



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

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Governor

Amy M. Jacobs
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DECAL Searching for Georgia's Early Childhood Educators of the Year

New Program Celebrates Outstanding Early Education Teachers of children Birth to Preschool

ATLANTA, Ga., (August 3, 2021) – The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) and the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning are seeking applications for the inaugural 2021-2022 Georgia's Early Childhood Educators of the Year Program. The new initiative recognizes outstanding early education teachers of children birth to preschool with an Infant Teacher of the Year (0-18 months), Toddler Teacher of the Year (15-36 months), and Preschool Teacher of the Year (36-48 months).

“Early child development helps build a foundation for lifelong learning, behavior, and health,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “The experiences children have in early care and education programs help shape the brain and the child’s capacity to learn, develop important social skills, and respond to daily stresses and challenges in a healthy manner. This new program gives Georgia the opportunity to celebrate those teachers who are helping to build that foundation for lifelong learning and healthy development.”

The top six finalists (two from each category) will each receive \$500 for their personal use, and the top three winners (one from each category) will receive an additional \$3,000 for their personal use, \$2,000 for a classroom makeover, and up to \$2,500 for their school to cover travel costs and stipends for substitute teachers as the teacher fulfills their duties as Georgia’s Early Childhood Educator of the Year.

Program directors working with early childhood teachers dedicated to making a difference in the lives of young children may nominate them for Georgia’s Early Childhood Educator of the Year through an online application found on the DECAL website at www.decal.ga.gov or on the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning website at www.gaeearlyed.org. Eligibility requirements are listed with the application. Deadline for applications is **Friday, September 3, 2021, at 5:00 PM**.

“We can’t wait to meet the teachers nominated for this honor,” said Carrie Ashbee, Executive Director for the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning. “The experiences children have in their classrooms help shape the brain and the child’s capacity to learn and to get along with others. We can’t say enough about the role these earliest teachers play in the life of a child, placing them on a successful path to lifelong learning.”

The Georgia’s Early Childhood Educator of the Year program follows in the footsteps of the highly successful Georgia’s Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year program, which began in the 2016-2017 school year.

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.decal.ga.gov.