



The GA Pre-K 411: Teacher Edition

Happy Fall!



Welcome to the 'ber months when the seasons change, the time changes, we practice getting coats on and zipped up, and the anticipation of upcoming holidays and fall field trips all merge!

By now, the dust has settled in your classrooms and on the start of the new school year. Routines are established and community is built. This is such a magical time when the pieces come together and an abundance of learning and growth can take place.

Remember to be intentional with your planning, strategic with your assessment documentation, creative with your center materials, and joyful with your interactions with your students.

Happy Fall Memory Making!

Georgia's Pre-K :)

15th Annual Georgia's Pre-K Week



Thank you for your support, creativity, and participation in the 15th Annual Georgia's Pre-K Week! What a fantastic way to kickoff October! We had a record breaking number of registrations this year and a fun photo contest ending Friday, October 31st! Speaking of photos, thank you for sending in yours! We had a continuous stream of photos from your classrooms

showcasing the many community members, state leaders, and other visitors reading as well as the fun dress up days, family activities, Every Amazing Story book activities, and more! Stay tuned to Decal and Voices for Georgia's Children Social Media for the winners of the photo contest!



In this newsletter you can find...

GA Pre-K Week a Success!

Meet the 2025-2026 Ga Pre-K Teachers of the Year

DECAL Teacher Training

WSO Tips + Reminders

Q+A with SEEDS

GA AIMH 2025 Conference

Other Pre-K + Agency Updates

The Pre-K Scoop

Meet the 2025-2026 Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the Year



Autumn Hart

Bundle of Joy Academy, Marietta

Autumn has dedicated 18 years to the field of Early Care and Learning, beginning her journey as a director of a childcare center before discovering her true passion for teaching young children. She joined Georgia's Pre-K program in 2013 as an assistant teacher while pursuing her bachelor's degree in early care and education at Kennesaw State University, which she completed in 2020. Throughout her career, Autumn has built lasting relationships with her students and their families, often teaching siblings and cousins to extend her classroom community year after year. Autumn is married and has two adult children. Her son is currently studying music education at the University of Georgia, and her daughter works with children and families in a pediatric office. Teaching and caring for young children is truly a passion that runs in her family. In her free time, Autumn enjoys watching her son perform in music and theater, traveling with her husband, family, and friends, and spending time with her granddaughter.



Teresa Swaim

West Jackson Elementary, Hoschton

Teresa has been part of Georgia's Pre-K program for 18 years, beginning as a paraprofessional before becoming a lead teacher at West Jackson Elementary in 2012. She graduated Summa Cum Laude from Ashford University with a degree in Early Childhood Education and has loved every step of her journey. Teresa believes teaching isn't just her job, it's her passion, and she brings joy and excitement to her classroom every day. Teaching is more than a career for Teresa- it's her passion. She finds every day with her students rewarding and fun, creating an environment where children feel loved, inspired, and ready to learn. Outside of school, she enjoys camping and biking at Jekyll Island, spending time with her husband of 42 years, their three children, six grandchildren, and her Yorkie puppy, Honey.

You'll meet Teresa and Autumn on this week's [DECAL Download podcast](#)! Tune in to hear their inspiring stories and what makes their classrooms so special!



2025-2026 Teacher of the Year Finalists

Shawna Butler, Castial Academy, Statham

Sheba Hill, Gems Academy, Union City

Erica Mimbs, Bleckley County Primary School, Cochran

Katonia Williams, Sallas Mahone Elementary, Valdosta

The Pre-K Scoop

WSO Tips + Reminders

- Unless you're a new lead teacher, you should have already entered all your students into WSO. Step-by-Step instructions for creating a class, adding students and creating checklists may be found in the [WSO Training Manual \(ga.gov\)](#), beginning on page 25.
- Ratings should be entered on the developmental checklist each week. Documentation must be provided to support your ratings in the Personal and Social, Language and Literacy, and Mathematical Thinking domains.
- When a student leaves your program, complete any outstanding data entry and 'archive' the student as quickly as possible.
- If you need assistance with WSO, submit a WSO Online Help Ticket at: <http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/Prek/PreKChildAssessmentProgram.aspx>.

DECAL Teacher Training Info

Training is required for all Georgia's Pre-K teachers. Directors are responsible for registration. 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.

Prior to attending Understanding Challenging Behavior or New Lead or Assistant Teacher Training you are REQUIRED to watch this 1-hour [Pyramid Model overview podcast](#).

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.

SEEDS | Supporting Young Learners: Common Challenges & Helpful Strategies

As we settle into the rhythm of the school year, many teachers are celebrating growth and progress while also navigating persistent challenges. This month, we're spotlighting a few common concerns and offering practical strategies to support your classroom community.

Q: I have two children who consistently refuse to come to circle time. How can I encourage them or support them in another way?

A: Start by observing what might be causing their reluctance—are they overwhelmed, disinterested, or simply unsure of what to expect? Try offering a choice: "Would you like to sit next to me or choose a special seat?" You can also invite them to help with a circle-time job (e.g., holding a book or choosing a song) to increase engagement. If they still prefer not to join, consider offering a quiet alternative nearby so they can ease into participation over time.

Q: I have a child who always plays alone during outside time. Is this okay, or should I help him get involved?

A: Solitary play can be perfectly healthy, especially if the child seems content. However, if you're concerned about social development, try gently facilitating peer interactions. You might say, "I noticed you like building with blocks—would you like to show your friend how you do it?" Small group activities or parallel play can also be great bridges to more social engagement.

Q: I have a child who is still very sad and withdrawn in the mornings, missing home. What are some ways I can support her?

A: Consistency and connection are key. Greet her warmly each day and offer a predictable routine to help her feel secure. A comfort item from home, a special morning job, or a quiet space to transition can ease the separation. Building a strong relationship with her and communicating with her family can also help create a sense of safety and belonging.

Agency Awareness

GA Association for Infant Mental Health: Birth to Five 2025 Conference

The [Georgia Association for Infant Mental Health: Birth to Five \(GA-AIMH\)](#) is hosting its [fourth annual conference](#) on **Wednesday, November 12, 2025**, at Georgia State University. This year's theme, **Unwavering Commitment**, honors the resilience, passion, and dedication of those working to promote the social and emotional well-being of Georgia's infants, young children, their families, and the professionals who serve them. The conference brings together early childhood educators, mental and behavioral health clinicians, home visitors, early interventionists, peer specialists, and more.

Karol A. Wilson, LMSW, IMH-E®, a deeply respected leader, consultant, and advocate in the field of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health is this year's Distinguished Speaker. With an commitment to connection, care, and community, Karol has dedicated her career to uplifting the workforce that stands at the heart of this field. Karol brings decades of expertise in reflective supervision, workforce development, and leadership mentoring, and is widely admired for her ability to hold space with both wisdom and compassion. Her work has strengthened countless professionals, organizations, and systems—always with a focus on relationships as the foundation for growth and healing.

Whether you're interested in joining us as a sponsor or exhibitor, or simply showing up to be in community, there's a place for you at the conference!

Date: Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Location: Georgia State University | Atlanta, Georgia

Time: 9 AM to 4 PM

Registration: \$75 (September 1 to October 31)

Late Registration: \$100 (November 1 to November 10)

[Register Here](#)



If you have any questions, reach out to GA-AIMH at aimh@gsu.edu.

"Our vision is for all of Georgia's infants and young children to be safe and nurtured through consistent, caregiving relationships so they can reach their fullest potential."

Thank you for reading!

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