

DECAL – Conference Call Notes: 01.05.2015

- I. In developing an Early Childhood program, what were your initial goals? Do you feel those goals are being/have been met?**
 - a. Consolidate rules and regulations of childcare licensing to improve accountability and make childcare more “customer friendly”
 - b. Enhance efficiency and maximize resources
 - c. Build culture of education within childcare
 - i. Roughly 50% of public schools offered Pre-K;
 - ii. Rest of the 50% through childcare/private preschools
- II. What is the structure of your program? Who provides governance and policy oversight for this program under the new organizational structure?**
 - a. Pre-K program first titled in 1992-1993 school year; tied to lottery and grew exponentially
 - b. Office of School Readiness in place in 1996
 - c. DECAL created in 2004 and took over Office of School Readiness
 - i. Program changes initiated under Governor Perdue
 - ii. Initial work in 90’s under Gov. Miller flagship: his goals were to create a public-private partnership
 - d. Much of the governance comes through Board—Georgia Education Alliance
 - e. DECAL works very closely with DOE – Georgia adopted Common Core standards; just finished alignment study between Pre-K and kindergarten standards
 - i. “Choice of approved curriculum” that any pre-k provider can select from – locally developed curriculum can also be submitted for approval
 - ii. Standard alignment guides GA instruction from 0 – 12th grade
 - f. DECAL contracts directly with local school system – funding doesn’t go through DOE, goes straight to school
 - i. Largely administered on contract basis (with exception: 3-5 year-old Part B administered through Dept. of Ed)
- III. Were there any policy bodies that required disbanding?**
 - a. Office of School Readiness
 - i. Already included Head Start, licensing, nutrition
 - ii. Was confusing because any program with Pre-K was licensed by Office of School Readiness; any program without Pre-K was licensed by Dept. of Human Resources
 - b. Licensing Division of Human Resources
 - c. Georgia Childcare Councils
 - i. Managed set-aside dollars; administered network of childcare resources
 - ii. All those monies have been brought to DECAL
- IV. What were the costs of organizing this department? What, if any, were the savings?**

- a. They do not have this info – no study in their possession to quantify costs or savings from consolidation
 - b. With exception of lottery, DECAL is almost entirely supported by federal funding
- V. Were there any states you looked towards in developing your program model?**
- a. ??
- VI. What services, if any, got left out? What services, if any, pertain to early childhood development that are not house under your department (e.g. home visits, child subsidies, mental health, etc)?**
- a. Home visiting:
 - i. Cannot stress enough: home visits should be included
 - ii. Currently working on Early Learning Challenge Grant to cover expansion of home visiting
 - b. Mental Health:
 - i. Challenge faced – How to ensure youth mental health would not be completely overshadowed by adult mental/behavioral health in Dept. of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
 - ii. Goal would be to incorporate resources for young families/children; address early onset issues that will impact educational learning
- VII. What sort of support did you have from the affected agencies going into this restructuring? Where was the great pushback?**
- a. How to bring all stakeholders together to ensure buy-in?
 - i. Gov. Perdue managed most initial coalition-building: Georgia seeking a nationally-recognized program to give focus for young children that may not have been there before
 - ii. Universal Pre-K a point of major support: serve families from all income and promotes middle class buy-in, constituency
 - iii. Head Start Collaboration office: partnership helped serve a greater number of 3-year-olds; DECAL merges funds to better serve Head Start population
 - b. No comment on pushback
- VIII. What were the reasons you chose to build a new department, rather than create a subdivision within a department (e.g. within Dept. of Education or Dept. of Health Services)?**
- a. Standalone educational agency charged with serving needs specific to 0-5 age group
 - b. Elevate importance of Early Childhood Education – look at all services needed for ECE (licensing, Head Start, Early learning challenges, nutrition, etc)
 - c. Make DECAL equivalent to Dept. of Education
 - i. However, Board of DECAL doesn't have as much power as BOE
- IX. What are the biggest accomplishments that you attribute to developing this agency?**

- a. Creation of partnerships to offer services and fundraise
 - i. Consolidation has brought more federal grants by cutting competition and allowing more pointed focus on grant funds
 - ii. Federal grants help coordination by running in-house: allows you to move faster in implementation of program and spend more time on seeing how program works, then tweak as needed
 - iii. Foundation support: having an agency help to put money on ground statewide and also help measure impact
 - 1. Having everything coordinated in more cohesive way has made it far easier to access foundation money
 - 2. Example: QRIS bonus and incentive packages fully funded with nonprofit dollars; share equal part in fundraising for program (in 18 months, raised \$10 million in private contributions)
 - 3. Structure: foundation partnership with Georgia Family Connection (DECAL cannot accept direct donations); partnership with every county in Georgia; 501c3 as fiscal agent for raising money
 - a. Funding does not flow through DECAL at all, but DECAL staff administers QRIS standards and private funding supports local providers

X. Looking back, what would you have done differently and what are some lessons learned?

- a. Regardless of whether you have various services, look at how you coordinate services – many times, children are receiving their care, regardless of where it comes from
 - i. Services may be implemented in various ways (e.g. Part B & C solely administered via Head Start in rural communities)
 - ii. Think of services through end provider—where do they go to receive those services?

XI. What sort of data systems and measurements are in place?

- a. Longitudinal studies in place due to Race to the Top
- b. Student info includes Part C, Early Head Start (Head Start already IDs separately), other children in Social Services
- c. How to monitor how provider data coordinates with each other?
 - i. Staff employees: DECAL has ~30 field staff who work with public and private providers, offering data and info on teacher credentials
 - ii. Maintains data on childcare licensing, Head Start collaboration; childcare subsidy program
- d. LRE data will affect classrooms; use that leverage in creating program and highlighting need