

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

84,000 - Expected enrollment in Georgia's Pre-K Program, 2014-2015

6,076 - Pre-K waiting list end of 2013-2014 school year

4,312 - Children enrolled in blended Head Start/Pre-K programs

\$4.3 million - Proposed annual funding from Early Head Start Grant (5 years)

328 - Tiered CAPS reimbursements based on Quality Rated star levels

55,632 - Children served by CAPS (July 2014)

33 - Emergency closures issued by DECAL since FY2012

1,755 - Goal for programs participating in Quality Rated at the end of 2014



Quick Links

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[DECAL on Twitter](#)

Commissioner's Corner

by Interim Commissioner Amy Jacobs

Dear DECAL Staff,

Even before I joined this agency two months ago, I admired the innovative work being done through Quality Rated. I understood how a high quality early education program could partner with families to build a solid foundation for success in a child's critical early years. Quality Rated's potential to make a difference in the lives of our children is exciting to me.

But raising quality costs money, and many early care and education programs - and the families they serve - don't have the resources needed to enhance or pay for high quality. While some limited federal and state dollars are used to support Quality Rated, we rely on partnerships with foundations and businesses to fund the incentives awarded to our rated programs. Partnering with Gaye Smith with Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) and Mindy Binderman with the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS), DECAL has raised close to \$8 million to support Quality Rated from the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation, the Zeist Foundation, and PNC Bank. Yet, a lot of work remains to be done.

Currently, we have two goals for Quality Rated: first, to raise an additional \$10 million in financial support for Quality Rated incentives; and second, to have all of Georgia's child care programs participating in Quality Rated by December 2017. Our goal for this year is to have 1,755 programs participating (32 percent of Georgia's 5,500 child care programs) by the end of December.

So far, Gaye, Mindy, and I have visited about a dozen family foundations, and we have more visits scheduled before the end of the year; then we'll talk with corporate foundations about their involvement. This is where we can use your help. You are one of DECAL's 300 employees located all over the state. If you know of a local family foundation or corporate foundation that might be interested in partnering with us through Quality Rated, please let me know. We would like to explain to them face-to-face how, working together, we can make significant gains for Georgia's children in their communities.

Thanks to your efforts, we have raised the profile of early care and education in Georgia, especially concerning health and safety for Georgia's youngest children and now concerning quality preschool services with a new emphasis on children birth to three.

I end this month's column by thanking Carol Hartman and her team for their hard work in applying for the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant. We applied for \$4.3 million in funding annually for five years to deliver comprehensive Early Head Start services to infants, toddlers, and families in metro Atlanta through partnerships with existing child care centers and family child care homes. We submitted our application on August 20, 2014, and should know something by March 2015. We'll certainly keep you posted on the status of this exciting grant opportunity.



[DECAL on Instagram](#)
[DECAL on Pinterest](#)
[DECAL Website](#)

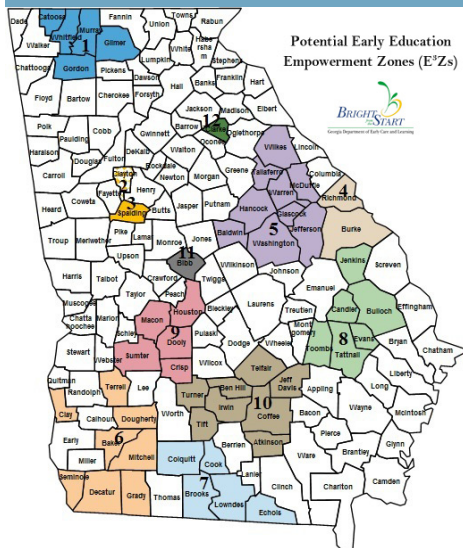


Final E³Zs Determined This Month

After several months of site visits and interviews, DECAL will determine the final four Early Education Empowerment Zones, or E³Zs, this month. Funding for the initiative is part of the \$51.7 million Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant received last year from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

E³Zs, as defined in the state's grant, will be multi-county regions of the state that are home to around 10,000 children under the age of five. Each E³Z will receive over \$1 million in targeted resources to improve early childhood outcomes in the region.

The final four locations will be announced in early October with local events in each region.



September Birthdays



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

- 1 - Richard Bartlett
- 2 - Cassa Andrews
- 5 - Tanya Astin
- 5 - Peggy Kosater
- 6 - Dana Bond
- 7 - Roslyn Williams
- 8 - Christi Bedwell
- 8 - Laura Davis
- 8 - Angelita Ramanou
- 13 - Jill West

I remind you: My door is always open, and I enjoy hearing from you at amy.jacobs@decal.ga.gov. And thanks for keeping Georgia's youngest children a priority in your lives.

Sincerely,
 Amy

DECAL Priority:

Ensure Health & Safety

First Lady Helps Celebrate Summer Food Service Program



Georgia's First Lady Sandra Deal with Bright from the Start Nutrition Director Falita Flowers

Georgia's First Lady Sandra Deal traveled to Tallapoosa in west Georgia recently to help kickoff the school year and cap off a successful summer of meal programs. The First Lady joined multiple state agencies and partners including DECAL, the Governor's Grade-Level Reading Campaign, the Georgia Department of Education, the Georgia Department of Public Health, and the Georgia Public Library Service in celebrating the growth and expansion of summer meals at library sites statewide.

In all, 23 libraries opened their doors to serve as meal sites this summer ensuring students had access to nutritious meals while many students participated in library summer reading programs. This partnership highlighted the connection between healthy eating and learning. This summer nearly 4 million meals were served to qualified children and adults, an increase of almost 11 percent from last year.

As the agencies celebrated the success of the summer partnership, the focus moves to making sure children have access to healthy meals during the school year. The At-Risk/Afterschool component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides children healthy snacks and meals in structured environments after the school day has ended.

Falita Flowers, Director of Nutrition Services for DECAL, stated "While we wrap up summer, we want parents to know of the many resources available to them. The At-risk/Afterschool Program provides free and nutritious meals to students in afterschool programs across the state. Our goals are a seamless transition for families and widespread availability."

For more information on the CACFP, visit [DECAL's website](#).

DECAL Priority:

Increase Quality & Access

DECAL Helps Get Georgia Reading Campaign with a Promise from Interim Commissioner Amy Jacobs

First Lady Sandra Deal and DECAL Interim Commissioner Amy Jacobs joined more than 100 partners representing government agencies, private businesses, nonprofit organizations, and communities from across the state to launch Get Georgia Reading - Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. They gathered at Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB) in Atlanta last month and promised Georgia's children that they will work together to get all kids on a path to reading proficiency by third grade by 2020.

- 14 - Sonia Ladd
- 14 - Jeannie Lippy
- 14 - Donna Marks
- 16 - Sarah Beck
- 17 - Amy Hill
- 17 - Shenetta McNair
- 18 - Secanda Jewell
- 19 - John Gardner
- 20 - Quatavius Copeland
- 22 - Takisha Aragones
- 22 - Glecia Carter
- 22 - April Rogers
- 24 - Luetricia Billingsley
- 27 - Pamela Bojo
- 27 - Alex Dagenhart
- 27 - Sherry Smith

You know that **great idea** you have for our department?
We cannot read your **MIND**.
That is why DECAL has



Shani Drake, MS
Nutrition Services Marketing & Outreach Manager

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, Savannah
First Congressional District

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District
(Secretary)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton
Third Congressional District

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain
Fourth Congressional District

Carlene Talton, Decatur
Fifth Congressional District

Dawn Henderson, Marietta

"We are at a critical point in time when it comes to preparing Georgia's next generation of leaders," said Arianne Weldon, director of Get Georgia Reading-Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. "The first critical milestone for any child's success in education is the ability to read by third grade because this is the moment a child transitions from learning to read to reading to learn."

Nearly two-thirds of Georgia's children are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade. According to a study commissioned by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, children who cannot read by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers. Children born into low-income families who lack access to educational opportunities arrive in kindergarten having heard 30 million fewer words within the first four years of life than their peers from more financially stable homes. Failure to reach this milestone has implications on Georgia's ability to prosper.

"We must make an active effort to increase the percentage of children reading well and independently at grade-level," said Georgia First Lady Sandra Deal. "By giving each and every child access to education at an early age, we are able to teach them the essential skills they need to build a foundation for all their future academic endeavors. Children are some of Georgia's most capable and treasured resources, and it is critical that we pave their path to lifelong education with opportunities to learn."

"In Georgia's Pre-K Program we work really hard to prepare children for school," Commissioner Jacobs told a group of third graders and others in attendance. "Pre-K is like building a house. What's the first thing a builder builds when putting up a house? Does he build the roof first? No, he uses bricks or concrete to build a foundation. Then he puts up the walls...and then the roof. In the Pre-K program...and even BEFORE Pre-K, we begin to build the foundation for you to learn. Now as a third grader, you've begun building the walls."

In her promise, Commissioner Jacobs told the children that she will "work with parents and Georgia's preschool teachers to continue building strong foundations for learning, so that Georgia's youngest students are better prepared, like you were, when they enter kindergarten."

To learn how you can get involved in the Get Georgia Reading campaign, visit <http://www.getgeorgiareading.org>.



DECAL Interim Commissioner Amy Jacobs (center) poses with Georgia's First Lady Sandra Deal, Get Georgia Reading's Arianne Weldon, and other officials at the Get Georgia Reading kickoff at Georgia Public Broadcasting.

Pre-K "First Days" Now Complete

Sixth Congressional District

Sherron Murphy, Lawrenceville
Seventh Congressional District

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner Robins
Eighth Congressional District
(Vice Chair)

Tammy Lenkeit, Hoschton
Ninth Congressional District

Janice Gallimore, Greensboro
Tenth Congressional District

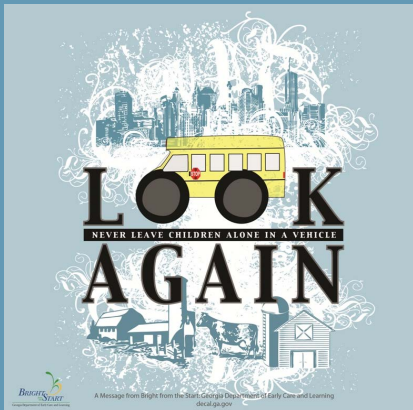
Victor Morgan, Cartersville
Eleventh Congressional District
(Chair)

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro
Twelfth Congressional District

Judy Neal, Stockbridge
Thirteenth Congressional District

Tangela Johnson, Cohutta
Fourteenth Congressional District

*We are committed to nurturing
Georgia's youngest children, keeping
them safe and healthy, and to enriching
their lives.*



[View the YouTube Video Here!](#)

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Kiejuan Davis, Vicki Watts, Mark Waits, Sylvia Boykin, Laura Davis, Jennifer Underwood, and Demetria Joyce.

Some 84,000 four year olds are currently attending Georgia's Pre-K Program for the 2014-2015 school year. 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. This is the 22nd year for Georgia's Pre-K Program, which is considered universal - meaning that any age eligible child may attend the program regardless of family income.

Georgia's model for providing the Pre-K program is unique in that it is offered through a public-private partnership in local school systems, in private child care centers, and in other facilities. The first day of Georgia's Pre-K year varies based on the school system and child care provider calendar. Last school year, 66 percent of all four year olds in Georgia were served by state Pre-K and Head Start, with a statewide Pre-K enrollment of nearly 82,000. The majority of programs begin in August, with Pike and Webster counties the last to start on September 2.

"Pre-K is an exciting time as our state's youngest learners begin their formal educational journey," said DECAL Interim 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."



At All Stars Academy in Coweta County, London Hosey proudly models the spirit of Georgia's Pre-K on orientation day.

DECAL Priority:

Foster Organizational Excellence

SCCP: Looking Forward, Giving Back

Georgia's annual State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP) kicks off September 1, with all state employees invited to make voluntary donations to local non-profits and charities. This year's campaign, whose theme is "Looking forward, giving back," runs through October 31.

Last year, DECAL was among the top contributing agencies, pledging nearly \$8,000 - a 26 percent increase from the previous year. Popular fundraising events included Penny Wars collecting \$840, Bizarre Bazaar raising over \$400, and Jeans Passes raising over \$380.

"From my perspective, the success of this program is not only measured in dollars raised but also in the percentage of employees participating," said DECAL Interim Commissioner Amy Jacobs. "Whether it's one dollar or a hundred dollars, every donation counts! You can make a one-time donation or opt for a monthly payroll deduction to support your organization throughout the year. Our Senior Leadership Team joins me in hoping for 100 percent employee participation this year at DECAL."

"No one is immune from sometimes needing help," said Sabrina Henry, Human Resources Assistant and agency lead for the campaign. "In a split second the loss of a job or a sudden chronic illness can change the playing field for any one of us at any given time. You might be giving money to an organization you will one day need as a recipient...It has happened before."

For more information on the SCCP, contact Henry at 404-463-0034 or sabrina.henry@decalf.ga.gov. You can also visit www.gasccp.org and follow on Twitter using #GASCCP or #GAgovAllin..



Sabrina Henry (left) and DECAL Interim Commissioner Amy Jacobs attended an August 20 breakfast at the Governor's Mansion to kick off this year's SCCP.