
Board of Early Care and Learning

Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting

Thursday, May 10, 2018, 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 Conference Room

Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Amy M. Jacobs, Commissioner

Meeting Minutes

Board Members

Susan Harper
Sheri Hooper
Melissa Boekhaus
Phil Davis

Victor Morgan
Kathy Howell
Dr. Luann Purcell
Tangela Johnson

Public Guests

Mark Waits, Victor Morgan, Maryane Gibson, Jorge Verlenden, Pam Runkle, George Huntzicker, Kayla Washington, Wande Okunoren-Meadows

Bright from the Start Staff

Amy M. 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 of PSS
William Cox, Director of Infrastructure
Jackie Shivers, Quality Initiatives Director

Woody Dover, Budget Administrator
Carol Hartman, Policy and System Reform Director
Sharon McPherson, Director of Finance
Rian Ringsrud, Director of Audits and Compliance
Faith Duncan, Field Operations Director
Robin Stevens, Human Resources Director
Nia King, Special Projects & Business Operations
Manager
Rachael Lee, QR Peer Support Network Specialist
Mary Stoklas, Quality Rated Operations Coordinator
Alexandria Williams, Research and Policy Analyst
Pam Stevens, Quality Rated Policy and Partnerships
Director
Quandra Collins, Executive Assistant
Shayna Funke, Research and Policy Analyst

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 5/10/18 Agenda and 2/15/18 Minutes

Susan 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. The minutes from the February 15, 2018 meeting were not officially approved. This was due to the fact that there was not a quorum. The minutes from the February 15, 2018 meeting will be approved at the next meeting of the board on August 16, 2018.

3. Inspiration

Victor Morgan provided inspiration drawing on Nurses' Appreciation and Teachers' Appreciation Week. He highlighted the importance of our nation's educators and the impact they have on children's futures.

4. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities:

- Kathy Howell has been working with a public relations representative of the Carrollton City School System. The representative was asked to write an article on Georgia's Pre-K for the 25th birthday of the program. The resulting article documents the origins of Georgia's Pre-K and Kindergarten
- Susan Harper announced that Dougherty County School System received a literacy grant. Ms. Harper worked on that committee and is proud of its work.

5. Bright from the Start Presentations

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

a. Finance, Administration, and Legislative Update

Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration, reported on the last quarter's budget and fiscal expenditures. He stated that we are on track and will close out the year strong. He reported that House Bill 494 was passed and signed earlier in the week. The Bill makes revisions to the law regarding the safety of children in early care and education programs. House Bill 740 was also passed, which will limit expulsion and out-of-school suspension as punishments for Kindergarten through third-grade students. Various other early education bills have passed.

Mr. Higgins stated that this was his last board meeting before starting a new role in June 2018. He thanked the board for their support. He stated Falita Flowers and Sharon McPhearson have also left for new opportunities. Mr. Higgins thanked everyone involved in the transitions for helping them run smoothly. He introduced Rian Ringsrud, who is transitioning to the role of Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration.

Mr. Ringsrud stated his enthusiasm for his new role and thanked Ray Higgins for his leadership. He announced there will be two directors for nutrition services taking the place of Falita Flowers. He introduced Tamika Boone as the Director of Eligibility Services and Sonja Adams as the Director of Provider Services. He then introduced Ben Applying as the new Director of Audits and Compliance. Mr. Ringsrud stated these new leaders come very well-recommended and with lots of relevant experience.

Susan Harper thanked Ray Higgins for his service and welcomed Rian Ringsrud.

b. Federal Programs Update

Elisabetta Kasfir, Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs and Eligibility, discussed CAPS policy changes. The first is the new DECAL service regions that will be implemented in July 2018, moving from 5 to 6 regions. She then introduced changes to CAPS family fees. There will be a 15% Quality Rated discount that will go into effect July 2018. Families enrolled at a provider with a 1-, 2-, or 3-star Quality Rating will receive a 15% discount. This is an incentive for families to choose quality. There will also be a simplification in the calculation of the family fee that will go into effect September 2018. The family fee will be evenly divided among all children's scholarships within a family. This enables the Quality Rated discount to apply only to children at Quality Rated providers. The goals of the new family fee calculation are to better align with federal

requirements, simplify the family fee calculation, and use family income as a foundation for the fee calculation. Ms. Kasfir stated the new family fee will be easier for families to understand. The new family fee structure will have 4 tiers and will be based on federal poverty levels. The new calculation will prioritize affordability for families. The family fee will still be recalculated during eligibility determination periods. Family fee can only go down during the eligibility period. For existing families, their fees will be calculated both ways and they will be issued the fee that is lower to avoid harm to families during this transition.

Ms. Kasfir announced that enrollment in an Associate's Degree program will be added as an approved activity for families applying for and receiving CAPS. This will go into effect in July 2018. Parameters around this new approved activity will be finalized by July.

Ms. Kasfir then spoke about the collaboration with the Technical College System of Georgia and the University System of Georgia. DECAL and these groups will participate in a meeting in July 2018 to build relationships and foster collaboration.

c. Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning Update

Carrie Ashbee introduced and welcomed Sarah Tinsley as the new Advancement and Donor Relations Coordinator of the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning. Ms. Tinsley has experience working with non-profits across Georgia. Mrs. Ashbee asked the board members to follow their new social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram with the tag "@gaeearlyed."

Mrs. Ashbee announced that the Foundation received a grant of \$650,000 from United Way to expand Quality Rated and continue their marketing campaign. She thanked Commissioner Amy Jacobs, chair of the Board of Directors, for her help with the grant. She also spoke to the contributions of the Board of Directors. The board will be expanding in conjunction with the 1-year birthday of the foundation that is coming up. Mrs. Ashbee announced their upcoming fall fundraiser *Picnic Under the Pines: A Singer Songwriter Series*. The fundraiser will be held in partnership with the Georgia Forestry Foundation to support children's literacy.

d. Georgia's Pre-K/ Instructional Supports Update

Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner of Pre-K and Instructional Supports, discussed challenges in infant and toddler care. She highlighted that infant and toddler care is the most expensive care; there is lower access to high-quality infant and toddler care; and there is high turnover of infant and toddler teachers. For these reasons, infant and toddler care quality is often low. Mrs. Adams reported administrative data from the Quality Rated Validation Study, which shows that infant and toddler classrooms have lower quality.

Mrs. Adams also discussed the Early Language and Literacy grants. The goal of the grants is to provide internal professional development for infant and toddler teachers. Teacher Leaders are funded to coach their peers.

The data collection methods for the grants include CLASS observations, LENA recording reports, interviews and surveys of grant participants, and reviews of teacher assistant plans and visit notes. Evaluation of the program with these methods is ongoing. They are conducted in partnerships with the Governor's Office of Student Achievement and Child Trends.

Mrs. Adams explained how the LENA device works and showed the device to the room. She then presented a sample LENA report and explained the results. Susan Harper stated her enthusiasm for LENA and the story it tells about children's interactions. Mrs. Adams presented data on the percent of children that experienced the desired LENA level of turn taking in 2- and 3-star classrooms.

Mrs. Adams then presented the next steps for the grant. Programs with the grant will continue with it in 2019 and the grants will be expanded. DECAL will begin to decrease their support and enhance the role of teacher leaders so they may take over the support of programs. New programs can apply for the grant soon and existing programs may request to add additional classrooms to their grant in 2019. The Sandra Dunagan Deal Georgia Center for Early Language and Literacy will be investing in the grants in 2019.

Mrs. Adams took some time to answer questions from the board and provide more context on the proper use of this data.

After a short break, Mrs. Adams introduced Dr. Sharona Fountain, the Director of The Learning Station, and two of her colleagues. The Learning Station is a center that participates in the Early Language and Literacy grant. Dr. Fountain expressed her gratitude for this grant and the positive impact it has on the center.

The two staff members described how they and other staff have benefitted from professional development opportunities provided through the grant. Specifically, they have learned new ways to connect with their students. Through participation in the grant, they have learned that teachers must be in tune with students and have intentional conversations with them.

Dr. Fountain stated the grant has allowed them to afford additional supplies and teacher leaders. She has seen great improvement in the language and literacy of the center's infants and toddlers since the implementation of the grant. Dr. Fountain and her colleagues emphasize the importance of simple, intentional communication with infants and toddlers and relaying this importance to parents.

Dr. Fountain spoke about the center's program, Parent Café, in which they discuss the grant with parents and the importance of engaging in intentional conversation with their children.

Dr. Fountain fielded questions and praise from the board.

Mrs. Adams thanked Dr. Fountain and her colleagues for their hard work.

e. Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Amy Jacobs thanked Dr. Fountain and her colleagues for their input. She then provided an update on the third year of the Pre-K teacher of the year. There are currently six finalists, three for public Pre-K classrooms and three for private Pre-K classrooms. The finalists will be interviewed, observed in the classroom, and will submit a video of a class activity before the winners are chosen in August 2018.

A new PSA was launched to promote www.qualityrated.org and 1-877-all-ga-kids. These services are provided in partnership with Quality Care for Children to help parents find summer camps and child care programs. In addition, these services also advise parents on specific questions to ask camp and program staff before enrolling their children in summer activities. Commissioner Jacobs played the PSA video.

The Look Again Campaign has expanded its message beyond child care providers to include all caretakers of children to educate them on the consequences of leaving a child in a vehicle. Commissioner Jacobs presented the campaign's new logo. Commissioner Jacobs announced that The Look Again Campaign event was scheduled to take place Tuesday, May 29th with Governor Nathan Deal and first lady Sandra Deal.

In addition, she acknowledged the many role changes occurring within DECAL and specifically thanked Ray Higgins for his service.

f. Child Care Services Update

Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services, provided the exact number and types of visits to licensed and exempt facilities; thus far in the 2018 fiscal year, as well as current compliance statistics. The total number of visits for the 2018 fiscal year as of April 30, 2018 was 11,005.

g. Legal Update

Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer, discussed the Child Care and Development Fund State Plan (CCDF). A printed executive summary of the CCDF was provided for each attendee. Mr. Sudman referred to highlights for each of the eight sections of the plan from the summary. Mr. Sudman presented the timeline of the state plan, including time for public comments on the plan. The target submission for the plan was June 22, 2018 and the final submission deadline was July 1, 2018. Public hearings were held for comments on the plan prior to submission. Comments were also emailed to dccdfstateplan@decalfga.gov.

h. System Reform Update

Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner of System Reform, described the revamped content of Quality Rated's social media pages for families. Ms. Bernhard provided statistics on the percent of centers participating in Quality Rated and those that are rated 1, 2, or 3 stars.

Some deadlines are in place to encourage providers to enroll in Quality Rated. A bonus package will be offered to programs that are participating in Quality Rated by June 2018. Providers who serve any children with CAPS subsidies must be participating by 2020. Ms. Bernhard provided statistics on initial ratings of programs by the year rated.

Ms. Bernhard introduced the Child Care Business Resources Initiative, which began under the Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge grant in January 2014. The purpose of the initiative is to promote programs' usage of existing business development resources. In 2017, DECAL was selected by First Children's Finance to participate in an Early Childhood Education Business Collaborative to sustain and expand the work of the initiative. As part of the initiative, licensed child care programs were recently surveyed about their business resource needs with a 30% response rate. Ms. Bernhard provided highlights of survey results. In general, the survey found that most respondents wanted additional training in some business areas. Several organizations have been identified as potential partners that could provide business training and support for child care providers.

6. Committee Meetings and Lunch

Ms. Harper dismissed the board to pick up lunch and attend committee meetings.

7. Public Hearing/Public Comment Period

Susan Harper opened the public hearing portion of the meeting. One person signed up for public comment, Wande Okunoren-Meadows. Ms. Okunoren-Meadows spoke separately for two organizations, Georgia Child Care Association and Little Ones Learning Center.

Ms. Okunoren-Meadows' comments for Georgia Child Care Association included the following: In reference to the CCDF plan, she reminded the board that quality care costs. The State is not funding at the optimal levels for quality childcare. Federal recommendations indicate that funding should be at the 75th percentile; Georgia is funding infant and toddler care at or below the 10th percentile. She stated she was happy that the program is going statewide; however, reimbursement rates are being reduced with each new period. She wants the funding for Quality Rated reimbursement rates to be standardized. She urged DECAL to continue serving as many CAPS children as possible rather than raising CAPS rates. Finally, she stated the Georgia Child Care Association is thankful for their partnership with DECAL.

Ms. Okunoren-Meadows' comments for Little Ones Learning Center included the following: She reminded the board of the Farm to Early Care and Learning mini-grant that was instituted several years ago by DECAL. She received the grant and it has been very beneficial to her center. She stated it was about supporting the local economy; getting kids to eat healthy; encouraging family engagement; and supporting professional development. She urges the board to consider funding this program again with the upcoming CCDF plan. She expressed the many benefits this program has provided for the children at her center. The kids that need this program the most are those that do not have access to quality foods. Quality dollars should be invested in this program to help those children. It has helped improve the behavioral outcomes for the children at her center. The program has also helped her teachers further appreciate the work that they do.

8. Committees reported on their work.

a. Programs & Rules

Kathy Howell reported for the programs and rules committee that annual reports are going out now. There is an issue with the criminal background checks now being coordinated with federal guidelines. This makes it difficult for classrooms to have the correct number of child care workers because they have to wait 21 days for background checks.

The Pre-K summer transition programs added 20 new sites this year. There are 120 rising Kindergarten sites and 47 rising Pre-K sites for children who speak Spanish and are registered for Pre-K for fall 2018.

The summer nutrition program has 98 food sponsors this year, which is a 5% increase from last year. The deadline for summer program applications was June 15th, 2018. There were three summer kickoff events to market the summer transition program.

Ms. Howell stated there are many new staff members with the CAPS program this year and lots of training currently underway. There will be regional managers for each of the six DECAL regions. New CAPS applications are being developed for the six regions. With the help of IT, there will be records of accident and injury reports.

b. Budget & Finance

Rian Ringsrud reported for the budget and finance committee that DECAL's budget and expenditures are on track.

c. System Reform

Phil Davis reported for the system reform committee that DECAL is submitting the continuation application to the Head Start office for an additional five years of funding. Quality Rated ERS managers, anchors, and assessors are conducting reliability visits with providers. The hope is that this will transform a bureaucratic process into a human process. A webinar is being developed for Quality Rated participants.

System Reform is making these processes easier for their customers. Quality Rated subsidy grants went to 2,500 slots as of July 1, 2018. On-site eligibility is available for families so they can apply for funding directly at their child care center. Mr. Davis also reported that System Reform is working with "mommy bloggers" to improve their social media content. The Quality Rated bonus package deadline to apply for Quality Rated was June 30, 2018.

9. Additional Board Actions/Business

Kristie Lewis stated that voting on Criminal Records Check rules would occur at the next board meeting.

Rian Ringsrud reminded the board that they will need to approve next year's budget at the next board meeting.

Ms. Harper announced Dawn Henderson resigned from the board. The board has made recommendations to the government for filling her spot.

10. Closing Remarks/Adjournment

Ms. Harper reminded the board that the next meeting of the board would take place August 16th, 2018.

Board Chair Susan Harper adjourned the meeting at 1:31 pm.

Jesse H. Harper
Board Chair, Signature

Date

Kathy B. Howell
Board Secretary, Signature

8/16/18
Date