

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning



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DECAL By the Numbers

\$4,226 - Cost of Georgia's Pre-K Program per child

\$299 million - This year's investment in Georgia's Pre-K Program

\$5 billion - Lottery dollars invested in Georgia's Pre-K Program over 20 years

19 - Child care programs that have received a one, two or three-star rating through Quality Rated

1,162 - Child care programs participating in Quality Rated

610 - DECAL "likes" on Facebook

331 - DECAL followers on Twitter

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Bobby Cagle



It's not every day you meet the President of the United States. As a kid growing up in rural North Carolina, I never thought that I would. And yet, on February 14, 2013, there I was at the College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center in Decatur, Georgia, shaking hands with President Barack Obama and hearing him personally thank me

--- and all of you --- for our efforts in early childhood education.

Don't let me exaggerate...that exchange took all of 30 seconds during a photo opportunity, but it is something I will always remember.

We were all proud when the President mentioned the importance of Pre-K in his State of the Union Address and then cited Georgia as an example of quality early childhood education. I was even more proud for the teachers and administrators at College Heights, who got to stand behind the president on national television. What a great moment for them. You could see the pride in their faces.

Since the presidential visit, many people have asked me how I feel about the president's proposal, and I think the best responses are "intrigued" and "curious." Certainly we're all encouraged by the continuing focus and



Backed by early education teachers, President Barack Obama speaks to the



Like

What the President Said...

Below are comments on the importance of early learning from President Barack Obama from his February 12, 2013 State of the Union Address:

These initiatives in manufacturing, energy, infrastructure, housing --- all these things will help entrepreneurs and small business owners expand and create new jobs. But none of it will matter unless we also equip our citizens with the skills and training to fill those jobs and that has to start at the earliest possible age.

You know, study after study shows that the sooner a child begins learning, the better he or she does down the road. But today fewer than three in ten four-year-olds are enrolled in a high quality pre-school program. Most middle class parents can't afford a few hundred bucks a week for private pre-school. And for poor kids who need help the most, this lack of access to pre-school education can shadow them for the rest of their lives. So tonight I propose working with states to make high quality pre-school available to every single child in America. That's something we should be able to do.

Every dollar we invest in high quality early childhood education can save more than seven dollars later on by boosting graduation rates, reducing teen pregnancy, even reducing violent crime. In states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children --- like Georgia or Oklahoma --- studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, form more stable families of their own. We know this works. So let's do what works and make sure none of our children start the

discussion about the importance of early childhood education.

crowd February 14, 2013 at the College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center in Decatur, Georgia.

Ultimately, given Georgia's successful history in this area, we would like to see the federal government provide maximum flexibility to us in implementing any changes in policy. As an agency, we stand ready to assist the President and Congress, providing formal feedback based upon our experience, expertise, and research over the past 20 years.

Since 1992, Georgia has wisely invested close to \$5 billion in lottery dollars into Georgia's Pre-K Program in our efforts to improve school readiness and ultimately develop a strong 21st century workforce for businesses here in our state. Governor Zell Miller and other state leaders were very wise in first identifying a funding source in the Georgia Lottery for Georgia's Pre-K Program and the HOPE scholarship. Likewise, Governor Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal have shown tremendous support for our program and made some tough decisions to keep this program vibrant for many years to come.

This year alone, we are investing \$299 million and are serving approximately 84,000 four year olds in Georgia's Pre-K Program. Governor Deal has proposed adding more than \$13 million in additional lottery dollars in the upcoming fiscal year to add to the quality of our program, bringing our total annual investment to \$312 million. As you know, we recently published a research study detailing the initial findings of a statewide Pre-K evaluation that certainly supports investments in early learning. The findings show children, on average, made significant gains in language, mathematics, and social skills during their year in Georgia's Pre-K.

Click here to see the full report on our website:

<http://dec.al.ga.gov/BftS/EvaluationGAPreKProgram.aspx>

We recognize the significance of this moment, but also eagerly await more specifics of the proposal for early childhood education. When I met the president and shook his hand, I was representing all of you here at Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. It also made me realize that every day is a great day when you're working for Georgia's youngest learners.

Let me add another word of thanks for all that you do.

race of life already behind. Let's give our kids that chance.

2013 "Read Across Georgia" Kicks Off on March 4

Governor Nathan Deal, First Lady Sandra Deal, and DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle are joining together to proclaim March as "Read Across Georgia" Month. The official kickoff will take place on Monday, March 4, 2013, at 11:15 AM in the North Wing of the State Capitol.

As a part of the celebration, DECAL will sponsor "Georgia Reads Aloud Day," on Tuesday, March 19, 2013. On this day, parents, teachers, and the entire community are encouraged to make a special effort to read to children of all ages. Classrooms are encouraged to enter a contest for the Most Books Read between the hours of 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM on March 19. The winning classroom will receive a special visit and reading from First Lady Deal and Commissioner Cagle. Last year, students across the state read 13,993 books over 13 hours.

"Children model their reading habits by listening to adults," said Mrs. Deal, who will be reading to children in Fannin, Gilmer and Pickens counties. "It is important for children to learn proper pronunciation, expression, pauses and cadence. It is my hope that Georgia Reads Aloud Day encourages our children to read to others and become young teachers themselves."



Governor Nathan Deal and First Lady Sandra Deal



President Obama gets a warm welcome to College Heights Pre-K in Decatur from Ella James Stacy. The four year old is the daughter of Chad and Dr. Stacy Stacy.

DECAL Priority:

Health & Safety

DECAL Family Fun on Saturday, March 9: Are You Ready?

Saturday, March 9 will be a busy day for DECAL and some of our commun



Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle and participants at the annual "Healthy Kids Georgia" event.

ity partners.

First, we'll join Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle's "Healthy Kids Georgia" at the State Capitol for the third annual "Be Healthy Georgia Day." Get there at 8:00 a.m. for registration and warm-ups with Olympic Gold Medalist Aries Merritt. Then at 9:00 a.m. it's the Atlanta Track Club's Kilometer Kids Fun Run. At 9:15 a.m., doors open to Dole Fit City and later there will be remarks from Lt. Governor Cagle, other special guests, and a Mascot Trot and Dance off.

Get more information at <http://ltgov.georgia.gov/healthy-kids-georgia>.

On that same day, we're joining with Zoo Atlanta as they host Educator Appreciation Day from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

joined DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle at High Point Elementary School in Sandy Springs, Georgia, last October for Georgia's Pre-K Week. The three will reunite on Monday, March 4, 2013, and visit Pre-K classes in Covington and Conyers as part of the First Lady's "Read Across Georgia" program.

Quick Links

[DECAL on Facebook](#)

[DECAL on Twitter](#)

[DECAL Website](#)



March Birthdays



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

- 2 - Mark Waits
- 3 - Christopher M. Sleeme
- 5 - Lajuana L. Williams
- 7 - Glenda Hambrick
- 8 - Laurel Lynn Berryhill
- 9 - Susan B. Adams
- 12 - Brian Griffin
- 12 - Sandra Lowe Kelley
- 15 - Brandi N. Swain
- 16 - Rachel M. Bartlone
- 18 - Sondra M. Paster
- 20 - Louis N. Brienza
- 20 - Shannen S. Grimes
- 23 - Monica D. Warren
- 24 - Jennifer A. McMichael
- 27 - Amy L. Page
- 27 - Ashley F. Shirah
- 28 - Lucy M. Bailey
- 30 - Shelly Alice Yeomans
- 31 - Mari Miranda Springs
- 31 - Pamela D. Stoner

Board of Early Care and Learning

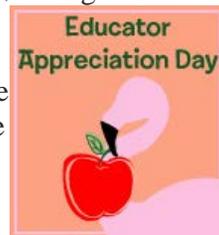
Supporting and guiding the mission and vision of Bright from the Start:

Board of Early Care and Learning

Kay Ford, Savannah
First Congressional District

Early care and education professionals throughout the state are encouraged to bring their guests to the Zoo for a day of fun-filled activities. This includes all DECAL employees, so take advantage of this great opportunity.

Educators will receive free admission and \$2 off general admission for each of their guests. Please note that educator identification is required. Types of ID include an employee ID with a photo; a pay stub or name badge imprinted with school name or county along with a state-issued photo ID; or a homeschool declaration of intent and a state-issued photo ID.



Pre-registration is encouraged at http://zooatlanta.org/educators_lounge. More information is available by calling 404.624.WILD or through e-mail at education@zooatlanta.org.

Get ready for an awesome Saturday in Atlanta.



DECAL Holding Forum, Webinars on Proposed New Safe Sleeping Rules

DECAL will hold a community forum and two webinars in March to review expanded recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics on safe sleep environments in child care programs to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and Sudden Unexpected Death Syndrome (SUIDS).

"DECAL supports the current recommendations and proposes to revise our current rules for safe sleeping environments in child care learning centers, group day care homes and family day care homes," said Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services Kristie Lewis. "These

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District
(Secretary)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton
Third Congressional District

Phil Davis, Norcross
Fourth Congressional District

Carlene Talton, Decatur
Fifth Congressional District

Dawn Henderson, Marietta
Sixth Congressional District

Vacant
Seventh Congressional District

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

Vacant
Ninth Congressional District

Janice Gallimore, Greensboro
Tenth Congressional District

Victor Morgan, Cartersville
Eleventh Congressional District
(Chair)

Vacant
Twelfth Congressional District

Vacant
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.

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Aleisha Golden, Jewel Pyle, Saritha Gummadi, Marian Brown, Elizabeth Abdinoor, Betty Lasseter, and Clare Michaud.

meetings allow us to fully explain the proposed changes and receive public comment before a final decision is reached."

The community forum will be held on Tuesday, March 5, 2013, from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM in the Auditorium, Building C, at Atlanta Technical College, located at 1560 Metropolitan Parkway in Southwest Atlanta. This meeting will cover proposed safe sleep rules for all child care programs.

The next two meetings will be presented by webinar and will be accessible from anywhere using a computer, smartphone or tablet. The webinar on Thursday, March 7, 2013, from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM will cover proposed safe sleep rules for child care centers and group day care homes. The webinar on Thursday, March 14, 2013, from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM will cover proposed safe sleep rules for family day care homes.

Child Care Center and Group Day Care home participants can register online for the March 7 webinar at <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/120354490> and Family Day Care Home participants can register online for the March 14 webinar at <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/218981978>.

Drafts of the proposed rule changes will be sent to all licensed and registered providers by e-mail prior to the first meeting. They will also be available on the DECAL website at www.dec.al.ga.gov. Interested persons can send comments or questions to cesrulerevisions@dec.al.ga.gov.

DECAL Priority:

Quality

DECAL Launches GELDS Website



DECAL launched a new website on February 25 to introduce and receive public comment on its new Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS). The website can be accessed at www.gelds.dec.al.ga.gov. Visitors to the site can comment by clicking on specific age-appropriate indicators or by clicking the general comment button on the home page.

The GELDS are the product of an alignment study and revision project that began in 2010. The project stemmed from the need for higher-quality standards for birth to age 5 and a better alignment with the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) for K-12. The new standards will take the place of the Georgia Early Learning

Standards for birth through three and the Pre-K Content Standards. The GELDS will serve as a framework that outlines what children age birth to five should know and be able to do.

"From the beginning of this project, it has been our goal to roll out the new GELDS in helpful phases that will ensure all teachers have the knowledge necessary to be successful," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "This new website will allow stakeholders to examine the GELDS and make comments. Eventually, the site will serve as a portal for all GELDS information and resources."

Cagle said DECAL is working with Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB) to produce short videos for the site to be used with professional development, lesson planning ideas, and an area for parent resources. GPB is also gathering footage at high quality learning programs that will showcase exemplary teaching practices using the GELDS.

"We will be able to attach video clips to each indicator on the website to show what that indicator would look like in action," explained Laura Evans, GELDS standards coordinator. "As we move forward with the GELDS roll out this year, this new website will be a valuable resource for all stakeholders."

In May, DECAL will offer a series of webinars on the GELDS. These webinars will be available via links on the new website. Also in May, DECAL will begin offering training and professional development for implementing GELDS. Training will include introduction to the domains, strands, standards, and indicators, and it will also offer help with planning lessons and appropriate activities around the GELDS.

Birth to five teachers can begin using the GELDS during the 2013-2014 school year with continuous support, training, and professional development.

Welcome to The Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS)

The GELDS are the product of an alignment study and revision project that began in 2010. The project stemmed from the need for higher-quality standards for birth through age 5 and a better alignment with the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) for K-12. The GELDS will take the place of the Georgia Early Learning Standards for birth through three and the Pre-K Content Standards.

The purpose of the GELDS is to outline what children should know and be able to do before kindergarten entry. These research-based standards should be used to guide teachers, parents, and all practitioners in the intentional integration of developmental knowledge with the skills and concepts children need to make progress in all learning areas.

This website serves as a portal for information and resources related to the GELDS. We welcome your comments and feedback as we approach the final stages of completion.

- Explore GELDS
- Executive Summary
- Revision Committee
- FAQ's
- Comment On GELDS

Enrollment Increasing for Quality Rated

In just over one year, more than 1,100 child care programs have enrolled in Quality Rated,



Georgia's voluntary system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. The program, which launched in January 2012, is administered by the Quality Initiatives Division of DECAL.

Quality Rated uses one, two, and three stars to indicate programs that meet defined program standards beyond Georgia's minimum licensing requirements. Among the rating milestones thus far: In September 2012, Justus Kidz, a family day care home in Buford, became the first child care program in the state to be Quality Rated with two stars; in October 2012, Explorations Christian Academy, a family day care home in Lawrenceville, became the first program to receive a three-star rating; in December 2012, Kid's World Learning Center in Statesboro became the first child care center in Georgia to be rated, receiving a two-star rating; and, in January 2013, the First Baptist Church of Ellijay Weekday program became the first child care center in Georgia to receive a three-star rating.

DECAL Priority:

Organizational Excellence

Child Care Services Announces Promotions

Deputy Commissioner of Programs Keith Bostick recently promoted three people on his leadership team in Child Care Services (CCS). Promoted were (pictured below L-R): CCS Director of Field Operations Elisabetta Kasfir, CCS Director of Program Operations Brenda Haynesworth and Assistant Commissioner of Child Care Services Kristie Lewis. There are over 6,100 licensed child care programs in Georgia with the capacity to serve around 375,000 children

