

ELPM BUILDING BLOCKS

Building a Future

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President Barack Obama Visits College Heights ECLC

City Schools of Decatur Press Release 2/14/13



Decatur, GA (2013) The President of the United States, Barack Obama, visited [College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center](#), a City School of Decatur in Decatur, Georgia, on Thursday, February 14, 2013. The President toured the school, participated in several hands-on, interactive math and language lessons with a pre-kindergarten special education inclusion class, and sang with a cafeteria full of students and teachers during the school's "Community Circle."

College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center (ECLC) is a school for infants through pre-kindergarten students and part of the public charter school system, City Schools of Decatur. The school is nestled in the Oakhurst neighborhood of Decatur, Georgia, and enrolls approximately 340 students through a blending of Georgia's Bright from the Start

lottery-funded pre-k program, a tuition-paying program, a special education program for children with special needs, and its collaboration with Partnership for Community Action, called Head Start and Early Head Start.

College Heights ECLC's reputation as one of the highest quality early childhood learning environments in the state of Georgia is the reason behind President Obama's visit. The concept of Decatur's early childhood education program was the vision of Superintendent Phyllis Edwards and the City Schools of Decatur's Board of Education during the first Strategic Plan process in 2004. The creation of a quality early childhood learning center was embraced by the Board as part of Strategic Plan Goal #2- close the achievement gap in the City of Decatur. College Heights Elementary School, formerly a pre-K through 5th grade elementary school, was renovated into a high-quality, accredited infant - pre-kindergarten center, in partnership with Early Learning Property Management.

"We are thrilled to have the President of the United States visit our Early Childhood Learning Center," said Dr. Phyllis Edwards, Superintendent. "This is confirmation that the way to enhance and ensure the successful educational progress of all students is to provide the highest caliber of learning experiences and opportunities for our youngest children."

"With the creation of a early childhood learning center, we wanted to level the playing field for our youngest children in Decatur and give them all a chance at an excellent education with educators who are committed to their craft," said Dr. Phyllis Edwards. "Words cannot express how honored we are to have been selected as a model of excellent early childhood education worthy of the President's visit. I commend the hard work of Principal Suzanne Kennedy, the teachers and staff of College. I am also proud of the Board's commitment to Early Childhood Education. Despite these times of economic difficulty, they have supported this direction upon my recommendation since the concept was introduced in 2004."

Principal Suzanne Kennedy explains what sets College Heights apart from other early childhood centers: "We have an instructional coach who works very closely with the teaching staff providing professional learning and instructional support both in and out of the classroom. He conducts informal observations, models best teaching practices, and offers feedback and "next steps" to teachers during debriefings. We want teachers to be reflective of their instructional practices."



"My role as the instructional coach is unique to early childhood learning centers because I function as classroom support over procedural administration," explains College Heights' Zeke Alejandro. "I provide on-going professional learning through classroom observations, debriefings, and collaborative team planning. I work closely with the principal, our Early Childhood Specialist, Sarah Garland, and our teachers to ensure rigor while promoting a playful atmosphere."

President Obama's tour of College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center was followed by an event to address an audience of mainly educators and parents from City Schools of Decatur at the Decatur Recreation Center.

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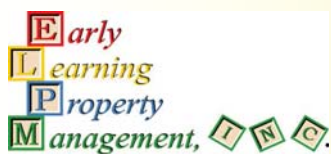
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**Kara Portnell
Executive Director**

www.elpm.org

Watch Me Grow—Community Garden & Greenhouse Minnie Howell Child Development Center

Progress Report: In April 2012, Premier Academy Minnie Howell Child Development Center was the recipient of the Sibley Award for Early Learning Leadership & Program Excellence 2012 for its dynamic program: “*Watch Me Grow—Community Garden and Greenhouse*”. The *Watch Me Grow* program is an interdisciplinary hands-on learning series that teaches preschool aged children practical lessons on making healthy lifestyle choices with a goal to combat childhood obesity by reinforcing healthy nutrition and physical activity for at-risk and low-income children, their parents and the community.

The Sibley Award was created to honor Mr. James M. Sibley for his commitment to the advancement of young children and the early learning initiative. With the support of The Sibley Award, Premier Academy has been able to launch an aggressive campaign against childhood obesity at the center and successfully embark on a journey towards healthier lifestyles for the children and parents.

Minnie Howell has implemented engaging age-appropriate classroom lessons, education opportunities for parents and professional development training for the staff. The Center has also purchased and installed a greenhouse and the preschool children started planting fast growing vegetables once the greenhouse was ready. This has been a fun activity for children and teachers. Other events being introduced to the children as they learn about healthy eating and combating childhood obesity are:



Children eating family style and being introduced and educated on what they are having for each meal, opportunities to taste “new” foods based on colors, textures and flavors and learning to make fresh juice from oranges and grapefruits.



All teachers have been trained on My Little World “A Day in Preschool”, Your Heart Jumps to the Beat! Curriculum. This series utilizes multicultural music to integrate physical activities and healthy nutrition practices in early childhood education. Age appropriate portable equipment, trikes, balls, hula hoops, ensure the children are active when engaged in outside activities.



Parents are provided information on creative ways to increase physical activity and nutrition through newsletters, flyers and parent meetings.

Ms. Cindra K. Taylor, Executive Director, “appreciates the opportunity to serve as the first organization to receive this prestigious award, and we are deeply humbled that Premier Academy has been recognized to honor Mr. Sibley’s contributions to education and early learning in Atlanta. It is with this award that Premier Academy will continue to make strides in the overall health and wellness for the hundreds of low-income children we serve each year.”

The Sibley Award is a competition between the ELPM centers and made possible through a generous gift from the Harland Foundation and the Pittulloch Foundation, both of whom share a common goal and commitment to the early learning initiative.

*Submitted by Cindra Taylor, Executive Director—Minnie Howell Child Development Center
For Premier Academy program information, please visit: www.premier-academy.org*



Bright from the Start Celebrates Georgia's Pre-K 20th Anniversary



Bobby Cagle
Commissioner—Bright
from the Start—DECAL

Congratulations to the Georgia Department of Early Care Learning (DECAL) as it celebrates the 20th Anniversary of Georgia's Pre-K Program.

Researchers at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill recently completed a portion of the first formal child outcome research study in the history of Bright from the Start and it held great news for Georgia's Pre-K Program. With more than 500 Georgia Pre-K student tested in 100 classrooms during the 2011-2012 school year, students, on average, showed significant gains in language, literacy, math, general knowledge and behavioral skill. Governor Deal approved a \$1.5 million in lottery dollars to fund the two year study.

Early results endorse the concept of a universal Pre-K program available to all children, regardless of income and other factors. Solid evidence shows that:

- ◆ Georgia's Pre-K Program is preparing students for their entrance into the K-12 program and placing them on a successful trajectory that will lead them to high school graduation and on to the world of college or career.
- ◆ Spanish-speaking dual language learners showed some growth in skills in both English and Spanish.

Bobby Cagle, commissioner of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) states, "We've come a long way. Georgia's Pre-K Program was created in 1992 after voters approved the creation of the Georgia Lottery for Education to support college scholarships and a voluntary pre-kindergarten program. In 1992, 750 at-risk four year olds and their families participated in a pilot program at 20 sites. Today Georgia is investing over \$300 million to serve approximately 84,000 of the state's youngest learners, more than 60% of all four year olds. This study will help us continue to improve Georgia's Pre-K Program which helps each teacher, consultant and successive class."

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.



For additional information, please visit www.dec.state.ga.us

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Time With Kids Can Be Good Medicine!!

By Bill Fokes 2009

We have a lot to be depressed about these days. As we consider losses to our investment holdings, rising unemployment, international violence, food contamination...the list of bad news seems endless. But I have rediscovered a great antidepressant. Children.

Children are not naturally bitter or depressed. Just watch young children run, skip, hop and dance alongside some more somber adults and you cannot help but feel better. As you talk with children, their fresh innocent perspective on the world around them is always refreshing and often hilarious.



Spending time with children is great therapy for adults because it helps us rediscover a joyful part of ourselves. It is also great for the children, if we make the children our top priority. And what priority is higher than children? Perhaps these hard times can help us to get our priorities straight.

Printed with permission.
Bill Fokes, Braselton, GA

Easter Seals CDC at Mansell



The Fulton Atlanta Community Action Authority (FACAA) visited the Mansell Center on February 15th and 21st to accept applications to assist low income individuals and families with their heating bills. The Mansell Center was honored to serve as a satellite center for this special event. The center very much appreciates the FACAA and its financial assistance to many families during these difficult economic times.

*Submitted by Tinu Agboola, Center Director, ES at Mansell
For program information, please visit, www.esng.easterseals.com*

MARCH

National Nutrition Month

Preschoolers are active, spirited little tykes and can be very opinionated about eating. They should eat what the rest of the family eats as long as family meals feature a variety of healthy foods and in moderation. There is always room for treats but they should be limited. Children adopt their parents eating habits starting early in life. They love to imitate adults. So by substituting healthier foods at the dinner table, parents can capitalize on their child's natural curiosity!



Early Learning Property Management Mission Statement

To support and promote early childhood learning and development by providing safe and adequate facilities where early learning programs and activities can be conducted.



ELPM CENTER LOCATIONS

For ELPM center program information, please visit www.elpm.org



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TO: Our Partners, Supporters and Friends