
Board of Early Care and Learning

Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting

Thursday, August 21, 2014, 9:00 a.m.

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department
of Early Care and Learning

2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE – East Tower, Oak Room
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Amy Jacobs, Interim Commissioner

Meeting Minutes

Board Members

Victor Morgan, Board Chair
Luann Purcell, Board Vice Chair
Susan Harper, Board Secretary
Phil Davis
Janice Gallimore
Tangela Johnson

Kathy Howell
Jerri Kropp
Tammy Lenkeit
Sherron Murphy
Judy Neal

Public Guests

Suezenette McDonald

Bright from the Start Staff

Amy Jacobs, Interim Commissioner
Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Pre-K and
Instructional Support
Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System
Reform
Dee Bolden, Assistant Commissioner for Federal
Programs and Administration
Keith Bostick, Deputy Commissioner for Programs
Craig Detweiler, Chief Information Officer
Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer
Carol Hartman, Director of Policy and System Reform
Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and
Administration
Laura Johns, Early Education Empowerment Zones
System Architect and Director

Pam Stevens, Interim Quality Rated Director
Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer
Sarah Beck, System Reform Coordinator
Falita Flowers, Nutrition Services Acting Director
Nadine Hollis, Business Operations Specialist
Earlene Huston, CCS Compliance Consultant
Sharon McPherson, Financial Services Director
Rob O'Callaghan, Research and Evaluation Specialist
Bentley Ponder, Research and Evaluation Director
Lisa Rambhajan, IT Administrative Assistant
Rian Ringsrud, Audits and Compliance Director
Judy Steigele, CCS Compliance Consultant
Robin Stevens, Human Resources Director
Mark Waits, Special Assistant to the Commissioner,
Board Liaison/Grants Specialist

1. Call to Order

Chair Victor Morgan called the meeting to order. He welcomed board members, Department of Early Care and Learning staff, and guests. He welcomed new board member Tangela Johnson and Interim commissioner Amy Jacobs both of whom shared their background and shared their excitement for being a part of the Department of Early Care and Learning.

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Phil Davis moved to accept the day's agenda. Luann Purcell seconded. The agenda was unanimously accepted. Phil Davis moved to approve the minutes of the May 22, 2014, meeting of the board. Jerri Kropp seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Inspiration

For inspiration, Dr. Jerri Kropp read a selection from Marian Wright Edelman.

4. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities.

- Susan Harper attended the July Early Education Empowerment Zone (E³Z) meeting in Albany attended by approximately 50 people from various community organizations. She also attended a core rules training in Albany and met with a faith based organization that plans to encourage all in their community to start reading to their children from birth.
- Jerri Kropp attended the E³Z visit on June 20th where they had representatives from Georgia Southern University, the local Chamber of Commerce, and members of the General Assembly.
- Judy Neal visited Summer Food Service Program sites throughout her community.
- Tangela Johnson attended the E³Z visit in her community and reported about the strong sense of collaboration at the visit.

5. Bright from the Start Presentations

Members of the executive staff provided updates on their program areas.

- Commissioner's Update:** Interim Commissioner Amy Jacobs presented updates on her activities. (See slides.) She recognized and thanked Earlene Huston, Sandra Kelley, and Judy Steigele who are retiring from DECAL after more than 94 years of combined service to the state. She has met with current staff to receive updates about what is currently happening at DECAL, while also going on monitoring visits in South Cobb. She has also visited Summer Transition Pre-K classes and summer feeding sites throughout the state. She provided updates to current fundraising efforts in conjunction with the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) and Georgia Family Connection Partnership for Quality Rated being coordinated by Coxe Curry. She informed the board that the goal is to raise 18 million dollars to provide incentive packages for centers that become Quality Rated because DECAL cannot use state and federal money for this incentives. She asked board members to let her know of foundations in their communities that could help with this effort. She concluded with an overview of the new DECAL organization structure that will better align DECAL's programs and initiatives.
- Finance, Nutrition, & Legislative Update:** Ray Higgins presented updates on the department's finances. (See slides.) He gave an overview of department expenditures to date and mentioned \$880,338.56 in revenue collections. He reported that the department will return \$7 million in surplus lottery funds to the state treasury. He gave an update on the Summer Food Service Program where DECAL has increased the percentage of sponsors, number of meals served, and the number of counties served since last year and recognized Falita Flowers and Shani Drake for making this program a success. He reported that the Nutrition Services unit will soon move from his division to the Programs Division. DECAL is currently refining legislative updates and proposals to give to Governor's Office for the next legislative session. He explained during a question and answer session with the board that faith based programs do serve meals in the Summer Food Service Program and that it is difficult to expand these services to some counties because they lack the administrative infrastructure to handle the program.
- Programs Update:** Keith Bostick presented updates on the department's program divisions. (See slides.) He explained that the current realignment occurring between divisions will ensure greater consistency and accountability within DECAL and within communities. He then introduced family day care home provider Suezette McDonald who has been a provider for over 35 years and was the first 3-star Quality Rated family day care home provider. She presented information about how health and nutrition can be fun for children in child care programs. She explained how she uses a school garden, family style dining, and active play and movement throughout the day to keep her students engaged and healthy. She explained how her school garden teaches students not only the growth cycle and about plants but helps them develop critical motor skills. Additionally, family dining helps establish good habits for portion control, using utensils, motor skills, manners, social skills, eliminates food waste, and helps children learn new foods. Tangela Johnson commented how she was happy that they are using math literacy. Ms. McDonald reiterated the importance of learning through play.

- d. Child Care Services Update:** Kristie Lewis presented updates on Child Care Services (CCS). (See slides.) She explained the new organization changes that have taken place in the CCS division including a new Director for CCS, moving the Infant Toddler Unit under CCS, and the new Technical Assistance Unit which has completed 150 visits as of July 1. She updated the total number and capacity of child care providers in the state. The number of child care programs has decreased; she hopes the next Economic Impact Study will help explain the decrease. Blitz visits have helped decrease the number of “Not Determined” programs for compliance from 331 in FY14 to 70 in FY15. She reported compliance statistics comparing FY2014 to FY2015 and explained that seven programs that are four years non-compliant have entered into a consent agreement with DECAL to ensure they are on the track back to compliance. 400 programs were non-compliant, but about 300 of those have moved back into compliance. She believes that the new TA unit will continue this movement from noncompliance to compliance. A DECAL work group is currently reviewing a process to better determine compliance. The Enforcement Sanction Task Force is 75% completed; the Injury Prevention Task Force is almost complete and is investigating how to better prevent fracture, finger pinch, leaving children in cars, and infant sleep harms. CCS staff visited about 90 summer day camps during the summer and hopes to report on those findings at the next board meeting. CCS staff are in the process of contacting all exempt programs and have made about 7,600 calls thus far. Many programs have closed; some programs have changed locations. CCS is planning to send out about 4,500 emails to ask exempt programs to reapply for their exemption because new rules have been implemented surrounding exemptions. In a question and answer session with board members, she explained that a large number of programs who become noncompliant do become compliant again in the next year and that DECAL is currently working to determine if their noncompliance was due to a single violation or if it was because they have a volume of citations that makes them non-compliant over time.

She then introduced Deidria Bolden, Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs and Administration, who explained the new organization of Federal Programs and Administration and reported that Nutrition Services would be moved under the division effective October 1. She updated the board on plans from the Office of Child Care to propose new rules governing the use of Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF) to decrease barriers for families to gain access to child care. The new rules will impact areas like improving health and safety in child care (enhanced caregiver monitoring, criminal records checks), establishing family-friendly policies (how often a family has to report changes in their circumstances - it's currently every 10 days in Georgia), improving the quality of child care (tiered reimbursement being used for providers who are Quality Rated – 328 providers participating in this program; 7,000 children), and strengthening program integrity (enhancements to technology and policy). Additionally, eligibility staff for the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program will be transitioning to DECAL from the Department of Human Services over the next 12-18 months. DECAL is working with the Department of Public Health, the Department of Community Health, and the Department of Human Services to create an Integrated Eligibility System (IES) that will be a statewide repository for eligibility and data sharing (a single place to apply for CAPS, SNAP, Medicaid, etc.). The Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&R) throughout the state provide comprehensive support to programs participating in and working towards becoming Quality Rated (QR). They have an instrumental role in the Early Learning Challenge grant by helping to recruit programs to participate in QR, providing technical assistance, and other professional learning opportunities and trainings.

- e. Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Supports Update:** Susan Adams presented updates on Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Support. (See slides.) She explained the new structure of the division, which will include Georgia's Pre-K Program, Professional Learning, and Inclusion and Family Engagement. This will help support the birth-five continuum to which DECAL is committed. The Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards are continuing to roll out, and DECAL continues to support teachers and administrators with training on the GELDS through in-person trainings (conducted by CCR&Rs) and by producing a Teacher Activity Tool Box that will be available for teachers in the future when they attend a GELDS training course. Additionally, with support from the Early Learning Challenge grant, DECAL and Georgia Public Broadcasting have partnered to create “Play to Learn” TV spots that use the GELDS to turn a “play” moment into a learning moment. Returning Pre-K teachers will also receive GELDS training paid for by lottery funds. DECAL is partnering with the World-Class Instruction Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium to develop training and resources to support Georgia's Dual Language Learners. WIDA is currently working on a crosswalk between the GELDS and WIDA standards to better support Dual Language Learners. DECAL will be implementing Train the Trainer courses to help ensure that teachers have the opportunity to attend this training. There will be a DECAL/WIDA Kick-Off Event on

Wednesday, October 23rd. The Summer Transition Program (a six-week program funded through CCDF) is composed of two models – a Rising Kindergarten Program (2010-2014) and a Rising Pre-K Program (2013-2014). Eligibility for these programs is based on family income versus Pre-K that is universal. These programs build on the Georgia Pre-K model and include a family engagement and transition coach to help families register for Pre-K or for Kindergarten. This work is incorporated into the Early Learning Challenge grant and perhaps in the Early Education Empowerment Zones. The Rising Pre-K Program was focused on children whose home language is Spanish and who are enrolled to attend Pre-K in the fall. These programs include a teacher who is fluent in English and one who is fluent in Spanish. This program served 19 classes in 2013 and 20 in 2014. While the program is small, DECAL is excited about the outcomes and sees this as an opportunity to look at how to develop effective professional development programs for teachers who serve dual Language Learners. Additionally, Georgia's 4th Annual Pre-K week is October 6-10th sponsored by Voices for Georgia's Children to increase awareness about and support for Georgia's Pre-K Program. During this week, legislators, community leaders, civic leaders, board members, etc. visit Pre-K classrooms.

Dr. Bentley Ponder joined the presentation to help explain the evaluation of the Rising-K Program conducted by researchers from the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute-UNC. The evaluation found that children's skills improved, findings similar to all four years of the Rising Kindergarten Program's existence. Every year has shown a statistically significant impact. Dr. Ponder then explained that DECAL has commissioned a new economic impact study. A questionnaire will go to providers within the next six weeks. All information collected will be completely anonymous, and DECAL will not have access to it. The study is being conducted by the University of Georgia and Georgia State University. The previous economic impact study in 2007-2008 was extremely informative in helping move the industry forward, but it was conducted before the Great Recession.

- f. **System Reform Update:** Kristin Bernhard presented updates on system reform. (See slides.) The System Reform division was created after Georgia won the Early Learning Challenge grant, and with the agency reorganization, Quality Rated, Early Education Empowerment Zones, Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships and Home Visiting have moved under the System Reform division. Currently, 1,320 programs are participating in Quality Rated. In the Early Learning Challenge grant, DECAL set a goal of 1,755 programs participating in Quality Rated by the end of the year. Participating means a program has completed a short application. Focus groups are currently being conducted throughout the state to help inform DECAL about how to streamline the Quality Rated process without sacrificing quality. This new streamlined process will launch in the fall. To increase awareness, information about Quality Rated will be on all licensing report cover sheets, and information about tiered reimbursement will be sent to all current CAPS providers. Additionally, a letter from the Commissioner encouraging all compliant child care providers to participate in Quality Rated will be sent in the fall. For zones not chosen as an Early Education Empowerment Zone, DECAL hopes to host QR participation drives in those areas to increase participation. DECAL is looking for board support and partnerships to help increase participation throughout the state.

Dr. Laura Johns then presented information about how the initial 11 zones were selected and how they will be narrowed to four that will become Early Education Empowerment Zones. The 11 zones are geographic areas with approximately 10,000 children with a large population of at risk children. Community visits are being conducted to bring the 11 zones down to four. The DECAL board, the faith community, K-12, the criminal justice community, members of the General Assembly, etc., have been actively engaged in these visits. The visits will conclude on August 22nd. On August 28th, Dr. Johns will recommend the final four zones to the Commissioner. On October 2nd and 3rd, official signing ceremonies will take place in the zones. Soon after, DECAL will begin connecting areas not designated as zones with resources to coordinate and enhance services to children with high needs in their communities.

Carol Hartman provided an update on the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership application. These grants will be awarded in March of 2015. Early Head Start provides comprehensive services to children 0-3 and their families who are at 100% FPL. Georgia currently has about 2,700 Early Head Starts spaces, and DECAL applied for 168 slots in this grant. This grant asks current EHS grantees to partner with child care learning centers to help spread the quality of EHS to other programs. DECAL was intentional in ensuring that it did not compete against any current EHS/HS grantees and only applied with current EHS providers who wanted to partner with the state. The grant application gave priority to applicants who committed to serve in certain zip codes, which significantly

limited DECAL's potential partners. DECAL will partner with Sheltering Arms, who will help provide comprehensive services to Atlanta Technical College's Child Development Center, Child Care Network #206, the Scottdale Child Development and Resource Center, and the Dorothy Arkwright Center. Additionally, DECAL will work with Quality Care for Children to provide comprehensive services to 10-12 primarily Spanish speaking family day care homes in Gwinnett County.

6. Committee Meetings and Lunch

Victor Morgan dismissed board committees for their meetings. Committee meetings were held in separate rooms over lunch. All committee meetings are open to the public.

7. Public Hearing

A time for public comment to the board was made available to the public. No one from the public requested time to comment.

8. Committee Reports

Committees reported on their work.

- a. **Budget & Finance:** Tammy Lenkeit reported for the Budget and Finance Committee. The committee recommended to the board to approve amended FY15 and proposed FY16 budget. The board unanimously approved the amended FY15 and proposed FY16 budgets.
- b. **Programs & Rules:** Sherron Murphy reported for the Programs & Rules Committee. The committee heard from Deidra Bolden, Susan Adams, and Falita Flowers about their respective programs. The committee was extremely encouraged by the productivity of these programs and believes that they are moving DECAL in the right direction.
- c. **Ethics:** Susan Harper reported for the Ethics committee. The committee recommended approval for updated bylaws that clarified language and made them in line with other state agencies. The board unanimously approve the new bylaws. The current committee has been serving as an ad hoc committee, and it is at the Chairman's discretion to change the committee's purview. The Chairman has changed the committee's purview to now deal with issues of System Reform – like the Early Education Empowerment Zones, Early Head Start/Home Visiting, and issues surrounding Quality Rated.

9. New Board Webpages Demonstration

Craig Detweiler demonstrated the new webpage that will have all the new board information. This is located at <http://dec.al.ga.gov/BftS/BoardOfEarlyCareAndLearning.aspx>. The contract with eBoard was not renewed, and all future board information will be posted on this site.

10. Communications Update

Reg Griffin explained that the Look Again coverage is continuing, with our message continuing to be the importance of calling 911 when you see a child in the vehicle. However, he is now seeing that parents are intentionally leaving children in cars, not forgetting they are there. Reg also explained that DECAL's profile is growing on a variety of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest.

11. Adjournment

The next meeting of the board will take place November 13, 2014. Victor Morgan adjourned the meeting at 1:22 p.m.