



**Georgia Dept
of Early Care
and Learning**
BRIGHT FROM THE START

Brian P. Kemp
Governor

Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DECAL Announces 2024-2025 Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the Year

Winners from Public School in Lincolnton and Private Program in Watkinsville

ATLANTA, Ga., (October 8, 2024) – The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) has named its Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the Year for the 2024-2025 school year just in time for the annual Georgia's Pre-K Week, which is also being recognized this week. The public-school winner is Elizabeth Arthur from Lincoln County Elementary School in Lincolnton, and the private child care center winner is Rachel Robertson from Oconee Preschool Academy in Watkinsville.

As Pre-K Teachers of the Year, Arthur and Robertson each receive \$3,000 for themselves and \$4,500 for classroom and program use. Winners serve as ambassadors for Georgia's Pre-K Program by public speaking, representing the program at various meetings, and modeling effective classroom practices.

The winners were selected from six semi-finalists. Each finalist submitted a video of small group instruction scored by outside judges, had a CLASS observation, and faced a panel for a personal interview.

“Georgia’s Pre-K Program is only as successful and effective as the dedicated women and men who work with Georgia’s four-year-olds every day,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “These Teacher of the Year awards are a small way for us to recognize and reward their professionalism and commitment to Georgia’s children and families. Because of the exemplary work of these Pre-K teachers, Georgia children have entered Kindergarten better prepared for school.”

“Since the beginning of Georgia’s Pre-K Program 32 years ago, more than 2 million children have entered Kindergarten better prepared to succeed in school,” said Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner of Georgia’s Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports. “Teachers are the heart of the Pre-K Program. Elizabeth and Rachel are wonderful examples of the difference a skilled and passionate teacher makes in a classroom. They not only inspire young minds but also lay a foundation for a lifelong love of learning. We celebrate their commitment to excellence in education within Georgia’s Pre-K Program.”

Among other requirements, candidates for Georgia’s Pre-K Teacher of the Year must have been employed as a Georgia’s Pre-K lead teacher during the 2023-2024 school year, taught as a lead teacher in a Georgia’s Pre-K classroom for a minimum of three years, and must be planning to continue as a lead teacher in a Georgia’s Pre-K classroom during the 2024-2025 school year.

This school year more than 71,000 four-year-olds are attending 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.

About Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning 1qasza

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.dec.al.ga.gov.