



the GA Pre-K 411: teacher Edition

It's 2026!



Welcome back! It is hard to believe we are already in the second half of the school year. It seems like just yesterday we were sharing in the excitement over the first days/weeks of the year and all the fun that Fall had to offer!

There's a lot about Pre-K to look forward to this semester as we continue to help our early learners grow academically and socially in preparation for Kindergarten next fall. Upcoming events include Inclusive Early Learning Week, the opening of the Georgia's Pre-K Teacher of the Year Application, and Children's Mental Health Week! We will also discover the winners of the Every Amazing Story Contest and get sneak peeks into classrooms through the 'Rug of the Week' social media campaign.

The new year is the perfect time to celebrate your collective impact. Continue to bring your energy, creativity, and passion for Pre-K to your classrooms and remember to have fun with your students. Thank you for all that you do!

Happy Winter + Happy Reading!

*Georgia's
Pre-K :)*

Inclusive Early Learning Week!

Please join us for Inclusive Early Learning Week, **February 9-13, 2026!**

The SEEDS Program, along with other partnering departments at DECAL, welcome you to help us in celebrating during the week of Valentine's Day. During this week, there will be activities to help bring awareness to the importance of inclusive practices in the classroom and in the community to support all children. There will be opportunities for you to participate in contests, trainings, as well as ways to engage the children and families of your program. To learn more about the activities of the week, please click on the QR code.



To learn more about the activities of the week, click on the QR code and listen to our podcast episode [here!](#)



In this newsletter you can find...

Save the Date for Inclusive Early Learning Week

WSO Reminders

Every Amazing Story Contest

Share Time! Show us your RUG!

You asked; we answered! Q+A time!

Teacher Training Information

TOTY Updates + Favorite Winter Lesson Plan Activities

The Pre-K Scoop

Work Sampling Online (WSO) Period 2 Reminders

- 1) Remember to change the Period setting on the 'Enter Evidence' screen from Collection Period 1 to Collection Period 2. This will not happen automatically because Pre-K calendars vary from program to program. Once you save a note under a new Collection Period, it will default all subsequent notes to that same Period until you change it again.



- 2) If your Period 1 Checklists are not yet finalized, please do so immediately or your students will be omitted from any Outcomes Reports that your Pre-K director may request. Currently, we have 36,911 Period 1 checklists that have not yet been finalized.
- 3) Remember to timely 'archive' any students that disenroll from your Pre-K Program.
- 4) Whenever you need assistance with WSO, submit a WSO Online Help Ticket at: <http://www.decal.ga.gov/Prek/PreKChildAssessmentProgram.aspx>. We will do our best to respond to your request within 24 hours. The WSO Training Manual, recorded webinars, WSO 'How To' files and a WSO FAQ sheet are also all available to you on this webpage.

Every Amazing Story Contest

Thank you for your participation in the Every Amazing Story Contest! Coy, Malcolm, and the review team loved seeing all of your creative, funny, heartfelt, and sincere entries. The stories told truly demonstrated how much love and fun goes into a Georgia's Pre-K Day!

The winners for each category will be announced in early February! Stay tuned!



Share Time!

The classroom rug is the heart of every Georgia's Pre-K classroom! We're looking for the most creative and welcoming large group rugs out there! Send in your best rug photos for a chance to be featured as Georgia's Pre-K Program Rug of the Week!

Send your emails to: prekrugoftheweek@decal.ga.gov



To kick us off, thanks to the following Pre-K programs!
L → R: unknown, Swainsboro Pre-K, Academy for Little People, Candler County Pre-K

The Pre-K Scoop

Q&A

Q: I've heard that starting in January, Pre-K payments will be prorated based on student enrollment. Will that impact teacher pay?

A. No. Proration applies only to the Operating portion of the payment and does not impact funds allocated to programs for lead or assistant teacher salaries.

Q. I need to update my GaPDS profile and have been asked to send official school transcripts. What is the difference between official and unofficial transcripts?

A. Official transcripts are sent from the educational institution in a sealed envelope to GaPDS for their review. In contrast, an unofficial transcript is typically one that you print from the institution's student portal, and it is usually marked as "unofficial."

Additional information about submitting documentation to GaPDS can be found in the FAQ section at [GaPDS](#).

DECAL Teacher Training

All lead and assistant teachers working in Georgia's Pre-K classrooms are required to meet the annual professional learning requirement by attending a session delivered by our Best Practice training team. Directors are responsible for registering teachers for training in GaPDS. Failure of providers and their staff to participate in required training will place their program in noncompliance and may result in probation.

Be sure to read your confirmation email from GaPDS Support completely so you can save the date and make appropriate arrangements for class coverage, travel, children, pets, and other obligations.

Remember that every training has online coursework to be completed after attending face-to-face training. You will find instructions for logging in and the link to the platform here: [Online Coursework - Best Practices Training \(gsu.edu\)](#). It is recommended that you complete the quiz and assignment within four weeks of attending training. The deadline to complete all online components is 4:00pm on March 25th.

We love to see you implement the strategies and activities you learn at training. Be sure to take photos and send them to the training team at bestpractices@gsu.edu!

Georgia's Pre-K TOTY

The first few months as Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the year have been fun for Mrs. Hart and Mrs. Swaim! They visited the DECAL offices in Atlanta in October to meet Commissioner Jacobs and join a podcast to talk about their love of and adventures in Pre-K. In November, they were off to sunny Florida to attend the annual NAEYC conference before they took over social media for a day in December and joined a literacy planning meeting. This month, they will be shadowing their Pre-K Specialist for the day to see what life as a Ga Pre-K Specialist is all about - not to mention the fun of visiting classrooms in their area and having the opportunity to talk with other Pre-K teachers and directors. Follow along to see what they do next!





Favorite Winter Lesson Plan Activity

Teresa Swaim, Public School GA Pre-K TOTY



The Snowman Who Loved Summer

Getting Started

Story: [The Snowman Who Loved Summer](#)

Lesson Title: What Happens When Snow Melts?

Learning Objectives: Children will: - Listen to and engage with a story. - Discuss seasons and temperature changes. - Explore cause and effect through science. - Express ideas and creativity through art.
GELDS: LL14.1, LL15.3, SC3.1, SC3.2, SED4.1, CA2.1

Materials Needed:

- The Snowman Who Loved Summer book
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Markers
- Picture cards of summer and winter items
- Shaving cream
- White school glue
- Blue liquid watercolor or food coloring
- Cardstock or snowman outlines
- Paintbrushes or craft sticks



Extension Activities

Science Connection

- Discuss what happens to snow and ice when they get warm.
- Introduce the concept of melting.
- Connect the discussion back to the story.

Extension Art Activity

Puffy Paint Melting Snowman

Objective: Children will create a textured snowman using puffy paint to show melting.

Directions

- Mix equal parts shaving cream and white glue.
- Add a small amount of blue coloring and swirl gently.
- Children spread the mixture onto their snowman artwork.
- Encourage downward strokes to represent melting.
- Allow artwork to dry overnight.

Teacher Prompts

- What does your snowman look like as he melts?
- Why is the paint dripping?
- How does this show summer weather?

GELDS Alignment: CA2.1, SC3.2, LL15.3

The Lesson

Lesson Introduction (5 minutes):

- Show the book cover and ask children what they notice.
- Discuss summer and winter briefly.
- Introduce vocabulary: melt, summer, winter, temperature.

Read Aloud (10 minutes):

- Read the story aloud with expression.
- Pause to ask prediction questions:
 - What do you think will happen to the snowman?
 - Why might summer be hard for a snowman?

Comprehension & Discussion (5-7 minutes):

- Why did the snowman love summer?
- What happened when it became warm?
- How did the snowman feel?

Teacher records student responses on chart paper.

Assessment

- Participation during story time
- Use of new vocabulary
- Ability to explain cause and effect
- Engagement in art activity

Closing Activity

Children complete the sentence: > "If I were a snowman, I would like ___ because ___."

Parent Connection Note

Dear Families,

This week in Pre-K, we read *The Snowman Who Loved Summer!* Through this story, children explored the difference between seasons and learned what happens when snow gets warm and begins to melt.

As an extension activity, the children created a **puffy paint melting snowman** using shaving cream and glue. This fun art project helped reinforce science concepts like cause and effect while encouraging creativity and language development.

Try this at home: - Talk with your child about the seasons. - Ask them what happens to ice on a warm day. - Encourage them to describe their snowman artwork.

Thank you for supporting learning at home!

Warmly,
Your Pre-K Teachers



Favorite Winter Lesson Plan Activity

Autumn Hart, Private Program GA Pre-K TOTY



Polar Polka: A Math Story Activity

Getting Started

Story: *Polar Polka: Counting Polar Bears in Alaska* by Cherie B. Stihler

Standard(s) addressed:

CD-MA2 - The child will manipulate, compare, describe relationships, and solve problems using number and quantity.

- CD-MA2.4b: Counts at least 10 objects using one-to-one correspondence.
- CD-MA-2.4c: Practices combining, separating, and naming quantities.

Materials Needed:

- Polar Polka Story Book by Cherie B. Stihler
- 10 Counting Bears
- White Printer Paper
- Rekenrek (1 per child and teacher)



Variations/ Modifications/Accommodations

Students can use one Rekenrek line to only add and take away the Polar Bears to practice counting and combining and separating quantities to 10, or for higher level learners, use two lines to add in the other polar animals to combine and separate quantities to 20

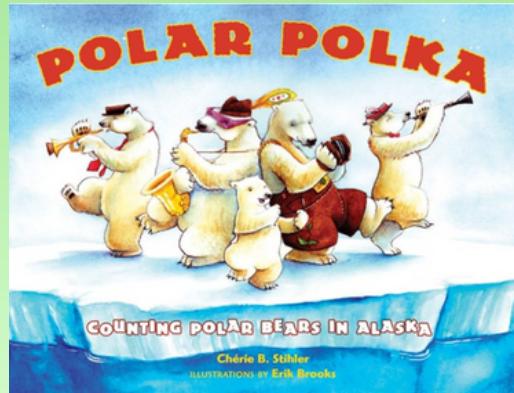


The Lesson

Review using a Rekenrek for the activity. Introduce the book by taking a picture walk to identify the various polar animals in the story, and point out the numerals in the story. Discuss that this must be a counting book similar to the *Over in the Arctic* or other counting books they are familiar with.

Set up 10 counting bears on white paper. Explain that you will count along using counting bears and the Rekenrek to follow along with the Polar Bear Polka Party in the story.

As you read, count the bears with the children on the "iceberg", tearing off a piece of paper each time, stopping to review and count how many have floated away and how many are left.



NOTES

If you have taken the Pre-K Best Practices Teacher training, M in STEM, you will remember the activities around Rekenreks! You can purchase Rekenreks or DIY them! Rekenreks help children master early skills such as counting, subitizing, the decomposition of numbers, and more. They are a fantastic hands-on, visual manipulative for students.

Printable Plans

For printable versions of both TOTY lesson plans, look under the Pre-K Story Time tab on the [Teacher page of the DECAL Website](#).



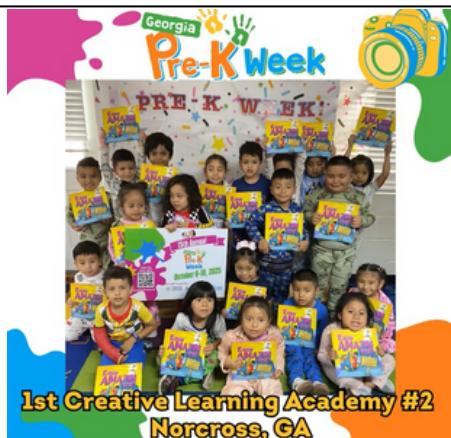
Extra, Extra!



THE APPLICATION FOR
2026-2027 GA PRE-K TOTY
WILL OPEN FEBRUARY 16TH.
TO LEARN ABOUT THE TOTY
QUALIFICATIONS AND
RESPONSIBILITIES,
[CLICK HERE](#).



ICYMI: Pre-K Week Photo Contest Winners!



Thank you for reading!

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