

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning



Sept. 2012 - In This Issue

- [By the Numbers](#)
- [Employee Spotlight](#)
- [2013 State Holidays](#)
- [September Birthdays](#)
- [Employee Anniversary](#)
- [Meet Victor Morgan](#)
- [Advisory Board](#)
- [Tracking Progress](#)
- [Complaint Unit's Role](#)
- [Pre-K Teacher Published Nationally](#)

DECAL By the Numbers

- 341** - Pre-K Directors trained
- 24,488** - Georgia children receiving Head Start services 2010-2011
- 4,300** - Georgia children enrolled in blended Head Start/Georgia's Pre-K
- 53,305** - Georgia children participating in subsidized child care program, CAPS, in July
- 4,505** - Early childhood educators who received professional development training in July from

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Bobby Cagle



In June, I was honored to join a delegation from Georgia visiting China. The 11-day trip was sponsored by Kennesaw State University's Confucius Institute, a non-profit organization promoting the study of Chinese

language, culture, ethics, and philosophy, and furthering the understanding of China today. While there, we were able to meet many of the Chinese teachers who have visited or will visit Georgia to teach Mandarin Chinese in several of our Georgia's Pre-K classrooms.

Whenever I visit a foreign country, I am always fascinated with the differences in culture. Each country has their own, which has developed over hundreds and hundreds of years. Webster's Dictionary defines culture as the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought, speech, action, and artifacts and depends upon the human capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. A simpler definition of culture that I have heard and embrace is values that we hold and radiate.

Just as cultures differ among nations, they can

the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies

12 - Stakeholder advisory groups engaging over 100 Georgia citizens

104,908 - Number of visits to the DECAL website in the month of July

104- Adult day care centers on Child & Adult Care Food Program

1,904 - Child care centers on Child & Adult Care Food Program



Spotlight on... Robin Stevens

Robin Stevens joined DECAL in March as Human Resources Director, bringing a wealth of experience and training to the department.



A native of Macon, Georgia, and long-time resident of Alpharetta, Stevens earned both her bachelor's (Arts and Sciences) and master's (Education) degrees from the University of Georgia.

She began her career as a compensation analyst with the Georgia Merit System and has worked in both the private and public sector. Her experience includes serving as Regional Director of Human Resources with American International Group, Director of Human Resources with Equifax, and Division Director of

also differ among workplaces. Within our offices and in the field --- whether intentional or unintentional --- we develop culture every day, an environment that we shape and create among co-workers, children, parents, providers and teachers. We will either be immersed into culture or we will create culture.

As Commissioner, I want to lead by example in creating a culture of excellent customer service with the health and safety of children at its heart. Someone said you can enter a room with two attitudes: "Well, here I am" or "Ah, there you are." In all of our interactions, I want DECAL to convey the message of "Ah, there you are. What can I do to serve you?" It's a delicate balance of representing the State of Georgia as a regulatory agency but also assisting our "customers" with plans for improvement and opportunities for quality enrichment.

One of our challenges, identified in the recent employee survey, is the fact that our 200 employees are widely dispersed across the state. This can create somewhat of a "disconnect" between the office in Atlanta and where you're working in the field. With that in mind, we developed this monthly e-newsletter and are giving greater attention to employee meetings. I will be holding more informal "Chatting with the Commissioner" meetings all across the state so I can hear concerns and questions from you in "real time."

In addition, I want to remind you that my door -- - both in person and virtually --- is always open. You can call me directly at 404.651.7432, e-mail bobby.cagle@decals.ga.gov or even follow me on Twitter at @DECALCommish. Better ways to communicate? Please let me know.

We're entering a busy time for our agency as Georgia's Pre-K begins its 20th year, Quality Rated nears 800 participating programs and our Child Care Services handle inspections for the second half of the year. As you work, keep our culture in mind: Excellent customer service with the health and safety of children at its heart.

I look forward to learning more from you in my visits around the state.

"Ah, there you are."

Human Resources with the Georgia Department of Transportation, among other human resources positions. She also has experience working in the classroom.

Stevens and her husband, Tom, who recently retired from The Coca-Cola Company, have two children: Chad, a marketing major graduate of Florida State University, now living in Scottsdale, Arizona, and Lauren, who graduated this past May with a public relations degree from Georgia Southern University and is presently working in the Atlanta area.

Quick Links

[DECAL on Facebook](#)

[DECAL on Twitter](#)

[DECAL Website](#)



2013 State Holidays

The following is the list of state holidays when the Capitol and all state agencies will be closed in 2013:

New Year's Day

Tuesday, January 1

Robert E. Lee's Birthday

January 19 - will be observed on Friday, November 29

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday

Monday, January 21

Washington's Birthday

February 18 - will be observed on Tuesday, December 24

Confederate Memorial Day

Monday, April 22

Memorial Day

Monday, May 27

Independence Day

Thursday, July 4

Labor Day

Monday, September 2

Tracking Student Progress... from Pre-K to

Ph.D.

Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, valuable information about Georgia's Pre-K students will become a part of the Georgia Department of Education's (GaDOE) Longitudinal Data System. For the first time Pre-K information will be available that will help Kindergarten teachers plan their instruction more effectively and strategically. This information will consist of indicators in literacy and language, mathematics, personal-social skills, and fine motor development.

All Georgia's Pre-K students will be assigned a Georgia Testing Identifier (GTID) which will stay with them when they enter the GaDOE system in Kindergarten. Pre-K assessment data will be included in the GaDOE system and therefore be available to Kindergarten teachers and elementary school principals.



Susan Adams

"Until recently, assessments in Pre-K have been collected manually. Now, Pre-K teachers have begun assessing children's progress using an online system, which can easily be transferred to elementary school teachers," explained Susan Adams, assistant commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program. "We expect to collect online assessments for about 87 percent of our students in the 2012-13 school year, and then 100 percent by 2013-14."

Adams says recording student performance online will help not only Kindergarten teachers next year but also Pre-K teachers this year. "Having this information will help them plan lessons, track student performance during the year, and print progress reports for families," Adams explained. "It also will provide an important professional connection between Pre-K teachers and their counterparts in the public schools, a relationship that they may not have recognized or appreciated before."

Craig Detweiler, DECAL's Chief Information Officer said, "The Pre-K assessment data will ultimately be tied to Georgia's colleges and

Columbus Day
Monday, October 14

Veterans Day
Monday, November 11

Thanksgiving Day
Thursday, November 28

Christmas Day
Wednesday, December 25

September Birthdays



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

- 2 - Cassa L. Andrews
- 5 - Tanya R. Moore Astin
- 5 - Peggy C. Kosater
- 6 - Dana M. Bond
- 8 - Christi R. Bedwell
- 8 - Laura G. Davis
- 8 - Geneise M. Graham
- 8 - Angelita L. Ramanou
- 14 - Jeannie M. Lippy
- 17 - Shenetta A. McNair
- 19 - John Pierce Gardner
- 20 - Quatavius D. Copeland
- 21 - Takiesha G. Lyons
- 22 - Takisha N. Aragones
- 22 - April L. Rogers
- 24 - Luetricia Billingsley
- 27 - Pamela A. Bojo
- 27 - George Alex Dagenhart
- 27 - Sherry Smith
- 28 - Marquita S. Gladney

Employee Anniversary



Craig Detweiler

universities through a system called Georgia Awards. Georgia Awards will make it possible to track students' progress from the day they enter Georgia's Pre-K Program through their secondary or postsecondary education. This is data that will be invaluable to researchers and state policy makers."

School recently began for an estimated 84,000 Pre-K students in Georgia. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the lottery-funded Pre-K program, ranked by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) as one of the top state programs in the nation based on quality standards, teacher qualifications, and enrollment.

Complaint Unit Keeps DECAL Officials Informed

It's time for recess at a child care center in South Georgia. Jumping from their tables and chairs, a swarm of three year olds heads straight for the back door and out to the playground. But as one child brings up the end of the line, a boy in front of her accidentally slams the door hard behind him. The little girl's finger is jammed in the door and may require medical attention.

Accidents like this can happen at any moment and Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning stands ready to help children, parents and providers. DECAL's Child Care Services receives around 160 complaints a month through phone calls, e-mails, letters and walk-in visits.

According to Elisabetta Kasfir, DECAL's complaint unit director, a group of four consultants handle "intake" every day, with two people entering complaints and two handling general questions and inquiries.

Complaints are classified into three categories: Category 1 involves the most severe cases where a child is injured or in danger; Category 3 covers unsatisfactory conditions at a center or a lack of



Deborah Toney Celebrates 30 Years

Deborah Gunn Toney recently celebrated her 30th anniversary working with the State of Georgia. She is pictured above at right with Kay Hellwig, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services.

Currently a Child Care Services Consultant Monitor, Toney began her state career on March 1, 1982, as a senior caseworker with the Fulton County Department of Family and Children Services.

In 1999, Toney joined the Child Care Licensing Division with the Office of Regulatory Services and continued in that role through department mergers with the Office of School Readiness and later Bright from the Start.

DECAL salutes Deborah Toney for 30 years of dedicated service.

Meet Victor Morgan

appropriate supervision; and Category 4 covers less severe issues such as improper paperwork for students' immunizations, as well as other issues. Kasfir said in previous years there was a Category 2, however, in January, 2011, those issues were merged in with Category 1.

"It's important to remember these reports begin as allegations and they sometimes prove to be unsubstantiated," said Kasfir, who has worked since 2003 with the Office of School Readiness and then DECAL. "On average, about 50-percent of the complaints are substantiated."

Kasfir says each complaint is thoroughly investigated with consultants dispatched to child care centers for inspections. Based on the outcome of the investigation, DECAL has the authority to impose fines, temporary or restricted licenses, license revocation or emergency closure.

While DECAL and its predecessor agencies have managed complaints for a long time, about ten years ago, the agency widened its circle of people who are notified and now sends all Category 1 alerts to Commissioner Bobby Cagle, Assistant Commissioners Susan Adams, Carol Hartman and Kay Hellwig, the Senior Leadership Team and each division and their designees.

"We have enhanced the information in these alerts," explained Child Care Services Director Brenda Haynesworth, who has worked in her role for 23 years. "In addition to attaching a copy of the complaint, we have added a summary of the complaint in the e-mail, including the name of the center, the county where it is located and other details. This makes the essence of the complaint much easier to read on a Blackberry."

National Publication to Feature Article Written by Georgia Pre-K Teacher

Mary Reid, a Georgia Pre-K teacher at Glanton Hindsman Elementary School in Carroll County, never really saw herself as a published author.



W. Victor Morgan of Cartersville serves on the DECAL Board of Advisors for the Eleventh Congressional District. He has served on the Board since its creation and is currently the Board's Secretary.

Appointed by Governor Sonny Perdue, Morgan gained an interest in early learning as a college student while working a summer job in a day care center, an experience he described "very rewarding." He later served as the director of a program for children, birth to age four, with disabilities. Morgan also was a Georgia's Pre-K director for ten years, beginning the second year of the lottery-funded Pre-K program.

"This population always has had and will have a special place in my heart," said Morgan.

He added, "The most rewarding part of serving on the board is working toward assuring, through rules, regulations and policies, that all of Georgia's children are served in a safe and secure environment."

Morgan is the retired director of student support services for Bartow County Schools and is currently the president/CEO of

But for that matter, she never saw herself teaching writing to four-year-old children. Recently, Mrs. Reid submitted an article about pre-school writing which will be included in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) national publication *Teaching Young Children*.

So, how do you teach writing to four year olds? "We model a lot," explains Mrs. Reid, who begins her ninth year teaching Pre-K this fall. "Labeling, message boards, sign-in sheets: We accept every mark on the page because for that four year old, that mark has meaning." Mrs. Reid will often ask a student to help her write something down, guiding them verbally and sometimes placing her hand over theirs to help form the letters.

On the surface, it may look simple, but Bright from the Start Pre-K Consultant Louanne Hutcheson says there's more going on here than meets the eye. "Her children learn they are writers very early on," Ms. Hutcheson said. "Her work with children over the years is a model that demonstrates the true power of shared writing; a tool that should be emulated by Pre-K teachers everywhere on a daily basis."

"Children learn to love what their teachers love, and it is apparent that Mrs. Reid loves language and believes her students are writers," said Susan Adams, assistant commissioner for Georgia Pre-K. "Master teachers, like Mrs. Reid, convey their passion to students and students excel."

Mrs. Reid's advice to other Pre-K teachers: "Keep at it. For these children, we are their first teachers and such an important part of their lives, both now and in the future."

For her part, Mrs. Reid says she was most influenced as an educator by her high school Latin teacher, Marcia Stille, and her grandfather, who was a teacher for 40 years. "I have to give him some of the credit for my love of learning," she said. She was also guided by the book

The Morgan Consulting Group, Inc.

He earned a bachelor's degree from Tuskegee University, a master's degree from the University of West Georgia, and an educational specialist degree from Jacksonville State University. He and his wife, Diane, have two children and three grandchildren.

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

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning Advisory Board

Vacant

First Congressional District

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District

Kathy Howell, Carrollton
Third Congressional District

Carolyn Ormsby, Ed.D., Conyers,
Fourth Congressional District (Chair)

Carlene Talton, Decatur
Fifth Congressional District

Dawnn Henderson, Marietta
Sixth Congressional District

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain
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
(Secretary)

Already Ready by Katie Wood Ray and Matt Glove.

Watch for Mrs. Reid's article in a future edition of NAEYC's *Teaching Young Children*.



Mary Reid fosters a love for learning in her Georgia Pre-K students.



Howell Visits Pre-K Class in Roopville

DECAL Advisory Board Member Kathy Howell gets some help with her name tag from Hayden Steed at Roopville Elementary School Pre-K in Carroll County

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

Kay A. Ford, Savannah
Twelfth Congressional District

Maggy Martinez, Hampton,
Thirteenth Congressional District

The Faces of DECAL

*DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R)
Jennifer McCreary, Alex Dagenhart, Cecelia Dorsey, Peggy
Kosater, Judy Carter, Louis Brienza and Meghan McNail.*

Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care and Learning | 2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE, 754 East Tower | Atlanta | GA | 30334