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## **Georgia's Pre-K Program welcomes over 80,000 Four Year Olds**

### ***Pre-K Students Show Significant Growth in Language and Literacy, Math, and Social-Emotional Skills***

**ATLANTA, Ga., (July 26, 2018)** – All over Georgia school is beginning for over 80,000 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.

Georgia's Pre-K Program is unique especially in its access and in its delivery model. First, the program is accessible to any age eligible child residing in Georgia regardless of family income. Second, the program operates through a public-private partnership as Pre-K classes are offered in local school systems, private for profit and nonprofit child care centers, military bases, colleges and universities, and other facilities. This unique delivery model helps ensure that families have many options in determining the kind of preschool experience they want for their child. In the 2017-2018 school year, approximately 60 percent of all four year olds in Georgia were served by state funded Pre-K.

Usually the first day of Georgia's Pre-K Program aligns with the local school system calendar regardless of the Pre-K setting, i.e., for profit and nonprofit child care centers, military bases, colleges and universities, and other facilities.

Georgia's Pre-K Program is administered by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). For this upcoming school year, DECAL awarded 15 new Pre-K classes, 24 expansion classes at existing programs, and 3,818 continuation classes for a total of 3,857 classes serving over 80,000 children.

“Georgia's Pre-K Program is a nationally-recognized program of excellence now entering its 26<sup>th</sup> year,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “The program encompasses all aspects of the highest quality early learning experiences that ensure school readiness for children and impact educational outcomes well into Kindergarten and early elementary years.”

“Research shows that a quality early learning experience through Georgia's Pre-K Program significantly impacts school readiness skills for our students in language, literacy, and math,” added Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports. “The program's success can be attributed directly to the outstanding Pre-K teachers and assistants who implement this program daily, and the strong family support we see in communities across the state.”

For parents enrolling their children in Georgia's Pre-K Program, DECAL's Pre-K consultants offer the following tips to help make the first day go smoother:

**Before School Starts/1st Day Tips:**

- Start talking positively about school before classes begin.
- Ensure the contact information at your child's Pre-K site is accurate in case the program must get in touch with you. Keep your contact information updated.
- After dropping your child off for their first day, get together with other parents for breakfast. This will help you get through the transition.
- Make/read/discuss a book about school with your child before school starts.
- Practice going to school. Show your child the route and if your child will be part of a carpool, discuss this with them.
- Two weeks before school begins, help your child get into the routine of going to bed earlier and getting up earlier.
- Make sure you attend the classroom's “Meet Your Teacher” and/or Open House.
- Read books about going to school and if possible, take a tour of the building and meet the teachers before your child's first day.

**Clothing Tips:**

- Ensure your child has clothes they can pull up and down independently when going to the restroom.
- Make sure your child has extra clothing at school in case there are bathroom accidents.
- Make clothing choices the night before so your mornings are more peaceful and less rushed.
- Choose your child's shoes carefully. You want your child to be safe while running and playing outside so shoes with heels, wheels, and backless shoes may not be appropriate.

**Ongoing Tips:**

- Be sure your child has adequate outside time and limit TV & video games.
- Tell your child in advance about any changes in routine. Example: Today, Grandma will pick you up after school.
- Make observations in your conversations in the car like, "I'm turning left" and "You are wearing green today."
- Keep your goodbyes brief. The longer you linger, the more likely your child is to get upset or to continue to be upset.
- No need to walk your child to the class door daily.
- If your child is new to the school or Pre-K site, hug them and reassure them they will have a great day. Let them know you'll see them that afternoon.
- If the school menu has unfamiliar food try some of those dishes at home.

**About Bright from the Start**

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages *Quality Rated*, Georgia's community powered child care rating system.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education.

For more information, go to [www.decal.ga.gov](http://www.decal.ga.gov).