

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are





September 2017 - In This Issue By the Numbers Follow DECAL on Social Media DECAL TV Quiz Winner Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz Winner **CAPS** Transition Moving Forward Wright and Ringsrud Graduate from Governmental Accounting Program SCCP Gets Underway September 5 Four Georgia Children Win in "We Care, Child Care" Sweepstakes New Faces and Places Privacy Matters September Birthdays Board of Early Care and Learning Commissioner's Corner 50 Infant and Toddler Classrooms Awarded Grants Study Confirms Pre-K Students Sustain Progress in First Grade Georgia's Pre-K Program Begins 25th Year Person on the Street New Ouality Rated Programs Virtual Suggestion Box

DECAL By the Numbers

4,791 - Licensed child care programs in Georgia

- 1,388 Quality Rated Programs in Georgia
- 3,851 Classes in Georgia's Pre-K Program

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs



Dear DECALers,

I've known for weeks what the "themes" of my letter to you this month were going to be. If, when I tell you what they are, you think, "Oh, those don't apply to me right now," just give it time; they will apply soon enough, so please keep reading.

Without question, these two themes...CHANGE and FLEXIBILITY...do apply to hundreds of us here at DECAL as we experience one of the biggest transitions in the history of this department...assuming

responsibility for administering all components of CAPS while also changing the program's focus.

One thing I've learned in my own life, personal and professional, is that *nothing stays the same forever*. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus said it this way: *There is nothing permanent except change*. For many of us, this inevitable change can be hard. It can produce stress, pressure, and insecurity. I admit that, at times lately, I have felt stressed by all the decisions, plans, and unforeseen challenges associated with this transition. I suspect many of you have felt the same way.

Another truth about change is that *it takes time*. I wish I could flip a switch and all the new staff would be hired and trained...all the space would be renovated, furnished, and moved into...all the CAPS providers and families would know who to call with their real-life questions or issues. But we all know that's not the way life works.

Which brings me to my second theme: FLEXIBILITY. Right now these changes have created a *new normal* at DECAL: increased phone calls and e-mails; unmet deadlines and timelines out of our control; former meeting rooms being used as office space for badly needed staff. I believe the only

969 - Children participating in Georgia's Pre-K Program Longitudinal Study

50- Infant and Toddler Classrooms receiving Early Language and Literacy Grants

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DECAL TV Quiz Winner



DECAL's Quality Rated Assessor Jennifer Waters is the winner of this month's DECAL TV Quiz. She won two tickets to Stone Mountain. Jennifer's name was drawn from all employees who took the quiz and scored 100. To win, watch next month's DECAL TV and complete the next quiz for your chance to score some fun prizes donated by local businesses!

Jennifer Waters

Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz Winner

DECAL's Quality Improvement and Training Consultant Teresa Churchwell is the winner of this month's Decidedly DECAL CALi Quiz. She won two tickets to the Atlanta Botanical Garden. Teresa's name was drawn from all employees who took the quiz and scored 100. To win, read this issue of Decidedly DECAL and complete the next quiz for your chance to score some fun prizes donated by local businesses!



Plans are Underway to Complete CAPS Move by the End of the Year healthy way for us as individuals and as an organization to successfully navigate our new normal is to be **flexible**.

To me, flexibility in our current situation means thinking about our co-workers' needs before our own; being willing to modify my plans on short notice if necessary; being patient; smiling; *choosing* to act with intentional kindness, encouragement, and respect instead of reacting with anger, resentment, and frustration.

My definition of flexibility may sound "Pollyanna" but *choosing* to be professional and positive is far better and more productive than being critical and negative. Negativity accomplishes nothing. Negativity is a toxin that poisons a person's or an organization's ability to succeed.

I understand that the changes DECAL is experiencing are hard...but we can't avoid it. So, I believe the best way to deal with these changes is to be flexible...which is a choice. We can choose the perspective I once saw on a poster: *As long as everything is exactly the way I want it, I am totally flexible*.

Or we can choose the perspective: Blessed are the flexible, for they will not be bent out of shape.

I encourage EACH of us to make the right, the best choice...for ourselves, for DECAL, and for the children and families we serve.

Sincerely,

DECAL & GOSA Award Grants to 50 Infant and Toddler Classrooms

DECAL joined the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) last month in awarding approximately \$2 million in Early Language and Literacy Classroom Grants to 50 infant and toddler classrooms across the state. "These state-funded grants will help implement strong language and literacy instruction for children in the earliest, and most critical, years of life," said Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs.

"Thanks to Governor Deal and the Georgia General Assembly, for the first time the state has committed significant funds targeting infants and toddlers," Jacobs explained. "This effort advances the Governor's goal that every child in Georgia reads on grade level by the end of third grade. Grant funding will provide infant and toddler teachers with coaching and professional development on building early literacy skills."

"GOSA is very excited to fund this grant opportunity because we know rapid brain development that specifically impacts language and higher cognitive functioning takes place during the first few years of a child's life," said GOSA Executive Director Martha Ann Todd. "Supporting infant and toddler teachers as they work to provide language-rich interactions, beginning at birth, will have tremendous positive impact on a child's ability to read well by the end of third grade."

The grants will foster positive and responsive relationships between teachers and children and will help develop critical early language and literacy skills. Teachers and directors will increase

The transition team for Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program hopes to complete the move of the CAPS eligibility function from the Division of Family and Children Services to DECAL by the end of the year. The team, led by Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs Elisabetta Kasfir and Deputy Commissioner for Finance and



Administration Ray Higgins, has begun an accelerated transition plan which includes hiring over 100 new staff, providing assistance managing the workload of existing DHS CAPS employees, and a new "Rapid Registration" process to help process new applications more quickly and efficiently.

DECAL launched a CAPS pilot project in 13 Georgia counties on July 17, 2017 and subsequently took on management of several statewide work streams for the CAPS program. Construction of new CAPS offices on the second floor of the State Agriculture Building is complete with plans to complete the fifth floor this fall. Training of new CAPS employees is underway on topics ranging from determining eligibility to using data systems such as Georgia Gateway and the Nexxphase phone system.

The CAPS move began in May 2012 under former Commissioner Bobby Cagle when Governor Nathan Deal signed the FY2013 budget which included moving CAPS from DHS to DECAL. The CAPS Administrative Team, much smaller in number, officially moved to DECAL on June 22, 2012. It has taken longer to move the larger eligibility function.

The new CAPS Program has three functional areas: Program Administration, Scholarship Administration, and Family Support. The Scholarship staff are centrally located in Atlanta, while Family Support staff will be regionally based throughout the state. Program Administration has both Atlanta based and remote staff.

"I thank our team for their diligence, hard work and patience throughout this process," said Kasfir. "CAPS will be a stronger component of the early education system that will ensure access to high quality child care for CAPS families all across Georgia."

"I thank the entire DECAL project team for their hard work, time commitment, and dedication throughout the effort thus far. Completing the final and largest phase of the CAPS transition is essential for the long-term improvement and success of the program," said Higgins.

Wright and Ringsrud Graduate from Governmental Accounting Program

Congratulations to Accounts Payable Accountant Atlantis Wright and Director of Audits and Compliance Rian Ringsrud who recently knowledge and skills in developing and maintaining a social, emotional, and intellectual climate that supports child-initiated and child-pursued learning and in building and sustaining positive relationships among adults and children.

"We are excited about this opportunity to support infant and toddler teachers and administrators in implementing strong language and literacy practices in their classrooms," said Jennie Couture, DECAL's Director of Practice and Support Services.



Meet the DECAL team responsible for awarding approximately \$2 million in Early Language and Literacy Classroom Grants to 50 infant and toddler classrooms across the state. First row (L-R) are Assistant Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports Susan Adams, Family Engagement Specialist Emily Smith, Director of Practices and Supports Jennie Couture, and Professional Learning Community Specialist Laura Reid. Second row (L-R) are Infant Toddler Manager Nicole Wilson, Program Support Coordinator Tanya Rowe, Inclusion Program Manager Brandy Locchetta, Director of Professional Learning Christi Moore, and Workforce Development Specialist Pamela Hall.

Study Confirms Georgia's Pre-K Students Sustain Progress in First Grade

According to findings from a recent study, students in Georgia's Pre-K Program continue to exhibit positive outcomes through the end of first grade across all domains of learning. The report is part of a multi-year evaluation of Georgia's Pre-K Program by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

"These findings clearly indicate that Georgia's signature early education program impacts children's

graduated from the State Financial Management Program: Primary Governmental Accounting Series. The program assists employees in learning how to apply Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) to transactions and events that occur in a government setting. Past DECAL graduates include Federal Reporting Accountant for CCDF Tu Bui and Federal Reporting Accountant for USDA and US HHS Bart Ellington in 2016; Accounts Payable Supervisor Melissa Donovan in 2015; and Georgia's Pre-K Program Rosters Specialist Shannen Grimes in 2014. All employees in DECAL's Finance Unit are required to graduate from the Primary Governmental Accounting Series.



Rian Ringsrud and Atlantis Wright

State Charitable Contributions Program Starts September 5

Georgia's annual State Charitable Contributions Program (SCCP) --- also known as The Campaign --- starts Tuesday, September 5, 2017 and runs through Friday, November 17, 2017. The SCCP is an opportunity for employees of the State of Georgia and the University System of Georgia to contribute to the non-profit of their choice through monthly payroll deductions or a one-time donation. There are more than 130,000 employees eligible to donate with over 1,000 charities participating. Each independent charity or federation of charities has been certified to be responsible, effective and upstanding.

Over the last 20 years, State of Georgia and University System employees have generously contributed over \$36 million to support a wide variety of causes. Last year, DECAL employees contributed \$11,691.22 with around 30% employee participation. academic development years after they participate in the program," said Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "The findings validate the important work accomplished by our teachers and assistant teachers every day and confirm that Pre-K provides the strong foundation needed for future learning."

DECAL commissioned the multi-year, comprehensive evaluation in 2011 at the request of the Georgia General Assembly. The study began with a sample of 1,169 children who participated in Georgia's Pre-K Program during the 2013-2014 school year and will follow them through their third grade year in 2017-2018.

"This study provides an important opportunity to follow over 1,100 children who attended Georgia's Pre-K through elementary school," said Dr. Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, principal investigator with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. "The results indicate that children made significant gains from Pre-K through first grade on most skills that were measured in English as well as the same skills when measured in Spanish for children who were Spanish-speaking dual language learners. However, children's gains tended to be greater in Pre-K and kindergarten than in first grade, suggesting that this earlier exposure may be especially beneficial."



Georgia's Pre-K Program is available in all 159 counties of the state. Approximately 60% of Georgia's four year olds are served by the program. Approximately 50% of Georgia's counties serve at least 70% of all eligible four year olds in their counties.

Susan Adams

"This study provides evidence of the impact of the program," said Assistant Commissioner for Pre-K and Instructional Supports Susan Adams. "It shows that Georgia's Pre-K is a beneficial and strong component of the state's educational

system. The study also helps inform decisions we make about policies and strategies that best support all of Georgia's youngest students."

The full report and an executive summary can be found at: http://decal.ga.gov/BftS/EvaluationGAPreKProgram.aspx.

Georgia's Pre-K Program Begins 25th Year



Susan Adams (Right) is shown pinning a Georgia's Pre-K Program 25th birthday pin on Board of Early Care and Learning Chair Susan Harper.

School is beginning for over 84,000 four year olds 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. This school year the program is celebrating its 25th birthday. For this school year, DECAL awarded 19 new Pre-K classes, 38 expansion classes at existing programs, and 3,794 continuation classes for a total of 3,851 classes serving 84,722 children.

"Starting Pre-K is an important time for children and families," said Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "Often it is the first time a child has been away from home and in a school environment. Georgia's Pre-K teachers, directors, and DECAL staff work hard to ensure all children and their

families have a positive and successful experience."

This year, DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs is serving as Honorary Chair for the statewide event. DECAL's Campaign Committee is composed of Brian McKeen, Camaria Wright, Carrie Ashbee, Keturah Washington, Paul Ominde, Rachel Fowler, Rhae-Nicole Holloway, Shannon Williams, Stanley Cooper, Taijha Harden, and Reg Griffin.

Watch for a special e-mail from Commissioner Jacobs next week! Thanks in advance for participating in The Campaign --- Georgia's State Charitable Contributions Program.



Commissioner Jacobs with Commissioner Christopher Nunn, Georgia Department of Administrative Services

Four Georgia Children Win in "We Care, Child Care" Sweepstakes

Four Georgia children from across the state were each awarded \$1,529 for their Path2College 529 Plans as statewide winners of the We Care Child Care Sweepstakes. The sweepstakes was sponsored by the Path2College 529 Plan and DECAL to help raise awareness about the importance of saving for continued education among pre-k students across the state.

Winners were chosen randomly from four regions: Metro Atlanta, Southeast, North and South Georgia. Winners included four-yearold Nevaeh White of Griffin, 11-year-old Jensie Merritt of Alma, three-year-old Lucas Chapman of Macon and nine-year-old Kedren Ceesay of Atlanta. Additionally, William's Child Care and Learning Center in Griffin and Eagles Nest Children's Center in Macon won \$529 as part of the sweepstakes.

"Saving regularly over time is the key to establishing a strong financial foundation for our children's continued education. But, too often families believe college is far enough away that there will be plenty of time to save later," said Mitch Seabaugh, executive director of the Path2College 529 Plan. "That's why we partner with DECAL to reach families with young children. We want them to look at their saving options and see the importance of starting early. "This year is especially exciting as we celebrate 25 years of providing a quality Pre-K education to Georgia's four year olds," added Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports. "We have planned many exciting things over the course of this school year and are looking forward to celebrating this important milestone in Georgia."

Watch Decidedly DECAL for more information on special events being held this year to celebrate Georgia Pre-K's 25th birthday.

Person on the Street

What was the last good movie you saw?



Brittany Sams, Quality Rated Subsidy Analyst: The last great movie I went to see was *Girls Trip*. It's definitely a must see for a great girls night out!



Nathan Thompson, Quality Rated Assessor: I know it had terrible ratings, but I actually thoroughly enjoyed *The Emoji Movie*. It was full of laughs, and it was heartfelt! The main character was a "meh" emoji who could not help but have several emotions...This is my "meh" face.



Sonya Price, Senior Recruiting Specialist: *Girls Trip*! I went to see it with my girls and it was hilarious. I really enjoyed the camaraderie and the true foundation of what friendship really means.



Jasmine Barnes, System Reform Administrative Assistant: *Train to Busan* is the sixth highest grossing domestic film of all time in South Korea, and for good reason. *Train to Busan* is action packed, suspenseful, gruesome, and heart-breaking. I screamed, I cried, and I rejoiced. This epic film is a must-watch!



Catherine Broussard, Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator: In April, my children and I went to see *The Promise* together. This movie depicts an event close to our hearts and chronicled what happened to our ancestors during the Armenian Genocide.

We also want them to learn about the state's tax-advantaged Path2College 529 Plan and encourage them to establish a financial strategy to help their children achieve their dreams."

This is the third year Path2College and DECAL have partnered to hold the sweepstakes.



New Faces and Places

Congratulations to the following employees who joined the DECAL team in August:

Human Resources welcomes Human Resources Assistant Abeni Daniels

Instructional Supports welcomes Infant Toddler Specialists Latasha Bailey, Shamira Champion, Tiffany Grindle, Miranda Murphy, and Lori Ray

Nutrition welcomes Technical Assistance Coordinator/Trainer Victoria Thomas

Research welcomes Research & Policy Analysts Ani Whitmore and Alexandria Williams

CAPS welcomes Receptionist Jessica Albright; Family Support Consultants Kerisha Alves-El, Bridgetter Bivins, Yvonne Braddy, Angela Cambridge, Cathy Caron, Brenda Cash, Andrew Dennis Jr., Sheila Derry, Kendra Drakes, Shamaya Eppinger, Karen Hill, Penny Holloway, Tiara Jenrette, Tameka Jordan, Jammye King, Kamilah Morris, Jamie Payne, Mattie Ray, Nicole Rocquemore, Shanise Searless, Lakenya Shamburger, Sabrina Sims, Amanda Tarpley, Charlene Threats, Amanda Vanmeter, Ivy Webb, Deirdre Williams,



Chad Paul, Help Desk Analyst:

Baby Driver- a very stylish and unique movie about a young getaway driver who uses music to drown out a constant humming in his ears. I love the way the soundtrack is incorporated into every sound and motion of the movie and the fact that it is entirely based in Atlanta.



Bridget Ratajczak, Child Development Specialist: I saw *Moana*. I loved the powerful storyline and the amazing animation and music.



Laura Reid, Professional Learning Community Specialist: *War for the Planet of the Apes* - we went because my husband wanted to go, but I really enjoyed it!



Angela Butler, Human Resources Assistant: *My Favorite Wife* with Doris Day and James Garner- I love old movies, romantic comedies, and I love to laugh.

Andrell Wingfield, Laura Crawford, and Selina Keith; Scholarship Administration Specialists Jeannie Barzola, Khadijah Bogle, Tiffany Conley, Lisa Cooper, Iman Cummings-Ingram, Jasmine Dawkins, Elashia Mincoy Hall, Ashley Hawkins, Tina Higgins, Arlette Hofler-Jones, Shonita Holley-Brooks, Tiffany Jackson, Domonika Johnson, Valesia Jones, Dakara Kier, Olivia Kyle, Jacqueline Matthews, Jameka Mitchell, Beatrice Newton, Raquel Roberts, Jacqueline Robinson, Kymberly Savage, Devonta Smith, Faith Strachan, Victoria Stripling, Andrea Thomas, Drascilla Thomas, Monica Thorpe, Sandra Vance, Kharla Walker, Sharell Watts, Charlie Wilson, Alexandria Wimberly, Jason Lewis; Scholarship Administrative Assistants Carla Beasley and Porcha Brown; QA Training Consultants Tanya Coleman, Emily Gilead, and Jessie Kemp; and Adverse Action/Claims Specialist Gertrude Maison

Privacy Matters by Brian McKeen, Privacy Attorney



Protecting Yourself...

I have done several articles on protecting DECAL's information, but what about your information? Recently the news has provided a number of easy examples of things that we all need to be aware of and avoid.

Brian McKeen

• Be careful of credit card skimmers - This issue has been in the news here in Georgia several time over the last few months. Skimmers fit over the credit card readers at retail locations, most frequently ATMs and gas pumps. They copy your card number and usually have a camera that

Congratulations to the newest QQUALITY RATED child care programs!

Northeast Intown YWCA, Atlanta ★ 🖈	★★ Sandra V. Shepherd, Savannah
The Chestnut Treehouse II, Ellenwood ★	★ Reta K. Biggs, Calhoun
A Brighter Day Early Learning Academy,	★★ Amazing Kidz Academy, Atlanta
Stone Mountain ★ 🖈	★★ Kids Like Me Childcare and Learning Center,
Generation Kids Preschool Nursery, Brunswick ★ 🖈	Decatur
Kat's Little Angels Daycare, Savannah ★ ★	★★ Qunnie E. Parker, Savannah
The Sunshine House #94, Atlanta ★	★★★ Shirley A. Mitchell, Pooler
Twyler J. Jones, Riverdale ★ ★	★ 🖈 Wright's Child Care, Savannah
Smart Start, College Park ★	★ Another Adventure Day Care, Savannah
Debra M. Bishop, Calhoun ★	★★ A Thru Z Childcare & Learning Center, Atlanta
Felicia D. Shuman, Savannah ★ ★ ★	★★★ Magic World, Lawrenceville
Valentina L. Bailey, Macon ★ 🛧 🛧	★★ A Thru Z Childcare & Learning Center, Atlanta
Erica Rodriguez, Stone Mountain ★ 🖈	★★★Tamika R. Davis, Macon

records your PIN. Anytime you use an ATM or pay-at-pump credit card reader, all you need to do to see if a skimmer is in place is to tug on the front of the credit card reader. If it is a skimmer it should easily pull off into your hand. If it does come off, call 911 and report it to the authorities.

- Use caution when shopping on Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace - If the deal seems too good to be true, it probably is. Common schemes involve advertising a highly valuable item at an extremely low price (e.g., a \$15,000 car for \$5,000). Once you make contact with the seller, they give you a sad story about the item belonging to a deceased family member and they just want it gone, or they are being deployed overseas and need to sell it quick, etc. The one thing they will all have in common is that the item is located a long way away from you, and they will want to handle the transaction electronically through wire transfer, PayPal, or some other electronic service. If you suspect an item for sale on one of these sites is a scam, click on the Report Fraud button on the site. The site operator will investigate and if needed remove the listing.
- Look for Secure Websites Most of us do at least some business online. Make sure the website is secure before you enter confidential information (SSN, credit card, account numbers, etc.). Make sure the website is from a reputable

Congratulations to all of our QUALITY RATED[®] child care programs who've increased their star rating in August!

*** First Steps Learning Center, Royston (1 to 3 stars)

*** Valenteena Davis, Madison (2 to 3 stars)

*** Maria D. Pichardo Batista, Hinesville (2 to 3 stars)

** Sunshine Early Learning Center, Hoschton (1 to 2 stars)

*** Sheltering Arms - Dorthy Arkwright, Atlanta (2 to 3 stars)

*** Antoinette H. Taylor, Snellville (2 to 3 stars)

** Noah's Ark Christian Academy, Hiram (1 to 2 stars)

** Khadijah Farmer, Decatur (1 to 2 stars)

*** Roma L. Anderson, Norcross (2 to 3 stars)

*** D. Scott Hudgens Jr. Early Education Center, Lawrenceville (2 to 3 stars)

Visit qualityrated.org to find Quality Rated child care programs in your area!

> Let Us Hear From You!

company, one you have heard of and dealt with before. Double check the web address and make sure it is correct. Close is not good enough as many criminals will set up fake websites at an address similar to the real company's address. Make sure the site is encrypted. To do this verify that the address starts with HTTPS rather than HTTP. The "S" on the end means secure. Additionally, you will notice a small padlock image either in the address bar or at the bottom of the browser window. If the lock is open, then the site is NOT encrypted so don't use it.

These are just a few issues that have been in the news locally over the past few months. Many other schemes out there involve fraudulent phone calls and emails claiming you have won a lottery that you didn't enter or that a distant relative has died and left you a large sum of money. The scenarios are endless, but they all follow the same themes. They play on our natural greed and hope of something for nothing. Remember the advice that you got as a child: "If it sounds too good to be true, then it probably isn't true."

September Birthdays



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

- 1 Richard Bartlett
- 1 Alisia Pickett
- 2 Cassa Andrews
- 4 Santeria Brown
- 4 Jamie Payne
- 4 Leslie Pettis
- 4 Emily Smith
- 5 Peggy Kosater
- 6 Dana Morrison
- 7 Gertrude Maison
- 7 Roslyn Williams
- 8 Laura Davis
- 8 Angelita Ramanou



Watch on POLAR



The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Rhae-Nicole Holloway, Allison Setterlind, Jeffery Arnold, Jennifer Bowen, Jennifer Collins, Monica Hale, and Nathan Thompson.

8 - Tiffany Whigham 11 - Abeni Daniels 13 - Jill West

- 14 Sonia Ladd
- 14 Jeannie Lippy
- 14 Donna Marks
- 17 Amy Hill
- 17 Penny Holloway
- 19 John Gardner
- 20 Quatavius Copeland
- 20 Sheila Derry
- 22 Glecia Carter
- 22 April Rogers
- 24 Luetricia Billingsley
- 25 Jessie Bruno
- 26 Krystal McCants
- 26 Barbara Sanders
- 27 Alex Dagenhart
- 27 Sherry Smith
- 27 Camaria Wright
- 30 Rhianna Clark

Board of Early Care and Learning

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

Board of Early Care and Learning

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