

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

7,245,584 - Summer meals served in 2013

197 - Approved summer food sponsors in 2013

10 - Statewide inclusion coordinators

202 - VIP visits to classrooms for Georgia's Pre-K Week

100% - Head Start/Early Head Start programs participating in Unified Data System (unique to Georgia)



Quick Links

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Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Bobby Cagle



Ever since I was a student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I have been fascinated with management styles and off-and-on have researched the topic in articles and books. As you might guess, management styles vary greatly, yet through my research some common themes have emerged that I try to use daily in my role as Commissioner.

One idea is something called MWWA or "Management While Walking Around," a concept promoted in a 1982 book by Tom Peters and Robert Waterman called *In Search of Excellence*. The basic concept conveyed in the book is to get out of your office, cut out all the distractions (e-mail, Blackberry and iPhone), and talk directly with employees face-to-face. In these interactions, consciously listen more and talk less, learning everything you can about what your organization is doing right and what needs improving.

There must be something to MWWA since it has been used successfully by people like Bill Hewlett and David Packard in building their computer company and by Steve Jobs, who used it with Apple employees and with customers as well. Jobs was known for soliciting feedback from a customer, sometimes even calling that customer to discuss it more in-depth. I'm sure many people thought they were receiving a prank call, but Jobs genuinely wanted to learn from the people who bought his products and services.

MWWA is the idea behind our "Chats with the Commissioner" held around the state. This year, I have met with employees in Augusta, Athens, Columbus, Tifton, Macon, Savannah, and Atlanta. I enjoyed every one of these meetings and always walked away encouraged by what I learned. I am in the process of compiling my notes from the Chats... and next year will share them with everyone, along with my plans for improving areas where you shared concerns or issues that can be resolved. I promised that I would not write anything until the last meetings were held in order to protect each group's anonymity and avoid being able to point back to a specific location or person. It's exactly the assurance I would want if I were participating in a meeting where I was asked questions like the ones I asked you.

On three occasions, members of our Board of Early Care and Learning joined

Santa Visits Georgia's Pre-K Classroom



Everyone enjoys reading to a Georgia's Pre-K classroom. In this photo, Santa delighted Pre-K students at Town Square Academy in McDonough as part of Georgia's Pre-K Week. He was one of over 200 VIPs to visit Georgia Pre-K classrooms that week.

December Birthdays



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

- 3 - Lacey Lewis
- 6 - Faith Duncan
- 9 - Meghan McNail
- 10 - Delia Newell
- 14 - Laurianne McDonald
- 15 - Tamara Hall
- 15 - Shamonica Reese
- 16 - William Folsom
- 16 - Angela Melton
- 17 - Carole Michele Allen
- 19 - Teresa Churchwell
- 19 - Suzanne Milford
- 20 - Sonja Adams
- 25 - Margrett Stephens
- 29 - Randy Hudgins
- 30 - Tahishe Smith
- 31 - Sabrina Henry

Board of Early Care and Learning

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

Board of Early Care and Learning

Kay Ford, Savannah

me for the Chats, with full support from the employees. The backgrounds of these board members really contributed to the discussion.

For example, Dr. Luann Purcell brought her experience as one of the state's leading educators to our meeting in Macon; in Augusta, Janice Gallimore used her experience as a local elected official to encourage us to always be involved in our communities, beyond the jobs we hold; and in Savannah, Kay Ford brought her experience from the corporate world with SunTrust Bank to discuss our process for filling job openings more effectively and efficiently, and comparing employee benefits and work environments between the public and private sectors.

During these statewide visits, I also met with parents, providers, teachers, the faith community, local officials, and the media. The response has been great, and I have found that lots of individuals in local communities share our interest in helping children build a solid educational foundation.

If you joined me for a Chat with the Commissioner this year, I thank you for your availability and cooperation. Let's stay in touch! If you did not attend a Chat this year, I hope to visit and hear from you in 2014.

I end this month's column by wishing each of you Happy Holidays and all the best in 2014. Thanks for being part of the DECAL team.

DECAL Priority:

Health & Safety

DECAL Joins Pediatricians for "Reach Out and Read" Literacy Initiative

The [James M. Cox Foundation](#) has announced a \$300,000 grant to support [Reach Out and Read](#) Georgia's Rx for Success initiative. The grant will ensure 35,000 children receive high-quality books from their pediatricians.

Reach Out and Read promotes early literacy and school readiness by partnering with pediatricians and giving new books to underserved children at their offices or clinics during regular checkups. Through the program, children ages six months to five years receive a new, age-appropriate book to take home, and doctors and nurses provide guidance to parents about the importance of reading aloud with their children every day.

"Reach Out and Read Georgia is an important early intervention that leverages the voice of hundreds of trusted doctors across the state to improve outcomes for the state's most vulnerable children," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "The research is clear that the single most important investment we can make is in the life of a young child."

"Approximately 233,000 Georgia children under the age of five are living in poverty. These children are the ones most at risk for falling behind in school or even worse, dropping out of school," said Reach Out and Read Georgia Executive Director Amy Erickson. "It is critical that we engage parents, and together, we can close the school readiness gap. Funding from the James M. Cox Foundation will significantly propel us towards our goal of ensuring all of Georgia's children by third grade are reading on or above grade level by 2020."

First Congressional District

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District
(Secretary)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton
Third Congressional District

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain
Fourth Congressional District

Carlene Talton, Decatur
Fifth Congressional District

Dawn Henderson, Marietta
Sixth Congressional District

Sherron Murphy, Lawrenceville
Seventh Congressional District

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

Tammy Lenkeit, Flowery Branch
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

Vacant
Fourteenth Congressional District

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

DECAL Priority:

Quality

Child Care Providers Participate in Leadership Conference

Seventy-three of the state's top child care programs participated in the first ever Quality Rated Leadership Conference, held last month at the Legacy Lodge and Conference Center at Lake Lanier Islands. Participating programs all received three stars from Quality Rated, Georgia's voluntary system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. The three-star programs include 35 child care centers, 36 family day care homes and two group day care homes. The conference was led by Dr. Penny Elkins, Senior Vice President for Enrollment Management at Mercer University, and our own Dr. Laura Johns, Director of Quality Initiatives.



"This conference is one of the benefits for those programs receiving three stars," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "We hope it gives providers a chance to network, become mentors for other providers and take their outstanding programs even higher."

Program standards include staff qualifications; child health, nutrition and physical activity; family partnerships; intentional learning practices; and ratio and group size requirements.

"Currently 20% of licensed and registered early care and education providers in Georgia are participating in Quality Rated," said Dr. Johns. "The Leadership Conference provides an opportunity for our 73 top rated three-star programs to celebrate their success and share their best practices in reaching and sustaining their quality levels. It is a humbling experience for me to support their efforts in providing high quality education experiences for Georgia's youngest citizens."

All of Georgia's Quality Rated Programs and their ratings are posted at www.qualityrated.org and the DECAL website www.decals.ga.gov. Over 1,400 child care programs are participating in Quality Rated, with over 270 programs now rated.



your brain is only young once

If your child is 5 or under, now is the time to help them live a happier, healthier life.

Introducing Georgia's community-powered early education rating system.

Make the right choice for your child. Choose Quality Rated.



qualityrated.org
877-ALL-GAKIDS

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Pamela Stoner, Sharelle Cross, Pamela Stevens, Lisa Henderson, Mary T. Stoklas, Leigh Ann B. Hendrix, and Donna Marks.

DECAL Priority:

Organizational Excellence

Employees Asked to Complete "Top Work Places" Survey



DECAL will participate in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution's 2014 "Top Work Places" program. It begins with an All Employee Survey that will be sent by Workplace Dynamics on Thursday, December 5, 2013.

The online survey only takes 3-5 minutes to complete. DECAL must achieve 35% participation to be considered for Top Work Places.

"I am a big believer in employee communications, and I believe we prove that with our Chats with the Commissioner all across Georgia, our monthly employee newsletter, and things like the All Employee Meetings," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "This survey is another great way for you to give me feedback on how we're doing so together we can continue to improve our organization."

The Top Ten Work Places are recognized each March in a special section of the AJC.

For more information on the survey, contact DECAL Chief Communications Officer Reg Griffin at reg.griffin@decalfga.gov.

Board of Early Care and Learning Sets 2014 Meeting Dates

The Board of Early Care and Learning held its final meeting for 2013 on Thursday, November 21, 2013. The Board has approved the following dates for its meetings in 2014: Thursday, February 20, 2014; Thursday, May 22, 2014; Thursday, August 21, 2014; and Thursday, November 13, 2014.

