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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DECAL seeking nominations for Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the Year

Winner from Public School and Private Center will be recognized

ATLANTA, Ga., (December 15, 2015) – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is seeking nominations for Georgia's Pre-K Program Teacher of the Year for 2016-2017. DECAL will select a winner from a local public school system and a winner from a private child care center. The nomination can come from a Georgia's Pre-K Project Director or a Pre-K teacher, but the nominated teacher must complete a teacher information page and respond to questions on the application.

“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.”

The application for Pre-K Teacher of the Year is available on the home page of the DECAL website at www.decals.ga.gov. Completed applications must be postmarked or hand delivered no later than 5:00 PM on **Friday, January 29, 2016**. Finalists will be announced in May, 2016, with the winners announced in the early fall.

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To be considered for Georgia's Pre-K Program Teacher of the Year, the nominated teacher must meet the following qualifications:

- Must have been employed as a Georgia's Pre-K lead teacher during the 2015-2016 school year.
- Must have taught as a lead teacher in a Georgia's Pre-K classroom for a minimum of three years.
- Must meet Georgia's Pre-K credential and Professional Development Registry requirements.
- Must be planning to continue as a lead teacher in a Georgia's Pre-K classroom during the 2016-2017 school year.
- Must be employed by a Georgia's Pre-K Program provider in good standing with all programs administered by DECAL (Pre-K, Child Care Services, Childcare and Parent Services [CAPS] and Nutrition Services).
- Must be willing to serve as an ambassador for Georgia's Pre-K Program. Duties may include but are not limited to: public speaking, representing Georgia's Pre-K at meetings, and modeling effective classroom practices.
- Must be able and willing to travel as needed – including some overnight stays.
- Must be willing to have a classroom evaluation and interview conducted if chosen as a finalist.

For more information, contact Meghan McNail, Summer Transition Program and Outreach Coordinator, at meghan.mcnail@decals.ga.gov or 770-357-4911

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.

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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.decals.ga.gov.