

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

5,297 - Licensed Child Care Programs in Georgia

80,462 - Students enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program

24,083 - Students enrolled in Head Start in Georgia

3,111 - Students enrolled in Early Head Start in Georgia

17,549,718 - Meals served so far in Fiscal Year 2015

1,885 - Sites in 2014 Summer Food Service Program

446 - Quality Rated Programs in Georgia



Quick Links

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Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy Jacobs

Dear DECALers,

As a high school student in Conyers and later as a college student at the University of Georgia, I was interested in politics, not as a potential candidate but as an engaged citizen. I've always had an appreciation for effective and efficient government and those who devote their lives to public service based on a desire to improve people's lives.



That's what made Thursday, January 15 such a surreal day in my life. It was clear I had moved from the sidelines into the game.

With my husband, children, and parents gathered with me, there I was...standing in the Governor's Office taking the official oath of office as Commissioner of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. As Governor Deal administered the oath, I glanced at my parents and thought about the many years they spent operating two child care centers here in Georgia when I was growing up. I remember working there during the summers and other breaks in school.

While I have been with DECAL for nearly seven months, I was honored to participate in this ceremony that made me "official." I thank all of you for conveying your congratulations and well-wishes in response to this special occasion. And, I feel privileged to follow in the footsteps of Bobby Cagle, Dr. Holly Robinson, and Marsha Moore, each of whom played an important role as commissioner in the evolution of DECAL.

In addition to being sworn in as commissioner last month, I was honored to be named by Governor Deal to the Education Reform Commission. This 33-member commission will study the state's education system, including its funding formula, and provide recommendations to improve the system, increase access to early learning programs, recruit and retain high quality instructors, and expand school options for Georgia's families. Our recommendations will be sent to the Governor by August 1 with some going into effect as early as the 2016-2017 school year.

I know we all share the Governor's vision for an exemplary education system driven by student need that provides local school leaders with greater control and flexibility. Please e-mail me any thoughts or recommendations you may have toward that end.

Thanks again for the opportunity to work with each of you to provide a brighter future for Georgia's youngest learners, their parents, and all the providers, sponsors, and stakeholders with whom we partner.

Sincerely,
Amy

Let Us Hear From You!

The DECAL Employee Advisory Group meets monthly to strengthen communications between the agency's more than 200 employees and senior management. The group recently welcomed new and returning members representing each division of the agency:

Audits	Edna Zimmerman
CAPS	Takisha Aragonés
CCS	Shawnell Johnson
	Dana Bond
	Rachel Fowler
Executive	Reg Griffin
Finance	Shannen Grimes
HR	Robin Stevens
	Bill Folsom
	Sabrina Henry
Legal	Maria Reznik
Nutrition	Sylvia Boykin
Pre-K	Faith Duncan
	Laura Reid
Research	Rob O'Callaghan
System Reform	Michelle Hughes

One of the ways we improve our agency is through the Employee Suggestion Program or ESP. [Click here](#) to leave a comment or concern, which may be made anonymously.

You are also encouraged to recognize a co-worker through our "Shining Stars" Program, where DECAL employees recognize each other for going "above and beyond" their normal job responsibilities. [Click here](#) for more information.

You know that **great idea** you have for our department?
We cannot read your **MIND**.
That is why DECAL has




Jackie Shivers
Director of Quality Support

EMPLOYEE
SUGGESTION
PROGRAM



Commissioner Amy Jacobs is congratulated by Governor Nathan Deal after taking the oath of office as Commissioner of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

DECAL Priority:

Ensure Health & Safety

DECAL Hosts First Annual Summer Food Service Program Summit

Over 100 potential and current Summer Food Service Program sponsors gathered on January 20th at the Merle Manders Conference Center in Stockbridge, Georgia for the inaugural SFSP Summit hosted by the Nutrition Services Division. The purpose of the Summit was to provide current and prospective sponsors with a wealth of information and practical resources that can be used to help facilitate a successful FY 2015 Summer Food Program.

The event was kicked off with an opening session featuring Georgia's First Lady Sandra Deal, DECAL Commissioner Amy Jacobs, and several members of our Senior Leadership Team. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Leisa Cook, Section Chief, SERO, also provided the national outlook of the SFSP to attendees.

For the remainder of the half-day conference, sponsors were able to choose to attend three of five sessions being offered with a mix of sessions geared toward prospective as well as current sponsors. Most sessions were filled to capacity, with a few overflowing throughout the day. These sessions featured current sponsors of the SFSP and varied representation from partnering organizations including the Georgia Department of Public Health, Share Our Strength/No Kid Hungry, and the Georgia Food Bank Association. Topics ranged from "Incorporating Physical Activities and Educational Enrichment into Summer Meal Programs" to "Innovative Strategies for Delivering Meals."

Current and prospective sponsors left the summit with plenty of practical resources to use to facilitate the upcoming SFSP.

Pictured below at the summit are (L-R) Nutrition Services Director Falita Flowers, DECAL Commissioner Amy Jacobs, First Lady Sandra Deal, Deputy Commissioner for Programs Keith Bostick, and Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs and Administration Dee Bolden.

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

DECAL Board Member Receives Honor

Gwinnett Technical College has honored a member of Bright from the Start's Board of Early Care and Learning.



Sherron Murphy

Sherron Murphy, who represents the 7th Congressional district on DECAL's Board, is the recipient of the college's 2015 Rick Perkins Award of Excellence in Technical Education.

The award, which has been an ongoing statewide program since 1991, honors technical college instructors who make significant contributions to technical education through innovation and leadership in their fields.

"Sherron is an outstanding educator and instructor who cares deeply about her students and their success," said Dr. Victoria Seals, vice president of academic affairs, Gwinnett Tech. "Her willingness to contribute to her students' education not only through teaching, but also as a mentor is what ensures their preparedness and capability when entering the professional workforce. She is very active with both state and national associations devoted to excellence in early childhood education and her students benefit from her understanding of best practices in the field."

As Gwinnett Tech's honoree, Murphy will represent the college in the statewide competition.

"Teaching at a technical college offers a platform for me to impact lives beyond the four walls of a classroom," said Murphy. "Through technical education, I empower students with relevant knowledge, essential skills and practical experience making gainful employment within reach. Further, their success stimulates our economy and enhances our collective desire to create viable and sustainable communities where citizens thrive. It is rewarding to play a meaningful role in such a powerful ripple effect."

Murphy began her career in education in 2011 as a kindergarten teacher for New York City Public Schools. She went on to work as a master teacher for Easter Seals North Georgia before joining Gwinnett Tech in 2006 as the associate director/academic curriculum coordinator for the D. Scott Hudgens, Jr. Early Education Center on campus.



DECAL Priority:

Increase Quality & Access

New Report Shows Professional Development Programs Improve Pre-K Teacher-Child Interactions

Two professional development models for prekindergarten teachers in Georgia have improved their interactions with children, according to a new report commissioned by DECAL. Scientists from the University of North Carolina's (UNC) Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (FPG) and Child Trends found that both approaches increased the emotional support that children received from their teachers.

FPG scientist Diane Early, lead author of the report, explained high-quality teacher-child interactions are essential for beneficial child outcomes. "We already know from FPG's evaluation of Georgia's Pre-K Program in 2014 that participation significantly improves children's school readiness skills across a wide range of language, literacy, math, and other measures," Early said. "Improved teacher-child interactions could further increase those benefits."

The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of two specific professional development models: Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI) and MyTeachingPartner (MTP). MMCI is a face-to-face group training model, and MTP primarily uses one-on-one remote coaching. Previous research indicated that both of these professional development approaches could improve teacher-child interactions. The FPG research team and DECAL wanted to learn how they would work when tested under real-world conditions.

A total of 486 lead teachers in Georgia's Pre-K Program were randomly assigned to MMCI, MTP, or a control group that received typical professional development. DECAL consultants served as MMCI trainers and MTP coaches.

The research team measured teacher-child interactions at the start and end of the Pre-K year using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), an observation tool with three components: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. DECAL uses the CLASS to

February Birthdays



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

- 1 - Taquella Austin
- 3 - Feclecia Moore
- 4 - Kimberly Smith
- 5 - Lauris Cooper
- 6 - Kesha McNeal
- 8 - Falita Flowers
- 8 - Charles Gore III
- 8 - Candy Prince
- 9 - Catherine Broussard
- 11 - Tamika Stubbs
- 12 - Stanley Cooper
- 14 - Linda Barge
- 18 - Christy McCray
- 18 - Beverly Pollard
- 19 - Bianca Staggs
- 19 - Laura Swann
- 19 - Lindsey Urry
- 20 - Judy Blasengame
- 24 - Carrie Spangler
- 25 - Lisa Rasmussen
- 25 - Michele Rauton
- 26 - Jae Boyd
- 27 - Melissa Adams
- 27 - Jana Albertson
- 28 - Michelle Radford

January Quality Rated Programs

QUALITY RATED

We are excited to announce the January 2015 Quality Rated Programs

- House of the Children Academy, Rome ★
- Althea Addison, Bonaire ★★
- Bartow Head Start, Cartersville ★★
- Bright Beginnings Academy, Ringgold ★★
- Discovery Point #45, Lawrenceville ★★
- Emanuel County Head Start, Swainsboro ★★
- First Presbyterian Child Care, LaGrange ★★
- First Steps, Cuthbert ★★
- Floyd Head Start, Rome ★★
- Gordon Head Start, Calhoun ★★
- Imagination Station #1, Columbus ★★
- KinderCare Learning Center #411, College Park ★★
- Lifespring Childcare Center, Moultrie ★★
- Fannie L. Meadows, Ft. Valley ★★
- Deirdre L. Prewitt, Atlanta ★★
- Puddle Jumpers Child Enrichment Center, Columbus ★★
- Puzzle House Learning Center Inc., Byron ★★
- Rockmark Head Start, Rockmart ★★
- Rollins Child Development Center, Cartersville ★★
- Smart Start Learning Center, Ricon ★★
- Stewart County Head Start, Lumpkin ★★
- Teachable Moments, LaGrange ★★

QUALITY RATED
qualityrated.org

BRIGHT START
Bright Beginnings Academy

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
First Congressional District

measure the instructional practices and teacher-child interactions in Georgia's Pre-K classrooms and to provide a framework for Pre-K teachers' professional development.

The research team found that both the MMCI face-to-face training and the MTP remote coaching model improved the emotional support Pre-K teachers provided children through their interactions. MMCI also improved instructional support, one of the strongest predictors of children's learning.

For a copy of the report: <http://www.decald.ga.gov/BfIS/EvaluationGAPreKProfDev.aspx>.

Three-Star Programs Participate in Quality Rated Leadership Conference

DECAL hosted over 100 teachers and directors of the state's top child care providers at a conference January 30-31 at the Legacy Lodge and Conference Center at Lake Lanier Islands. Participating programs had all received three-stars last year from Quality Rated, Georgia's voluntary system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs.

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

Speakers included Commissioner Jacobs, DECAL Board Chairman Victor Morgan, Atlanta Speech School Executive Director Comer Yates, and Cox Curry and Associates Senior Consultant Ann Wilson Cramer. Pictured below are the conference attendees.



Deadline Approaching for Child Care Economic Impact Survey

Researchers at the University of Georgia hope to wrap up their part of a child care industry impact study for Georgia by February 14. Last November, DECAL commissioned UGA and Georgia State University to conduct the comprehensive study, which began with a survey of the state's approximately 5,500 child care programs.

"It has been seven years since our last economic impact study, and we know conditions have changed since then," said Commissioner Amy Jacobs. "The previous study revealed the significant impact the child care industry has on Georgia's economy. Now it is time to gather current data and to gauge the impact of the Great Recession on the industry. As Governor Deal continues to emphasize job creation in our state, it is important to understand the economic impact of the child care industry in Georgia and to recognize that it is a viable economic engine across the state."

The 2007 study showed that child care programs in Georgia created over \$4.1 billion in revenues annually, while creating over 61,000 jobs. Researchers from UGA administered the survey and researchers from GSU will analyze and interpret the results. The universities will work collaboratively to draft the final report. Dr. Bentley Ponder, DECAL's Director of Research and Strategic Planning, said the new report will be released sometime this summer.

DECAL Priority:

Foster Organizational Excellence

Wagner Joins DECAL as E³Z Director

Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System Reform, has announced that Laura Wagner, formerly Director of Research with the Georgia Early Education

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, Hoschton
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

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

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are
(L-R) Brandy Locchetta, Debra Buster, Rachael Lee,
Tu Bui, Megan OBara, Suzanne Harbin, and
Anthoula Petropoulos.

Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS), has joined DECAL as Early Education Empowerment Zone (E³Z) Director.

Wagner moved to Atlanta after graduating with a Masters of Education from Vanderbilt University in May 2011. She has experience working for and volunteering with numerous non-profit organizations in South Carolina, including The Blood Connection of Greenville, Center for Developmental Services (CDS), Salvation Army Community Center of Spartanburg, and the Greater Spartanburg Philharmonic. While at Vanderbilt, Wagner served as a Research and Analysis Intern for the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. Additionally, she has worked for Public Education Partners of Greenville County (SC) to assist with data collection and communications focused on providing resources for quality teaching, community engagement, and public policy.



Laura Wagner

Wagner and her husband live in the Atlanta area. In her spare time, she enjoys running, hiking, playing the violin, and reading.

Bartlett Nominated for "Servant's Heart" Award

DECAL Audits and Compliance Examiner Richard Bartlett has been nominated for First Lady Sandra Deal's "With A Servant's Heart" Award. Commissioner Amy Jacobs, who made the nomination, said the award recognizes state employees for their dedication to children and families outside their normal roles.

As pastor of the Stockbridge Church of God of Prophecy, Bartlett impacts the lives of many people in Henry County, anonymously helping struggling families with the purchase of food and clothing. Each Christmas, he and his wife Debbie and daughter Bethany organize a Santa Surprise, collecting toys and gifts for children and the elderly. He often donates his time ministering to families without a pastor for weddings or funerals. Bartlett is shown below at left with Compliance Manager LeighAnn Hendrix presenting him with a copy of Commissioner Jacobs' nomination. Pictured at right are the Bartletts during a Santa Surprise.

