

# Decidedly DECAL

*Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are*



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## DECAL By the Numbers

- 851** - Georgia child care programs that are now Quality Rated
- 2,386** - Georgia child care programs participating in Quality Rated
- 80,084** - Students enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program
- 3,837** - Funded Georgia's Pre-K Classes
- 58** - Trainings conducted this quarter on inclusion of children with disabilities and on social emotional development/positive behavior supports
- 692** - Teachers and directors training this quarter
- 5,300** - GELDS toolboxes distributed to providers and trainers
- 5.7 million** - Meals served in Georgia by Summer Food Service

## Commissioner's Corner

*by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs*

Dear DECALers,

This week I find myself in a place much different from where I've been the past two weeks (with you at the 2020 Roundtables). I am writing this letter from Boston, Massachusetts where I and other leaders from Georgia are meeting with states participating in Frontiers of Innovation (FOI). FOI is an effort of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University that was begun by Dr. Jack Shonkoff, a medical doctor who is also one of the nation's top experts in brain development and early childhood care and education.



At the conference we're hearing about the theory of change, about translational science, and about the impact of toxic stress on child development.

The theory of change suggests that to achieve breakthrough outcomes for children, we must actively build the self-regulation skills, executive functioning, and mental health of the adults who care for them. It's high level but fascinating work...and work that supports and informs what we've discussed the past weeks at the 2020 Roundtables.

I'm learning that for us to significantly impact outcomes for Georgia's children, for us to successfully achieve our mission of ensuring access to high quality early care and education for ALL Georgia children, then we as early care and education support professionals can change some of the ways we do things, and we need to help the early care and education professionals who work directly with Georgia's children to change.

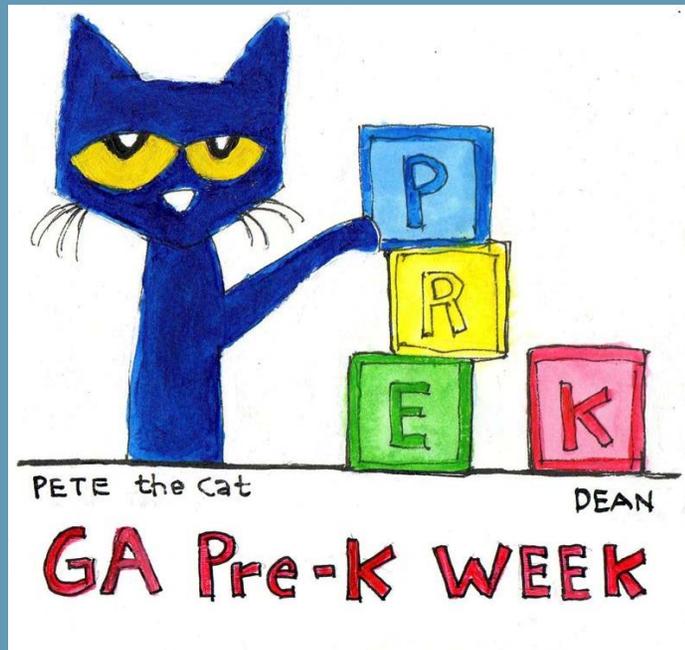
If change in US will help us effect change in owners, administrators, teachers...and children, then

Program sponsoring organizations

**1,386** - DECAL educational assistance SCHOLARSHIPS given in FY2015

**1,652** - DECAL Incentives given in FY2015

**116** - State leaders participating in 2015 Georgia Pre-K Week



## In the News

In case you missed these articles that ran last month, they are worth reading! Just click on the headlines below:

[Georgia Child Care Industry Adds \\$4.7 Billion in Economic Activity](#)

[AJC Op-Ed: The Big Business of Caring for Children by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs](#)

[Editorial: Georgia Pre-K Week](#)

## Quick Links

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[DECAL on Pinterest](#)

[DECAL Website](#)

change we will, and I think we made a good start toward change at our 2020 Employee Roundtables. Thank you for all your input through your engaging interaction with your peers and managers. I enjoyed getting to meet many of you at both events, and I hope you feel like you know me a little better.

As we said, much of what we accomplished at the Roundtables will be reflected in our five-year strategic plan that will guide our work until 2020.

I hope you have taken time to complete the short evaluation of the 2020 Employee Roundtables. I really want to know your thoughts about our time together primarily so that next year we can fine tune the event to make it even more effective, substantive, and fun.

As we celebrate our national day of Thanksgiving this month, I wish you, your family, and friends a day filled with blessing, good food, and happy fellowship. We all have so much to be thankful for.

Sincerely,

## Deal: Study Finds Georgia Pre-K Significantly Improves Student Readiness

Gov. Nathan Deal recently announced that students in Georgia's Pre-K Program show educational improvement in key areas and progress at a greater rate while participating in the program, according to a recent study. The results are part of a multi-year evaluation by the Frank Porter Graham Childhood Development Institute at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.

"Ensuring Georgia's youngest scholars continue to benefit from Georgia's highly ranked Pre-K program is one of my top priorities," said Deal. "This study confirms that Georgia is on the right track. Our Pre-K program helps students acquire the foundation necessary for a solid education, puts them on track to read at grade level by the third grade, and assists in developing essential skills which will lead to academic excellence and future success."

The comprehensive evaluation was commissioned in 2011-2012 by DECAL and tracked the progress of 1,169 children who participated in Georgia Pre-K during the 2013-2014 school year. Results showed that program participation significantly improved children's school readiness skills across a wide range of literacy, math, and general knowledge measures. Based on standardized test scores, the study indicates that students progressed at a greater rate while participating in the program compared to normal development in the same timeframe. The report also revealed that Spanish-speaking dual language learners grew skills in both English and Spanish, usually showing greater growth in English.

"These findings are strong and attest to the impact of Georgia's signature early education program and the important work accomplished by our teachers and assistant teachers every day," said



## November Birthdays



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

- 1 - Tammie Baldwin
- 1 - Alison Benson
- 1 - April Crawford
- 1 - Connie Fisher
- 2 - Robin Currie
- 3 - Rachel Fowler
- 4 - Rian Ringsrud
- 6 - Joyce Collins
- 6 - Leah Klatzker
- 8 - Arlene Green
- 9 - Leslie Truman
- 10 - Shannon Carroll
- 11 - Shani Drake
- 11 - Jill Vandenbos
- 13 - Colleen Covey
- 13 - Andrea McFarland
- 14 - Gary Amos
- 14 - Jessica Grant
- 16 - Shyreeta Hicks
- 16 - Nikiesha Neil
- 17 - George Davis
- 17 - Brenda Haynesworth
- 17 - Colette Upshaw
- 19 - Emily Grosoff
- 22 - Lisa Rambhajan
- 23 - Mike Chandler
- 25 - Valerie Blackmon
- 25 - Alva Huff
- 25 - Rita Lang
- 28 - Seydou Kompaore
- 30 - Shayla Lewis

## A Day in the Life of Gary Amos

As is the case with many professionals, a typical work day for Gary M. Amos Sr. entails responding to scores

DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "The findings concerning language and literacy are especially important, as they suggest that foundational reading skills are taught in Pre-K classrooms. These findings support that what children are learning in Pre-K aligns perfectly with Governor Deal's emphasis on grade level reading."

Researchers will continue to monitor student progress through the end of the third grade.

"Georgia's Pre-K Program has had positive outcomes for children, and the level of quality has remained fairly constant over time," said principal investigator Ellen Peisner-Feinberg. "The results from the studies conducted so far indicate that the program clearly has several areas of strength; as a long-standing, statewide, universal Pre-K program, the outcomes for children and the quality of classroom practices has been maintained."

The full report and an executive summary can be found at <http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/BftS/EvaluationGAPreKProgram.aspx> .

## Economic Study Road Show Is a Success

DECAL has completed a four-city road show presenting the results of the Economic Impact Study and promoting Quality Rated and the importance of early childhood education. The Briefings and Public Policy Forums were held in late September and October in Valdosta, Macon, Atlanta, and Athens. The study shows that the early care and education industry generates \$4.7 billion in economic activity annually while creating more than 67,000 jobs statewide. In 2014, DECAL commissioned the University of Georgia (UGA) and Georgia State University (GSU) to study the impact of the child care industry on the economy of Georgia.

"As Governor Deal continues to emphasize job creation in our state, it is important to understand the significant economic impact of the child care industry in Georgia and to recognize that it is a viable economic engine all across the state," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "While generating \$4.7 billion in economic activity each year, early childhood education enables parents and caregivers to work and earn more than \$24 billion annually, while preparing their children to succeed in K-12, college, and careers."



Bentley Ponder

Dr. Bentley Ponder, DECAL's Director of Research and Senior Policy Advisor, explained that all of Georgia's approximately 6,000 licensed and regulated child care providers were asked to complete a comprehensive survey in the fall of 2014. The University of Georgia developed and distributed the survey and compiled the data. Georgia State University then analyzed the data which formed the basis for the final report.

The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (GPEE) and the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) joined UGA, GSU, and DECAL to present results from the study at the four community meetings.

The study found that the early care and education industry serves more than 337,000 children each



of emails and phone calls. He considers the task anything but mundane because it leads to what he looks forward to every day: the thanks he receives from those he is able to assist.

*Gary M. Amos Sr.* Amos joined DECAL two years ago as an administrative assistant supporting Pre-K directors and became Pre-K training and professional development coordinator last year.

His primary responsibilities include coordinating training registrations, maintaining curriculum updates in the system and facilitating all issues related to training and professional development. Hence, he spends a lot of time in contact with providers, teachers and internal customers, and he finds their appreciation for his efforts extremely rewarding.

Likewise, his job is made more enjoyable because of his colleagues.

"The people that work at DECAL are just amazing, friendly and positive," said Amos, who serves on DECAL's Wellness Committee.

If he were made DECAL Commissioner for a day, Amos said he would spend the day in one-on-one meetings with a non-management representative from each department.

"I would work my way from the ground up to build an even stronger agency," said Amos, whose hobbies include motivational speaking and certified Christian counseling.

Amos also enjoys weightlifting, hiking, jazz, singing, photography and yoga (he is a yoga instructor and teaching beginners yoga from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. every Thursday). Amos has a daughter in college, two grown sons, a granddaughter and a Yorkie, who is "the ruler of my home."

year, including 143,000 children ages birth through three years, over 118,000 four year olds, and almost 75,000 school age children (5 to 13 years). The average weekly parent fees for infants in family child care homes range from \$91 in rural areas to \$127 in urban areas. Among child care centers, the average weekly fees range from \$99 (rural) to \$161 (urban).

As an industry, Georgia's early care and education providers generate \$2.45 billion in annual gross industry receipts. By comparison, Health and Personal Care Retail Stores generate \$2.40 billion, Printing - \$2.43 billion, and Pharmaceutical Preparation and Manufacturing - \$2.55 billion.

DECAL has posted an executive summary on its website at <http://www.dec.al.gov/BftS/ResearchEconomicImpact.aspx>.

## Employee Meetings Help Cast Commissioner's 2020 Vision

DECAL employees met in two roundtable meetings last month in Macon and Atlanta. The 2020 DECAL Employee Roundtables were designed to help formally introduce Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs and give employees the opportunity to hear short 3-2-1 updates from each division and get to know each other better working across divisions on a few assignments.

Citing her son, Charlie, and daughter, Laine, as her greatest accomplishments, Commissioner Jacobs shared her personal vision for DECAL: "Every child in Georgia will have access to high quality early care and learning, as determined by Quality Rated, Georgia's tiered quality rating and improvement system, regardless of family income and location." Commissioner Jacobs said her personal vision for each employee is that "Every employee of DECAL will clearly recognize and appreciate how her/his job contributes -- directly or indirectly -- to fulfilling the SHARED mission of the department."

In the 2015 Employee Survey, 88 percent of employees strongly agreed or agreed that they are "proud of our achievements as an organization." Seventy-eight percent strongly agreed or agreed that "generally speaking, DECAL is heading in the right direction."

During both meetings, Commissioner Jacobs responded to questions from employees, ranging from compensation to her favorite things to do away from DECAL.



Tips & Resources Available for Parents  
Via Text Messages



# 2020 DECAL EMPLOYEE ROUND TABLE



**PARENTS OF 4 & 5 YEAR-OLDS**  
**TEXT GAREADY4K TO 313131**  
TO RECEIVE TIPS, FACTS & RESOURCES FOR PRE-K & KINDERGARTEN

**GET GEORGIA READING**

FREE TEXTS MADE POSSIBLE BY A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN  
THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND STANFORD UNIVERSITY

**Let Us Hear  
From You!**



## **Annual Georgia Pre-K Week Was a Hit with Students and Guests**

Leaders from around the state showed their support for early childhood education last month by visiting early learning classrooms for this year's Georgia Pre-K Week, held October 5-9.

Launched five years ago by DECAL and Voices for Georgia's Children, Pre-K Week's support from government, business and community leaders grows every year. This year, the Georgia School Boards Association joined as a Pre-K Week partner, and Georgia Power, Synovus, and Scholastic returned as corporate sponsors.

More than 116 state leaders participated in Georgia Pre-K Week by reading to students. That group included Governor Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal, 74 state representatives, 23 senators, 6 congressmen, and 14 members of the governor's staff. DFCS Director Bobby Cagle, DHS Commissioner Robyn Crittenden, and The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) Executive Director Martha Ann Todd also participated.

"The support of such influential public and private organizations is a powerful statement about the value of children's education and learning in the early years," said Emily Pelton, Executive Director of Voices for Georgia's Children, the child advocacy organization that organizes Pre-K Week each year, along with its partners. "Investment in early childhood education creates the foundation necessary for a child to succeed in nearly every phase of life, from learning to read successfully by third grade to graduating high school and entering the workforce."

The statewide celebration draws attention to early learning, including Pre-K, a hallmark program that was pioneered in Georgia 22 years ago. To view scenes from the celebration, follow this link:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X\\_PiEezXPzA&sns=tw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_PiEezXPzA&sns=tw).

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

Dawn Henderson, Marietta  
Sixth Congressional District



*Governor Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal are greeted by "Pete the Cat" as they visit a classroom to read to students during Georgia Pre-K Week.*

Sherron Murphy, Lawrenceville  
Seventh Congressional District

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

Vacant  
Ninth Congressional District

Janice Gallimore, Greensboro  
Tenth Congressional District

Victor Morgan, Cartersville  
Eleventh Congressional District  
(Chair)

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro  
Twelfth Congressional District

Judy Neal, Stockbridge  
Thirteenth Congressional District

Tangela Johnson, Cohutta  
Fourteenth Congressional District

## 800th Quality Rated Program

## Congratulations to the newest QUALITY RATED child care programs!

All Gods Children, College Park ★★	★ Kids Express Learning Academy, Albany
Alpha Preparatory Academy II, Norcross ★	★ Kid's Kastle Day Care & Learning Center, Inc, Americus
Erica P. Alston, Atlanta ★	★★★ Amy M. Krafchick, Roswell
Tamala L. Baker, Athens ★★	★ Legacy of Purpose Preparatory Academy Gwinnett, Lilburn
Bethesda Christian Academy, Lawrenceville ★	★ Glenda A. Long, Dalton
Big Apple Child Daycare, Inc., Decatur ★	★★★ McIntosh County Head Start, Darien
Briarcliff Day Care Center, Atlanta ★	★★ Miss Mothers Kiddie Care & Preschool, Hahira
Brighter Tomorrows Child Development Center, Calhoun ★	★ Mountain Area Christian Academy, Morganton
Cambridge International	★ Play N Stay Daycare, Thomson
Preschool at Buckhead, Buckhead ★★	★★ Playstation Childcare & Learning Center, Wrightsville
Child's World Comprehensive Learning Center #2, Thomson ★★	★ Primary Prep, Roswell
Desiree S. Chisolm, Savannah ★★	★★ Regina's Daycare, Atlanta
Zully Cueva, Duluth ★★	★ Rochelle's Day Care Center, Waycross
Eastman Head Start, Eastman ★★	★★ Charlee L. Roundtree, Cordele
Jillvonn M. Finley, Morrow ★★	★★★ Sandy's Sandbox - Moody Road, Bonaire
First Presbyterian Church	★ A Step of Faith Christian Academy, Union City
Child Development Center, Gainesville ★★	★★ The Goddard School - Canton II, Canton
Future Scholars Christian Academy, Union City ★	★ Tickle-Me-Pink Daycare / Learning Center, Valdosta
Kaila J. Gordon, Conyers ★★	★ Trinity AME Early Learning Center, Atlanta
Lisa C. Harden, Acworth ★	★★ Warner Robins Montessori Academy, Warner Robins
KIDazzle Child Care - Lowery, Atlanta ★★	★ Wee Kids Day Care, Inc., Nahunta
The Kids Depot, Valdosta ★	

## Open Enrollment Reminder

Open Enrollment for both health care and flex benefits ends on November 6.

Congratulations to  
**Georgia's 800th**  
Quality Rated child  
care program!

**Mountain Area  
Christian Academy**  
Morganton, Georgia



### **The Faces of DECAL**

*DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R)  
Janika Young, Brandy Locchetta, Susan Jill Vandenbos, Daphne  
Hanna, Glen Clardy, Diane Swift, and Krystal McCants.*