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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Spalding County Educator is Finalist for
Georgia's Pre-K Program 2016 Teachers of the Year**

*Kelly Harris of Crescent Elementary School in Griffin
Among Finalists for Statewide Honor*

ATLANTA, Ga., (May 16, 2016) – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) announced today that Kelly Harris of Crescent Elementary School in Griffin, Georgia, is among six statewide finalists in the search for Georgia's Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year for 2016-2017. The announcement was made this morning during a special visit by Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports.

In October, DECAL will select a winner from a local public school system and a winner from a private child care center. Finalists were nominated by Georgia's Pre-K Project Directors and Pre-K teachers.

"Now in its 23rd year, Georgia's Pre-K Program is nationally recognized as an exemplary early childhood education program for four year olds that significantly impacts school readiness skills in language, literacy, and math," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "The program's success can be attributed directly to the outstanding Pre-K teachers and assistants who implement this program daily. This is a small way for us to recognize their efforts. We congratulate Kelly on all of her achievements thus far."

Finalist Announced for Georgia's Pre-K Teacher of the Year – Page 2

The six finalists are being informed this month. Winners will be announced this fall during Georgia's Pre-K Week, October 3-7, 2016.

This school year approximately 84,000 four year olds attend 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 universal – meaning that any age eligible child residing in Georgia may attend the program regardless of family income. Georgia's model for providing the Pre-K program is unique in that it is offered through a public-private partnership in local school systems, in private child care centers, and in other facilities.

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.