

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



State Employee

2022

Recognition Week



May 1-7, 2022

DECAL By the Numbers

- 4,347 - Licensed child care programs in Georgia
- 2,896 - Quality Rated child care programs in Georgia
- 73,262 - Children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program
- 1,032 - Sites for Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program
- 50,122 - Downloads of DECAL Download since podcast was launched in September 2018
- 71, 531 - Georgia children issued a CAPS scholarship so far in State Fiscal Year 2022

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Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs



Dear Fellow DECALers,

If you're like me, sometimes words and phrases I hear over and over... and say over and over...begin to lose their meaning and impact. THANK YOU is one of those phrases. And this is a time of year in Georgia state government, STATE EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION WEEK, when Thank You is exactly what I want to say, but

those two words seem so hollow and inadequate to express what I really mean.

So, I *googled* "ways to say thank you" and found an article titled "Funny Ways to Say Thank You." Let's see what you think of these:

- **Today I am wearing the smile that you left me with. (Kind of cheesy, but it's often the case!)**
- **I can't spell thank you without YOU.**
- **If you received a dollar every time I felt grateful for you, you would be rich.**
- **Thank you but, no, Thank you. (Punctuation absolutely necessary!)**
- **Is there no limit to your awesomeness?**
- **I will never forget this favor of yours.**
- **This means a lot to me.**
- **Thank you for being my unpaid therapist.**
- **You came in handy.**
- **This is not a thank you card; it is a grateful one.**
- **I would not say thank you to a person if they fail to match your vibe.**
- **Thank you berry much.**

I hope one or more of the preceding bullets spoke to you in a new



and different way. Because, truth is, I very much recognize and appreciate the work you do, and I thank you for being part of DECAL.

Gratefully,



**New Episodes
Every Wednesday**

Children’s Mental Health Week Is This Week



DECAL’s second annual recognition of Children’s Mental Health Week will take place May 2 - 6. In 2020 DECAL took on a new role by housing the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Director position. This role, filled by Laura Lucas as part of the DECAL Pre-K and Instructional Support Division, provides state level leadership around building early childhood system infrastructure to better support social emotional health for young children and their caregivers.

“We’ve made a lot of progress over the last year in areas of workforce development, policy, and finance issues, but still have a lot of work to do in the promotion of early childhood mental health,” said Lucas. “ Many people still do not associate mental health with young children. Everyone has mental health, including infants and toddlers.”

One way to be a part of promoting social emotional health for young children and their caregivers is to spread the word about Children’s Mental Health Week. An email was sent out last week with a Children’s Mental Health Week Zoom background and other information on how child care providers can participate in fun activities, such as a puppet show about feelings for three-year-old classes and Pre-K performed by Mental Health America of Georgia, giveaways, a social story from Suri the Spider, and age appropriate classroom activities and resources. DECAL will also release a new video focusing on the importance of the caregiver role in supporting children’s social emotional development. Better Brains for Babies and Zero to Three are also sponsoring a webinar on Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health on May 5th that anyone can attend. Register here: <https://bit.ly/BBBWebinarMay522>

“Children’s Mental Health Week is an opportunity for young children and their caregivers to better understand the importance



DECAL’s official spokes-puppy CALi was back in action and on hand recently for a resource fair at Our House, one of DECAL’s Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships. Also attending were Sharifa Brand, Angela Hall, and Desiree Kendricks.

Student Parents Added as Priority Group for Child Care Financial Support

DECAL has announced that

DECAL announced that beginning this week student parents will be considered a “priority group” for receiving financial assistance through the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program.

CAPS is a program administered by DECAL that helps pay for child care for families with no to low incomes so they can work or attend school. CAPS also helps families find high-quality early learning programs; maintain stability in their child care arrangements; and connect families with resources to help them become self-sufficient by supporting the whole family.

“According to research, one in five college students in the U.S. is a parent, so we are excited to add student parents as a priority group for Georgia’s most vulnerable families to receive CAPS scholarships for child care,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “A 2021 study by Ascend at the Aspen Institute and The Jed Foundation found that financial stress is a major burden for student-parents. Ensuring that student-parents have access to the high-quality child care they need is critical to helping them continue their educations, complete their degrees, and support their children so they can thrive.”

Jacobs said the new initiative will help student parents achieve their economic mobility goals and support children’s learning and development.

“Across the 22 colleges of the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), affordable child care is a challenge for many of our student parents who are striving to improve their lives

children and their caregivers to better understand the importance of social and emotional development and also provides us a chance to address the negative stigma around mental health,” said Susan Adams, Deputy Director of the DECAL Pre-K and Instructional Supports Division.

Mental health is important to all of us, so do your part by using the Children’s Mental Health Zoom background and share the resources on the DECAL Children’s Mental Health Week webpage:

<http://www.decal.ga.gov/Prek/ChildrensMentalHealthWeek.aspx>!

A special thanks to the Children’s Mental Health Week Planning Committee:

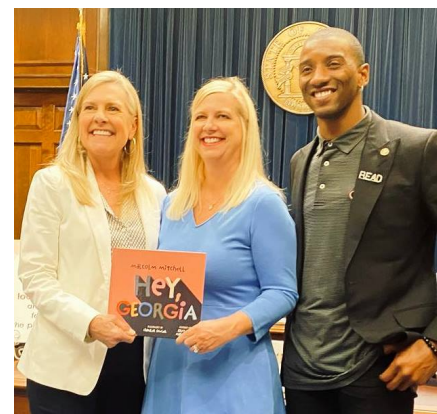
Pre -K: Kerry Bayens and Perri Walden

Inclusion and Behavior Support Team: Morlinda Dawson, Megan McGraw and Veronica Thomas

Infant Toddler Team: Lori Ballew

Communications: Jerry Brown

Governor and First Lady Unveil New Malcom Mitchell Children’s Book “Hey Georgia”



Georgia Governor Brian P. Kemp and First Lady Marty Kemp joined DECAL in April to unveil a new children’s book by former NFL and University of Georgia wide receiver Malcolm Mitchell. Copies of “Hey Georgia” will be distributed this fall to all students enrolled in Georgia’s Pre-K Program.

Two Georgia’s Pre-K Program classes from Heards Ferry Elementary School in Fulton County recently got a preview of the book at the State Capitol as it was read personally by Mitchell, Governor Kemp, and First Lady Kemp. DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs also attended the event.

“As most sports fans are aware, Malcolm Mitchell is one of the top ten all time receivers at the University of Georgia who went on to play with the 2017 Super Bowl Champion New England Patriots,” said Commissioner Jacobs. “We are thrilled to have him on our literacy team in Georgia, sharing the importance of early literacy for our youngest learners and learning about their home state in a fun and entertaining way. We look forward to sharing ‘Hey Georgia’ with students enrolled this fall in our 30th year of Georgia’s Pre-K Program.”

through education,” said TCSG Commissioner Greg Dozier. “By adding student parents as a priority group for financial support through the CAPS program, these students can focus on their education without the stress of finding affordable, high-quality child care.”

Mitchell is a native of Valdosta, Georgia. After graduating from UGA with a degree in Communications in 2015, he was drafted by the New England Patriots. Among Mitchell’s numerous awards and accomplishments both on and off the field, he considers discovering a love of reading his greatest achievement. Initially, reading was a challenge; however, through perseverance, books became an avenue for expanding his curiosity, creativity, and learning. Through literacy Malcolm has authored and published children’s books, created a youth literacy initiative called Read with Malcolm, and established Share the Magic Foundation to transform lives through literacy.

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Employee Suggestion Program



**Visit the Virtual
Suggestion Box now!**

Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Brian Griffin, Jerald Savage, Jody Peskin, Shannon Ricardo, and Moriam Hassam.

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE, 754 East Tower,
Atlanta, GA 30334
404-656-5957

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**Georgia Dept
of Early Care
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BRIGHT FROM THE START

