



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and WIDA Early Years Announce Partnership to Support Young Dual Language Learners

ATLANTA, GA., (October 16, 2014) - Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) will host a kick-off event for stakeholders from across the state to inform about a new partnership between Georgia and WIDA Early Years. The partnership focuses on supporting young dual language learners enrolled in preschool and other early care and education programs. The kick-off event will take place on **Wednesday, October 22, 2014**, from 8:30 AM to 1:00 PM at the Sheraton Atlanta Hotel, 165 Courtland St. NE, Atlanta, GA 30303, conference room: Georgia 2.

Focusing on dual language learners is part of Georgia's commitment under the *Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge*. Georgia was awarded this grant in December 2013. The partnership with WIDA aligns with Georgia's focus on critical areas, such as contributing to supporting high needs children, developing a great workforce, and improving family engagement.

This partnership will assist practitioners in identifying dual language learners, children that are learning English and one or more languages, and supporting their language development – a key factor for school readiness. By providing training and technical assistance on appropriately supporting linguistically and culturally diverse children and families, early care and education practitioners as well as school district personnel will be equipped with tools and strategies to

support English and home language development. Home language is a valuable asset in early development and second language acquisition.

WIDA (www.wida.us/EarlyYears) will offer two seven-month training of trainers programs starting in January 2015. This program is based on the WIDA Early English Language Development Standards, a set of standards for dual language learners, age 2.5–5.5 years, which corresponds to the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS). The trainers who have completed the program will return to their organizations to train staff on supporting dual language learners.

About Bright from the Start

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the childcare and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses childcare centers and home-based childcare, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of childcare, and works collaboratively with Georgia childcare resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.dec.al.ga.gov.

About WIDA Early Years

WIDA recognizes the urgent need to provide linguistically and culturally relevant instruction and assessment for dual language learners and the challenges encountered by practitioners and administrators when trying to do so. For this reason, WIDA works in partnerships with early care and education programs that support the language and learning of dual language learners, while simultaneously providing practitioners with the necessary tools and resources. Our comprehensive approach to supporting and assessing early language development helps promote educational equity of dual language learners through four key components:

- Understanding and utilizing the WIDA Early Language Development Standards

- Building state and local capacity through training, coaching, and technical assistance
- Making informed decisions using the suite of early language development assessments
- Promoting family engagement

WIDA Early Years is part of WIDA, a non-profit organization housed within the Wisconsin Center of Education Research at the School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. For more information, visit www.wida.us/EarlyYears or www.dec.al.ga.gov.

Contact at WIDA Early Years

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References

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant awarded to Georgia

www.dec.al.ga.gov/BftS/EarlyLearningChallenge.aspx?CCS=1&l=1

The Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS)

www.gelds.dec.al.ga.gov

WIDA Early English Language Development Standards

www.wida.us/EarlyYears