



December 15, 2023 Email Blast

Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education



Red and gold Christmas tree ornament.

Directors,

Happy Holidays! I am sure most of you are ending school today for the holiday break. It is a great feeling to enjoy time with friends and colleagues at school and then have the next two weeks for family and friends. Please take a break from your work. Everyone needs a chance to really relax. Hope your holidays are the best ever!

Registration is Open for the Federal Programs Conference: District and School Leaders Improving Outcomes for Georgia's Students!

Registration for the Georgia Department of Education's Federal Programs Conference: District and School Leaders Improving Outcomes for Georgia's Students is open. This is a collaborative initiative from the Offices of Federal Programs, School and District Improvement, Teaching and Learning, Whole Child Supports, Financial Review, Assessment & Accountability, and Rural Education and Innovation.

District and school leaders will receive information to assist with plans for coordinating federal funds in FY25 and supporting newly identified CSI and TSI schools. Local Educational Agencies (LEA) participants should include representatives working with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) grants, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grants, and selected

instructional personnel. Principals at newly identified Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools, their direct supervisors, and the district point of contact for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools are required to attend.

This conference will be an in-person event with a modified virtual option. LEA staff not able to join in-person can register for the free live-stream of the general sessions only. All workshop recordings will be available in the GaDOE PL Events catalog after the conference. Join us at the Georgia International Convention Center (GICC) for two days of training and information sharing on February 13-14, 2024. [Conference information and registration is available here.](#)

Research Highlights from the National Center for Special Education Research

The Institute for Education Science's (IES) National Center for Special Education Research (NCSE) funds research to expand the knowledge and understanding of learners with and at risk for disabilities, from infancy through postsecondary settings.

"The Importance of Collaboration and Support to Improve Working Conditions for Special Education Teachers" takes a deeper dive into one issue discussed during NCSE's February 2023 Special Education Teacher Workforce technical working group — lack of collegial and leadership support as a contributing factor to teacher burnout and attrition. It also summarizes some of the NCSE-funded research on supporting special education teachers.



Friday, December 8, 2023, was a day of excitement and Christmas fun for more than 175 students with disabilities who attended the first annual "SEASonal FRIENDSmas Celebration" in Bleckley County (Cochran, Georgia)!

The event was free to all in attendance and sponsored by Bleckley Elementary School's JitterBug Joe Coffee Cart which is operated by students in Mrs. Riley Troili and Mrs. Scarlett Moore's third through fifth grade class. Teachers from eight school districts (Bleckley, Dublin City, Laurens, Wheeler, Treutlen, Wilcox, Vidalia, and Montgomery County) who are members of the recently formed SEA (Special Educators Alliance) brought their students to this day of holiday fun which was held at House of Grace Church in Cochran. Students had the opportunity to visit with Santa, hear a story from Auntie Claus (Santa's much younger sister), enjoy a prize walk, play S-A-N-T-A

Bingo, decorate a Christmas cookie, play in the indoor playground, and make a holiday ornament. Mrs. Troili took great care to account for accessibility for all attendees through these measures:

- Visual schedules supported by pictures/symbols for all groups
- Colored wristbands paired with symbols such as Christmas trees for groups
- Visual map of the venue with “Candy Cane” Directional Signposts throughout
- Adaptive “Letters to Santa” templates sent before the event for students to complete with assistance as needed
- Adaptive Holiday Visual Recipe Instructions for Cookie Decorating
- Adaptive “SANTA” Bingo Cards
- Sensory Room/Calm Down Station Availability
- Many invaluable “Elves” and other volunteers who gave their time and heart to this event!

Mrs. Riley Troili, who started the SEA in August 2023, stated, “I am ecstatic at the turnout and more than appreciative of all who volunteered their time to make this possible. Sometimes our students are not invited to parties and similar events, or they cannot handle the sensory overload, or they may feel awkward in those settings. Mrs. Moore and I hoped that this “SEAsonal FRIENDSmas Celebration” would be a day that all of these students would feel comfortable, loved and included.” This event provided all of this and so much more! Thank you, Riley, and all volunteers for supporting students with disabilities!



Decorated Christmas tree in front of a fireplace.

This will be the final newsletter blast for 2023. The next blast will roll out on Friday, January 5.

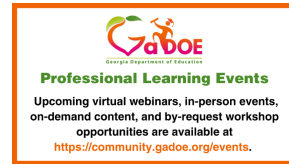
In less than a week, the fun will begin at our house. My nephew and his family from Texas will arrive first, next Ali and Chris from Pennsylvania and finally, Christopher, Cari, Annabelle and Josie from Utah will be here. The entire group will all be together for about half a day as the Texas group leaves on Saturday evening. Lucy will be beyond excited for all her favorite people to come to visit. It will be chaotic, but I wouldn't want it any other way. As the song says, "I'll be home for Christmas".

Happy Holidays to all! You are appreciated and loved.

Keeping students first,
Wina

Special Education Events & Due Dates

Please review the information below and the Due Dates Calendar for deadlines and key dates.



*Professional Learning
Events*

Coming Up

January 5 at 9 a.m. Statewide Vision Educators Consortium

Reminders

January 1 High Cost Grant Applications Available (Submitted via www.gahcf.org)

January 1 Grant for Residential and Reintegration Services Grant Applications Available (Submitted to Budget Liaison using Portal email)

January 1 American Printing House (APH) Census Opens (Submitted via GIMC website direct link)

January 17 Parent Survey Opens (SE Applications Dashboard) APR Indicator 8

January 31 Deadline for Excess Cost Calculation Submission (Consolidated Application in GaDOE Portal)

Visit GaDOE Community for a complete listing of GaDOE Professional Learning Events.

Practice Pointers – Individualized Education Program (IEP): Supplemental Aids and Services / Support for School Personnel



Arrows

Supplemental aids and services should include supports that are provided in general education classes or other education-related settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate as well as participate in nonacademic and extracurricular activities as determined by the IEP Team. Examples of these supports include tutoring, adult assistance, note-taking, peer helper, pre-teaching/re-teaching or reinforcing concepts, behavior intervention plan, point sheet, assigned seating, etc. Some accommodations used for instruction may also be considered a supplemental aid and service. In comparison, supports for school personnel should be included when training or other supports are being provided to local educational agency (LEA) staff regarding a specific child's need. Examples of these supports may include

training on an assistive technology device and/or service, a workshop on a content area or disability area, crisis prevention training, behavior management techniques, etc.

For more information, please see our [Special Education Rules Implementation Manual](#), our [IEP Resources](#) and [Specially Designed Instruction \(SDI\)](#) webpages, our [Parent Information Fact Sheets](#), and the [PROGRESS Center](#) at [American Institutes for Research / IEP Tip Sheet PLAAFPs](#).

FY24 Legal Updates - School Psychologists Webinar

The Division for Special Education Services and Supports is hosting a Technical Assistance online webinar for school psychologists.

Jamila Pollard, Legal Officer/Senior Program Manager, will deliver updates regarding current dispute resolution data in Georgia and discuss some common IDEA violations found in formal state complaints and due process hearings. The webinar will place an emphasis on IDEA violations that are related to the work of School Psychologists. This webinar will occur virtually on January 18, 2024 from 1 - 2:30 p.m.

FY24 GaDOE Legal Updates: School Psychologists Registration

For more information, please contact Alicia Mercer by email at amercer@doe.k12.ga.us.

Office of Teaching and Learning: December 7, 2023 Right Now Resources

Please review the [December 7, 2023 Right Now Resources](#) newsletter for Teaching and Learning Updates, or subscribe on the [Curriculum and Instruction](#) webpage to have them delivered straight to your inbox. You are in a place to purposefully impact teaching and learning in your districts, schools and classrooms.

Thank you for your commitment and dedication; we stand ready to support your needs.

Statewide Vision Educators Consortium

Join the Georgia Department of Education's Division for Special Education

Services and Supports webinar for Vision Educators. Facilitators will provide state updates, resources, and information for educators supporting students with visual impairments. Participants will receive information from organizations around the state and region that can assist with providing appropriate services to students. Best practices and state guidelines will be shared.

Date: January 5

Time: 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Statewide Vision Educators Consortium Registration

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