

Welcome to Second Semester of School Year 2020-2021

Dr. Stephanie Johnson, Deputy Superintendent

Welcome to second semester of school year 2020-2021 as we continue to reimagine education during COVID-19 and beyond! Local school districts and our state agency were charged with immense and urgent tasks of planning, launching, and sustaining a successful school year for staff and students in the wake of COVID-19. Despite changes and unknown circumstances, our Georgia teachers, leaders, support staff, parents, and students are to be commended for the high level of resiliency and commitment displayed during the restart of school. As the year progresses, our staff is committed to serving and supporting each school district as they strive for equity, are mindful of health and safety, and focus on teaching and learning to improve outcomes for all students.

While school may look different than what educators and students are accustomed to, our focus remains the same: Every student receives a high-quality education. This is true whether students learn remotely, in person, or through a hybrid of the two. We realize there are no single solutions or one-size-fits-all strategies. In fact, school districts in Georgia are structured and function in significantly different ways across our state. However, focusing on educational equity and meeting the needs of the whole child unifies our mission statewide to increase outcomes for all students. This means every student has access to the educational resources and rigor they need at the right moment and time in their education across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background, and/or family income. Reaching educational equity begins with reflection:

- How do we shift our practices to become forward-thinking in the use of data, accountability metrics, planning, and funding in support of the Whole Child?
- What is our current reality and what is our desired state?
- Who is involved in our work? Who should be involved?
- How can we maximize our resources to better support our staff and students?
- What do our students and staff need to be successful?
- How is my leadership helping?

The purpose of the content provided in this newsletter is to help educators across Georgia explore how to best work with and leverage evidence-based resources and support available through GaDOE and our partners, in an effort to increase capacity, build coherence, and advance equity. In the sections that follow, the articles present relevant information about opportunities to increase school and district effectiveness and links to resources addressing wraparound support, instructional practice, and leadership for schools and districts. This includes examples of promising practices that school districts throughout Georgia are currently employing to provide the greatest level of support for their staff and students successfully.

Please enjoy the newsletter and remember to check our website www.gadoe.org/SDE for the professional development calendar, evidence-based resources, and the archive of video presentations from our instructional leadership workshops and conferences.

Dr. Stephanie Johnson
Deputy Superintendent

The Outcome and not the Obstacle

North Area News

Martha Jo Johnson, Interim Program Manager



Dr. Adkinson shopping for turkeys.

Hornsby Elementary School, Richmond County School System, earned TV news recognition for a fabulous turkey drive, which provided 1,000 turkeys for donations to families for Thanksgiving. The school team collected funds to provide turkeys for every Hornsby family, a partnering school, a church, and a local senior community. Dr. Willie Adkinson, Hornsby principal, was “caught in the act” of purchasing an astounding number of turkeys at a local Walmart by a [news reporter](#). This event, and other outreach initiatives, reflect Hornsby’s determination to remain focused on service despite all challenges.

As the second semester begins, the Hornsby scheduling team will give attention to nearly doubling its face-to-face enrollment and to helping students regain any academic ground lost during the past year. Hornsby focuses on intervention during a daily block, and the principal guides the teachers to have a mindset of “compassion over compliance.” A 24/7 online tutoring service is provided for students, and the school has even partnered with a local counseling agency to offer social/emotional support through weekly classroom guidance sessions.

With nearly half of the students learning virtually, administering assessments has been a challenge. Nevertheless, the school was able to conduct initial screening for nearly all of its students. Most impressively, those students are showing growth above the previous year.

Hornsby Elementary School will continue to focus on great outcomes for students and overcome any obstacles.



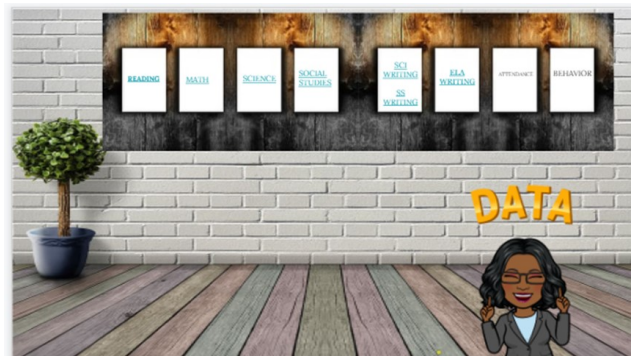
Mr. Murry shopping for turkeys.

Unleashing the Champions

South Area News

Janie Fields, Program Manager

DeRenne Middle School (DMS) in the Savannah-Chatham Public School System is sporting a new way to display student performances thanks to the leadership of Principal Tammy Broadnax. In the past, schools posted data on the walls in classrooms and data rooms. However, in a virtual setting, displaying data also needs a virtual format. After observing Bitmoji classrooms, Mrs. Broadnax was inspired to create a virtual data room. The DMS virtual data room reflects both formative data for each major content area and the analyses' findings. The teachers summarize their data analyses in a Google data protocol form, which resides in a Google folder that contains all data for a specific content area. Furthermore, the virtual data wall is linked to the Google content area folder and updated as new formative data is entered each week.



The virtual data wall promotes more stakeholder ownership of the data and serves as a resource during grade-level and cross grade-level meetings. The data is beneficial to the administrative team as they work collaboratively to monitor Tier 1 instruction and identify teachers and students who may need additional support. Mrs. Broadnax feels that the virtual data room will continue to be utilized after face-to-face instruction has fully resumed. In the near future, she plans for teachers to share the virtual data room with their students and utilize it as a motivational strategy.

Georgia Schools in the Metro Region are Forging Ahead: Teaching and Learning in the Virtual World with the Whole Child in Mind

Metro Area News

Susan Patrick, Program Manager

G.W. Northcutt Elementary School Clayton County Schools

How can schools ensure that students are receiving high-quality instruction, even during remote learning? The teachers and leaders at Northcutt Elementary School (NES) are making it happen daily through its work as a Professional Learning Community!

The NES principal, Arlando Dawson, had a vision of the “Northcutt Way”, which features pervasive best instructional practices consistently being implemented in every classroom. With that vision in mind, NES instructional coaches, Shakia Bruce and Kaila Green, created and presented a series of professional learning focused on using learning intentions and success criteria to enhance teacher clarity. During the first session, all NES teachers learned to effectively deconstruct standards, define “lesson-sized” learning targets for each lesson, and set appropriate pacing based on the standards. Teams were then provided with a framework to support collaborative planning.

According to first grade teacher, Latia Styles, “My students have a better understanding of the standards and my lesson pacing has improved since we have been using this framework.” When asked how the PL has impacted instructional planning, math coach Green says, “It has leveled the playing field across all classrooms because the expectations are the same for every team. Planning is more streamlined and intentional.”



Image from Deconstructing Standards PL presentation

Frederick Douglass High School Implements Social and Emotional Learning for Every Student Every Morning



Instructor Chief Hill delivers an SEL session on coping with the social changes of society.

Frederick Douglass High School is currently implementing the social emotional learning (SEL) model for students through counseling and other wraparound services to provide a strong, whole-school initiative to include all students and staff. Teachers and counselors are included in the sessions and rotate delivering quality SEL sessions to all students as they share their experiences to bring SEL to life through personal conversations and real-world illustrations.

Sophomore Alicia Ward said, “SEL is the favorite part of my day because I am able to connect and share with my peers.” John Carson shared that the SEL moments have helped him to reflect on the importance of family and his long-term goals. Now that Frederick Douglass High School has created a prototype for other schools to implement, the school counselor, Dr. Neely, offers this advice: “Advocate and support your students by ‘thinking out of the box’ when it comes to preparing them for real-world experiences and embracing their social and emotional needs.”

Bibb County's Northeast High School Targets Increased Learning Time: Virtual and Face-to-Face

SIG 1003(g), Cohort 5

Dr. Patricia Rooks, Program Manager

All SIG Schools, including Northeast High School, are required to target priority areas for program sustainability while developing goals, objectives, strategies, resources, and action steps to improve student achievement. When the Bibb County School District decided the 2020-2021 school year would begin virtually for all students, Principal Steve Jones and the staff determined one priority area needing immediate attention was Increased Learning Time (ILT). Faced with the challenge of increasing learning time within the virtual classroom was new territory. However, the Northeast Raiders were up for the challenge.



One of the strategies utilized to monitor student success was to continue to schedule RaiderVisement in each student's virtual learning schedule. During RaiderVisement, each student's academic progress is monitored and individual student needs are addressed. In addition to RaiderVisement, virtual tutoring sessions, as well as face-to-face learning time, continue to be offered Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. These content-based tutoring sessions are scheduled using Microsoft Teams. Teacher facilitators assist students as needed using various online learning platforms and other resources. Even with these strategic efforts, Northeast High School leaders determined ILT needed to be offered at an additional time to meet the needs of all students. As a result, ILT will offer Saturday sessions during second semester. These combined efforts help to eliminate student failures and ultimately promote student success. After all, it is the Northeast Way!

Visit www.gadoe.org/SIG for more information.

Title I School Improvement Grants

Atlanta Office News

Dr. Gary C. Wenzel, Operations Support Specialist

Drawdown benchmarks for Title I School Improvement 1003 funds is approaching — March 31, 2021.

Grant Award	Drawdown Benchmark 2 75% Expended
Title I Section 1003 School Improvement Initial FY20 Allocation - July 2019	March 31, 2021
Rural Resource Grant	March 31, 2021
GSCI Grant	March 31, 2021
Title I Section 1003 School Improvement FY20 Amended Allocation - January 2020	March 31, 2021
Digital Learning Grant	March 31, 2021

Grant Award	Drawdown Benchmark 1 50% Expended
Title I Section 1003 School Improvement FY21 Initial Allocation - July 2020	March 31, 2021

School Improvement Listserv

We are excited to share our new Office of School Improvement listserv. It will provide pertinent and timely information to subscribers, including upcoming professional learning opportunities, quarterly newsletters, resources, annual conference information, grant opportunities, and other statewide school improvement information. To join, send a blank email to join-schoolimprovement@list.doe.k12.ga.us.

Networking Opportunities

Alternative/Non-Traditional Education News

Dr. Samuel Taylor, Program Manager | Dr. Debra White, District Effectiveness Specialist

Do you want an opportunity to collaborate or network with other alternative/non-traditional school leaders? Consider becoming a member of the Georgia Association for Alternative Education. Membership in the GAAE will be very beneficial for all who serve as advocates for students in alternative/non-traditional school settings. The mission, vision, and core beliefs of GAAE are as follows:

MISSION – To provide the highest quality of professional learning, promote innovative learning opportunities, and serve as an advocate for students matriculating in non-traditional settings throughout Georgia.

VISION - To provide a positive environment conducive to learning for all children utilizing a variety of innovative and traditional approaches differentiated for each student's needs and skills.

CORE BELIEFS – (1) Everyone can learn; (2) Every person has value and deserves to be treated with respect; (3) There is strength in diversity; (4) Positive human interaction fosters viable communities; and (5) A one-sized education program does not fit everyone.

Membership is for one year, beginning on January 1 and ending December 31. The cost is \$50.00. To learn more about GAAE resources, conference information, and membership, go to www.gaaae.org or contact Dr. Taylor or Dr. White. You may also email members of the GAAE Board or Dr. Keith Hose, President, directly through the website. We are encouraging you to participate in the membership drive that is taking place now through February 14. This is a wonderful opportunity to become a member and join in with a network of like-minded individuals who are committed to ensuring students are able to thrive in non-traditional settings.

Visit www.gadoe.org/alternative for more information.

Focusing on Student Learning

Area Program Assessment Specialist News

Georgia School Assessment of Performance on Systems (GSAPS)

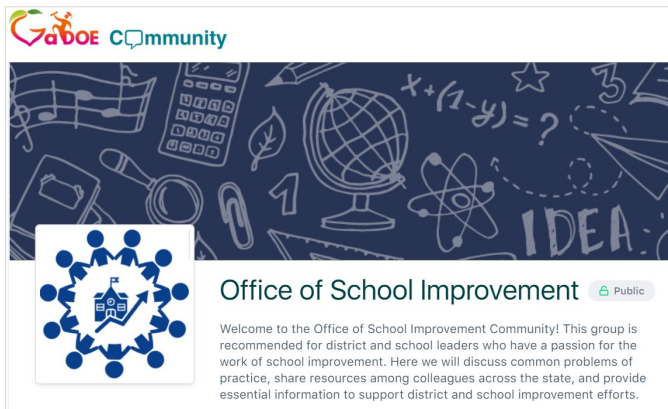
Georgia schools and districts have been dealing with a historic and unprecedented interruption to the pattern of schooling. Suddenly, school took place at home, and educators faced the daunting challenge of reaching students affected by personal stress and trauma, differing abilities to engage with virtual/remote education, and unknown gaps in learning. We are so proud of our schools and districts for dealing with these changing times during this difficult period by maintaining their focus on our ultimate purpose, student learning. Building growth and mastery to ensure all students have the knowledge they need to understand a chaotic and unpredictable world is the central importance of education.

Accordingly, formative assessment is a critical tool for educators looking to unlock in-depth information on student learning in a world of change. Since our schools and districts did not have state testing last spring, our schools are focusing on utilizing formative assessments to meet students where they are, address learning gaps, and create exceptional opportunities for growth and development. The Georgia Department of Education offers [DRC BEACON](#), a formative interim assessment system administered in ELA and mathematics in grades 3-8.

This fall, we conducted a survey to see how our schools and districts utilized formative assessments to provide the real-time feedback necessary to dynamically adjust instruction to meet learner needs as they emerge and change. We are proud to report that 93% of the schools and districts SDE serves are currently using high-quality formative assessment practices in ELA and mathematics to ensure adjusted instruction is occurring to build growth and mastery for students. Keep up the great work, and please let us know if you need any assistance.

Visit www.gadoe.org/SDEreview for more information.

GaDOE Community



Welcome to the GaDOE Community! The Georgia Department of Education launched this site to provide a platform for staff to interact with our colleagues across the state. This site has been developed to facilitate collaboration and our ongoing efforts to provide the services and supports necessary to ensure all students across Georgia have what they need to be successful. This is a place where GaDOE teams, school and district staff, RESA staff, and other partners within the state can interact to share important information, discuss ongoing work, and share success stories across agencies.

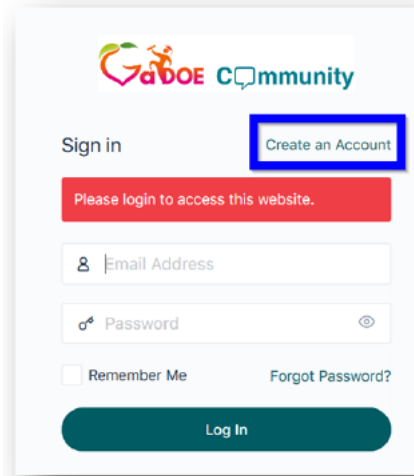
We are pleased to announce our new Office of School Improvement Community! This group is recommended for district and school leaders who have a passion for school improvement. Our group will share success stories, discuss common problems of practice, provide resources, and offer essential information to support district and school improvement efforts. We encourage district leadership, school leadership, instructional coaches, and teachers to join our group. Please see the directions for joining Community in the next column.

Important Notice

Thank you for your participation in GaDOE Community. As a reminder, information in the Community is available for public inspection under the Open Records Act. So, please do not include any personal information that you would not want made available to the public. This may include items such as home addresses, home telephone numbers, and years of birth. Also, please remember that the information in the GaDOE's Community will be retained in accordance with the appropriate retention schedule. Additionally, please refrain from posting student personally identifiable information that is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

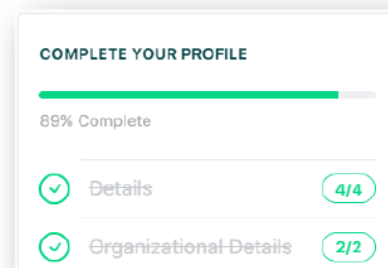
Step 1: REGISTER

Go to community.gadoe.org. Create an account using your professional, work-provided email. Accounts are approved within 24 hours Monday-Friday.



Step 2: COMPLETE PROFILE

After you log in the first time, take a moment to complete your user profile so others can connect with you.

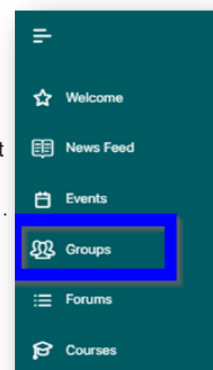


Step 3: JOIN GROUP

Search available groups hosted by DOE departments. Some groups allow for public access and others require access to join.

As you interact with the platform and your colleagues, please submit any comments or concerns via the contact page on the site or to gadoecommunitysupport@doe.k12.ga.us.

We look forward to learning with you in the Community!



On the Road with Dr. Johnson and SDE: Pandemic-Relevant Information Collected Semester I and Lessons Learned

Dr. Stephanie Johnson, Deputy Superintendent

As school districts in our state continue to “Reimagine Education During COVID-19 and Beyond” for Semester 2, our goal remains to support school districts with reducing variability in student learning with a focus on equity, access, and opportunity for all. The school and district effectiveness team collected pandemic-relevant information from federally identified school districts across the state. The information collected offers lessons learned and important next steps for all school leaders and educators in response to supporting a school district’s strategy for delivering instruction to students and continuing relevant professional development and support for school staff during COVID-19. Even during the pandemic, the goal is to serve the needs of the whole child and provide maximum opportunities for each child and staff member to experience optimal success in a safe and orderly environment conducive to learning:

- Information obtained from our field staff indicates concern with student attendance and remote learning participation that reinforces the urgency of providing appropriate school staff support to children, especially those at risk of becoming detached and dropping out. Utilizing counseling and support staff members to work with teachers and families to address attendance and engagement concerns is essential.
- Results from our work with school districts for Semester 1 regarding online learning and teaching show that districts offering remote learning are effective only when students have consistent access to wireless services and digital devices, and only if teachers have received targeted training and supports for online instruction. Because these needed requirements for effectiveness were absent in some school districts, we are concerned that remote education during the pandemic impeded teaching and learning. The GaDOE website has resources to support targeted training and support for remote learning. Each district

has an assigned DES (District Effectiveness Specialist) that can refer school and district leaders to available grants and funding information if students are in need.

- Information obtained from our direct support field staff show remote learning was effective with students in schools for whom intentional, personalized, and sufficient resources were consistently available during Semester 1. In fact, many of our staff members reported increased student performance on district-led formative assessments, such as MAP. The unplanned shut-down in spring 2020 forced a transition to instructional delivery utilizing a remote platform without preparing most teachers or parents for methods to address personalized learning strategies and engagement. For Semester 2 and beyond, it is imperative for school leaders to ensure staff and students have sufficient resources to ensure high quality instruction continues.

As we settle into the new semester, it is time to begin planning and budgeting for opportunities to address potential learning loss. A reduction in learning time has possibly impacted student learning and interfered with support for serving the whole child in some districts. Our schools must make up for this time by increasing the amount and quality of learning time through after school opportunities, extended school schedules, summer enrichment opportunities, and personalized instruction. Additionally, our leaders must promote creative staffing strategies to reduce class sizes and ensure our highly credentialed educators have the resources and support needed to feel supported and safe in their work environments. We do NOT want to lose our excellent teachers.

Visit [School and District Effectiveness \(SDE\)](#) for more information on school improvement programs and events.