



Nathan Deal
Governor

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Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Quality Rated Welcomes 500th Rated Program

*Especially for Kids Christian Academy in Riverdale is 500th Child Care Program
To Receive Quality Rating*

ATLANTA, Ga., (March 30, 2015) – A Riverdale child care center has become the 500th child care program rated in a State of Georgia initiative designed to help parents in selecting quality early education programs in their communities. Especially for Kids Christian Academy, located at 11 Upper Riverdale Road, received the highest rating possible from Quality Rated --- three stars --- demonstrating its commitment to exceed the state’s minimum health and safety requirements. The rigorous rating process requires child care programs to compile an extensive portfolio of the program’s curriculum and practices and to undergo independent observations of each classroom.

First Lady Sandra Deal and Amy M. Jacobs, Commissioner of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, visited the center today to make the announcement and read to students for Read Across Georgia Month.

“From birth to five years old, a child’s brain can make 700 new connections per second and a high quality early education program can partner with parents to build a foundation for success in these critical early years,” said Mrs. Deal. “Quality Rated is our community-powered child care rating system that identifies which early education programs are using best practices to help prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond.”

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“Programs participating in Quality Rated receive free approved training, free technical assistance, and are eligible for a \$1,000 materials mini grant,” said Commissioner Jacobs. “Star-rated programs also receive generous bonus packages of classroom materials contributed by private philanthropic partners and are eligible to collect higher reimbursements through the state’s child care subsidy program.”

“GEEARS is proud to partner with Georgia Family Connection Partnership and DECAL to raise private funds to support improving and communicating the level of quality in early learning programs,” said Mindy Binderman, Executive Director of the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, who also attended the recognition event. “Members of the philanthropic community continue to demonstrate their support Quality Rated and combined have contributed over \$10M to the initiative through our partnership.”

“With a footprint in every county in Georgia, Family Connection Partnership was a natural fit along with GEEARS and DECAL to support the roll-out of Quality Rated incentives and bonuses to child care programs across the state,” Said Gaye Smith, President of Georgia Family Connection partnership, who joined those recognizing the accomplishment. “We’re thrilled to see Quality Rated achieve this critical milestone.”

Families looking for child care can learn more the importance of selecting a Quality Rated child care program at www.qualityrated.org and can search Quality Rated programs on the DECAL web site www.decals.ga.gov.

Quality Rated was formally launched by Governor Nathan Deal and DECAL in July 2013. Today 500 programs have been rated with 1,579 programs currently pursuing a rating.

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.

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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.



Shown L-R are DECAL Deputy Commissioner for System Reform Kristin Bernhard, Pre-K Lead Teacher Garyson Striggers, Senator Valencia Seay, Especially for Kids Director Diane VanDyke, Georgia Family Connection Partnership Executive Director Gaye Morris Smith, Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) Executive Director Mindy Binderman, DECAL Commissioner Amy Jacobs, First Lady Sandra Deal, Pre-K Assistant Teacher Michelle Taylor