



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

**Brian P. Kemp**  
Governor

**Amy M. Jacobs**  
Commissioner

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Contact: Reg Griffin  
404-656-0239  
[reg.griffin@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:reg.griffin@dec.al.ga.gov)



## **2021-2022 DECAL Scholars of the Year Announced**

*DECAL Scholars of the Year Recognize Individuals Actively Pursuing ECE Degree or Credential While Working in Child Care Workforce*

**ATLANTA, Ga., (August 5, 2021)** – The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) and the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning have announced the recipients of the 2021-2022 DECAL Scholars of the Year. This year’s program celebrates the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of DECAL Scholars that supports early care and educational professionals in Georgia in gaining more education and skills and earning financial awards. DECAL Scholars of the Year are limited to those who are actively pursuing a degree or credential in Early Childhood Education while also working in a child care program.

The four-year college/university winner is Edelina Lane of Ellenwood, a Family Child Care Provider who is a student at Point University, and the Technical College winner is Quinecia Styles Smith of Newnan, a lead teacher at Parker Chase Preschool North in Peachtree City and student at West Georgia Technical College. Lane hopes to obtain a master’s degree and open three child care learning centers in metro Atlanta before the end of 2023. Smith would like to become an inclusion therapist or curriculum specialist.

“We are excited to recognize Edelina and Quinecia who represent thousands of Georgians who are balancing home, work and school to invest in their own education while continuing to serve children,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “Similar to our Pre-K Teachers of the Year, this is a great opportunity for DECAL to recognize and reward early child care professionals who are committed to providing a high-quality early education experience here in Georgia.”

As DECAL Scholars of the Year, Lane and Smith will each receive a \$1,500 award, \$500 for a classroom makeover, and a virtual classroom visit from Coy Bowles, lead guitarist for the Zac Brown Band, author of children’s books, including “What’s Behind the Little Red Door?” and a member of the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning Board of Directors.

“The Foundation is proud to support this important initiative by recognizing and rewarding our dedicated early childhood educators,” added Carrie Ashbee, Executive Director of the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning. “When you are a teacher by day and scholar by night, it can be challenging to achieve the right balance. We hope these awards are a small way of recognizing the amazing commitment and dedication these early education professionals have to their students and families, both now and in the future.”

Get more information on DECAL Scholars at [www.decalscholars.com](http://www.decalscholars.com).

### **About DECAL**

The 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 and 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.decalscholars.com](http://www.decalscholars.com).