
Board of Early Care and Learning

Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting
Thursday, May 21, 2026 — 9:00 a.m.
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

Kristy Beam (Chair), Phil Davis, Maria Franklin, Joyce Freeman, Susan Harper, Joanna Hill, Karen Jones, Kristin Morrissey (Vice Chair), Cristina Washell, Sylvia Washington, Karla Zisook

Public Guests

Charlotte Davis, Diane Early, Hanah Goldberg, Samantha Hogan, Sandra Hong, Zoe Jones, Emma Loew, Kelly Maxwell, Lindsay McVicar, Charlotte Pelz, Ellen Reynolds, Hyosub Shin, Emily Stancil, Noni Walton, Jessica Woltjen

DECAL Staff

Amy Jacobs, Commissioner
Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner for Pre-K and Instructional Supports
Dennis Brice, Chief Information Officer
Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer
Elisabetta Kasfir, Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs
Quandra Obi, Special Assistant to the Commissioner
Pam Stevens, Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services
Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer
Clayton Adams, Northeast Early Education Community Partnership Lead
Farouk Baksh, Senior Director, Information Technology
Katrina Bernard, Quality Rated Family Call Center Support Manager
Chondra Bolton, CACDS Project Manager
Tamika Boone, Nutrition Services Director
Jessica Boshuizen, Quality Rated Assessor
Jennifer Bridgeman, Director of CCS Process and Policy
Vanessa Brown, Quality Assurance Manager, Quality Rated
Stephanie Clark, Professional Learning Supervisor
Kim Davis, Director, Quality Rated Assessment and Regional Operations
Glenda Davis-Canteen, Early Education Community Partnership Lead NW
Tammy Dill, Quality Rated Assessor
Tyler Duggins, QIP Special Projects Coordinator
Bart Ellington, Budget Manager
Shayna Funke, Director, Research Partnerships and Business Supports
Moriham Hassan, Budget Analyst
Melissa Herndon, Director of Field Operations, CCS
Donya Higby, Quality Rated Education Specialist Coach
Michelle Hughes, Quality Rated Assessor Manager
Abraham Hussain, Procurement and Facilities Specialist
Laura Jackson, Intern

Denise Jenson, Director of Quality Rated Development and Business Operations
Melissa Johns, Quality Rated Assessor
Alaina Jones, Quality Rated Assessor
Jarita Lawrence, QIP Contracts Coordinator
Laura Lucas, Director of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
Brittany Marks, Early Education Community Partnerships Coordinator, Central East
Amy Mastin, Quality Rated Assessor
Stephen McGarity, Institutional Research and Data Quality Manager
Andrea Moore, Quality Rated Enforcement Specialist
Abby Mozo, Operations Analyst, Workforce Supports and Learning
Amir Nilforooshan, IT Assets and Purchase Supervisor
Mia Obiwo, Workforce Quality and Process Administrator
Rob O'Callaghan, Director, Institutional Research and Data Quality
Stephen Owusu-Ansah, IT Systems Administrator
Valerie Perez, Research Partnerships Manager
Bridgette Person, IT Business Analyst
Lisa Pitts, Early Education Community Partnerships Coordinator SW
Laura Reid, Assistant Director for Workforce Supports and Learning
Anne Rein, Department Writer/Editor
Dajuana Robinson, Community Engagement and Partnerships Manager
Mike Rodgers, Director Finance
April Rogers, Director of CCS Enforcement Operations
Barbara Sanders, Senior Business Analyst
Pamela Scalf, Professional Learning Specialist
Allison Setterlind, Head Start Collaboration Director
Angela Shelton, Workforce Supports Supervisor
Hannah Smith, Research Analyst
Sonja Steptoe, Assistant Director, QIP Business Supports and Operations
Thea Stevens, Infant Toddler Program Manager
Rokeya Stone, Pre-K Specialist
Jill Taylor, Director, Community Partnerships and 2Gen Outreach
Veronica Thomas, Director, Practice and Support Services
Adi Valdez-Rodriguez, Quality Rated Assessor
Laura Wagner, Executive Director, DECAL Foundation
Mark Waits, Senior Writer
Bridgette Washington-Collier, Early Education Community Partnerships Coordinator, Central West
Erin Watson, Quality Rated Assessor
Martine Watts, Quality Rated Regional Coordinator, North
Jill West, Quality Rated Operations, Regional Assessor Manager
Jada Wilson, Quality Rated Assessor
Liz Young, Government Relations Director

The May 2026 meeting of the Board of Early Care and Learning was held in the Oak Conference room and livestreamed.

1. Call to Order

At 9:01 a.m. Board Chair Kristy Beam called the meeting to order.

2. Welcome

Dr. Beam welcomed Board members, DECAL staff, and guests.

3. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Dr. Beam asked for a motion to accept the meeting agenda. Mr. Davis moved to accept, and Dr. Washington seconded. The Board accepted the agenda unanimously. Dr. Beam asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the November 20, 2025 meeting. Ms. Morrissey moved to approve, and Dr. Zisook seconded. The Board approved the minutes unanimously.

4. Inspiration

Ms. Franklin reflected on the month of May as a time for graduations and the opening of new chapters for children of all ages. She invited Board members to notice that life is constantly evolving, and growth is always happening. She reminded everyone that our presence in children's lives contributes to their growth.

5. Board Member Updates

Dr. Beam invited Board members to share updates about their recent activities. She reported going to her grandson's Pre-K graduation. Ms. Morrissey reported on the NIEER press conference at the capitol. Ms. Hill said that she returned to her former child care center and read for Children's Mental Health Week.

6. Resolution Honoring Susan Harper

Commissioner Jacobs and Dr. Beam presented a resolution for Susan Harper honoring her 17 years of service as a Board member and her prior leadership as Board Secretary, Vice Chair, and Chair. Ms. Harper was originally appointed to the Board by Governor Perdue and reappointed by Governor Deal and Governor Kemp. Ms. Harper received a standing ovation for her service. She reflected on DECAL's growth over her tenure on the Board and expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to serve.

7. DECAL Staff Reports

DECAL leaders provided updates about the agency's work.

a. Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Amy Jacobs spotlighted the recognition Georgia's Pre-K received from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). Georgia is the first state with a universal Pre-K to have met all 10 NIEER quality benchmarks. Only six states have achieved that recognition, and Georgia's Pre-K serves the most children of those six. The Commissioner announced the six finalists for Pre-K Teacher of the Year (TOTY). Funds are raised privately for each finalist to receive \$500 for their own use. This year's finalists from public schools are Lacy Parrish from Robinson Elementary in Dawson County, Leah Mays from Jefferson Elementary in Jackson County, and Marisol Rivas from West Green Elementary in Coffee County. Finalists from child care centers are Kellie McCormick from Cedars Preschool at Hudson Bridge in Henry County, Shawn Meyers from Sunrise Learning Academy in Gwinnett County, and Skyla Holmes from Angel's Paradise Learning Center in Fulton County. These six will go through a rigorous evaluation process during late summer, and the two TOTY will be announced in the fall.

b. Finance and Administration Update

Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration Rian Ringsrud reported that DECAL's expenses are on track with the budget for SFY 2026. The budget for amended FY 2026 (HB 973) includes an additional \$1.4 million from state general funds and \$17.3 million from state lottery funds for a one-time bonus for full-time state employees and Pre-K lead and assistant teachers. The budget for FY 2027 (HB 974) includes a net increase of \$28 million over FY 2026 to fund year three of the four-year phase in of the Pre-K classroom size reductions, from 22 to 20 students; expand the extended day program to the Pre-K CAPS priority group; expand the rising Pre-K Summer Transition Program by 25 classrooms; and provide five days of paid leave for Pre-K lead and assistant teachers. The agency was also directed to use existing funds to add 1,288 CAPS scholarships, Mr. Ringsrud said. He gave a brief update on recently enacted legislation related to early childhood. HB 1123 requires public schools that offer both Pre-K and afterschool programs to allow Pre-K students to participate in their afterschool programs. HB 1193 requires literacy coaches in all public K-3 schools. SB 589 allows parents to enroll their children in Pre-K if they turn 4 or 5 by Sept. 1 and enroll children who are eligible for first grade into kindergarten instead. HB 1097 changes the mechanism through which the state receives federal criminal record history.

Mr. Davis asked Mr. Ringsrud whether he knew about enrollment trends for Pre-K. Mr. Ringsrud deferred to Ms. Adams. Dr. Zisook asked whether including 4-year-olds in after school programs (as required by HB 1123) impacts licensing regulations. Mr. Ringsrud replied that there would likely be no impact for public school programs, but there might be implications for schools that contract with child care providers to provide after-school care. Ms. Freeman asked whether provisions are in place to make sure that Pre-K students aren't in school from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Ms. Adams responded that most after-school programs close at 6 p.m. She added that her team is fielding a survey of Pre-K providers to learn what their practices are to help them make more informed decisions.

c. Quality Innovations and Partnerships (QIP) Update

Deputy Commissioner for Quality Innovations and Partnerships (QIP) Bentley Ponder recounted the evolution of DECAL's community outreach efforts from four empowerment zones established in 2014 to the current structure with six regional Early Education Community Partnership Coordinators. He highlighted some achievements from that team and invited Board members to interact with their local coordinators. Dr. Ponder announced that a team from DECAL will visit many of the 15 Community Impact grantees between June 1 and June 16 to learn about their projects and how they are helping local families, and he invited Board members to join a grantee visit. The number of providers that have received a star rating through Quality Rated remains steady at about 67% of all eligible providers, Dr. Ponder said. The Quality Rated Workforce Bonus continues to be well-received; 95% of eligible providers have had staff apply in 2026, and \$3 million has been paid out so far this year. Commitment to Quality payments have been going out to 2- and 3-star providers since January; a total of \$3.7 million has been paid to 1,934 providers to date. Dr. Ponder gave brief updates about research projects underway with external research partners.

Mr. Davis asked whether there are any common denominators among the 26% of providers that are not participating in Quality Rated. Dr. Ponder responded that there are various reasons that providers choose not to participate. Those who don't participate in CAPS are not required to participate in Quality Rated. Mr. Davis asked whether there are regional differences. Dr. Ponder said he would get back to Mr. Davis about that. Dr. Washell asked how many coaches are on staff to provide Quality Rated coaching. Dr. Ponder said there are three coaches and a manager. Dr. Washington asked whether coaching is available

to 1-star providers to help them improve their ratings. Dr. Ponder responded that coaching is not currently available to 1-star providers, but last year the QR team offered structured support to 1-star providers. Ms. Harper expressed concern that too many young children are in care for such long hours that they don't have any unstructured time to relax. Dr. Ponder said that the quality study includes school-age programs so that the agency will have data about their practices for the first time.

Dr. Ponder introduced Dr. Sandra Soliday Hong, Senior Research Scientist at the Frank Porter Graham (FPG) Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Hong gave a presentation about a study of language development in Pre-K conducted during the 2022–2023 school year. The study confirmed earlier research showing that Georgia's Pre-K successfully prepares children for kindergarten and that children make solid gains in language skills during their time in Pre-K. The biggest gains were in phonological awareness. Georgia's Pre-K teachers demonstrated strong language practices, encouraging children to speak and engage in conversation, and introducing new vocabulary. The only measure on which a majority of teachers did not score in the moderate-to-high range was instructional support, although this is consistent with national trends. The study also found that teachers with more experience saw bigger gains in children's language development. Overall, children's language scores were typical for their age but slightly below the national average.

Mr. Davis commented that we're still below national norms despite having one of the best programs in the country. "What do we learn from that?" he asked. Commissioner Jacobs replied that while it is a little concerning that we're below the national average, DECAL is focused on the gains made from fall to spring. The children come into Pre-K behind, and we're seeing growth over the Pre-K year, and that's what DECAL's job is. Susan Harper asked how much the results are impacted by the 30 million word gap between children from low-income families and those from higher income families. Dr. Hong replied that more recent research has found that the emphasis on language spoken in the home is slightly misplaced because children are in diverse environments and hear language spoken in a lot of different places. The word gap between these groups is not as large as previously thought, she said. However, children from higher income homes are more likely to hear academic language and that gives them an advantage at school. Dr. Washell asked whether the study dug deeper into the indicators of vocabulary and phonological awareness. Dr. Hong said yes. The more items one includes, she said, the more reliable the score is; but the researchers don't use individual indicators to predict child outcomes. For improvement purposes, that data was analyzed and given to DECAL. Ms. Franklin asked about the fact that teachers scored high on emotional support but not as high on instructional support. She asked what factors, such as challenging behaviors, might affect that score. Dr. Hong said that to get a high score on instructional support, teachers must interact with children constantly during the school day. "It's a very high bar," she said. Dr. Washell asked for clarification about whether instructional support measures the ability of the teacher or the child. Ms. Adams answered that measure is about what the teacher is doing and how the children are responding to the teacher's interactions. Dr. Beam asked for clarification about the correlation between teachers' experience and improvements in children's language skills. Dr. Hong clarified that the bars on the graph represent teachers with five, 15, 30, and 45 years of experience. Dr. Beam asked the sample size of teachers with 45 years of experience. Dr. Hong said that it's pretty high in Georgia. She added that her team always ensures an adequate sample size and controls for other factors. Dr. Beam noted that Dr. Hong's presentation did not include recommendations. Ms. Adams responded that she would talk about recommendations during her presentation. She also reminded Board members that the Pre-K program is still recovering from the loss of teachers during the budget cuts in 2013 and 2014 and the program is doing a very good job in supporting children in language and literacy.

8. Break

Dr. Beam recessed the meeting for a short break at 10:26 a.m. The meeting resumed and staff reports continued at 10:44 a.m.

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

Deputy Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Supports Susan Adams thanked Dr. Hong for her presentation and emphasized the importance of evaluations by independent researchers. She said the study was designed to evaluate how well Georgia's Pre-K supports children's readiness for kindergarten with respect to literacy and language development. It was a follow-up to the longitudinal study completed several years ago. The longitudinal study found that, while children made solid gains in language development during the Pre-K year, there was room for improvement in vocabulary development. The 2022–2023 study examined how classroom quality supports language and literacy development and whether there are specific characteristics of teachers and their practices that make a difference. Studies of Georgia's Pre-K have repeatedly shown that classrooms have high quality, Ms. Adams said. Ms. Adams gave examples about how her division is incorporating research findings into program strategies. The emphasis on teacher retention began with moving lead teachers to the K–12 pay scale and continues with the increase to five days of paid time off (PTO). Revisions to the Georgia Early Learning & Development standards (GELDS) to be rolled out next year emphasize vocabulary development and early writing skills. Ms. Adams' division has also implemented Science of Reading courses for DECAL's Pre-K Specialists and lead and assistant Pre-K teachers. The expansion of the Rising Pre-K Summer Transition Program (STP) for dual language learners opens language development opportunities to more students, and the Pre-K team conducts ongoing analysis of child language skills.

Mr. Davis asked Ms. Adams to explain what “instructional support” includes. Ms. Adams said that there are three domains of instructional support. These are social and emotional support for children; classroom management, which includes making schedules with a good balance of activities and lessons that are appropriate; and the expertise that master teachers exhibit of being able to track 20 students in real time and make individual adjustments for individual students throughout the day. The Pre-K Teachers of the Year exemplify this quality, Ms. Adams said. Ms. Morrissey commented that the complexity of teaching challenges makes clear why financial support of teachers is so important. Ms. Adams agreed, saying the first two domains of instructional support must be mastered before the third can be achieved. Mr. Davis asked how the shape of our graph compares to the graph in other states. Dr. Hong responded that Virginia is the only state that publishes that data. Mr. Davis asked how we know whether we're above or below the national average. Dr. Hong replied that the national average is not published. “What I think is happening,” she said is that Georgia has done an outstanding job of keeping scores steady or increasing, whereas the rest of the country lost a lot of their workforce and did not increase pay, and no one wants to highlight that right now.

Ms. Adams also gave an update on the Summer Transition Programs. For rising kindergarteners there will be 335 classes of 14 students each (4,690 seats). For rising Pre-K children there will be 92 classes of 12 students each (1,104 seats). New classroom materials were purchased this year for inclusion classrooms and dual language classrooms. With respect to the upcoming school year, Ms. Adams said, DECAL has funded an additional 132 classrooms and will add more as needed in particular regions. Births in Georgia peaked in 2007, bottomed out in 2013, and stayed low. The children in Pre-K this year are at the very bottom of that demographic trend, Ms. Adams said. Between 2013 and 2025 more than 50% of Georgia counties saw a decline in the population of 4 year olds. Right now, Georgia's Pre-K

serves about 52% of 4 year olds in the state. At one time that number was closer to 60%. Ms. Adams' team is surveying families now to ask about their choices and gearing up for the first Pre-K marketing campaign.

Ms. Harper noted that there are unlicensed Pre-K programs, some run by churches, and she asked whether the number of children in those programs might be affecting enrollment trends. Ms. Adams replied that we know 85% of 4 year olds are in some type of structured care, but we don't know what types of programs they attend. Ms. Harper asked how such programs can operate without serving meals. Ms. Adams said that these programs are limited to a certain number of hours per day.

Ms. Adams introduced Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Director Laura Lucas. Ms. Lucas gave Board members an update about the accomplishments of the interagency IECMH task force. The task force solicited input from caregivers for its recently-published strategic plan for 2026–2028 and has been invited to a national conference to share how they incorporated caregiver voice. Georgia continues to receive national recognition for the IECMH Medicaid billing guides. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid publish Georgia's billing guide as an example for other states to follow. Georgia was included in a national project to increase screening and effective referrals for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Ms. Lucas said. She also showed highlights from Children's Mental Health Week, including a short video with Commissioner Jacobs and CALi about taking a pause for grounding.

Ms. Franklin shared a practice for calming that she has used with young children. She has them smell a flower to get the idea of deep breathing.

e. Child Care Services (CCS) Update

Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services (CCS) Pam Stevens reviewed the rule changes that her team is working on for implementation in October. Most are changes to language only and will not impact child care providers. These will be posted for public content over the summer, and the Board will be asked to approve them at the August meeting. Ms. Stevens also reported on the national TRLECE licensing study that Georgia participated in. The study explored whether higher quality levels were associated with fewer licensing violations. The study found that, in Georgia, programs with higher QR ratings generally demonstrated stronger licensing compliance, and this finding was consistent in centers and FCCLH providers. Notably, programs with higher QR ratings also had fewer high-risk citations.

f. Federal Programs

Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs Elisabetta Kasfir shared updates about CAPS' work with the Family and Provider Advisory Councils. The CAPS team has acted on feedback from both groups, redesigning forms to make them easier for families to understand, and changing policies to streamline key processes for both families and providers. Ms. Kasfir announced that, for initial eligibility, the income limit has increased from 40% to 50% of the State Median Income (SMI), and the threshold for the Very Low Income priority group has increased from 30% to 50% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The upper limits on income for CAPS renewals have not changed. Ms. Kasfir informed the Board that data collection for the market rate cost study is underway as required by CCDF requirements. This year the agency is collecting data from two groups: (1) all licensed providers and (2) a sample of Quality Rated providers that participate in the CAPS program. DECAL is partnering with the Georgia State University Policy Lab and, for the first time, collecting data about the cost of care in a continuing effort to understand the cost of providing high-quality care.

g. Head Start Collaboration Office

Head Start Collaboration Director Allison Setterlind gave an update on Head Start in Georgia. The federal Administration for Children and Families makes grants directly to local community organizations, non-profits, and school systems. Grantees customize their programs based on community needs. The grants include funding for comprehensive services that are free to enrolled families, and all children in Early Head Start and Head Start receive early screening for disability. Head Start is currently funded to serve about 20,000 children and their families in Georgia and is a big supplier of early care and education programs in rural parts of the state.

Dr. Jones commended Early Head Start for work with children from birth to 3, especially with wraparound services.

9. Lunch and Committee Meetings

Dr. Beam adjourned the meeting for lunch and committee meetings at 11:56 a.m.

10. Public Comments

At 1:00 p.m. Dr. Beam opened the public comment period. Ms. Obi called on Mechelle Correll Hobbs who said,

Thank you. Good afternoon, members of the board. My name is Mechelle Correll Hobbs. I am the owner and founder of Cornerstone Learning Center in Rockdale County, Georgia. What started out for me as a way to get into the field of education, because my degree is in early ed, I wanted to be that teacher. But when I went to, as a single mom, drop my little one off at 18 months old in a preschool, I never left. I never left. I couldn't do it. And my mission then changed to become a place where people can have safe care while they go off to work, because that's what I needed. In doing so, in 2019, I opened my first location. And since then, we have thrived and continue to grow and build. We are now a founding center in the community. We are big, we are known, and our families look for us and trust us. So recently, I've dedicated my time, my energy into coming here today to be heard on a matter that is truly concerning and deeply, deeply impacting us. Like I said, I've done this for 28 years, serving children, families, and the early childhood community here in Georgia. This is not just business to me. This is my life's work. It's my ministry. It's my reputation. It's my passion. And I have spent decades building through service, sacrifice and commitment to quality care. Today, I respectfully and formally am requesting a meeting with Ms. Stevens regarding a serious concern surrounding the handling of citations that are being issued against programs and the process in which those determinations are made. Specifically, the inconsistencies, the interpretations from one consultant to the other, and how it impacts us on the back end, not just in that moment, but the rippling effects that it will have if it's not corrected. I want to be very clear. I fully support accountability, compliance, and child safety. What I want is to be heard, to be heard on the matters that I don't feel have been heard, to have an audience in which I can get a true objective interpretation of what it is we should do. Because again, if I've been doing this this long and have never, ever, ever been in situations like this, then I want to get a clear understanding so that that way we can do it right. Not just for my center, but for those that I mentor, for those that I work with, for all of the people who are doing the work and doing it because we truly care. The impact of these citations goes far beyond reports on paper. These citations threaten my business, their standing in the community, staff around, family trust, and potentially even the insurability of financial sustainability as a child care provider. More importantly, even though I know, as stated to me, when I tried speaking with the supervisor over my location. I know that citations roll off in 12 months. That doesn't matter to me. The record needs to be correct, and the record should be clear. For again, all intents and purposes, we're on the same page. We're a part of the same team. We have the same goals with Bright

from the Start. So, we want to make sure that when we go this year to renew our insurance, it's not listing things of false accurate, false statements and things that can potentially require or determine whether or not we can even be reinsured. And that's a big deal for us. As a small business owner, I take that very seriously because it was hard enough trying to find insurance for child care centers without now these added pressures. What concerns me most is if this can happen to a provider with nearly three decades of experience, transparency, and documented commitment to quality care, then other providers may also fear speaking up when they believe something is unfair. So, with Bright from the Start's mission, speaking on partnerships with providers to improve outcomes for children and their families, that partnership must also include fairness, objectivity, professionalism, and the willingness to truly listen before damaging conclusions are finalized. Again, my request today is simple, but extremely important. I am asking this board to help facilitate a formal meeting with Ms. Stevens so these concerns, supporting evidence and broader implications of these actions can be properly reviewed at the highest appropriate level. Thank you for your time.

Ms. Obi called on Rachel Shelton who said,

Good afternoon. I'm Rachael Shelton, and I'm a mother and a teacher, and I have served as an educator in Cobb County daycare centers. I have found that as I have toured schools and worked at the schools, that unfortunately, I believe that the quality of care at many of them has not met what I would expect for a good quality center. And I know that DECAL, that's your goal is to seek to make sure that the quality is at the best possible quality. People leave their precious children in these schools. And right now, many schools are opting to keep their classrooms at the maximum number of children allowed by our state, and they want to hire only one teacher to be in the classroom at a time. I found this in more than one school or more than one center, excuse me. So, the state ratio allows for 15 three-year-olds with one teacher and as many as 12 two-year-olds with one teacher. When there's one teacher, the level of supervision is unacceptable for being able to take proper care of young children, particularly with those current state ratios. With two teachers as a mandate, there may still be the occasional oversight, but with one, it's an accident waiting to happen. When there are two teachers in charge of any group, children will be interacted with much more. And we know that that's very important, especially at these young ages, to interact with the children, have conversations. I'm not seeing enough of that, obviously, myself being one teacher in a class with 12 two-year-olds, obviously even three-year-olds, many are not potty trained. So, some argue that 20 or more children enrolled in a class can cause issues such as overcrowding of the space, which I understand, then we must find a way of funding payroll for two teachers with groups of 17 or 18 three-year-olds, for example. Our children deserve two teachers in the room in every class for ages birth through five years old, and especially infants and one-year-olds who are helpless. Obviously, it would be a tragedy if a teacher were to become incapacitated and have to wait on someone to happen to notice a teacher, I'm sorry. So, if a child care facility cannot keep consistently 17 or 18 three-year-olds enrolled, such as would already require two teachers, they should close the class or even the school. The state is able to keep two teachers in our pre-K programs, so schools should be required to give this base level of care to all, and especially younger children and infants. And basically I would like, I would recommend that the legislature, or I'm sorry, liaison recommend to those who have the power to make those decisions, make it much safer. I know that funding can be difficult, a difficult situation, but I think it's worth it and I think it is doable to make sure that every child care center has two teachers in every classroom, birth to age 5.

11. Committee Reports

At 1:05 p.m. Dr. Beam called for committee reports. Ms. Franklin reported from the Programs and Rules Committee. CAPS made changes to expand the work of their Family Support team. These efforts focus on

community engagement, centering family voice, and outreach efforts based on feedback from CAPS families. The Family Supports team will partner with different teams across DECAL, including the QIP Early Education Community Partnerships coordinators and Nutrition Services. DECAL Nutrition Services will host events across the state to kick off Happy Helpings and a CACFP Service Summit later this Summer. The USDA issued a final rule to expand fluid milk options in school and programs that participate in CACFP.

Ms. Morrissey reported from the Budget and Finance Committee. The committee received an updated financial report covering the period through April 30, and agency expenses remain on track with the budget. The agency continues to operate with great efficiency, Ms. Morrissey said, with 89% of funds received going out for grants and programs. Ms. Morrissey called on Mr. Ringsrud to announce the audit results for the previous year. He informed the Board that DECAL received notice of another clean audit, marking 22 successive audits without any major findings.

Ms. Freeman reported from the Quality Innovations and Partnerships Committee. Several efforts are being made to increase the response rate for the Market Rate Survey. The Thriving Child Care Business Academy worked with Civitas to develop trainings focused on state and federal credits to help providers understand and take advantage of them. Webinars, small study groups, self-study guides, and video tutorials are all options for providers to learn more about tax-related topics.

12. Proposal to Amend Board Bylaws

Dr. Beam told Board members that a proposal has been submitted to dissolve the Board committees so that the Board meetings can be shorter. If the Board accepts the proposal, DECAL staff who present to the Board will include the information they now present over lunch into their morning presentations. This proposal requires a change to the Board's bylaws. Chief Counsel Ira Sudman and his team have drafted that change and included it with the other materials Board members received. Dr. Beam asked that Board members review the proposed changes and be prepared to vote on the proposal at the August meeting.

13. Adjournment

Dr. Beam reminded Board members of the next meeting on August 27 and adjourned at 1:21 p.m.



Board Chair, Signature

08/27/2026

Date



Board Secretary, Signature

08/27/2026

Date