

## Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting

Thursday, February 21, 2019, 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

## Board of Early Care and Learning

### Meeting Minutes

#### Board Members

Susan Harper  
Dr. Melissa Boekhaus  
Carlene Talton

Phil Davis  
Kathy Howell  
Victor Morgan

#### Public Guests

Becky Thomas-Haden, Stephanie Westhafer, Joe Perrault, Hanah Goldberg, Katie Landes, Erica Sitkoff, Emily Dore, Charlotte Pelz, Callan Willis, Kayla Washington, Uzma Azhar, Jamie Stevens, Victoria Ward

#### Bright from the Start Staff

Amy Jacobs, Commissioner  
Rian Ringsrud, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration  
Elisabetta Kasfir, Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs  
Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System Reform  
Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner for Pre-K and Instructional Supports  
Pam Stevens, Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services  
Bentley Ponder, Senior Director of Research and Policy  
Allison Setterlind, Director of Head Start Collaboration  
Jim Keith, Interim Chief Information Officer  
Christi Moore, Director of Professional Learning  
Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer  
Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer  
Robin Stevens, Director of Human Resources  
Randy Hudgins, Deputy Director of Research and Policy  
Carol Hartman, Director of Policy and System Reform  
Denise Jenson, Quality Rated Operations Director

Faith Duncan, Director of Pre-K Field Operations  
Brandy Locchetta, Inclusion Director  
Jackie Shivers, Director of Quality Initiatives  
William Cox, Director of Infrastructure  
Laura Wagner, Director of Quality Rated Policy & Partnerships  
Tamika Boone, Compliance Manager  
Sonja Adams, Nutrition Program Administrator  
Meghan McNail, Summer Transition and Outreach Manager  
Woody Dover, Budget Administrator  
Shayna Funke, Policy Analyst  
Chris Linn, Federal Programs Administration Director  
Sarah Tinsley, Foundation Advancement Coordinator  
Jill O'Meara, Community Coordinator  
Pamela Hall, Workforce Development Specialist  
Mary Stoklas, Quality Rated Operations Coordinator  
Veronica Thomas, Inclusion Specialist  
Ben Appling, Audit Project Coordinator  
Quandra Collins, Executive Administrative Assistant  
Sonja Steptoe, Departmental Editor and Writer  
Afrin Jahan, Intern

#### 1. Call to Order

Board Chair Susan Harper called the meeting to order at 9 a.m.

#### 2. Welcome

Ms. Harper welcomed the board members, Department of Early Care and Learning staff, and public guests.

#### 3. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Ms. Harper asked for a motion to accept the day's agenda. Phil Davis moved to approve, and Victor Morgan seconded. The Board approved it unanimously. Ms. Harper next asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the

November 15, 2018 meeting of the Board. Kathy Howell moved to approve, and Carlton Talton seconded. The Board approved the minutes unanimously.

#### 4. Inspiration

Ms. Howell provided an Inspiration that focused on inclusive early learning. She played a video of a recent CBS Sunday Morning Show segment about the impact of acts of inclusion. The piece told the story of residents in a Newton, Massachusetts, neighborhood who are learning sign language so that they can communicate with a 2-year-old girl in their community who is deaf, but eager to engage with them. The child's preschool teacher told the reporter that the community's commitment to inclusion will almost certainly guarantee a happier, more well-adjusted child.

#### 5. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities.

- Ms. Harper read to a Pre-K class in Lee County during Inclusive Early Learning Week. She also was interviewed by an Albany TV station to remind parents about the start of Georgia's Pre-K registration. She will read to a Pre-K class in Dougherty County next week to commemorate Dr. Seuss's birthday.
- Dr. Boekhaus announced that she will attend a Child Care Safety Summit in Macon co-sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics Georgia Chapter on March 12 and 13. Child care trainers and workers will participate in the sessions. She is pleased that the event will focus on injury prevention for youngsters in child care settings.

#### 6. Bright from the Start Presentations

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

##### **a. Commissioner's Update**

Commissioner Amy Jacobs announced several leadership or organizational chart changes, including the departure of Deputy Commissioner Kristin Bernhard on February 22 to accept a position at Ounce of Prevention Fund in Chicago, the retirement of IT Director Craig Detweiler, the appointment of Jim Keith as Interim Chief Information Officer, the promotion of Senior Director of Research and Policy Director Bentley Ponder to succeed Ms. Bernhard, and the promotion of Randy Hudgins to succeed Mr. Ponder. The Commissioner praised and thanked Ms. Bernhard for her successful work and contributions to the agency. She also discussed the movement of several programs to different agency divisions. The Research unit, which has reported to Deputy Commissioner Rian Ringsrud, will be moved under System Reform. But the Commissioner stressed that even though Research will be located under System Reform on the organization chart, the unit will continue to serve all DECAL divisions. Additionally, the Quality Rated Subsidy Grant (QRSB) program will move from System Reform to the CAPS division in order to align all subsidy grant administration efforts better to ensure that children receiving CAPS scholarships have access to the highest quality child care. The QR Technical Assistance team, including the contracts with the child care resource and referral agencies (CCR&Rs) who provide technical assistance for programs participating in QR, are currently housed under System Reform and will move under Instructional Supports so that internal and external professional development efforts are housed in one unit. The Commissioner explained that there will be no changes in the work that the CCR&Rs do.

The Commissioner then introduced 2018-19 Pre-K Teachers of the Year, Becky Thomas-Haden of Mulberry Creek Elementary in Harris County for public schools and Stephanie Westhafer of Georgia Kids Academy in Jackson County for private centers. Ms. Thomas-Haden has worked in Pre-K for 18 years. Ms. Westhafer has been a teacher for four years after a career in finance.

Ms. Thomas-Haden thanked the Commissioner and the Board for the award and opportunities it brought to her, and shared photos as part of a presentation about her classes, activities, experiences, and family life. Ms. Westhafer thanked the Commissioner and the Board for the award and the experience. She shared photos as part of a presentation about her classes, activities, experiences, and family life. The two teachers also received Board resolutions from Ms. Harper commemorating their achievements and recognizing their dedication and commitment.

##### **b. Finance, Legislative, and Administrative Update**

Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration Rian Ringsrud summarized the agency's state fiscal year (SFY) 2019 budget and expenditures as of the end of the second quarter ended December 31, 2018. He reported that DECAL is on track, with half the year done and 48% of its funds remaining. He noted that only 16% of the budget for Quality Initiatives remains because spending in that area continues at a faster pace than anticipated. Mr. Ringsrud said

it reflects the success and growth of the QRSB program which is at around 3,000 slots. In light of that, Mr. Ringsrud said his team is working with the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget to add more funds from available federal funds to that line item. Mr. Ringsrud cited it as an example of why it's so important for the Finance division to monitor expenditures and remaining balances to identify impacts and potential shortfalls and to resolve them before they become an issue. Mr. Davis asked whether the budget that is passed by the legislature includes this level of detail about the line items. Mr. Ringsrud responded that the agency is required to maintain two legal levels of control for the budget—by program and by funding source. He reports both to the Board so that members can see what the agency is accountable for to the legislature. Looking at the summary of the agency's proposed SFY2020 budget that reflects the Governor's final budget proposals, he noted that it now includes a total of \$11.4 million allocated by the Governor to the Pre-K Program for a \$3000 raise for every lead teacher and a 2% raise for assistant teachers. He said the additional funds reflect the Governor's priorities to support teachers, including Pre-K teachers. The financial impact for DECAL is that the Pre-K budget will increase by about 3% and the agency's overall budget will increase by 1.5%, which will bring the SFY2020 budget to just under \$850 million. The Governor's budget recommendations are now being reviewed by the Georgia legislature. Mr. Davis asked if the increases in the 2020 budget are higher than DECAL's budget request and Mr. Ringsrud said they were. Mr. Ringsrud also shared the positive results of the recent audits of DECAL's budget, banking and cash management practices. During his legislative update, he listed the leadership changes within Georgia's government that potentially impact DECAL, including the new Governor and Lt. Governor, new chairs of three of the four legislative committees that oversee aspects of DECAL, 37 new members of the state House of Representatives, and five new members of the state Senate. He said DECAL doesn't have any agency legislation under consideration but he did describe three bills being debated in the General Assembly that the agency is monitoring. One is Senate Bill 48, which provides for identification and support of students with dyslexia. The original language in the measure called for identification and assessment of dyslexia during Pre-K. However the bill passed the Senate recently and the language now calls for the assessment to be conducted in Kindergarten instead. Though he doesn't anticipate that the measure will impact DECAL now, his team will continue to monitor it. The second measure is Senate Bill 85, which provides for an early child care scholarship program. There is no funding attached to it yet, and he says it looks to be a conversation starter to take the temperature of the legislators around additional investments in early child care programs like CAPS or in CAPS itself. It's currently in committee and it's not clear how far it will move this session. The final measure he's monitoring is House Bill 180, which provides for a repeal of provisions creating boards, task forces, authorities, commissions, and councils that are no longer active. Some of the sections of the Georgia Code that fall into the category relate to DECAL and his team is working with the bill's author to ensure that there are no unintended consequences for the agency.

### **c. Georgia's Pre-K/ Instructional Supports Update**

Deputy Commissioner for Pre-K and Instructional Supports Susan Adams mentioned the fourth year of DECAL's celebration of Inclusive Early Learning Week on February 11-15 to educate and celebrate how young children with a wide variety of backgrounds and abilities are included in early learning environments. She was pleased with participation, support, and publicity about the week's activities. She then provided details on the new one-year, \$2.96 million Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5) that DECAL recently received. Ms. Adams explained that it is jointly administered by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. The grant is designed to help states think about building infrastructure to improve early learning and systems for parents and children ages birth to 5 across the state. About 45 states received one of these grants, and all of them will be eligible to apply for a five-year renewal grant in fall 2019. The grants will provide a larger amount of money for implementing the plans they develop as part of the initial, one-year grant. The grant has five purposes: to enable states to conduct a cross-agency needs assessment of available services and needs for the birth-to-5 age group and especially the most vulnerable children and families within that group, including those in rural areas and who speak languages other than English; to develop a statewide strategic plan to strengthen services for those groups based on the needs assessment; to maximize family choice and knowledge about existing programs and providers; to share best practices among early childhood education providers to increase collaboration and efficiency of services; and to improve overall quality by developing and implementing evidence-based practices to improve professional development. Ms. Adams explained that Georgia received about 70% of the money it asked for in its grant proposal. The next steps in the process include revising the budget, getting federal approval of the budget, hiring staff, procuring contracts, and forming a cross-agency child council and stakeholder groups. Mr. Davis asked whether anyone maintains a list of state services focused on the birth-to-5 age group. Ms. Adams explained that while there isn't a master list, DECAL has a good idea of where the services for that group are located. She said the strategic planning activities will give the agency a better understanding of the system of supports. He said it would be good to have it to refer people who inquire. He questioned the characterization of Georgia as primarily rural and noted that the state is less than 30%

rural. Ms. Adams explained that looking at the way the state is characterized in federal grants and other measures, such as population and land mass, can vary. She said the intention of the grant work is to look at both urban and rural groups and to think about how services for those living in an urban setting differ from those available in a rural setting. On the issue of the rural classification, Ms. Harper added that she drives 200 miles to attend Board meetings and drives through rural areas. She observes that it's a totally different world. She said it's a very different population and the issues are very different. The urban poverty is different from the rural poverty and the access is different. For that reason she is glad to see that the grant work will include a statewide study of the issues and needs in the rural areas. Ms. Adams said the grant asks DECAL to focus on the quality and access to those services. She agreed that it can be very different depending on where you look. Ms. Harper noted that she has read reports about rural towns dying because of increased Internet shopping, which leads to the lifestyles of residents in those areas disappearing, with lots of boarded up buildings and lost livelihoods, outside of farming and agriculture. She said it leads to loss of jobs and opportunities for young people, and causes them to leave the communities, making it an important issue to address.

Ms. Adams then introduced Director of Professional Learning Christi Moore to update the Board on the DECAL Scholars Awards. Ms. Moore began with an overview of the DECAL Scholars program and the assistance it offers to early learning professionals who are either pursuing an initial degree in early childhood education (ECE) or a higher degree, as well as expansions DECAL is making to target specific populations of professionals. She explained that DECAL has a staff that helps professionals identify educational options in the ECE field; identify colleges/universities that offer ECE credentials or degree programs on-site or online; identify steps needed to enroll in a college or university; and apply for DECAL scholarships, awards, and incentives programs. She said the list of available programs include free educational counseling; scholarships that provide tuition assistance and a support stipend to eligible ECE professionals pursuing credentials or degrees in ECE; awards for early educators that offer a single bonus to eligible applicants who have earned a higher ECE credential or degree within the past 12 months; and the incentives salary bonus program that provided rewards during the tenure of professionals who increase their levels of ECE education. In terms of the scholarship awards, DECAL provides 80% of tuition and mandatory fees not covered by the HOPE Scholarship, Pell Grants or other awards at public institutions, up to \$2,028 per semester of tuition and mandatory fees not covered by those same awards at private institutions; a \$250 stipend for students enrolled in one to three credit hours; and a \$500 stipend for students enrolled in four or more credit hours. The counselors also help professionals learn about other sources of funds for which they might be eligible and how to access them. Ms. Moore also explained that once the professionals earn an advanced credential they are eligible for a bonus award. The Awards for Early Educators Program was created through the Early Learning Challenge Grant and rewards a single bonus at each level of credential earned, within 12 months of earning the higher credential. The Incentives program encourages professionals to remain with their employer after earning their higher credential to ensure continuity of care. It is a salary bonus for the tenure of ECE professionals who increase their levels of education. Last year, the scholarships program awarded over \$1 million to 1,067 participants and to date in 2019 has given out \$675,954 to 631 participants. Just over 1,330 Incentives participants received \$1,027,125 in 2018 and 911 have earned \$516,675 so far this year. Finally, the Awards program gave 886 participants \$1,204,300 last year and has awarded \$479,300 to 359 recipients to this point in 2019. Ms. Moore also shared information about the new DECAL Scholars TEACH, and the DECAL Scholars LEAD Programs. She explained that the TEACH program will support current and aspiring early learning teachers who are interested in working with the youngest learners. The hope is that they will choose the ECE career pathway. It also applies to infant-toddler credentialed teachers pursuing advanced credentials in that discipline, and teachers in family child care learning homes (FCCLHs) that provide infant-toddler care. In partnership with the Dept of Education's Career Technical and Agricultural Education Program, the TEACH initiative also provides financial support to high school students pursuing a child development associate (CDA) credential to encourage them to think of early childhood education as a viable career choice. It will also support bilingual teachers pursuing a CDA so that students have access to them. The DECAL Scholars LEAD Program will provide financial bonuses for both individuals providing relationship-based supports to the workforce as professional learning community facilitators and early learning coaches who are pursuing specialized training in those areas. The early learning coaching program is a pilot initiative at this stage.

Ms. Harper recessed the Board meeting for a short break at 10:20 a.m., and reconvened it at 10:30 a.m.

#### **d. System Reform Update**

Deputy Commissioner for System Reform Kristin Bernhard provided updated information on the number of Quality Rated (QR) participating and star rated programs. She reported that as of January 2, 2019, 1,650 or 35% of 4774 eligible programs are star rated, with 38% somewhere in the process and 28% that are not yet participating. Overall, 72% of eligible providers are participating. She shared the distribution of ratings by provider type. For licensed family

child care providers, they are significantly more likely to be 3-star rated. She also noted large chunks of participating providers in the 2- and 3-star rated categories. Seeing the distribution of star ratings tip toward the higher ratings is encouraging, she said. For programs earning their first star ratings, data shows that the number of 0-rated programs remains low. A 0-rated program has completed the QR process but didn't score high enough to earn a 1-star rating. Ms. Bernhard attributed the drop in the number of initial ratings in 2018 to the large number of reassessments the QR team performed during the year. She reported that 55% of all children receiving child care subsidies are in QR programs. In less than a year the number has grown by 10 percentage points, reflecting the phenomenal work of the Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, the fantastic response of the child care community, the work of the DECAL assessor staff, and the partnerships with other DECAL divisions. Tracking the percentage of Pre-K programs that are in Quality Rated star-rated or participating programs, she reported that 90% are in participating programs while 56% of the programs are rated and 38% of the rated programs are 2- or 3-star. She also explained the plans for refining the structural quality aspect of the QR evaluation process, including revisions to the online portfolio requirements, based on results of the QR validation study and survey findings, that will be developed over the next two years for later implementation. The data showed that although the portfolio completion consumes a lot of provider time, the portfolio score doesn't correlate closely to the star rating a program receives. Ms. Bernhard stressed that the refinement process is still underway and is not close to completion, with the implementation of any changes in the portfolio requirements not expected until after the December 31, 2020 deadline for all eligible providers to be QR. Therefore, she cautioned providers against thinking they can delay completing their QR applications in hopes that the portfolio requirements will change. The review will include a mini-pilot of a revised process to collect feedback. In the fall of 2019, there will be stakeholder engagement, followed by a larger pilot at the end of 2019 with a diverse group of providers. In 2020, the QR team expects to finalize the revisions that will be most effective and then develop all the required IT, training and technical materials and a communication plan. Mr. Davis asked if there are systemic functions that look at whether the requirements are overloading the centers. Ms. Bernhard explains that assessors review all the QR application documents that are submitted on which they receive points and scores. There is no formal way of determining the burden on providers, she added, but the team has received feedback that it was time consuming and created an administrative burden, which has led to the review of ways to reduce the administrative burdens on providers that's underway.

#### **e. Federal Programs Update**

Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs Elisabetta Kasfir described the first CAPS staff meeting in December 2018 for the division's employees. She said it was the first time after recent changes in CAPS and the scaling up of the division for everyone to learn about all that CAPS does in its functional areas. It was a chance to team build and collaborate. The meeting included a number of sessions, including presentations from a number of DECAL divisions on topics such as federal priority populations and how they link to the CAPS population, research topics, and the impact of trauma on child development. Ms. Kasfir then introduced CAPS Program Administration Director Chris Linn who reported on revisions to CAPS program integrity practices and health and safety guidelines for license-exempt and informal providers that took effect on February 1. CAPS has been collaborating with the Child Care Services (CCS) unit, which oversees health and safety monitoring, to create the policy for the 300 to 400 exempt and informal providers. CCS will handle monitoring for those providers as well as the licensed providers it already monitors. If there is a need for an adverse action on exempt and informal providers regarding health and safety violations, CCS will turn the matter over to CAPS for administering the adverse action. CCS will continue to monitor and handle adverse actions for licensed providers. Mr. Linn explained that the revisions are needed to comply with new federal rules requiring standards for all providers, including exempt and informal providers. In developing them, CAPS's goal was to align the health and safety standards for both license-exempt and informal providers with those for licensed providers, and to improve clarity. In terms of improving clarity, the policy has been reorganized. The revisions are a part of the new CAPS Program Integrity Policy that sets guidelines to ensure integrity and accountability in the administration and use of CAPS funds while maintaining continuity of services. CAPS wants to promote transparency, reduce and eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse; and to be good stewards of program funds. CAPS is applying the integrity approach through its transparent policies and compliance expectations, training, evaluation, and process improvements. Families support Program Integrity by providing accurate, current and complete information; reporting certain changes in circumstance, complying with investigations and inquiries, and ensuring that their children are signed in and out of care each day. Care providers support program integrity through accurate record keeping, proper billing, and demonstrating responsiveness by participating in webinars and providing feedback. The new health and safety standards were informed by existing standards and stakeholder feedback provided through surveys and webinars. The feedback showed that child health and safety were important to them and that they favored warning letters, technical assistance, and corrective action plans as appropriate corrective actions for

health and safety, comprehensive background checks (CBC), fire safety and fences violations. The new requirements combine mandates from the Child Care and Development Fund and DECAL. They include reporting serious injuries, complying with CBCs, participating in health and safety training, providing care that meets basic health and safety standards, and cooperating with annual monitoring visits and enforcement actions when necessary. They include aligned compliance and monitoring, and enforcement standards for all providers. Mr. Linn also explained specifics of how the new standards change monitoring for license-exempt and informal providers and how enforcement actions will be determined, based on a new points system CAPS developed. The system creates standardization but also allows for some flexibility based on other factors that need to be taken into account. He also delineated the three categories of enforcement actions, which consist of prevention, an intermediate stage, and finally dismissal and disqualification. The new CAPS policies can be found at [www.caps.dec.state.ga.us](http://www.caps.dec.state.ga.us). Mr. Davis asked if the new standards might provide an incentive for exempt providers to want to become licensed. Mr. Linn said it potentially could. Mr. Davis then noted that provider preferred enforcement actions are those that don't financially impact providers and asked how CAPS would determine which ones to use. Mr. Linn explained that CAPS wanted to include sanctions that providers preferred, especially in the prevention category. But he clarified that all sanctions that will be levied will be based on the circumstances and what's appropriate. Mr. Davis also asked him to explain the difference between the plan of improvement and a corrective action. Mr. Linn said the plan of improvement is more informal and quicker, while corrective action is more formal with added steps. Ms. Harper asked whether exempt programs receive CAPS and Mr. Linn confirmed that some do. Commissioner Jacobs added that some exempt programs administer after school programs and summer day camps, which are all federally funded. Ms. Harper asked whether consultants visit the exempt programs and the Commissioner confirmed that they do as part of monitoring and enforcement functions. Ms. Harper also asked who shuts down the exempt programs and Mr. Linn said CAPS has the authority to dismiss or disqualify a program from CAPS if needed. But if a program's exempt status needs to be revoked, CCS would handle the case. Mr. Morgan asked if there are any issues with exempt programs regarding staff-to-children ratios. Mr. Linn said CAPS monitors them. Ms. Kasfir said the core health and safety standards for exempt and informal programs are similar to those for licensed programs. So whatever ratios are required for licensed programs also apply to exempt and informal ones.

#### **f. Child Care Services Update**

Deputy Commissioner of Child Care Services (CSS) Pam Stevens began by following up on the discussion of the new health and safety standards for exempt programs. She said CCS consultants do visit programs to ensure health and safety of the children in their care and to support providers in complying with standards by providing technical assistance. She said CCS therefore considers it very important to build strong relationships with providers and conducted a survey of providers to gauge their satisfaction with the customer service CCS consultants provide. She introduced Research and Policy Analyst Shayna Funke, who shared the overwhelmingly positive results of a survey of providers about the customer service they receive from child care consultants. Ms. Funke reported on the responses to the five questions posed to providers about their experiences with CCS consultants' customer service. She explained that the survey was conducted between July 2018 and November 2018 and 1166 providers responded, with 26% of the responses from FCCLHs and 74% from child care learning centers (CCLCs). Overall, an overwhelming majority of the providers said the consultants were knowledgeable, professional, courteous, helpful, fair, transparent, and responsive. Some 90% or more of the respondents also said consultants reviewed the results of their visit reports with them before leaving the facility and were available to answer questions. The researchers compared these responses to those for comparable questions on the provider customer service survey conducted in 2015. Four years ago, between 83% and 94% of providers had strongly positive responses, while in the 2018 survey between 96% and 99% of them responded positively. The comparison indicates that consultants are doing an even more impressive job of attending to providers' needs.

Ms. Stevens said she and her team are very excited about the positive responses. She then made the Board aware of the content and key dates related to two proposed rule changes for providers. The first change ensures that health and safety pre-service training and orientation and annual training include components required by the CCDF. CCS recommends that the changes should be effective on October, following public comment and webinars in July 2019 and a board vote on the final rules at the August 15 meeting. The second proposed change would revise the rule book for FCCLHs to align it with the rules for CCLCs that were revised in 2017. Those changes would take effect July 1 2020, following public comment period and informational webinars conducted during April and May 2020, and board approval at the May 2020 meeting. At the end of her presentation, Ms. Stevens asked the Board for permission to begin work on the rule revisions that members will vote on later this year and in 2020. Ms. Harper stated the request

and asked for a motion to vote on it. Mr. Morgan made the motion that was seconded by Dr. Boekhaus and unanimously approved by the Board to grant permission to CCS to begin revisions.

Ms. Harper adjourned the meeting for lunch and committee meetings at 11:30am.

7. Committee Meetings and Lunch

Ms. Harper called the meeting back to order at 12:55 p.m.

8. Public Comment Period

When the meeting reconvened, Ms. Harper invited speakers to come forward during Public Comment Period. No one came forward and the Comment Period ended.

9. Committee Reports

**a. Programs & Rules**

- Ms. Howell reported that the Programs Committee heard about several upcoming conferences, the benefits of the online system Georgia Gateway for determining CAPS eligibility, the range of family supports CAPS provides, application deadlines for the Summer Transition Programs and Teacher of the Year Awards, new policies related to conducting criminal background checks including the fact that DECAL is paying the provider costs for some of them, the registration period beginning in March for the Nutrition Services Summit on June 7-8 in Macon, and the goal of serving 5 million meals during the 2019 Summer Nutrition Program. The Committee was also told that the Pre-K enrollment period has closed and that the additional funds in the Pre-K budget will cover pay raises, but not additional student slots.

**b. Budget & Finance**

- Ms. Talton reported that the Finance Committee congratulated DECAL's finance team for passing its audits.

**c. System Reform**

- Mr. Davis said the System Reform Committee wished Ms. Bernhard well in her new position. The group was updated on QR operations, policies and partnerships, and the DECAL Early Head Start Partnership activities. DECAL has worked with the Branagh Information Group to enhance the summary report child care providers receive when they become rated. The new report contains details to help providers understand the meaning of each item scored, includes a concise description of why a discount was received, and will include suggestions for improvements. The Committee heard a report on the number of QR observations that showed the pace of assessments is steadily increasing as System Reform moves closer to the December 2020 deadline. DECAL was one of four states selected to participate in a field test of the new Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Third Edition (FCCERS-3). The test has now concluded and the authors are analyzing the data from the four states to make final edits and revisions to the new scale prior to publication later this spring or summer. Related to QR policy and partnerships, the Early Education Community Partnership Team has been focused on developing a prioritization plan for their outreach efforts in each of DECAL's six regions. Data used for this prioritization plan aligns with DECAL's agency-wide focus on supporting communities with the greatest needs across Georgia. System Reform has also partnered with the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) to develop short videos to promote QR. One of these videos focuses on the QR/CAPS 2020 Policy; one has targeted messages for childcare providers throughout the state; and another will have targeted messages for families seeking high quality childcare. The Committee also received an update on the competitive DECAL Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant application. DECAL applied in November for an additional Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant to provide services to 72 children in QR FCCLHs in targeted counties in and around Valdosta. The Partnership has not received information about this application. In other news, the current Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant ends on June 30, 2019. To continue to deliver services in metro Atlanta, DECAL may submit a non-competitive application for a new five-year grant cycle. The annual budget for July 1, 2019- June 30, 2020 will be \$4,625,686. This includes the required 20% match. DECAL has reflected on the successes and challenges of the past five years to inform a plan for the new grant. The partnership will refine the way early education hub services are provided and rely solely on DECAL's existing statewide quality improvement model: the state's Child Care Resource and Referral agencies. With this change, the CCLCs as well as the FCCLHs will be supported by one early education hub. The Committee members said they are sad to see Ms. Bernhard leave but are happy that Mr. Ponder is succeeding her. At future meetings he will reveal the results of the latest part of the QR Validation Study and the Year 4 Pre-K Study. Mr. Ponder also shared with the Committee information about the Tennessee Pre-K study that has received a lot of publicity in Atlanta,

explaining that it is an intervention program for underserved children, while Georgia's is universal and open to all children. He added that there are significant differences in the design of the two studies that make comparisons misleading.

Following the committee reports, Ms. Harper announced that the next Board meeting will be held on May 16, 2019. She adjourned the meeting at 1:15 p.m.

*Juanita Harper* 5/16/19  
Board Chair, Signature Date

*Kathy B. Howell* 5/16/19  
Board Secretary, Signature Date