

**Board of Early Care and Learning**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**February 21, 2019**

**Attendees**

**Board Members:** Susan Harper (Chair), Dr. Melissa Boekhaus, Phil Davis, Kathy Howell, Victor Morgan, Carlene Talton

**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:** Commissioner Amy Jacobs, Rian Ringsrud, Elisabetta Kasfir, Kristin Bernhard, Susan Adams, Pam Stevens, Bentley Ponder, Allison Setterlind, Christi Moore, Randy Hudgins, Reg Griffin, Ira Sudman, Robin Stevens, Jim Keith, Carol Hartman, Denise Jenson, Faith Duncan, Brandy Locchetta, Jackie Shivers, William Cox, Tamika Boone, Sonja Adams, Meghan McNail, Jill O'Meara, Mary Stoklas, Woody Dover, Laura Wagner, Shayna Funke, Chris Linn, Sarah Tinsley, Pamela Hall, Afrin Jahan, Ben Appling, Veronica Thomas, Quandra Collins, Sonja Steptoe

The February 21, 2019, meeting of the Board of Early Care and Learning was called to order at 9 a.m. by Board Chair Susan Harper.

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

Ms. Harper asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the November 15, 2018, Board meeting. Kathy Howell moved to approve, and Carlene Talton seconded. The Board approved the minutes unanimously.

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 all 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.

Board members provided updates on their recent 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.

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Learning (DECAL) staff provided updates on their program areas:

- Commissioner Amy Jacobs announced several leadership or organizational chart changes, including the departure of Deputy Commissioner Kristin Bernhard, the promotion of Senior Director of Research and Policy Director Bentley Ponder to succeed Ms. Bernhard, the promotion of Randy Hudgins to succeed Mr. Ponder, the retirement of IT Director Craig Detweiler and the appointment of Jim Keith as Interim IT Director. She also discussed the movement of several programs to different agency divisions. She introduced Pre-K Teachers of the Year Becky Thomas-Haden and Stephanie Westhafer, who made presentations about their activities and experiences and received Board resolutions commemorating their awards from Ms. Harper.
- Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration Rian Ringsrud's presentation included an update on the state's fiscal year (SFY) 2019 budget and expenditures, as well those for SFY 2020, the latter of which includes Pre-K teacher and assistant pay raises. He also shared the positive results of two recent audits of DECAL's

financial records. During his legislative update, he listed the leadership changes within Georgia's government that potentially impact DECAL and described three bills being debated in the General Assembly that the agency is monitoring.

- Deputy Commissioner for Pre-K and Instructional Supports Susan Adams mentioned DECAL's commemoration of Inclusive Early Learning Week on February 11-15 and provided details on the new one-year, \$2.96 million Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5) that DECAL recently received.
- Director of Professional Learning Christi Moore updated the Board on the DECAL Scholars Awards, and shared information about the new DECAL Scholars TEACH, and the DECAL Scholars LEAD Programs.

Ms. Harper recessed the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

- When the meeting resumed at 10:30 a.m., Deputy Commissioner for System Reform Kristin Bernhard provided updated information on the number of Quality Rated participating and star rated programs. She reported that 1,650 or 35% of 4774 eligible programs are star rated and 72% are participating. She also explained the plans for refining the structural quality aspect of the Quality Rated evaluation process, including revisions to the online portfolio requirements, based on results of the validation study and survey findings, that will be developed over the next two years for later implementation.
- Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs Elisabetta Kasfir described the CAPS staff meeting in December 2018 for the division's 280 employees. She then introduced CAPS Program Administration Director Chris Linn who reported on revisions to CAPS health and safety standards for license-exempt and informal providers.
- Deputy Commissioner of Child Care Services (CSS) Pam Stevens 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. Stevens then explained the content and key dates related to proposed rule changes for providers. At the end of her presentation, she asked the Board for permission to begin work on the rule revisions that members will vote on later this year and in 2020. Mr. Morgan made the motion that was seconded by Dr. Boekhaus and unanimously approved by the Board granting the permission to CCS.

Ms. Harper adjourned the meeting for lunch and committee meetings at 11:30 a.m. She called the meeting back to order at 1:00 p.m. When the meeting reconvened, Ms. Harper opened the Public Comment Period and closed it when no one came forward.

The Board meeting continued with committee chairs delivering their reports.

- Ms. Howell reported that the Programs Committee heard about several upcoming conferences, the benefits of the online system 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 for criminal background checks and their purpose, registration information for the upcoming Nutrition Services Summit on June 7-8 in Macon, and goals for the 2019 Nutrition Program.
- Ms. Talton reported that the Finance Committee congratulated DECAL's finance team for passing its audits.
- Mr. Davis said the System Reform Committee wished Ms. Bernhard well in her new position. The group was updated on Quality Rated operations, policies and partnerships, and the DECAL Early Head Start Partnership activities.

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.