



**Georgia Dept
of Early Care
and Learning**
BRIGHT FROM THE START

Brian P. Kemp
Governor

Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DECAL Announces 2026–2027 Georgia’s Pre-K Teachers of the Year

Winners Hail from Atlanta (Private School) and Jefferson (Public School)

ATLANTA, Ga., (October 2, 2026) — The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) has named its Georgia’s Pre-K Teachers of the Year for the 2026–2027 school year, just in time for the 16th annual Georgia’s Pre-K Week, observed October 5–9, 2026. The private-school winner is Skyla Holmes-Hood of Angel’s Paradise Learning Center in Atlanta, and the public-school winner is Leah Mays of Jefferson Elementary School in Jefferson.

As Pre-K Teachers of the Year, Holmes-Hood and Mays will each receive \$3,000 for their personal use and \$4,500 for classroom and program use. Winners serve as ambassadors for Georgia’s Pre-K Program by public speaking, representing the program at various meetings, and modeling effective classroom practices.

The winners were selected from six finalists. Each finalist submitted lesson plans for review, had a class observation, and faced a panel for a personal interview.

“Since the beginning of Georgia’s Pre-K Program in 1992, more than two million children have entered Kindergarten better prepared to succeed in school,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “That preparation has been possible only because of dedicated Pre-K professionals who work with their students every day. Honoring exemplary Pre-K teachers by recognizing Pre-K Teachers of the Year is one way to thank them for their hard work.”

“Skyla and Leah remind us of the lasting difference a caring, dedicated teacher can make in a child’s life,” said Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner for Pre-K and Instructional Supports. “Their passion for helping young children learn, grow, and thrive reflects what makes Georgia’s Pre-K Program so special—and why it continues to serve as a model for other states.”

Among other requirements, candidates for Georgia’s Pre-K Teacher of the Year must have been employed as a Georgia’s Pre-K lead teacher during the 2025–2026 school year, taught as a lead teacher in a Georgia’s Pre-K classroom for a minimum of three years, and must be planning to continue as a lead teacher in a Georgia’s Pre-K classroom during the 2026–2027 school year.

This school year more than 71,000 four-year-olds are attending Georgia’s Pre-K Program. The voluntary, lottery-funded Pre-K program has been recognized as one of the top programs in the nation, based on quality standards, teacher qualifications, and enrollment.

About Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is the state agency supporting Georgia’s children and families by overseeing and promoting access to high-quality early care and education programs. These programs include Georgia’s Pre-K, child care licensing, CAPS, Quality Rated, nutrition programs, Head Start collaboration, and statewide quality improvement efforts. Get more information at www.dec.ga.gov.