

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL

By the Numbers

- 900** - Children Participating in Georgia's Pre-K Summer Transition Program
- 1,666** - Total feeding sites that operated in this year's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
- 6,300** - Licensed child care programs in Georgia
- 16,310** - Licensing and technical assistance visits made by Child Care Services consultants between July 1, 2011, and June 30, 2012
- 84,000** - Children attending Georgia's Pre-K for the 2012-13 school year

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Bobby Cagle



School bells are ringing for some 84,000 Georgia Pre-K students. This year marks the 20th anniversary of Georgia's Pre-K, recently ranked by The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) as one of the top state programs in the nation, based on quality standards, teacher qualifications, and enrollment.

During the 2010-2011 school year, sixty-six percent of all four year olds in Georgia were served by state Pre-K and Head Start, with a statewide Pre-K enrollment of nearly 83,000. This fall, we are excited that the state budget is adding back 10 days to the Pre-K calendar and increasing the school year from 160 to 170 days.

The first day of 2012 Georgia Pre-K will vary based on school system and child care provider. It starts as early as August 8, 2012, and runs through the week following Labor Day, September 3, 2012.

Research shows that the early education of children, from birth to five years old, proves critical to their success later in kindergarten and elementary school. As a result, we believe investing in our youngest learners is important



Spotlight on... Kay Pollard



Kay Pollard, a Pre-K Consultant for northwest Georgia, has a "decidedly DECAL" attitude about Georgia's Pre-K and a great

appreciation about the impact it has on the lives of our youngest citizens.

"Georgia's Pre-K rocks! Pre-K makes a difference in children's lives by preparing them and their families for school and for life," she said.

Pollard's prior work experience includes working as a Georgia's Pre-K lead teacher, site director, center director and mentor teacher.

"To continue my involvement in Georgia's Pre-K is very exciting as I have had the great opportunity through the years to see first-hand the impact the program and its people make daily," said Pollard.

When not working, Pollard enjoys spending time with her husband and children, cooking and watching Alabama football.

Her favorite quote is by Chauncey Veatch: "To dream is to be filled with hope. I know this because I see the faces of hope daily."

not only to their personal success, but also to the long-term economic growth and potential of Georgia.

Over the summer, DECAL hosted a six-week Summer Transition Program for rising kindergartners who either did not attend Georgia's Pre-K or Head Start, or attended and needed additional support to be ready for Kindergarten this fall. The program was targeted for children whose families are eligible for Child and Parent Services (CAPS), now administered through our agency.

And so, to the more than 7,600 Pre-K teachers and assistant teachers across Georgia, as well as our 35 Pre-K consultants employed by Bright from the Start, have a great 2012-13 school year. I look forward to visiting many of your classrooms this year and meeting your amazing students.

DECAL Enrolls 700th Early Learning Program for New "Quality Rated"

DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle announced on August 1 that in only six months, DECAL has met its first year goal of enrolling 700 child care programs in Quality Rated, Georgia's new voluntary system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs.

The announcement was made at a special reception held to mark the occasion with the Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) and United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, Quality Rated identifies early care and education programs that meet a set of standards exceeding the state's minimum licensing requirements. The program launched in January, 2012.

Commissioner Cagle said implementing Quality Rated is a priority for Governor Nathan Deal. "Governor Deal has clearly communicated his vision for a state where children attend quality early care and education programs that support the whole child and prepare them for ongoing success in life," Cagle explained. "With 700

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Stakeholders or Customers?

Do you know the difference between a DECAL stakeholder and a DECAL customer?

Stakeholders are those with an interest in the work of the agency.

DECAL stakeholders include the following:

- Governor's Office
- Legislators
- DECAL Board Members
- Funders (Philanthropy)
- Business Community
- Other Government Agencies (federal and state)
- Citizens/Tax payers
- Advocacy/Associations
- Faith based Community
- Non-Profits

Customers are stakeholders who receive or provide a service.

Note: Customers are also a subset of the stakeholder group.

DECAL customers include the following:

- Children
- Providers - Directors, Owners
- Parents
- Superintendents

centers voluntarily enrolling in only six months, we can see how this program is being enthusiastically embraced by child care professionals across the state."

"Quality Rated will award ratings at increasing levels to early care and education programs that meet defined program standards beyond Georgia's minimum licensing requirements," said Dr. Laura Johns, director of Quality Initiatives at DECAL.

"Programs choosing to participate in Quality Rated become eligible for free professional development, technical assistance, and financial incentive packages funded in part by a \$2.4 million grant from the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation and the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta."



The program will feature tiered reimbursements, including one-time \$500 bonuses for directors and assistant directors and \$250 for teachers. Programs will be rated with a three-star system, with the highest rating, three stars, going to top providers.

Parents whose children receive subsidized child care through the Childcare and Parents Services Program (CAPS) also win with Quality Rated. CAPS intends to implement tiered reimbursement in July, 2013, for Quality Rated programs that serve children receiving subsidized care. Tiered reimbursement means that child care subsidy payments will be based on the quality level of the program. The higher the Quality Rated level, the higher the subsidy reimbursement.

[Read More](#)

National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) recognizes Melissa Davis

As a consumer services banker in the early 90s, Melissa Davis faced a personal child care crisis. With one small child and another on the way, she learned that her family child care provider was

- Teachers

In Case You Missed It

Fulton County Flies Air Quality Flag to Protect Students' Health

As part its new initiative *Fulton Asthma Improvement and Reduction (FAIR)*, the Fulton County Department of Health Services is joining DECAL and the Georgia Head Start Association to help raise public awareness of daily air quality conditions. On July 24, officials signed a Memorandum of Understanding for participation in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's School Flag Program to help protect children's health in Georgia's Pre-K programs, Head Start and Early Head Start centers and child care centers. According to the American Lung Association, 24,657 children and nearly 55,000 adults in Fulton County suffer from asthma. [Read More](#)



Commissioner Bobby Cagle signs Memorandum of Understanding

August Birthdays



Best wishes go out to the following DECAL employees who celebrate birthdays this month:

6 - Valerie H. Coulton

moving and her efforts to find another quality center were proving fruitless. So Davis left her bank job and opened Little Blessings Family Preschool and Consulting in Dacula, Georgia, a child care center she would operate for 11 years.

Now, eight years later, Davis is sharing her expertise with child care providers across the state as a Program Evaluation and Development Specialist with DECAL.

She was recently honored by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) during their conference in Atlanta with the Ruby Brunson Community Advocate Award, which recognizes accomplishments in strengthening family child care.



Davis is humbled by the recognition, saying, "I don't feel I've done anything special that any one of us at Bright from the Start isn't doing for our customers. I once heard a speaker say that we should find people we respect and admire and emulate their qualities. I've put that advice to use and have tried to adopt those habits I saw in others that I wanted for myself."

"We are very proud of Melissa and her passion for the health, safety and quality education of Georgia's youngest learners," said Commissioner Bobby Cagle, pictured above with Davis. "She is helping create a unique culture at DECAL of serving children, parents, teachers and providers and her passion comes through with every interaction. I join in the applause for this outstanding achievement."

"Melissa builds rapport with child care

- 6 - Ira M. Sudman
- 7 - Kay W. Pollard
- 12 - Yolanda K. Joachim
- 12 - Kristie D. Lewis
- 14 - Denise A. Jenson
- 16 - Karen Sabrina McGill
- 19 - Monique R. Johnson
- 23 - Susan A. Simpson
- 25 - David B. Ellington
- 26 - Betty J. Lasseter
- 26 - Kay S. McCorkle

Employee Anniversary



Margie Landers Celebrates 25 Years

DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle congratulates Financial Services Director Margie Landers on 25 years of service with the State of Georgia.

In those 25 years, Landers has held four different positions in three different departments, including the Department of Administrative Services and the Department of Human Resources, where she worked for Georgia Industries for the Blind. Her proudest accomplishment in her current position, which she has held since September 2000, is having completed nine successful audits.

DECAL salutes Margie Landers for 25 years of dedicated service.

providers," notes DECAL Assistant Commissioner for Programs Carol Hartman. "Providers appreciate her guidance. They know that she has the experience and education to help them meet and maintain quality standards."

"I love being a witness to and documenting the good things providers are doing in their programs to promote healthy child development," Davis explained. "It's important that providers are validated and encouraged for their work, and I enjoy being a resource to help them achieve higher goals of helping families."

Results from Staff, Stakeholders and Customer Surveys

*By Bentley D. Ponder, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Evaluation*

Over the past six months, the Department has surveyed three important groups: employees, stakeholders, and customers. These surveys were done to create measures for our strategic



plan/balanced score card; to create goals for us to submit to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget; and to solicit information to make us more effective in our work. I have presented highlights of the survey findings to many of you, and the official reports are now posted on our website. Let

me know if you have not heard my presentation or have trouble accessing the reports.

The results indicate many positives for DECAL. Stakeholders responded that they feel the Department is moving in the right direction and are excited about the various opportunities to provide feedback. Our customers continue to give us high marks for responding in a timely manner and being knowledgeable in key areas. The employee surveys demonstrate that overall many of us are satisfied in our jobs and are proud of our achievements as an organization. Most importantly, employees overwhelmingly reported a strong commitment to the work we do and its importance to children and families across the state. This does not mean the work is easy; in fact, many staff also shared honestly that they



Welcome to Pre-K

DECAL Advisory Board Member Janice Gallimore welcomed Pre-K students to CBJ Preschool in Greene County

Supporting and guiding the mission and vision of Bright from the Start:

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning Advisory Board

Vacant
First Congressional District

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District

Kathy Howell, Carrollton
Third Congressional District

Carolyn Ormsby, Ed.D., Conyers,
Fourth Congressional District (Chair)

Carlene Talton, Decatur
Fifth Congressional District

Dawn Henderson, Marietta
Sixth Congressional District

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain
Seventh Congressional District

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner Robins,
Eighth Congressional District
(Vice Chair)

feel a lot of stress. As we all know, we are required to do more with less, but the commitment to the job and to doing the job well remains unfettered.

As implied in the paragraph above, many challenges were identified in the surveys, especially the employee survey. In addition to the stress that employees reported, issues with resources and communication within DECAL also exist. When looking at the results by location (Atlanta office versus the field) the responses are continually lower for the field. In other words, we have work to do. I think many of us would agree that research findings are only as good as what we DO with them: subsequent actions and results. A group of us that worked on the surveys have met with Commissioner Cagle about the findings of these surveys; he takes these results very seriously. As a result of the surveys, he is putting together an aggressive plan to meet with employees around the state and continue to gather feedback. With his agenda and other communication plans being put into place, you will definitely see actions from these results.

I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting with all of you in the last month. We have an aggressive data and research agenda in place that I look forward to sharing with you. (As a point of clarification, most of these research studies are funded with federal dollars, i.e., State Advisory Council funds and are part of reporting requirements. The Department actually saves money by using internal resources to conduct many of these studies.) If you have any questions about the surveys or about any of our data/research projects, do not hesitate to contact me.)

The bottom line about the surveys: "It's all good - but we can improve in ways that will enhance employee and customer satisfaction."

Welcome New Board Member Kathy Howell

Kathy Brannan Howell of Carrollton has joined the DECAL Board of Advisors for the Third Congressional District.

Vacant
Ninth Congressional District

Janice Gallimore, Greensboro
Tenth Congressional District

Victor Morgan, Cartersville
Eleventh Congressional District
(Secretary)

Kay A. Ford, Savannah
Twelfth Congressional District

Maggy Martinez, Hampton,
Thirteenth Congressional District

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Tameyer Nealy, Ira Sudman, Brandi Swain, Sophal Lackey, Andrea McFarland, George Davis and Erica Armstrong.



Howell retired from education after 30 years, serving as a teacher and principal. After retirement she spent several years working at the Georgia Department of Education. She earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of West Georgia.

Howell is Past-President of the Carroll County Master Gardener Association, and is State Director of the Northwest 2 Region for the Georgia Master Gardeners. Howell was honored as Sertoman of the Year for outstanding service to the community and club by the Carrollton Evening Sertoma Club. She is married to David Howell. In retirement they enjoy gardening, golfing, fishing, and traveling. They have five grown children and nine grandchildren.

We are committed to nurturing Georgia's youngest children, keeping them safe and healthy, and enriching their lives.