
Board of Early Care and Learning

Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting
Thursday, November 16, 2017, 9:00 a.m.
Bright from the Start
Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE – West Tower,
Empire Room
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
Amy Jacobs, Commissioner

Meeting Minutes

Board Members

Susan Harper
Jerri Kropp
Carlene Talton
Dawn Henderson
Sheri Hooper

Melissa Boekhaus
Phil Davis
Victor Morgan
Kathy Howell

Public Guests

Melissa Johnson, Erica Sitkoff, Kelly Maxwell, Pam Tatum, Jessica Woltjen, Joe Perreault, Kelly Farr, Bibi Omar, Ellen Reynolds

Bright from the Start Staff

Amy Jacobs, Commissioner
Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Pre-K and
Instructional Supports
Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System
Reform
Elisabetta Kasfir, Assistant Commissioner for Federal
Programs
Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer
Craig Detweiler, Chief Information Officer
Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and
Administration
Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care
Services
Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer
Jennie Couture, Director, Practice and Support Services
Bentley Ponder, Director of Research and Policy
Analysis
Allison Setterlind, Head Start Collaboration Director
William Cox, Director of Infrastructure
Jackie Shivers, Quality Initiatives Director

Falita Flowers, Nutrition Services Director
Carol Hartman, Policy and System Reform Director
Sharon McPherson, Director of Finance
Rian Ringsrud, Director of Audits and Compliance
Jessie Bruno, Data and Research Coordinator
Faith Duncan, Pre-K Field Operations Director
Robin Stevens, Human Resources Director
Carrie Ashbee, Georgia Foundation for Early Care and
Learning, Executive Director
Meghan Dean, Senior Research and Policy Analyst
Randy Hudgins, Senior Research and Policy Analyst
Shannon Williams, Communications Coordinator
Jim Keith, IT Data Services Manager
Denise Jensen, Quality Rated Operations Director
Pam Stevens, Quality Rated Policy and Partnerships
Director
Amy Page, Policy and Process Improvement Manager
Jill O'Meara, Community Coordinator
Donna Johnson, CAPS Family Support Director
Jasmine Barnes, System Reform Administrative
Assistant
Quandra Collins, Training Logistics Coordinator
Woody Dover, Budget Administrator

1. Call to Order

Board Chair Susan Harper called the meeting to order. She welcomed the board members, Department of Early Care and Learning staff, and public guests.

2. Approval of 11/16/17 Agenda and 8/17/17 Minutes

Harper asked for a motion to accept the day's agenda. Phil Davis moved to approve, and Victor Morgan seconded. The agenda was unanimously accepted. Kathy Howell moved to approve the minutes of the August 17, 2017 board meeting. Phil Davis seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Inspiration

Sheri Hooper provided the inspiration. She shared a fable told to her by a mentor about the eagle and the chicken that teaches us to always encourage those we work with and the children we work with to "spread their wings and fly."

4. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities, most during Georgia's Pre-K Week:

- Dawnn Henderson read to a class in Marietta.
- Sheri Hooper read to children at Jones Elementary School in Gainesville.
- Susan Harper read to the Dougherty County Pre-K. She was invited back for the book parade as the grand marshal.
- Melissa Boekhaus read to Bright Horizons in Buckhead. Board chair Harper shared that Melissa was named the Young Physician of the Year for 2017 by the Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- Susan Harper announced that Janice Gallimore, one of the founding members of the board, has retired from the board.

5. Bright from the Start Presentations

Members of DECAL's executive staff or their designees provided updates on their program areas.

a. Finance, Administration, and Legislative Update:

Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration, presented the budget report for the last quarter ending September 30. The budget is on track. During the upcoming legislative session DECAL will track HB 494 which addresses federal changes made to criminal records checks (CRC). The Nutrition Services Division served 9.8 million meals and reached three targeted counties during the Summer Food Service Program 2017. The CAPS transition is continuing and nearing completion.

During this update, Dr. Erica Fener Sitkoff provided an overview of this year's Georgia's Pre-K Week which has been organized by Voices for Georgia's Children for the past seven years. This is an opportunity for legislators to see firsthand the impact of Georgia's Pre-K Program on young children. This year's event was special because DECAL is celebrating Pre-K's 25th birthday. Leaders of state agencies, legislators, and local leaders made over 200 visits. Pre-K classes in nearly all counties in Georgia have been visited over the years, and next year the goal is to have Pre-K classes in all counties visited. First Lady Sandra Deal visited 19 summer transition classes in a special effort to spotlight the summer transition program. Six legislators made nine visits to summer transition classes. One Georgia legislator completed 12 visits during the initiative.

b. System Reform Update:

Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System Reform, presented updates on Georgia's two-generation grant, the **Parents And Children Thriving Together (PACTT)** grant. Georgia was one of five states awarded the grant that requires states to develop and implement plans that focus on serving the whole family. DECAL contracted with the Georgia Center for Non-profits (GCN) to produce a landscape analysis of existing two-generation efforts in the state. The initial report has been received. GCN will continue to receive responses and update the appendix of the report as needed. The initial findings confirmed the approach DECAL is taking as a state. Many of DECAL's partners and non-profits are serving the whole family already through strategic partnerships and awareness of the full range of supports currently available to parents and children.

To pilot the new strategies developed as a result of the PACTT grant, DECAL allocated \$16,000 to provide grants to three Georgia counties. DECAL partnered with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government to facilitate three half-day sessions in which communities will develop a single community plan to identify and align services for the adults and children in

families. An example of an underused resource in many areas of Georgia are federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds to support unemployed or underemployed adults in obtaining a credential in a high-demand career field. The funds are not limited to education, but can be used for transportation, child care, food, etc. These funds, administered by the local Workforce Development Boards, often go underutilized because communities and potential recipients are unaware of this resource. In addition, One of DECAL's goals is to connect parents of children in means-based early learning programs to this underused resource. The timeline for this project is January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018.

Currently, 68% of all child care learning centers are participating in Quality Rated. As of November 2017, 1,426 child care programs in Georgia have received a star rating.

Susan Harper mentioned that she wants to contact the centers in her community that aren't rated and start the conversation about participating in Quality Rated. Bernhard said that DECAL can provide board members with a list of child care centers in their areas including contact information. Also, DECAL/CCR&R staff will be conducting 10 Q&A sessions across Georgia about Quality Rated. These sessions will provide opportunities for child care providers to speak face to face with their CCR&R.

Pam Stevens presented on work done to meet the 2020 deadline established by the DECAL Advisory Committee that Quality Rated eligible providers must be rated by December 31, 2020 to continue to receive CAPS funds. DECAL will be communicating this new requirement to providers over the next year. All Georgia's Pre-K and CCS consultants have postcards to distribute during their visits to providers. The Instructional Supports division and the Atlanta Speech School will partner to develop peer-to-peer learning communities to support providers participating in Quality Rated.

c. Federal Programs Update

Elisabetta Kasfir, Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs and Eligibility, announced that the CAPS division is almost fully staffed. Last week CAPS staff moved to the fifth floor of the Agriculture building. DECAL assumed responsibility for administering the CAPS program four years ago; four weeks ago DECAL took over CAPS case management for approximately half the state from DFCS. By the end of December DECAL will have taken over all new applications to CAPS and 100% of operating the eligibility function. The division is currently examining processes to make the system more efficient.

Donna Johnson, Family Support Director, presented on the family support function of the CAPS program. CAPS is committed to serving 50,000 children annually. The division has hired 60 family support consultants. Five family support coordinators will support the five regional managers. Twelve family support consultants will be assigned to work with families in each region. Each family will receive a welcome call from their consultant which will provide information about family support and provide an opportunity to discuss challenges and resources. When hiring family support staff, the division focused on employing people with a background in social work or human services; in addition, the division also provided training in the specific skills that will be needed to work with families. All families participating in CAPS must renew their eligibility every 12 months by submitting prescribed documentation up to 45 days before the end of their eligibility period. Family support consultants will support families in renewing their eligibility for CAPS. Consultants will also be engaged in their communities in an effort to familiarize themselves with appropriate resources for CAPS recipients. A long term goal is to have a database of all resources available to families participating in CAPS. One of the current priorities, though, has been to update the referral process for children in DFCS custody to obtain CAPS assistance as quickly as possible. DECAL has been collaborating with DFCS on this project. DECAL also plans to develop collaborations with the Technical College System of Georgia, the Georgia Head Start Association, the Georgia Department of Public Health, and the Georgia Department of Education.

d. Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Amy Jacobs announced that the Pre-K Teachers of the Year were announced at the end of September. They are Nathan Leatherwood from Calhoun City Pre-K and Jodi McNamara from Kids R Kids #49. They will each receive \$3,000 for their personal use, \$2,000 for classroom materials, and \$2,500 for substitute teachers and travel costs while they represent Georgia over the next year. They will participate in the annual Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Christmas Parade on December 3. The entire DECAL staff met on October 15th for the annual All Staff Meeting. Board

members Phil Davis and Kathy Howell also attended. The Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning has received 501(c)(3) designation. Next steps for the foundation include setting up the non-profit's board.

e. Child Care Services Update

Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services, presented on progress with annual licensing and monitoring visits. The division has made 5,662 regulatory visits from the new fiscal year to November. 98.5% of the licensed child care programs are in good standing. Dr. Kelly Maxwell, co-director of Child Trends, presented the preliminary findings from a study to review license-exempt programs and thanked Kristie Lewis, Randy Hudgins, Amy Page, and Marcy Maioli for their support and work on the project. DECAL will use this study to inform policy in the future. The study found that license-exempt programs are statistically different in how well they meet basic health and safety practices. Georgia is the first state to gather data on license-exempt programs, putting the state at the forefront of this type of research. DECAL recruited 492 licensed-exempt programs to participate in the study and identified licensed programs that were being monitored at the same time in order to compare the two sets. For 12 of 38 practices, the percent met among license-exempt programs was over 90%. For 29 of 38 practices, the percent met among license-exempt programs was over 75%. Compared to licensed programs across all 38 practices, the percent met was greater than 90%. The study found that license-exempt programs are statistically different in how well they meet basic health and safety practices. The study included some limitations because data was not gathered on all health and safety practices or other aspects of program quality.

Kristie Lewis sees this study and its findings as just a starting point. Commissioner Jacobs has requested a comprehensive plan to address the findings, and a draft has already been submitted for her review. The final report from Child Trends will be available by the end of the year. Dr. Maxwell commended DECAL for seeking an answer to a challenging question and reiterated that other states will be interested in what Georgia is doing. Lewis thanked Amy Page for her work on this project as the primary liaison between DECAL and Child Trends.

f. Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Supports Update:

Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner of Pre-K and Instructional Supports, and Bentley Ponder, Director of Research and Policy Analysis, provided an overview of an analysis conducted by researchers at Child Trends. The analysis compared their grade scores on the Georgia Milestones End-of-Grade (EOG) tests for children who had and had not attended Georgia's Pre-K. The study utilized data from GA*AWARDS, the state's Pre-K through workforce longitudinal data system. This comparison was possible because of DECAL's partnership with the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, and the project was funded through the Early Learning Challenge Race to the Top grant. The final sample size for both groups, children who did attend Georgia's Pre-K and children who did not, was 46,262. The study looked at students' scores on English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. Third graders who attended Georgia's Pre-K exhibited small but meaningful differences.. Impact was greater for children eligible for free/reduced lunch and for children with a home language other than English.

Pre-K in Georgia is not designed to be an intervention for or targeted to specific populations; rather, it was designed to be a high quality experience to benefit all children. The fact that the comparison study revealed some significant difference is meaningful.

Professional Learning Updates

Dr. Christi Moore, Director of Professional Learning, provided updates on the process for revising Georgia's Workforce Knowledge and Competencies (WKC). The WKC are a workforce standards document that identifies the skills and knowledge base that teachers working with young children should know and be able to do. Revising the document was written into the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. The revisions were needed to align the document more closely with recent research in the field and with national standards including NAEYC and the Division of Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC). The revision workgroup included staff from state agencies and professionals in the field. The process included a comment period, and comments were submitted to the national board to ensure alignment. The finalized full document is available on the DECAL website.

The next part of the process is to ensure everyone knows about the WKC. Approved trainers across the state are required to align their trainings with the WKC so the plan to transition to the revised WKC includes notifying all trainers of the

updated standards. From this point in time, no new training will not be approved if it does not align with these WKC's. This process will begin in March 2018 with expected alignment for all trainings (new and existing) by October 2018.

GaPDS is the online professional registry for DECAL trainings. This system, launched last summer, has been well received. Currently, online it houses trainings facilitated by CCR&Rs, GSU Best Practices, and DECAL staff. In 2017, these three groups provided 170 trainings offered over 1,000 times. Phase II will bring in other trainers. The GaPDS profile can keep track of a teacher's or director's training history and credential status which can be printed out. A part of the strategic goal to increase users by 15% each year. Currently, the system includes 80,000 users. The new updated GaPDS system is projected to launch October 2018. In the new updated system, Home Visitors employed by the Georgia Department of Public Health will be able to track training history and credentials.

g. Head Start State Collaboration Office Update

Allison Setterlind, Head Start State Collaboration Director, provided updates from the Head Start State Collaboration Office. She began by highlighting the support from DECAL. Georgia is special in that DECAL embraces/serves all children. The systems that have helped Head Start this year have been greatly supported by DECAL's IT division, especially through the CACDS project. This year Jim Keith of the IT division spoke with each grantee directly about sharing their data with DECAL safely. Now CACDS includes data from all but two Georgia Head Start grantees ensuring that this year, reports will be more accurate.

The Collaboration Office has been working closely with DFCS. Getting accurate data on the number of children in foster care being served by Head Start is a priority. Local leadership can receive a list every month. The DFCS collaboration officer will now be aware on a monthly basis if children in foster care are being served in Head Start programs, through CAPS or by another agency/entity.

The Chronic Absenteeism study findings suggest that truancy patterns develop in early childhood. Educators have seen chronic absenteeism appear in 3rd grade, in 6th grade, and then in dropout rates at 9th grade. Chronic absenteeism data can be a useful tool. Absenteeism is a family issue in early education, so the study, conducted by the University of Florida, began by surveying parents. Over 1,000 parents responded to a survey through the University of Florida's project. The agencies that participated in the study received a report on the comments that their parents made. Then the researchers compared this data to the federal data. 94% of families that responded, both Head Start and Pre-K families, listed chronic illness as the reason why. These health issues will not go away as children get older. It is necessary to have health and safety measures and information during those early years. Transportation is another major reason for absenteeism, so it providers need help in addressing the transportation obstacle. Additionally, stress, emergencies, and activities outside of school were also reported as obstacles to attending school.

Randy Hudgins, Senior Research and Policy Analyst, spoke on trends in the data on absenteeism. Over the past three years, absenteeism has increased. In 2017 absenteeism has decreased thanks to efforts by the Head Start State Collaboration office. With help from DECAL, the Collaboration Office has given the reports to each grantee which was used for their annual self-assessments and community assessments. Hudgins created individual reports for each agency.

6. Committee Meetings and Lunch

Harper dismissed the board to receive lunch. All committee reports were presented during lunch.

7. Committees reported on their work.

a. Budget & Finance:

Sharon MacPherson presented further details on the budget and provided a handout to the board. There are no problems at this point. All budgetary items are on track.

b. Programs & Rules:

Kristie Lewis reminded everyone that license fee season has begun. The notice to centers went out on November 1. So far DECAL is seeing an early response. The goal is to have fees paid by December 1. Late fees will be processed on January 1. The revocation process will begin in February if no fees are paid.

