



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

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

Brian P. Kemp
Governor

Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner

July 2021

Dear Child Care Professionals of Georgia:

A few weeks ago I had the pleasure of surprising the finalists for the **Georgia's Pre-K Teacher of the Year** award. They were thrilled, of course, to get the news, and I felt uplifted by their passion and enthusiasm. I'm happy to share their names and tell you about the selection process. I'm also very excited to announce two new awards that will recognize excellence and promote the professionalism of the entire early learning workforce in Georgia. All of these awards are privately funded through the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning.

You'll recall that we select two Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the year, one from a public school and one from a private program. From public schools, the finalists are:

- Stephanie Curington from Kings Chapel Elementary in Houston County,
- Teresa Swaim from West Jackson Elementary in Jackson County, and
- Lisa West from Crisp County Pre-K in Crisp County.

This year's finalists from private programs are:

- LaNita Carey from Jackson Creek Academy in Gwinnett County,
- Shelley Hoster from 1st Creative Learning Center #2 in Gwinnett County, and
- Marie Thebaud from Kiddie Kottage Academy in Cobb County.

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the DECAL Scholars program this year, DECAL and the Foundation are inaugurating the **DECAL Scholar of the Year** award. The DECAL Scholars program offers scholarships and incentives to support child care professionals in continuing their education and obtaining credentials. We will recognize two DECAL Scholars of the Year, one who is attending a four-year college or university and one attending a technical college.

We are also introducing this year the **Early Childhood Educator of the Year** program for professionals who teach younger children, from birth to age 3. A winner will be chosen from each of three divisions:

- Infant Teacher (Birth to 18 months)
- Toddler Teacher (15 months to 36 months)
- Preschool Teacher (36 months to 48 months)

All these awards recognize exceptionally high quality in classroom teaching and demonstrate the importance of early childhood educators in giving children a foundation for future academic

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success. These are not popularity contests. Winners receive cash awards and serve as ambassadors to help us promote excellence throughout the early care and education system.

In early September, finalists for Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the Year will participate in virtual interviews with a panel selected by DECAL. They will submit one week of completed lesson plans for our review, and they will send us videos of small-group and large-group instructions, which will be scored. The winners will be announced in late September or early October. Each winner receives \$3,000 for her own use and \$2,000 for a classroom makeover. The Foundation also provides the school with funds up to \$2,500 for travel expenses and stipends for substitute teachers so that the Teacher of the Year can highlight best practices outside of their classroom and around the state.

Candidates for DECAL Scholar of the Year must be currently participating in the DECAL Scholars program; work in a licensed program, an exempt Head Start or Department of Defense program, or a Georgia's Pre-K public school program; have a minimum of two years' attendance at a four-year college or university or one year at a technical college; and have a minimum GPA of 3.0. Winners receive \$1,500 and \$500 for a classroom makeover. They and their students will also have a virtual visit with Coy Bowles, lead guitarist for the Zac Brown Band, a member of the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning Board of Directors, and author of several children's books including, *What's Behind the Little Red Door?* Winners will be announced in July.

Candidates for Early Childhood Educator of the Year must be credentialed lead teachers with a minimum of three years as a lead teacher; plan to continue as a lead teacher for at least a year; and work at a 2- or 3-star Quality Rated program that is in good standing with DECAL. The Early Childhood Educators of the Year will receive \$3,000 for personal use, \$2,000 for a classroom makeover and up to \$2,500 for travel expenses and stipends.

Teachers may apply on the Foundation website, www.gaearlyed.org, from August 2 until September 3. Winners will be announced in December 2021.

Because the Early Childhood Educator of the Year is a new program, we'll be doing a lot of social media outreach to make sure we get a large pool of applicants. I hope you follow us on social media; and if you'll share these posts when you see them, I will be very grateful.

Thank you for all you do to support the continuous improvement of our early care and learning system in Georgia. I truly appreciate your partnership. I hope you have plans for summer that will keep you cool!

Sincerely,



Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner



Did you know over 20,000 people shop for child care and summer camps on DECAL's website every month? If you're a child care provider, update your profile on <https://decalkoala.com/> TODAY to make sure you're putting your best foot forward!

Finalists Named for Georgia's Pre-K Program 2021-2022 Teachers of the Year

In May 2021, Georgia's six finalists for the GA Pre-K Program Teacher of the Year were announced with each receiving \$500. The 2021-2022 finalists are LaNita Carey from Jackson Creek Academy in Lilburn; Stephanie Curington from Kings Chapel Elementary School in Perry; Shelley Hoster from 1st Creative Learning Academy #2 in Norcross; Teresa Swaim from West Jackson Elementary School in Hoschton; Marie Thebaud from Kid-die Kottage Academy in Austell; and Lisa West from Crisp County Pre-K in Cordele.

Pre-K lead teachers who have taught as a lead teacher in a GA Pre-K classroom for a minimum of three years were invited to apply for Teacher of the Year. The application was posted on the DECAL website in February. Applicants must meet Georgia's Pre-K credential and Professional Development System requirements and plan to continue as a lead teacher for the coming year. They must also be employed by a GA Pre-K Program provider in good standing with all programs administered by DECAL (GA Pre-K, Child Care Services [CCS] Childcare and Parent Services [CAPS] and Nutrition Services.)

This fall, the finalists will be interviewed and receive a classroom evaluation. DECAL will then select two winners in September, one from a public school system and another from a private child care learning center. The winners will receive a \$3,000 check for themselves and \$2,000 for a classroom makeover and supplies. Their schools will receive up to \$2,500 to cover substitutes and travel expenses while the teacher is away.

The winners will serve as ambassadors for Georgia's Pre-K Program, attending meetings and conferences, making presentations, and modeling effective classroom practices.

Planting SEEDS for a Successful School Year

The Inclusion and Behavior Support Unit at DECAL is committed to supporting childcare providers in creating and maintaining high-quality, inclusive environments for all of Georgia's earliest learners. With the unique experiences that young children and their families have faced over the past year, we want to offer providers resources to ensure every classroom is an inclusive environment where all children can succeed. To do this, we are launching an outreach campaign entitled ***Planting SEEDS for a Successful School Year***. This campaign will provide strategies and resources in the form of tip sheets, webinars, provider testimonials, and a Facebook Live series that all focus on boosting social-emotional wellness and minimizing challenging child behaviors within your program. Social media outlets will be our main form of communicating these tools to the community, so be sure to follow DECAL on Facebook and Instagram. Please take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about the Specialists in your area and hear our team touch on common issues in the classroom. We will be providing tips on how to implement various inclusive practices and ideas on how to embed social emotional supports throughout the learning day. The outreach campaign will also feature success stories from providers across Georgia, as well as information on how and when to reach out to us for support. Through a successful partnership with Georgia early childhood providers, we as an education community can address the needs of our children and build a strong foundation for a successful school year. For more information about the free trainings and coaching support we provide, contact the SEEDS for Success Helpline at 1-(833) 354-HELP, or email us at

Inclusion@decalfga.gov.

1.833.354.HELP
GEORGIA SEEDS for SUCCESS



Planning for Summer Just Got a Whole Lot Easier!

Positive youth development begins with the 5 C's: Confidence - Character - Connection - Competence - Contribution. Youth need to practice these to become proficient. Try this activity to build Confidence and form Connections with your school age students! This is a great ice breaker and a “get to know you” activity.

Activity directions: To set up the game, give each child a piece of paper, pen, and a piece of tape. Have the children write their name on the top of the paper. Tape the piece of paper on their backs. Have the children sit in two circles, an outer and inner. Have the children in the outer circle face the children in the inner circle. Everyone should be sitting across from a partner. Have the children sitting in the outer circle start the game. Give them one minute to tell their partner something positive about themselves (something they are good at, proud of, how they are a good friend etc.) At the end of the minute have their partner write one positive word about the speaker on the paper that is taped to their back. Have them switch roles and have the listener speak and repeat. When each partner has gone a round, have the outer circle move one seat to the left and the inner circle move one seat to the right. Repeat the game. When everyone has been paired up with several partners have the kids take the papers off their backs and read to themselves all the positive words their peers had to say about them.

For additional activities check out the Summer Activity Guide which is a suite of **150 Activities and Challenges** divided into 5 units organized by four different age groups (5-9) (10-12) (13-15) (16-18). You can download the [Summer Activity Guide at Summer Activity Guide - GSAN \(afterschoolga.org\)](#) You can also access on-demand webinars to help implement summer learning. [Getting to Know the New Summer Activity Guide](#) dives into the structure and elements of the activities for each age group so that participants feel comfortable facilitating every component of these lessons. [Keeping Youth Engaged this Summer](#) allows participants to learn more about effective positive youth development practices and how to use the new Summer Activity Guide to effectively engage with youth through different delivery models.

Hurricane Season: June 1st—November 30th

During the hurricane season, please be prepared for severe weather such as tornadoes, strong winds, and heavy rain. What can you do immediately to prepare for this season?

1. Determine a local and trusted media source to get your weather updates from.
2. Make sure your staff and families know the emergency closure plan for your program and encourage each of them to have an emergency home plan as well.
3. Keep tree limbs and shrubs trimmed.
4. Make sure you have copies of all critical documents ahead of time.
5. Begin gathering items for your preparedness kit so it won't be a huge expense at once.

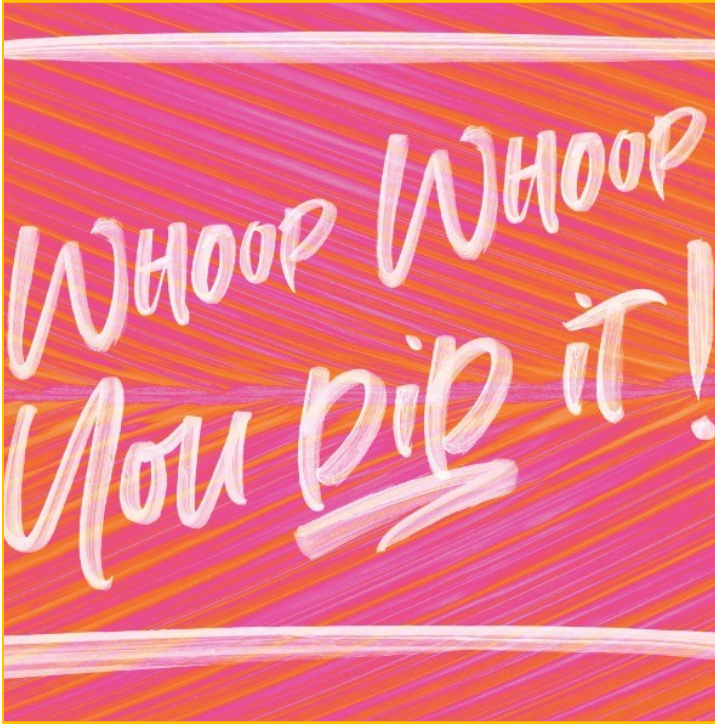
For more detailed information, visit

<http://www.dec.state.ga.us/documents/attachments/HurricaneInformationalFlyer.pdf>



Southeast Region: Quality Rated Program Recognition

Congratulations to the following programs for earning new ratings, maintaining ratings, or increasing ratings since April 1, 2021!



Rivers Day Care
 Jacqueline F. Roland
 Tender Years Learning Center #14
 The Norman Academy
 Tiny Tots Learning Center
 Utopia Early Child Development
 and Learning Center LLC
 Retha R. Weatherspoon
 Young Learners Day Care
 Sharon D. Denison
 Khadija A. Flannings
 Natasha J. Fleming
 Cathy L. Hartley
 Eula V. Howell
 Humble Beginnings Childcare LLC

Humpty Dumpty Learning Center
 Janice L. Lee
 Little Country Day Care Preschool
 #1
 Patricia A. McBride
 Cynthia E. Mcfadden
 Samantha T. Moultry-Maxwell
 Our Little Blessings
 Mellissa A. Boatright
 Clementina R. Clealand
 Annette Cuyler
 Islands YMCA Fun Club
 Rhonda L Burns
 Eagle's Nest Learning Center
 Little Miracles Learning Center
 Step by Step Child Care and
 Learning Center
 Teach Love & Care Learning
 Center



How to Prepare for LO-VE by TA Shelly Lawson

1. Share the assessment tool with all staff by emailing it to them or making copies for them.
2. Review the feedback forms from the topic assignments to see what areas were needing improvement.
3. Continue informal observations, both in-house and virtually.
4. Provide opportunities for the staff to have Q&A sessions.
5. Stay in contact with your TA for any assistance that is needed.



A huge shout out to Teach, Love & Care Learning Center in Effingham County for being the first program to go through the LO-VE process in our 40-county region and knocking it out of the park by increasing to a 3-Star program!

Looking for staff???

Post your open positions using the following links:

<https://employgeorgia.com/>

<https://careers.childcareaware.org/>

Now
Hiring!

Professional Learning Opportunities

Jan Leverett is now teaching the **Fire Safety Class for Caregivers** as required by Georgia law. Classes of five (5) or more students can be taught at your location. Cost for the Fire Safety Class (5 hours credit) is \$25.00 per student.

Evening classes available in Wayne, Liberty, and Long counties.

Saturdays, Sunday afternoons, or any weekday daytime sessions available in:

Appling, Atkinson, Bacon, Bleckley, Brantley, Bryan, Bulloch, Camden, Candler, Charlton, Chatham, Clinch, Coffee, Dodge, Echols, Effingham, Emanuel, Evans, Glynn, Jeff Davis, Jones, Lanier, Laurens, Liberty, Long, Lowndes, McIntosh, Monroe, Montgomery, Pierce, Screven, Tattnall, Toombs, Treutlen, Twiggs, Ware, Washington, Wayne, Wheeler, and Wilkinson.

Contact Jan at 912-294-4267 or jleverettfire@gmail.com to schedule a class or for more information.

Quality Rated Peer Support Network

The Peer Support Network (PSN) was created by child care providers to share ideas, success stories, and lessons learned during the Quality Rated experience. The PSN is open to all programs who are interested in earning or increasing their Quality Rated star rating. Topics of discussion are guided by the interests and needs of the participants.

PSN Meetings are open to program owners, directors, and administrators.

Participants receive Bright from the Start ADM training hours.

To register for a session, search "Peer Support Network" under Trainings > Find Scheduled Training Session. You will see the September 2021 training. You can select a meeting based on a date and time that works for you or use the schedule to select a specific session based on the county or ambassador serving as host.

Bulloch County:

Michelle Smith-Lank
minelsmith@yahoo.com

912-764-4298

Camden County:

Gillian Butler
kopedcs@kingofpeace.org

912-882-7067

Laurens County:

Dee Harrell
deejharrell@gmail.com

478-274-1453

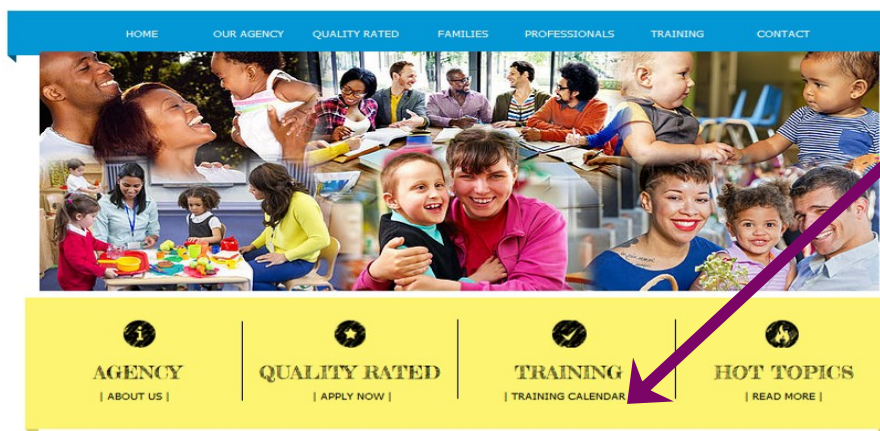
How to Register for Trainings

Go to: www.ccrrofsoutheastga.org



Click on the *Training Calendar* link.

From there, you will be redirected to the Calendars/ Events page.



To register, click on the training you are interested in.

This will take you to our information page. Please read **ALL** information and then click on the PDS link to reserve your spot in that session.

CALENDARS / EVENTS
Trainings

Time zone: GMT -04:00 < March 2021 > Today

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8 ! 6:30pm Ex...	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18 ! 6:30pm Jo...	19	20
21	22	23	24 ! 12:15pm Gl...	25 ! 6:00pm Su... ! 6:15pm Gul...	26	27
28	29	30 ! 6:15pm Sta...	31	1	2	3

****PLEASE NOTE THAT WHEN YOU REGISTER FOR A CCR&R TRAINING THROUGH THE GA PDS, THE ZOOM LINK IS SENT IN YOUR REGISTRATION CONFIRMATION EMAIL. PLEASE SAVE THAT EMAIL FOR ACCESS TO THE TRAINING SESSION. THIS SAME EMAIL WILL HAVE THE LINKS TO ANY SESSION DOCUMENTS/HANDOUTS THAT ARE NEEDED FOR THE TRAININGS AS WELL****

Childcare Resource & Referral of Southeast Georgia
at Savannah Technical College
190 Crossroads Parkway
Savannah, GA 31407
www.ccrrofsoutheastga.org
Telephone: 912.443.3011
Toll Free: 1.877.935.7575
Email: ccrr5@savannahtech.edu

Dana Driggers Assistant Director of Operations 912.667.4563	Melissa Cole Executive Director 912.443.3016	Terenia Moody Assistant Director of Operations 912.433.9482
Jenna Tucker Fiscal Coordinator 912.443.5080	Stephanie Rozier Technical Assistance Coordinator 912.433.0462	Johnnye Rogers Community Engagement Specialist 912.443.3384
Jessica Boshuizen Professional Learning Coordinator 912.650.3937	Monica Natoli Professional Learning Coordinator 912.677.3517	Pam Scalf Professional Learning Coordinator 912.663.0100
Jeneine Barlow Technical Assistance Manager 912.704.8192	Cynthia Akins Technical Assistance Manager 912.655.6682	Jennifer McMichael Technical Assistance Manager 912.659.7454
Allison Wall Technical Assistance Manager 912.433.9577	Shelly Lawson Technical Assistance Coordinator 912.650.1777	Sheila Booker Technical Assistance Coordinator 912.433.3307
Linda Reed Technical Assistance Coordinator 912.659.5263	Mandy Roe Technical Assistance Coordinator 912.663.0137	Cindy Beecher Technical Assistance Coordinator 912.663.0218
Linda Taylor Technical Assistance Coordinator 912.433.1116	Maureen Harris Technical Assistance Coordinator 912.433.0461	Letty Kinslow Technical Assistance Coordinator 912.659.6663
	Cantina Gandy Technical Assistance Coordinator 912.655.8143	



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