



Nathan Deal
Governor

Bobby Cagle, MSW
Commissioner

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Media Contact: Reg Griffin
404-656-0239
reg.griffin@dec.al.ga.gov



**Research Concludes Georgia's Pre-K Program Significantly Improves
School Readiness across Key Domains of Learning**

Students Scored Above National Norm in Language, Literacy and Math

ATLANTA, Ga., (March 6, 2014) – A recently released report by national experts in early childhood education and care concludes that Georgia's Pre-K Program significantly improves school readiness skills in language, literacy and math. The report shares the results of Phase Two of a multi-year, comprehensive evaluation commissioned by Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) at the request of the Georgia General Assembly.

The study, conducted by scientists at the FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (FPG), included a one-time comparison group created using a sophisticated sampling technique previously used in similar studies of the Oklahoma and North Carolina Pre-K programs. Average scores for children who participated in Georgia's Pre-K Program were above the national norm on key standardized measures of language, literacy and math skills. Average scores for the comparison group tended to be right at or slightly below the national norm. Researchers found results were most pronounced in key language and literacy skills such as letter knowledge, letter-word identification, and phonemic awareness, all crucial benchmarks in being proficient in later literacy skills.

Participation in Georgia's Pre-K Program also resulted in positive effects on key math skills, including counting and problem solving, and children's general knowledge.

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“Since taking office, I have made increasing the percentage of Georgia’s third grade students reading at grade level a top priority and this study proves that we are moving in the right direction,” said Governor Nathan Deal. “The results reveal that participation in our Pre-K program had significant positive effects on foundational skills that coincide with later reading proficiency. By acquiring these skills early on, students stand a greater chance of reading on grade level, which will better position them for future academic excellence.”

“These findings are strong and attest to the impact of Georgia’s signature early education program and the great work performed by our teachers every day,” said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. “The findings concerning literacy are especially important, as they suggest that foundational reading skills are taught in our classrooms. This fits perfectly with Governor Deal’s emphasis on Grade Level Reading.”

Phase One of FPG’s research, released in January 2013, indicated that children exhibited significant growth during their Pre-K year across all domains of learning including language and literacy, math, general knowledge and behavioral skills. The study revealed that children who were Spanish speaking dual language learners showed growth in skills in both English and Spanish, although their growth tended to be greater in English.

“While studies like these, showing that Georgia is laying a solid foundation for future learning, are gratifying, they also reveal areas where we can continue to enhance our services,” said Cagle. “My goal is never to be completely satisfied with where we are but rather to always strive to do better for Georgia’s youngest learners.”

The full report can be found at: <http://dec.al.ga.gov/BftS/EvaluationGAPreKProgram.aspx>

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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 voluntary quality enhancement programs.

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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.decal.ga.gov.