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## **Board of Early Care and Learning**

### **Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting**

Thursday, November 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

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## **Meeting Minutes**

### Board Members

Phil Davis (Vice Chair)  
Kristy Beam  
Jen Bennecke  
Dr. Melissa Boekhaus

Debra Brock  
Theresa Magpuri-Lavell  
Kristin Morrissey  
Cristina Washell

### Public Guests

Paul Walker, Hanah Goldberg, Katie Landes, Joe Perrault, Maria Ramos, Kayla Washington, Erica Fener Sitkoff

### Bright from the Start Staff

Amy Jacobs, Commissioner  
Rian Ringsrud, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration  
Elisabetta Kasfir, Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs  
Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner for Pre-K and Instructional Supports  
Pam Stevens, Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services  
Bentley Ponder, Deputy Commissioner for Quality Innovations & Partnerships  
Dennis Brice, Chief Information Officer  
Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer  
Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer  
Farouk Baksh, Snr Director of Information Technology  
Allison Setterlind, Head Start Collaboration Director  
Christi Moore, Director of Professional Learning  
Robin Stevens, Director of Human Resources  
Randy Hudgins, Director of Research and Policy  
Michael Rodgers, Director of Finance  
Faith Duncan, Director of Pre-K Field Operations

Carrie Ashbee, DECAL Foundation Executive Director  
Maria Goss, Early Head Start Partnership Director  
Liz Young, Government Relations Director  
Jackie Shivers, Director of Quality Initiatives  
Jennie Couture, Practice Support Services Director  
Laura Wagner, QR Policy & Partnerships Director  
Tamika Boone, Nutrition Eligibility Services Director  
Catherine Broussard, CCS Process & Policy Director  
Melvia Usury, Budget Administrator  
LariLyn Beyer, QR Assessor Manager  
Rob O'Callaghan, Senior Research Analyst  
Meghan McNail, Summer Transition Outreach Manager  
Bridget Ratajczak, Instructional Support Supervisor  
Jill O'Meara, Community Coordinator  
Laura Reid, Instructional Support Specialist  
Woody Dover, Budget Administrator  
Shayna Funke, Research Analyst  
Anita Hasni, Research Analyst  
Jessica Guarneros, Research Analyst  
Quandra Collins, Executive Administrative Assistant  
Demetrius Wilburn, IT Support Specialist  
Sonja Steptoe, Departmental Editor and Writer

## **1. Call to Order**

Board Vice Chair Phil Davis called the meeting to order at 9 a.m.

## **2. Welcome**

Mr. Davis welcomed the board members, Department of Early Care and Learning staff, and public guests. He congratulated Board member Drew Hunt on the birth of her child. He also explained that Board Chair Susan Harper was absent while recuperating from surgery.

### **3. Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

Mr. Davis asked for a motion to accept the day's agenda. Ms. Morrissey moved to accept, and Ms. Beam seconded. The Board accepted the agenda unanimously. Mr. Davis then asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the August 15, 2019, Board meeting. Ms. Bennecke moved to approve, and Ms. Washell seconded. The Board approved the minutes unanimously.

### **4. Inspiration**

Ms. Brock provided the Inspiration that consisted of sharing a video of preschool students expressing what Thanksgiving means to them and sending messages of Happy Thanksgiving to viewers. She thanked everyone for the work they do to help Georgia's children, and the opportunity to serve on the Board. She also wished everyone Happy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas.

### **5. Board Member Updates**

Board members provided updates on their recent activities:

- Ms. Magpuri-Lavell read to students in Hancock County during Pre-K Week. She also hosted a meeting at the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center with the DECAL Early Education Community Partnership to discuss partnering with the Center on community work. The Deal Center also initiated a family literacy night with the Technical College System of Georgia.
- Ms. Bennecke attended the DECAL All Staff Meeting on October 1. She also read to two classes at the YMCA center in her district during Pre-K Week.
- Dr. Boekhaus partnered with DECAL to conduct a safety training seminar for child care centers in her role as a Board Member of the Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. She also delivered a poster presentation summarizing the seminar at the Academy's National convention in New Orleans in October 2019.
- Ms. Brock attended the DECAL All Staff Meeting in October and worked on Bright Little Minds events in her district that develop early language and literacy skills.
- Ms. Washell helped develop and participated in Pre-K afterschool literacy clinics and instruction programs for English and dual language learners that also make families aware of available resources.
- Ms. Morrissey helped implement a literacy program for Pre-K students in her district sponsored by the United Way, the County Library system, and Rotary Club that serves meals and provides information on state services through the Department of Family and Child Services. She reported that the Library System is also growing its outreach to rural communities through the new Bookmobile that now travels to those areas.
- Ms. Beam visited Pre-K classes in her district during Pre-K Week.
- Mr. Davis delivered a presentation on DECAL's student services and programs to the Stone Mountain Rotary Club. Ms. Morrissey asked him to share the presentation materials with the rest of the Board.

### **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 that Heather Williams of Central Georgia Tech in Houston County was chosen as Pre-K Teacher of the Year in the Child Care Center category. Johnathan Hines of Barack H. Obama Elementary in DeKalb County was chosen in the Public Center category. She listed the upcoming activities for the two award-winning teachers. The Commissioner also updated the Board on the progress DECAL is making in implementing Governor Brian Kemp's Language & Literacy Endorsement initiative. She reported that an Expert Committee met in May, June, and September 2019. The group drafted recommendations for the endorsement and solicited feedback on them. The draft recommendations state that: the endorsement should support programs in continuous quality improvement; only programs with a 2- or 3-star rating will be eligible to earn an endorsement; the endorsement process should prioritize programs and communities serving high proportions of children and families from vulnerable and underserved populations; DECAL will develop professional learning supports based on available data, past experience, and knowledge of best practices; the endorsement should require professional

learning based on the individual needs of programs, teachers, and families; and the endorsement should be awarded after a program successfully completes professional learning and develops a DECAL-approved plan for sustaining practice and professional learning. DECAL held a public comment period and conducted stakeholder engagement, and is now finalizing recommendations. The agency plans to implement a pilot of the endorsement in early 2020. She then introduced Erica Fener Sitkoff, executive director for Voices of Georgia's Children, who thanked the DECAL leaders and staff for helping to execute this year's events and recapped all of the activities conducted during Georgia Pre-K Week, October 7-11, 2019. Reach Out and Read Georgia donated 300 copies of this year's book, *Llama Llama Red Pajama*, that were placed on the chamber desks of each Georgia legislator, along with an invitation to participate in Pre-K Week. Over the last eight years, 155 of 159 counties have participated in Pre-K Week. In 2019, the remaining four counties registered to participate, Ms. Sitkoff said. She noted that 2019 marks the first year, since the inception of Pre-K Week, of 100% county participation, and called it a landmark year. A total of 782 child care centers and 29 community partner organizations participated in the activities. She also reported that 134 business people, and national, state, and local government leaders including mayors, first responders, military members, state legislators, U.S. Congressional representatives, and members of the Governor's administration made more than 190 visits to Pre-K centers. Summer transition classes also received visits from legislators.

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

Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration Rian Ringsrud updated the Board on the agency's state fiscal year (SFY) 2020 budget and expenditures. As of 9/30/2019, the first quarter of the state fiscal year (SFY2020) with 75% of the year remaining, 72% of DECAL's funding remains. Generally the agency is on track and all is well, he said. He pointed out that there is 82% remaining of state general funds and 80% of the state lottery funds. Those are the two areas that will be impacted by budget cuts the Governor ordered. But it's a positive sign that with 75% of the year remaining both categories have 80% of their funds remaining. He said his finance team is monitoring spending in those two areas very closely to make sure that as allotments are reduced the department isn't spending too much. The federal funding amount remaining is 61% which he acknowledged might seem concerning. He reminded the Board that the budget for federal funds reflects what is available to DECAL when it creates the budget and what it expects to spend. So, because state and federal fiscal years do not run concurrently, and because the federal funds that were available totaled \$391 million, that's what DECAL projected. Now, however, additional funds have become available since FFY2020 began, so there is actually more money to spend and the 61% remaining is not a reason for concern. Mr. Ringsrud said his team is working with the Governor's office to change the budget projections and to amend the federal funding source budget projections to reflect the additional funding that's now available. He said the next report should show that the spending is more in line with the funds available. He said the budget audit continues so there are no results to report yet. The Board will receive notification when the audit is complete and when the audit report is issued, Mr. Ringsrud will report to the Board. Regarding the budget cuts, he reminded the Board that it has already approved the amounts to be cut. He went on to explain how the required budget reductions would impact DECAL. He said DECAL is already operating efficiently with low administrative costs, so deciding what to cut was difficult. DECAL's criteria for determining what to cut were to avoid impacting the quality of the agency's programs and services, or the department staff, such as furloughs or salary cuts and the like. The order calls for a 4% cut in FY2020, which totals \$438,826 for the CAPS subsidy program within the Child Care Services (CCS) budget and \$476,920 for Pre-K. The reductions will result in eliminating one vacant position, redistributing funding for the DECAL Foundation to federal funding source, and limiting the implementation of additional FY2020 CAPS funding from the legislature. In FY2021 DECAL is required to cut 6%, which totals \$658,239 for CAPS within CCS and \$715,379 for Pre-K. Those reductions will result in fewer temporary staff positions allocated to Pre K, reducing spending for computer equipment, and reducing, realigning, and reprioritizing obligations to contractors that handle child care program audits, research projects, and teacher training. Mr. Davis asked whether, when the funding is moved from state source to a federal source, the state comes back and asks for more cuts from the state side. Mr. Ringsrud said the state was aware of DECAL's funding shifts. He also said there are limits to the administrative costs DECAL can pay with money from federal sources. With CCDF grant money, which will be used to operate the DECAL Foundation now, the limit is 5%. When DECAL told the state budget office about the plans to move those programs from the state ledger to the federal ledger, Ringsrud explained the federal funding

limits. So he doesn't expect additional requests. Ms. Bennecke asked how DECAL will make up for the cuts in the 2020 and 2021 budgets. He said DECAL will be able to meet its 2020 and 2021 budget goals by implementing the changes in a smaller way in 2020 because they haven't been in effect for the full year, while the changes will cover the full year in 2021 and will have a larger impact. Mr. Ringsrud also shared highlights of the 2019 Summer Food Service Program, which had 84 sponsors for four kickoff events around the state and 1,571 approved feeding sites. Over 150 counties had a summer food sites and served 4.8 million meals served to Georgia's children. The program reimbursed sponsoring organizations more than \$15 million for providing healthy meals to children. Mr. Davis said he can confirm that state revenues are down so the cuts are timely. He said he was impressed that DECAL devotes 91% of its budget to programs and services and congratulated DECAL.

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

Deputy Commissioner for Pre-K and Instructional Supports Susan Adams began her presentation by explaining the agency's work on the Preschool Development Grant (PDG). It's a federal grant DECAL was awarded and for which it now serves as the lead implementing agency in Georgia. It involves five other state partners, the Depts of Education, Public Health, Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities; the Technical College System of Georgia; and the University System of Georgia. The projects conducted with grant funds must benefit vulnerable and underserved children from birth to age 5. Georgia focuses on dual language learners, children with disabilities, children in foster care, children in poverty, children experiencing homelessness, children living in rural areas, and infants and toddlers. The services and programs Georgia has targeted are child care, CAPS, Head Start and Early Head Start, Home Visiting, Early Intervention Babies Can't Wait, Early Intervention Preschool Special Education; and Georgia's Pre-K. The required tasks the state must perform consist of a statewide needs assessment, a strategic plan based on the needs assessment, and the development of initiatives that help to maximize parental choice, spread knowledge, and share best practices. At this stage DECAL has requested the no-cost extension the federal agencies have offered to finalize the needs assessment and the strategic plan. The plan will be completed by a cross-agency child council the department has formed. The council will work with the Children's Cabinet. DECAL will also assemble a family ambassador council to provide the perspective of families as projects to maximize parental choice are developed. The ambassadors will be trained to understand the early childhood system and how to access services and to advocate for the things that are needed to improve systems and services. They will also receive tools to take out into the community and will be paid for the engagements that they do, such as participating in community fairs, serving on PTOs and focus groups, and advocating for programs. As part of this parent-focused effort DECAL is creating a website with content that ties in to the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards and focuses on useful family information such as explanations about developmental milestones. Additionally a consultant will offer advice for making licensing reports and other documents family friendly and more useful to them. DECAL is also working with six communities across the state to train families and child service professionals on trauma-informed care. Those communities will receive grants from DECAL to develop the training programs. DECAL has also applied for a 3-year, \$18 million renewal grant to continue the work on these projects. These grants focus on implementing the elements of the strategic plan and only about 26 states will receive them. Ms. Adams then described activities underway in the Georgia SEEDS for Success Program that provides an early learning multi-tiered system of supports. She explained that the three tiers were designed based on feedback and research showing that early care and education programs needed more focus on social-emotional development and reducing suspensions and expulsions. The hallmark of the services are trained specialists who help to develop a behavioral plan, deliver on-site coaching, and liaise with parents and resource providers. Tier 1 consists of child level supports that include development and implementation of a Facilitated Behavior Support Plan, systems liaisons, and clinical support referrals. Tier 2 involves a number of General Classroom Level Supports that DECAL has been providing all along. The full list of services are: on site targeted training; in-classroom coaching with the teacher; SEEDS Pyramid Model Implementation grants; on site targeted training in conjunction with individual development plans; and early intervention referrals. While 90% of problem behaviors that occur in the classroom can be resolved in Tier 2, Tier 3 is for more intensive support for the more complex problems that make up the other 10%. Its services involve consultation and technical assistance, helpline intake and triage, referrals from external partners families, child care providers, and families; referrals to Tier 2 or 3 support for other services and to other DECAL divisions. To provide this enhanced support, DECAL has created a 21-person regionally based team

comprised of 12 inclusion specialists, six behavior support specialists, and three regional supervisors who can better determine the help children and families need, collect data to identify needs and provide information to callers on the Hotline. To date, the line has received 600 calls. Dr. Boekhaus praised the SEEDS program. She says she sees social-emotional and behavior problems in her pediatrics practice and asked if there are referrals to medical specialists as well. Ms. Adams said there are. The specialists handling intake calls sometimes suggest discussing certain issues with medical providers. To facilitate this, DECAL will distribute the SEEDS marketing materials to partners such as the Georgia Chapter of the Academy of Pediatrics for their awareness. Ms. Brock also praised the SEEDS Program and said her school has implemented it, and it is working beautifully.

**d. Communications Update**

Chief Communications Officer Reg Griffin introduced the new DECAL logo and presented the agency's branding materials that were created through a multi-phase process in consultation with DECAL executive leadership. The new brand and logo were rolled out on October 1 and have been incorporated on the department's website, letterhead, PowerPoint presentations, and social media platforms. Under the new brand, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is now the agency's name and Bright from the Start is now its tagline. Ms. Beam asked where she can find the one-pager summarizing all of DECAL services. Mr. Griffin said it is posted to the DECAL website home page.

**Recess**

Mr. Davis recessed the meeting at 10:30 a.m. It resumed at 10:40 a.m.

**e. Child Care Services Update**

Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services (CCS) Pam Stevens discussed a new newsletter called The Quality Connection that the division will begin issuing to consultants and providers in December. It will deliver cross-divisional information about CCS, Quality Rated, and Pre-K. The newsletter will serve as an additional resource for CCS consultants and providers, make connections between licensing requirements and higher quality practices, and will crosswalk CCS rules that apply to Quality Rated and Georgia's Pre-K. She explained that the first issue will focus on scheduling. Ms. Stevens also shared details about a new technical assistance unit pilot program DECAL is launching. The pilot program will use coaching strategies and training techniques for newly licensed programs. The goal of the pilot is to provide positive and proactive support to new programs and help them create systems to maintain compliance. She explained that since December 2018, 267 programs in Support or Deficient compliance status were assigned to six CCS TA consultants. Of those programs assigned, 15% had been licensed less than 12 months. During the same time period, 122 programs underwent a Change of Ownership, and 12% of those programs fell out of compliance within 12 months of the new owner operating the program. Providers participating in the pilot will complete an initial needs assessment, receive Coaching/TA visits every two weeks, receive an explanation of licensing visit expectations, receive an in depth review of DECAL KOALA, and an in depth review of the enforcement chart and possible adverse actions. She also discussed new business practices training CCS will offer to providers. It will consist of a core rules overview for providers, a training module for managers based on the McCormick Center curriculum. Training topics will include leadership practices, preventative practices, effective communication, and staff morale. The pilot programs will be tracked for 12–24 months after intensive support has ended to monitor compliance level. Newly licensed programs can choose to receive intensive TA and coaching to help them maintain compliance after being licensed.

**f. Head Start Collaboration Office**

Head Start Collaboration Office Director Allison Setterlind explained the program's work, explaining that Head Start Collaboration Offices (HSCO) facilitate partnerships between Head Start agencies and other state entities that provide services to benefit low income children and their families. The state HSCO receives federal funds under Section 642B of the 2007 Head Start Act. She also discussed several collaborative initiatives being conducted with local partners. With the Department of Public Health's Babies Can't Wait and the Department of Education, Head Start has Early Intervention Partnership Forums focused on the transition of children with disabilities. With the Department of Community Affairs, which is funded by HUD to serve youth and families who are homeless in 152 rural Georgia counties, Head Start has Community Partnership Forums focused on the housing, child care, and employment needs of families experiencing homelessness. With the Georgia Head Start Association and the DECAL Research Team, Head Start updated the Association's Partnership Directory. She also updated the Board on state Head Start data. The total funded enrollment in FY2019 was 24,735.

The number of grantees in Georgia that exceeded the 10% mandate for services to children with disabilities was 24. The number who exceeded 20% is 13. The number of locations where children are served is 336. There are 260 DECAL-licensed center locations. The number of new applications for new center licenses as a part of the GHSA initiative in 2019 was 50. Mr. Davis asked if the Head Start contact information is on the one pager of DECAL programs and services and Mr. Griffin confirmed that it is.

**g. Federal Programs and Quality Innovations & Partnerships Update**

Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs Elisabetta Kasfir and Deputy Commissioner for Quality Innovations and Partnerships discussed the preparations for helping all CAPS providers earn a Quality Rated star rating by December 31, 2020 (CAPS/QR 2020 Goal). They outlined the rationales, policies, processes, and activities involved in the goal of having all programs providing CAPS receive a Quality Rated star rating by December 31, 2020 in order to continue receiving CAPS funding. Ms. Kasfir explained that the purpose of the Goal is to ensure that there is a large supply of high-quality care to promote parent/family choice for all Georgia's children and families, to provide more high-quality programs serving the most vulnerable children, to provide responsible stewardship for early education supports and resources, and to support Georgia's efforts to encompass high-quality early care and education (ECE) in Georgia's education pipeline. The Goal originated from a recommendation from DECAL's Early Education Subcommittee (now called the DECAL Advisory Committee). It is an agency-wide goal that involves the work and input from CAPS, Quality Rated, Instructional Supports, CCS, and Pre-K. The Goal is considered feasible due to Georgia's strong ECE foundation. Mr. Ponder noted that research supports QR as an appropriate quality framework and data supports providers' intentions to become star rated. He shared parent testimonials about the benefits of Quality Rated Child Care. He also reported that 67% of children receiving subsidies are in Quality Rated care and 54% of CAPS providers are Quality Rated. Of Georgia's 4,660 eligible programs, 1,970, or 42%, are Quality Rated. He also repeated the summary findings of the Quality Rated Validation Study 4th Report. It found that center-based programs and FCCLHs with the highest Quality Rated star rating were generally of higher quality than lower-rated programs. Preschool children in higher-rated programs learned more than children in lower-rated programs in some, but not all, domains. In center-based programs with higher star ratings, the work climate was better in terms of turnover, wages, and employee benefits. The report had the following recommendations: continue current revisions to the rating system; focus quality improvement efforts for infants and toddlers; continue efforts to improve compensation of the workforce; move to ITERS-3 and FCCERS-3; continue to support programs once they are rated; continue to focus on all areas of children's development. Ms. Kasfir explained that CAPS is Georgia's program to provide child care scholarships to low income families that is funded through the Child Care & Development Fund (CCDF). CAPS is committed to serving 50,000 children at any given time and its implementation includes scholarships and other forms of family support. The program was transferred to DECAL in 2017. She presented landscape data on CAPS provider types and the numbers of children served, noting that 71% of providers are licensed centers, with family child care homes comprising 16% and 10% of them exempt and the final 2% are informal care centers. Almost 100% of the children served are in those licensed centers. Among the priority groups CAPS supports are those with very low income, in Department of Family and Child Services custody, and those experiencing homelessness and domestic violence, along with children with disabilities. She also noted that CAPS providers are less likely to earn three stars and more likely to earn one star, compared to non-CAPS providers. Additionally, 1,130 CAPS providers do not have a rating, and 527 of them have 11 or more active CAPS scholarships. If this specific group earns a star rating, 92% of all children with CAPS scholarships will be in Quality Rated child care. But currently, 33% of children enrolled in CAPS are receiving care at programs not yet Quality Rated. The statistics justify the requirement that all CAPS providers earn a star rating to continue receiving the funds. Current DECAL efforts around CAPS involve creating cross agency work groups, implementing CAPS staff Quality Rated training, facilitating stakeholder engagement opportunities, and conducting ongoing data review. She shared upcoming key activities including stakeholder meetings, issues forums, and information sessions; surveys and public comment opportunities; and webinars and email communications. She also shared results of the survey of unrated CAPS providers about their intentions regarding participation in QR. Of the 1,015 respondents, 77% plan to earn a star rating, 16% are ready to submit a portfolio; 56% are receiving TA and are in the process of completing their portfolio; 14% are receiving technical assistance but haven't started their portfolio; 14% need more information about becoming Quality Rated; 19% were unsure,

and 4% plan to opt out. Ms. Morrissey asked why some are not planning to participate in QR. Ms. Kasfir said the data is still being tabulated but there are various reasons. She also noted that the 4% represents only about 44 providers. Ms. Washell asked if there was a possibility of multiple responses from one provider. Ms. Kasfir explained that the survey was only made available to unique users of the provider online portal. She said she is encouraged that 56% of providers are receiving technical assistance and are working on their portfolios. Mr. Ponder discussed the key milestones related to the CAPS/QR 2020 Deadline. By May 1, 2020, providers who are not signed up for an observation slot may not accept new CAPS families. After May 1, 2020, families may select only QR providers or those signed up for observations. The deadline for providers to be observed is December 31, 2020. By January 2, 2021, providers not yet observed for a rating can no longer participate in CAPS. If a provider is not star-rated or observed by that date, their families with CAPS will move to a QR provider at the next renewal period. Scholarships of existing families receiving CAPS will be end-dated at the time the family completes the redetermination process in 2021. Ms. Morrissey asked if DECAL will be able to look at the status of providers in all communities as the 2020 Goal deadline approaches and determine which ones have families that will have reduced access to CAPS and QR. Ms. Kasfir said DECAL will analyze the data and work with providers to develop plans and policies to ensure that all families in all communities will be served with high-quality child care. Ms. Bennecke asked if DECAL has the staff capacity to handle the flow of observations and portfolio assessments to get all the work done within the time frames. Mr. Ponder said yes. He outlined the methods DECAL is using to communicate with impacted families about the new rules and to help them understand and navigate this process. DECAL is developing a multifaceted, ongoing communication plan. General communications about the benefits of choosing a Quality Rated provider have begun. Communications to all CAPS families around plans for the 2020 goal and what families can expect will begin in December 2019. Communications to all CAPS families will also occur before each major milestone. Targeted communications with families enrolled at non-rated providers will occur starting with their renewal that occurs after January 1, 2020. Targeted communications with families that remain enrolled at an unrated provider after December 31, 2020, will occur 45-60 days prior to their renewal in 2021. Ms. Washell asked what the communications will look like. Ms. Kasfir listed letters, emails and other forms, including text messages and social media. She then asked if the communications will be in the family's native language. The response was that translation services are available for families who need help. Mr. Ponder then outlined the permanent and temporary QR operations changes that have been made to facilitate the 2020 Goal. The new slot-based portfolio submissions system will be a permanent change which, along with the temporary changes, will allow better management of the flow of observations. Implementation of the Cohort Group Sign-up System slots begins December 1, 2019. Among the temporary changes, providers who have a mandatory re-ratings or required reassessments slated for 2020 will be granted an automatic hold harmless year. Additionally, voluntary reassessment requests will be suspended in 2020. To encourage providers to sign up for a cohort slot and to commit early to getting the rating process underway, Mr. Ponder said, DECAL is offering program sign-up incentives, along with program rating incentives to encourage observations earlier in the year for initial ratings. He explained that research shows it can take up to a year to become Quality Rated. DECAL will also create and implement a provisional status to encourage and support current unrated, non-CAPS providers to accept students with CAPS scholarships. The status will allow newly licensed programs to serve families in CAPS immediately. Additionally, he explained that despite best efforts, some programs complete the rating process and do not score high enough to receive a 1-, 2-, or 3-star rating. In other cases, some programs may allow their rating to lapse when it comes time for their 3-year renewal. DECAL needed a mechanism to ensure continuity of care for children and families in those circumstances. To do that it created and will implement a probationary status to those providers. Details on these new status levels are still being finalized. Finally, Mr. Ponder reported the key takeaways and input received from the stakeholder engagement activities. There is general agreement with the CAPS milestones dates the agency has set. Stakeholders recommend comprehensive, immediate plans to communicate with families. And, they agree that 2020 rating incentives will motivate providers. He closed by forecasting what QR will focus on the time beyond 2020, saying he believes QR has changed the Georgia ECE landscape, and looks forward to revisions to QR after 2020 that will further enhance the program. As DECAL moves forward with enhancements to and growth of the QR system he said it will continue to support programs in increasing their star levels and in achieving continuous quality improvements.

**Lunch and Committee Meetings**

Mr. Davis adjourned the meeting for lunch and committee meetings at 11:50 a.m., and called the meeting back to order at 1:00 p.m.

**7. Public Comment Period Opens**

When the meeting reconvened, Mr. Davis opened the Public Comment period. No one signed up to speak.

**8. Committee Reports**

The Board meeting resumed with committee chairs delivering their reports.

**a. Budget & Finance**

Ms. Morrissey reported that the Finance Committee discussed the SFY2020 budget and applauded the team for only using 9% of the budgeted funds for administrative expenses.

**b. Programs & Rules**

Ms. Beam reported that the Programs and Rules Committee heard from the Nutrition Services Division about the preparations for the 2020 Summer Food Service Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and next year’s Farm to School and ECE events. CAPS reported on the DECAL/TCSG fall partnership meetings. CCS updated the Committee on the School Age Research Project and the Georgia’s Pre-K Program outlined its expanded online learning platform. Head Start explained its interagency partnerships to discuss how data from DECAL and elsewhere can inform and enhance outreach efforts especially to families experiencing homelessness.

**c. Quality Innovations & Partnerships**

Ms. Magpuri-Lavell reported that the Quality Innovations & Partnerships Committee received general updates on the Community Outreach and Partnerships efforts, including the Early Education Community Partnership coordinators’ work; an introduction to the new EHS-CCP director; and the Research Team’s grant writing, and data analysis. The committee also heard overviews of other projects related to the 2020 Goal, including Quality Rated’s process improvements and new class observation tools.

**9. Public Comment Period Closes**

Following the committee reports, Mr. Davis closed the Public Comment Period when no one came forward to speak.

Mr. Davis announced that the next Board meeting will be held on February 20, 2020.

**10. Adjournment**

Mr. Davis adjourned the meeting at 1:13 p.m.

*Susan H. Harper*      *2/20/2020*  
Board Chair, Signature      Date

*Kathy B. Howell*      *2/20/2020*  
Board Secretary, Signature      Date