



**Brian P. Kemp**  
Governor

**Amy M. Jacobs**  
Commissioner

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Contact: Reg Griffin  
404-656-0239  
[reg.griffin@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:reg.griffin@dec.al.ga.gov)



**DECAL and Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning Announce  
Georgia's Pre-K Program 2019-2020 Teachers of the Year**

*Teachers from Public School System and Private Child Care Center are recognized to  
represent the public-private partnership that has helped with program's success*

**ATLANTA, Ga., (September 12, 2019)** – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning have named two outstanding educators as Georgia's Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year for the 2019-2020 school year. The recipients are Heather Williams of the Central Georgia Technical College Child Development Center in Warner Robins/Houston County, and Johnathon Hines of Barack H. Obama Elementary School in DeKalb County.

Each year, DECAL names two teachers, one from a public school system and one from a private child care center, representing the public-private partnership through which Georgia's Pre-K Program is offered. Williams and Hines will serve as ambassadors for Georgia's Pre-K Program this year, making presentations, attending meetings and conferences, and modeling effective classroom practices.

“The Georgia Pre-K Program's reputation as an exemplary early childhood education program for four year olds can be attributed directly to the outstanding Pre-K teachers and assistant teachers who implement this program daily,” said Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “These awards are a small way for us to say thank you and to recognize their efforts. We congratulate Heather and Johnathon and look forward to working with them throughout this school year.”

Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports, added, "We appreciate this opportunity to recognize the commitment of our Pre-K teachers who work every day all over the state to ensure that Georgia's children have a great Pre-K experience. The quality of the teacher in the classroom determines the quality of the classroom instruction."

Earlier this year, six finalists for Georgia's Pre-K Program Teacher of the Year were announced, each receiving \$500. Recently all of them were interviewed and underwent an extensive classroom evaluation. Today's recipients were each presented with checks for \$7,500 from the Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning, which includes \$2,000 for their school, \$2,500 for their classroom, and \$3,000 for themselves. The awards are funded annually by the Naserian Foundation.

This school year approximately 80,000 four year olds are attending Georgia's Pre-K Program. The voluntary, lottery funded 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 universal – meaning that any age eligible child residing in Georgia may attend the program free of charge regardless of family income.

### **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.dec.al.ga.gov](http://www.dec.al.ga.gov).