

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

84,000 - Four year olds expected in Georgia's Pre-K Program this year

420 - Students participating in our Rising Pre-K Summer Transition Program

1,280 - Students participating in our Rising Kindergarten Summer Transition Program

5,224 - Licensed Child Care Programs in Georgia

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs

Dear DECALers:

It's hard to believe that it's already August and back to school for many of our own children and the children and families we serve. Used to be that summer was sort of a "down time" for education but that certainly hasn't been the case here at DECAL. The assistant commissioners and senior leaders from each of DECAL's divisions or units regularly report to me about how hard you're all working in your respective programs, and I thank you on behalf of Georgia's youngest citizens, their families, and the providers, sponsors, and stakeholders we serve.



Georgia's Pre-K Program 2015-2016 is gearing up, as it enters its 23rd year, to serve around 84,000 four year olds, and the Summer Transition Programs (STP) are winding down. This summer we offered 30 classes of the Rising Pre-K STP for 420 students entering Pre-K and 80 classes of the Rising Kindergarten STP for 1,280 students entering Kindergarten.

This summer we learned that the Georgia Lottery Corporation transferred over \$980 million to the Lottery for Education Account for FY2015. This exceeds last year's transfer by more than \$35 million supporting the HOPE Scholarship and Grant programs and Georgia's Pre-K Program. The

670 - Quality Rated Programs in Georgia
56.7 million - Meals served in Georgia by Nutrition Program in FY2015



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August Birthdays



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

1 - Gwen Kahn
4 - Phoenicia Pittman
5 - Paula Lawrence
5 - Jennifer Waters
6 - Valerie Coulton
6 - Ira Sudman
7 - Kay Pollard
10 - Linda Norwood
11 - Brandi Templeton
11 - Vicki Watts
12 - Kristie Lewis

impact of these increased revenues on our program remains to be seen.

Also winding down for summer 2015 is the Summer Food Service Program. I look forward to sharing with you soon about the millions of meals and snacks served to Georgia's children and adolescents who may not have had access to nutritious meals while they were out of school. I commend Nutrition Services and the hundreds of sponsors who worked hard to ensure the success of the SFSP. And, of course, all DECAL's other programs continued to forge ahead this summer with the department's support units working hard to keep things going.

Even though we as a department may not have experienced much of a "down time" this summer, I hope you took (or are planning to take) some down time for yourself and your family. As I've said before, I am a BIG TIME believer in work-life balance, and we all need time away to rest and recharge. Only then, can we adequately serve our customers.

Thank you for your continued commitment to and passion for the work you do everyday.

Gratefully,

DECAL Priority:

Ensure Health & Safety

DECAL Training Child Care Staff on Handling Challenging Behaviors

Early childhood educators report that handling challenging behavior in their classrooms is a major concern. To address that concern, DECAL is spearheading an initiative to provide training in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to early childhood educators, families, and others.

Georgia is working with the national Pyramid Model Consortium on the implementation of a research-based model to improve classroom climate in Georgia's early childhood settings by promoting social competence and addressing challenging behavior in young children. The model is called the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young

14 - Denise Jensen
16 - Shaheedah El-Amin
16 - Karen McGill
19 - Monique Johnson
21 - Rachael Lee
23 - Susan Simpson
25 - Bart Ellington
26 - Debra Buster
26 - Kay Mayfield
30 - Sylvia Boykin
30 - Tamisa Sapp



Zoo Atlanta Hosts Educator Appreciation Day

DECAL is partnering again this year with Zoo Atlanta as they host Educator Appreciation Day on Saturday, August 29, 2015, from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Early care and education professionals throughout the state are encouraged to bring their guests to the zoo for a day of fun-filled activities. Educator Appreciation Day is presented by PNC Bank and sponsored by Kaiser Permanente and Macy's.

Educators will receive free admission and \$2 off general admission for each of their guests. Educator identification, such as an employee photo ID; a pay stub or name badge with school name or county and a state-issued photo ID; or a homeschool declaration of intent and a state-issued photo ID, is required. Educators are encouraged to pre-register to attend at

<http://shop.zooatlanta.org/webstore/shop/ViewItems.aspx?&CG=105&C=55>.

"Educator Appreciation Day provides a great opportunity for educators and their guests from across the state to experience Zoo Atlanta," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "In addition to enjoying one of Georgia's most interesting and extensive nature resources, educators can access the Educator Lounge at the Ford Tent to personally encounter exotic animals and to talk with the Zoo's education staff."

"Education is a central aspect of our mission at Zoo Atlanta, and we rely on our fellow Georgia educators not only to help us introduce hands-on concepts of wildlife, conservation and ecology to the children of our state but also to join us in making sure Georgia students excel in the

Children.

"The Pyramid Model is a tiered framework of evidence-based practices that promotes the social emotional development of all young children with additional supports for children and families with more complex needs," said Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports. "Based on evaluation data over the last eight years, the Pyramid Model is a sound and effective framework for early care and education systems."

A state leadership team composed of representatives from early childhood programs, the Metro Regional Education Service Agency (RESA), Georgia's Pre-K Program, Georgia Department of Education, Babies Can't Wait, Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, and other partners has been formed to develop a multi-year plan to guide the work. In the first year, this team will support implementation of the Pyramid Model in early childhood programs in Cordele, Brunswick, Lawrenceville, Marietta, and Richmond Hill. The leadership team will identify additional implementation sites and develop a plan for sustainability and scale-up.

"We are excited to provide Georgia's early childhood professionals with research-based practices they can use to promote strong social emotional skills and decrease challenging behavior in their classrooms," said Jennie Couture, DECAL's Director of Practice and Support Services.

"Our teachers have been asking for a stronger foundation in understanding social, emotional, and behavior needs of the children who enter our program," said Monica Warren, Director of Early Learning for Crisp County Pre-K. "The Pyramid Model will lay a foundation for all of our staff and ensure we are better able to meet the needs of every child who enrolls in our program."

Julie Barnett, Pre-K Project Director for the Knowledge Learning Corporation, added, "The Pyramid Model training has increased our teacher's confidence in dealing with challenging behaviors and given them a fresh perspective on communicating challenges with families. The framework is a great resource to increase team work and school spirit as well. With the Pyramid Model, the teacher is no longer alone in the journey."

Couture said DECAL's Cassa Andrews is managing the project and Inclusion Specialists Esther Duggan, Lindsey Urry, and Katie Hagan are serving as external coaches to the demonstration sites. All staff in each site will receive high-quality professional development, training, and individualized technical assistance. Additionally, the participating programs have identified site leadership teams that will meet on a monthly basis to review data and guide implementation.

DECAL Priority:

Increase Quality & Access

Georgia's Pre-K Program Set to Welcome 84,000 Four Year Olds

School bells are ringing for up to 84,000 four year olds attending Georgia's Pre-K Program. The voluntary, lottery-funded Pre-K program has been recognized as one of the top programs in the nation

sciences," said Raymond B. King, President and CEO of Zoo Atlanta. "Educator Appreciation Day is just one of the ways we show educators how much they're valued and appreciated. We're proud to partner with DECAL on supporting excellence inside and outside the classroom."

In addition, guests will receive a coupon for 10 percent off purchases in the gift shop and food outlets (coupon valid on August 29 only). For more information on Zoo Atlanta's Educator Appreciation Day, call 404.624.WILD or e-mail education@zooatlanta.org.

Below are photos from Zoo Atlanta's Educator Appreciation Day in previous years.



based on quality standards, teacher qualifications, and enrollment. The program is beginning its 23rd year.

Georgia's Pre-K Program is unique especially in its access and its delivery model. First, any age eligible child residing in Georgia may attend the program regardless of family income. Second, it is provided through a public-private partnership involving local school systems, private for profit and nonprofit child care centers, military bases, colleges and universities, and other facilities. The first day of Georgia's Pre-K year is usually based on the local school system calendar. In the 2014-2015 school year, 60 percent of all four year olds in Georgia were served by state funded Pre-K and federally funded Head Start.

"Pre-K is an exciting time as our state's youngest learners begin their formal educational journey," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "Recent independent studies have shown that Georgia's Pre-K helps four year olds build a solid foundation for lifelong learning with significant impacts in school readiness skills in language, literacy, and math."

"Starting school is a significant time for children and families," said Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports. "Many children enrolling in Pre-K are 'leaving home' for their first school experience. For this reason we take our roles seriously, and we work really hard to provide Georgia's children with positive and meaningful experiences."



Aidan L. Henley, son of DECAL Office Administrator Lisa Rambhajan, began Georgia's Pre-K Program Friday at Middle Ridge Elementary School in Newton County.

Tips for Preparing Children for Their First Day in Georgia's Pre-K Program

For parents enrolling their children in Georgia's Pre-K Program, DECAL Assistant Commissioner for Pre-K and Instructional Supports Susan Adams offers the following tips to help make the first day go smoother:

- Send your child to school in clothes they can manage independently in the bathroom: No overalls.
- Make sure your child's shoes are comfortable for playtime. Slip on shoes or shoes with Velcro fasteners are easiest for children to manage.
- Visit the classroom before school starts so children are familiar with the new surroundings.
- Tell your child's teacher about any fears he or she may have.
- Inform the teacher of any special dietary needs or allergies your child may have and ask the teacher to explain program policies around meals.
- Complete necessary forms or releases your Pre-K provider may require for dispensing medication during the school day.
- Locate the bathroom with your child and determine any special bathroom routines the school observes.
- Build in extra time for the first day: Make sure you have time to say good-bye.
- Determine if your child needs a blanket for rest time: Can they bring a favorite stuffed animal?



**Let Us Hear
From You!**

You know that **great idea** you
have for our department?

We cannot read your

MIND.

That is why DECAL has



Randy Hudgins
Research Specialist

EMPLOYEE
SUGGESTION
PROGRAM

[Visit the Virtual Suggestion Box Now!](#)

Send along a family photo in your child's backpack in case they get lonely.

Child Care Services Launches New Website for Providers

DECAL Child Care Services recently launched a new website designed to give Georgia child care providers more control and easier access to their online information. Named DECAL KOALA, for Kids Online Administrative Licensing Application, the new system allows providers to create their own profiles, update contact information, add e-mail addresses, pay license fees online, review inspection reports, and more.

"DECAL KOALA is in direct response to feedback and requests from our child care providers," said Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services. "The owners and directors of these facilities can now update, view, and print information about their programs, as well as view and print licenses and inspection reports. And this is only the beginning. Over the next two years, we will be introducing additional features to make their jobs easier."

"DECAL KOALA activation emails were sent to child care providers on Monday, July 13, 2015, and already 849 programs have activated their accounts," said Sherry Smith, CCS Administrative and Policy Manager. "We are very excited about the conveniences of this new service and the response from providers."

To begin using DECAL KOALA, providers should open the activation e-mail from decalkoala@decals.ga.gov and click on the link to create a password. A list of Frequently Asked Questions has been posted to the website at www.decalkoala.com.

Send questions to decalkoala@decals.ga.gov or call 404-657-5562.

DECAL KOALA
Kids Online Administrative Licensing Application

Board of Early Care and Learning

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

Board of Early Care and Learning

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First Congressional District
(Secretary)

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Sixth Congressional District

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Seventh Congressional District

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner Robins
Eighth Congressional District

Vacant
Ninth Congressional District

Janice Gallimore, Greensboro
Tenth Congressional District

Victor Morgan, Cartersville
Eleventh Congressional District
(Chair)

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro
Twelfth Congressional District

Judy Neal, Stockbridge
Thirteenth Congressional District

Tangela Johnson, Cohutta
Fourteenth Congressional District

DECAL Launches Applications for Inaugural Quality Rated Advisory Committee

DECAL has released applications for its Quality Rated Advisory Committee to guide and foster growth for Georgia's Quality Rated program.

Quality Rated is Georgia's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for eligible child care programs in the state. Similar to rating systems for other industries like restaurants and hotels, Quality Rated assigns a rating (one star, two star, or three star) to child care programs that meet certain quality standards over and above the state licensing requirements for health and safety. Currently, 670 child care programs in Georgia (12.8% of eligible child care programs) are Quality Rated.

"We are excited to open applications for the inaugural Quality Rated Advisory Committee," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "We are looking for a cross-section of early care and education professionals whose support will be critical in helping Georgia achieve its goal of 100% of eligible child care providers participating in Quality Rated by the end of 2017."

Quality Rated child care providers who have received their quality rating within the past year; child care providers who are participating in the process of becoming Quality Rated; and early childhood education stakeholders are eligible and encouraged to apply to serve on the Quality Rated Advisory Committee. Applications for the one-year term on the committee are due on August 18, 2015.

Applicants selected to serve will be notified by August 26, 2015.

For more information about the Quality Rated Advisory Committee and to access the application, visit www.bit.ly/QualityRatedAC.

DECAL Priority:

Foster Organizational Excellence

Benefits Update

On Friday, June 26, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling that requires all states to recognize marriages between two people of the same sex when their marriage was lawfully licensed in Georgia or another state. This decision requires states to recognize same sex marriages to the same extent that they recognize marriages between a man and a woman. Governor Nathan Deal has confirmed that Georgia will follow the federal law, and Attorney General Sam Olens has instructed state agencies to ensure their practices conform to the law.

The change in federal law means that, as of the June 26th ruling, employment benefits that the State extends to spouses of employees must be extended to spouses regardless of the gender of the employee and spouse. Employment benefits include health insurance plans, flexible benefits, and

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Candace Gilbert, Phoenicia Pittman, Kristen Huie, Phillip Jesup, Robin Currie, Clayton Adams, and Laura Wagner.

retirement plans. Only employees that experienced a life change qualifying event as a result of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling are eligible to enroll spouses and dependents.

In other benefits news, House Bill 313 was signed into law this year providing up to eight paid hours per calendar year to eligible State employees for Education Support Leave. Effective July 1, 2015, all full-time, non-temporary employees who work at least 40 hours per week have this new category of leave available for use. The purpose of this leave is to allow employees to use any portion of the available eight hours to participate in activities related to student achievement and academic support that promote education in Georgia. This leave is available to parents of students and non-parents and may be considered for activities supporting public, private, and home school achievement.

Through the Education Support Leave program, full-time State employees can support education at all levels, from Pre-K/early care and learning all the way through their education. Employees can contact their local school systems, private schools, child care facilities, technical colleges, and/or universities to learn about opportunities to support education initiatives in their communities and ask about any background check or other criteria needed before participating in volunteer activities.

For more information on these recent changes, contact DECAL Human Resources.

Congratulations to the newest QUALITY RATED child care programs!

- Tabernacle Child Development Center, Augusta ★
- Bresha A. Cornelius, Conyers ★
- Candy Cane's Daycare, Adel ★
- Angela M. Lee, Martinez ★★
- Tabitha J. Herchig, Grovetown ★★
- Fabiola I. Buitrago, Lawrenceville ★★★
- First Division Child Development Center, Fort Benning ★★
- Foundations For The Future, Kennesaw ★
- Jackie's Lil Tooty Tots Daycare, Americus ★★
- Tameka L. Shearer, Ellenwood ★★
- Liberty Head Start, Riceboro ★★
- North Fulton Child Development Center, Roswell ★★★
- Marietta Head Start/Pre-K, Marietta ★★★
- StoneBridge Early Learning Center at Bailey Station, Sharpsburg ★★
- A Kid's World, Loganville ★★
- Kids 'R' Kids #32, Atlanta ★★
- Calvary's Kinder Academy, Vidalia ★
- Lollipop Kids, Forest Park ★
- Main Post Child Development Center, Fort Benning ★
- Camden Head Start/Day Care Facility, Woodbine ★★
- Bessie's Child Care, Augusta ★
- CYSS, Fort Benning ★★
- Oasis Child Enrichment Center, Midland ★★
- Kids 'R' Kids #23, Bogart ★★
- Appletree - ABC Preschool, Alpharetta ★★
- Indianhead Child Development Center, Fort Benning ★
- Childcare Network #167, Macon ★★
- Orchard Rise Child Enrichment Center, Cochran ★
- Kimberly D. Jordan, Warner Robins ★★
- Colethea S. Hawkins, Dalton ★★
- LaKesha L. Thomas, Valdosta ★
- Prime Time A.J. McClung, Columbus ★★
- Sante Fe Child Development Center, Fort Benning ★
- Open Doors Child Development Center, Valdosta ★★
- Busy World Learning Center, Marietta ★
- Prime Time D. A. Turner, Columbus ★★
- The Blocker Daycare and Learning Center, Inc. II, Augusta ★
- Edna F. Matthews, Union City ★★
- Westwood Day Care Center, Hinesville ★★
- Rocky Branch Academy, Bogart ★★
- Lolly's Prekindergarten C C Center, Eastman ★★
- Sykithia Bronson, Fairburn ★
- Berry College Child Development Center, Mount Berry ★★
- Willene Dopson, Morrow ★★
- The Sunshine House #8, Evans ★★
- King Of Peace Episcopal Day School, Inc, Kingsland ★★