaking check to Governor Deal for over one BILLION dollars for HOPE and for Georgia's Pre-K Program. This is the first time the Georgia Lottery has transferred more than \$1 billion in a single fiscal year and is the largest funding transfer in the 23-year history of the lottery.

All Georgians can be proud of the billions of dollars for education generated by the Georgia Lottery and can be grateful to former Governor Zell Miller for his wisdom and foresight in creating the lottery and legislating how the proceeds can be used. Millions of Georgia's children and their families have benefited from Pre-K and HOPE.

I've also worked with several of your colleagues and DECAL units to develop the following grant proposals to support our work.

1. We've applied to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for a grant to plan how we will evaluate the effectiveness of our CCDF State Plan. Georgia receives millions of dollars of federal funds each year to serve eligible families, and we must ensure that the programs, initiatives, and services included in our State Plan accomplish the goals and objectives we set forth.



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August Birthdays



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

1 - Gwen Kahn
 4 - Phonecia Pittman
 5 - Paula Lawrence
 5 - Jennifer Waters
 6 - Valerie Coulton
 6 - Ira Sudman
 7 - Kay Pollard
 10 - Quandra Collins
 10 - Linda Norwood
 11 - Brandi Templeton
 11 - Vicki Watts
 12 - Charnele Dobbins
 12 - Kristie Lewis
 14 - Denise Jenson
 16 - Shaheedah El-Amin
 16 - Karen McGill
 18 - Anitra Brooks
 18 - Michelle Clark
 20 - Brian Collin
 21 - Rachael Lee
 22 - Karla Crawford
 23 - Susan Simpson
 23 - Atlantis Wright
 25 - Bart Ellington
 26 - Kay Mayfield
 29 - Hasnein Gulamali
 30 - Sylvia Boykin
 30 - Tamisa Sapp

Day in the Life of Angela Butler

When on the job, Angela Butler likes to stay busy, and her position as a Pre-K administrative assistant certainly delivers.

Butler spends her days providing assistance to the Assistant Commissioner and staff for Pre-K and Instructional Supports. She schedules meetings, answers and re-directs phone calls, files and fulfills

2. We've applied to the Peyton Anderson Foundation in Macon for funding to provide incentive packages and bonuses for child care providers in Macon-Bibb County who choose to participate in Quality Rated.
3. We've begun the application process for a technical assistance grant from the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). The name of the grant is Parents and Children Thriving Together (PACTT): Two Generation State Policy Network. The purpose of the grant is to help states develop policies to simultaneously promote children's learning and healthy development and parents' success as caregivers and breadwinners - giving low-income families a double boost in their efforts to achieve economic security.

I'm incredibly grateful for the vision and skills that each of you brings to our work especially when we seek support beyond state resources...as researchers, writers, data specialists as we draft proposals...and then as managers, administrators, consultants, administrative support, employees in Finance and IT as we implement proposals for which we've asked for financial or technical support.

Because of your commitment and professional integrity, I have no hesitation at seeking public or private grant support when it will benefit the children and families of Georgia. Thank you for enabling me to have that confidence.

Sincerely,

Georgia's Pre-K Program Set to Welcome 84,000 Four Year Olds

School bells are ringing for up to 84,000 four year olds attending Georgia's Pre-K Program. The voluntary, lottery-funded Pre-K program has been recognized as one of the top programs in the nation based on quality standards, teacher qualifications, and enrollment. The program is beginning its 24th year.

The first day of Georgia's Pre-K year is usually based on the local school system calendar. Taliaferro County was the first to start on July 14, followed by Montgomery and Terrell counties on July 27. More than 70 percent of Georgia public schools start the week of August 1.

Georgia's Pre-K Program is unique especially in its access and in its delivery model. First, any age-eligible child residing in Georgia may attend the program regardless of family income. Second, the program is provided through a public-private partnership involving local school systems, private for-profit and nonprofit child care centers, military bases, colleges and universities, and other facilities. In the 2015-2016 school year, approximately 60 percent of all four year olds in Georgia were served by state funded Pre-K.

"Pre-K is an exciting time as our state's youngest learners begin their formal educational journey," said Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "Recent independent studies have shown that Georgia's Pre-K helps four year olds build a solid foundation for lifelong learning with significant impacts in school readiness skills in language, literacy, and math."

various requests from the colleagues she supports. Additionally, she manages the Assistant Commissioner's calendar and processes travel plans.

She said she looks forward each day to "new challenges regarding job duties and assisting others."

Butler has been working for DECAL for just over six years - four years as a contractor and two as an employee. If she were named DECAL Commissioner for a day, Butler said she would plan an off-site team building exercise with staff in an outdoor setting such as in the mountains, at a lake or at the zoo.

When not on the job, Butler (pictured below) enjoys reading and traveling.



"Starting school is a significant time for children and families," said Susan Adams, assistant commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports. "Many children enrolling in Pre-K are 'leaving home' for their first school experience. For this reason we take our roles seriously, and we work really hard to provide Georgia's children with positive and meaningful experiences."

Tips for Georgia's Pre-K First Day

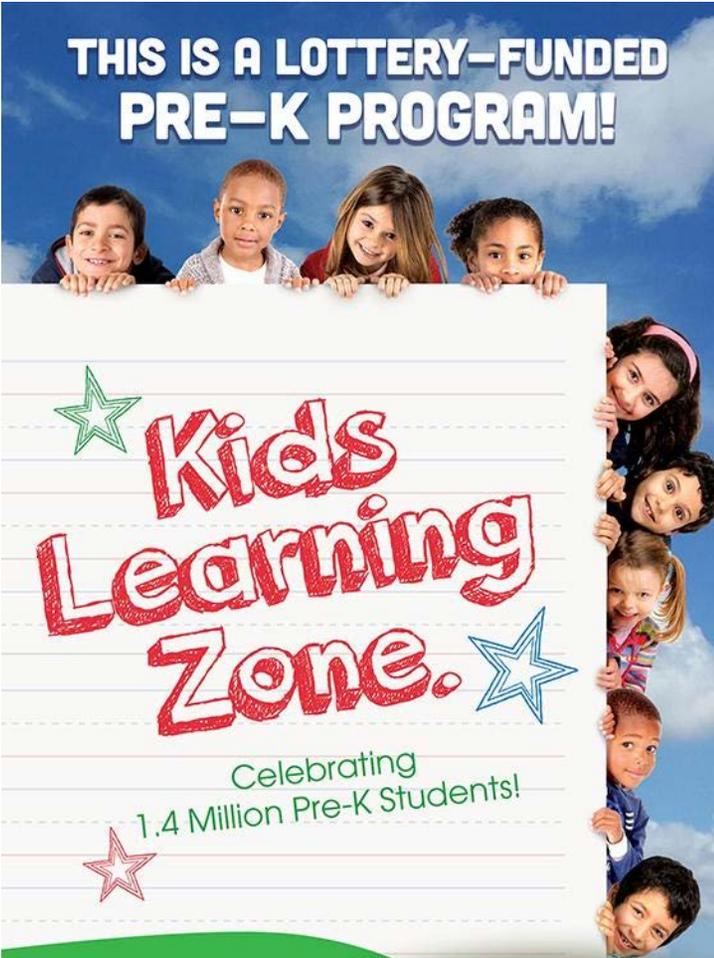
For parents enrolling their children in Georgia's Pre-K Program, Assistant Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports Susan Adams offers the following tips to help make the first day go smoother:

- Start a routine of "early to bed" and "school wake-up time" several weeks before Pre-K begins so your child has time to adjust to the new schedule.
- After walking your child to class on the first day of school, try not to linger too long in the classroom even if your child appears upset. Typically once children are by themselves with the teachers and their new friends, they feel less apprehensive and "settle" into their new setting more easily.
- Remember that the more calm and positive you are about your child starting Pre-K, the more confident and less anxious your child will be about this new adventure. Make this an exciting and fun time for your child!
- Send your child to school in clothes they can manage independently in the bathroom: No overalls.
- Make sure your child's shoes are comfortable for playtime. Slip-on shoes or shoes with Velcro fasteners are easiest for children to manage.
- Visit the classroom before school starts so children are familiar with the new surroundings.
- Tell your child's teacher about any fears he or she may have.
- Inform the teacher of any special dietary needs or allergies your child has and ask the teacher about the program's policies relating to meals.
- Complete necessary forms or releases your Pre-K provider may require for dispensing medication during the school day.
- Locate the bathroom with your child and ask the teacher about any special bathroom routines the school observes.
- Build in extra time for the first day: Make sure you have time to say good-bye.
- Determine if your child needs a blanket for rest time: Can they bring a favorite stuffed animal?
- Send a family photo in your child's backpack in case they get lonely.
- Attend Pre-K orientation. This is a good time to learn about program policies and visit the classroom.

Sign of the Times: Lottery Announces Record Transfer to Education

Last month Governor Nathan Deal announced that the Georgia Lottery Corporation transferred its fiscal year 2016 profits, a total of \$1.09 billion, to the State Treasury's Lottery for Education Account. This is the first time the Georgia Lottery has transferred more than \$1 billion in a single fiscal year and is the largest funding transfer in the 23-year history of the lottery. Later this month close to 1,900 Georgia Pre-K sites across the state will receive new Pre-K signage (shown at left) compliments of the Georgia Lottery Corporation.

**THIS IS A LOTTERY-FUNDED
PRE-K PROGRAM!**



Kids Learning Zone.

Celebrating
1.4 Million Pre-K Students!



Georgia's Pre-K Program
BRIGHT START
Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
GEORGIA LOTTERY

**Let Us Hear
From You!**



Good Standing, Support, Deficient: New Compliance and Enforcement System Goes Live

A new integrated compliance and enforcement system for Georgia's licensed child care programs went into effect July 1. DECAL's Child Care Services (CCS) Division regulates the state's more than 4,900 child care programs to help ensure they are meeting basic health and safety requirements. CCS consultants also support and help programs in meeting the rules and regulations and improving quality.

In the past, a child care program in Georgia was deemed either compliant or non-compliant with state

You know that great idea you have for our agency?

We cannot read your mind.

That is why DECAL has

ESP

Employee Suggestion Program



[Visit the Virtual Suggestion Box Now!](#)

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, Midway
First Congressional District
(Secretary)

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District
(Vice Chair)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton
Third Congressional District

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain
Fourth Congressional District

Carlene Talton, Decatur
Fifth Congressional District

Dawnn Henderson, Marietta
Sixth Congressional District

Vacant
Seventh Congressional District

rules and regulations, based on two inspections each year. The new system uses a "rolling compliance" that focuses on correcting previous rule violations and gives credit for sustaining compliance. Based on their most recent inspection, a child care program will now be classified as Good Standing, Support, or Deficient.

"Two years ago, we convened a group of external stakeholders for an Enforcement Task Force to review and subsequently align the unit's regulatory and support functions," said Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services. "The goals of the group were to examine the existing enforcement policy and then to create a new enforcement action model that is transparent, easy to understand, and that aligned program compliance with state licensing rules and regulations. This new system integrates national best practice for regulatory agencies and the Georgia code for regulations administered by DECAL."



Kristie Lewis

April Rogers, CCS Director of Policy and Enforcement, says while it is still early, response to the new integrated compliance and enforcement system has been overwhelmingly positive. "Under the old system many providers felt like one rule violation...even when corrected...could stay with them for up to two years," she explained. "This new system gives providers credit for correcting violations, and if a provider maintains compliance with the rules and a previous violation is not repeated within a 12-month period, then they are likely to remain in good standing."

Rogers said all providers received an e-mail last month informing them of their new compliance designation based on performance going back to July 1, 2015. When a facility receives a visit from CCS, they will receive their compliance determination, based on a 12-month look back at the provider's history. Licensing reports will continue to be posted on the DECAL website. CCS reports that most providers in Georgia are currently in "Good Standing."

For more information on the new integrated compliance and enforcement system, including webinars and tutorials, visit <http://www.decals.ga.gov/CCS/EnforcementCompliancePolicy.aspx>.

In the photos below, DECAL Child Care Services Consultant Rachel Fowler is excited about the upgraded equipment CCS recently received to support the implementation of the new integrated compliance and enforcement system for Georgia's licensed child care programs. Meanwhile, IT Help Desk Specialist Chad Paul shows CCS Policy and Process Improvement Manager Melissa Herndon a feature on her new tablet.

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner Robins
Eighth Congressional District

Sheri Hooper, Gainesville
Ninth Congressional District

Janice Gallimore, Greensboro
Tenth Congressional District

Victor Morgan, Cartersville
Eleventh Congressional District
(Chair)

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro
Twelfth Congressional District

Vacant
Thirteenth Congressional District

Tangela Johnson, Cohutta
Fourteenth Congressional District

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Tamara Hall, Heather Bang, Sonya Price, Susan Breheny, Connie Fisher, Morlinda Dawson, and Julie Strickland.



Child Care Expansion Grants Awarded

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), in partnership with DECAL, has awarded a third round of Child Care Expansion Grants to four early childhood care and education organizations located in the state's Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs). With funding from the federal Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant, DECAL and DCA award economic development incentive packages for child care programs to expand or to open new child care programs to serve infants and toddlers with high needs in Georgia's E3Zs.

In this round of funding, DCA awarded grants totaling \$281,089 in economic development incentives to: Children's Destiny Christian Academy in Lowndes County; Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. in Bibb County; Sandy's Sandbox in Bibb County; and Schoolzin Schoolzout Christian Learning Center in Catoosa County.

"I am excited about these four Quality Rated child care programs working with DCA to expand their businesses, so they can serve more infants and toddlers," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "The child care industry creates jobs while enabling families to provide a critical workforce for other industries in our state. These grants will enable child care programs to serve more children with high needs, create new jobs, and support more families."

Children's Destiny Christian Academy will use grant funds to serve 35 additional children with \$100,000 of developmentally appropriate equipment. Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. will receive \$87,626 to serve 34 additional children in a larger facility. Sandy's Sandbox will receive \$48,753 to support 12 new children. Schoolzin Schoolzout Christian Learning Center plans use \$44,710 to expand operations within existing program space to serve 16 additional children. DCA and DECAL will hold a fourth round of funding for Child Care Expansion Grants this fall.