



February 3, 2023 Email Blast

Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education



Hearts spelling love

Directors,

It seems impossible but February is here! When we think of February, we must honor the groundhog and the important predictions forecast about a late or early spring. President's Day is another spotlight for February, but Valentine's Day holds the top honors. Over the last few weeks, I have shared some thoughts on excellence, success, kindness and joy. It seems only fitting to begin with love for this month. The word, love, means many things based on the context. I certainly believe love is a large part of our work too. Love of our profession, love of our colleagues and certainly love of students and their families that we serve is so important. We have all heard the quote from Confucius, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." Of course, that doesn't mean you will not work, it just means you will love your work so much that it will not seem like work. When I was a first year teacher, I was so much in love with my job and students that I made the statement to my family that I would work even if I didn't get paid. (Trust me - I have not lived that down to this day.) Certainly, many of us work to support our families as a necessity but it is great if you also love your work. I would like to maintain the love and excitement that comes with starting a new role as a teacher to be instilled for a lifetime. We all have a responsibility to support each other so the love will last. There was a 5th teacher in one of our schools that had a posted rule in her classroom that said, "Love One Another." That struck me as very different compared to most

classroom rules such as: raise your hand to speak, be respectful of others and so forth. But, if you really dig deep and think what “Love One Another” means, it may be the only rule needed.

The Division for Special Education Services and Supports has completed a review of data for LEA Determinations from the 2021-2022 school year. LEA Determinations will be emailed today. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your district liaison. Our Program Managers can also be contacted with questions Felicia Peavy at fpeavy@doe.k12.ga.us or Lynn Holland at lholland@doe.k12.ga.us. Of 223 LEAs, 181 met requirements. Congratulations and keep up the great work!

Our district highlight is from Bleckley County Schools. Learn more about STAR MART or Shopping To Actively Review Math And Reading Tasks. Looks like such a fun way to reinforce reading and mathematics. I am so proud of this work!

Our new Special Education Director featured this week is Dr. Cincrystal Poythress from Muscogee County Schools. Cincrystal has great experience as a building leader to prepare her for the district level leadership role. She is motivated to do the best for students with disabilities as well as open to continuous improvement. Thank you, Cincrystal, for your leadership!

Our staff spotlight is shining on Kriszti Kilpatrick. Kriszti just joined our team a few months ago but she has already jumped in and is a part of the family. Kriszti brings building-level and district-level leadership to this role. As a former Special Education Director, she knows all the joys and challenges, from the teacher shortage to seeing a child learn to read. We are so proud to have you on our team!



Red heart

Your assistance is needed to seek feedback on an important survey about transportation and employment needs for individuals with disabilities. The survey is being conducted by the University of Georgia on behalf of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities. Please share with educators, families and related service providers. Our voice from transition-aged youth needs to be heard. Please assist in sharing the survey links with appropriate individuals. See the full eblast for details.

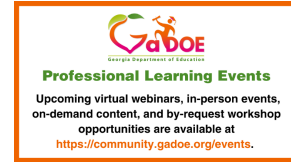
I am happy to say that I do love my profession even after all these years. So, they say, “Love makes the world go round.” Spread kindness, joy and love.

Sending my love and appreciation for all you do to support student with disabilities.

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*

Professional Learning Events

February 9 at 1:30 p.m. – FY23 Sp Ed SR- Recovering Rejected Events

February 9 at 3:30 p.m. – Assistive Technology (AT) Webinar Session 5

February 14 at 1:00 p.m. – Special Education Directors' Webinar registration

February 14 at 3:00 p.m. – Designing Transition Programs

Reminders

February 15 – Final Date to submit Grant for Residential and Reintegration Services Application (SE Applications Dashboard)

February 15 – Final Date to Submit High Cost Grant Application (Submitted to Budget Liaison using Portal email)

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

New Director Spotlight: Dr. Cincrystal Poythress

GaDOE's Special Education Services and Supports Division is excited to feature Dr. Cincrystal Poythress for our New Director Spotlight this week.

Dr. Cincrystal Poythress is the Special Education Director for Muscogee County Schools and has been in the field of education for 18.5 years. Dr. Poythress is attentive, solution oriented, passionate about ensuring that all children get what they need, and strives to be inclusive and build relationships.

Dr. Poythress served as an Assistant Principal for one year in Butler, Alabama and as an Assistant Principal at Lagrange High School for three years. Prior to being an Assistant Principal, Dr. Poythress served as a special education teacher at Smith Station High School for three years and at Beulah High School

for three years. In addition to serving as a special education teacher while at Beulah High School, Dr. Poythress also served as an Administrative Assistant, a position in which she supervised the following programs: English Language Learners (ELL), 504, and Building Base Student Support Team (BBSST). In addition, Dr. Poythress was the Principal of Beulah High School where she provided supervision for over 500 students in grades seven through twelve and supervised sixty-five faculty and staff members. Evaluating the effectiveness of the curricular program, Dr. Poythress also monitored the school's compliance with the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP), addressed student disciplinary issues, conducted professional developments, and addressed parent and faculty concerns. February of 2023 will mark Dr. Poythress' first full year as the Executive Director of Program for Exceptional Students.

Dr. Poythress' educational career was influenced by her parents, and it was with their support and encouragement that she pursued a higher education. Dr. Poythress' influence to be a leader in education came from Dr. Michelle Washington. "She was always a listening ear, a guiding light, and a supportive leader. Her passions and advocacy in the field of education excited me and motivated me to do more for the students I serve."

Dr. Poythress enjoys spending time with her husband and three children, traveling, and trying new restaurants.

District Spotlight: Bleckley County

Bleckley County Elementary School

At Bleckley County Elementary School, Riley Troili and Scarlett Arnold have been immersed in planning relevant, fun and educational activities for students with disabilities for a long time. This time a lot of planning went into their very own classroom grocery store, STAR MART, which stands for Shopping To Actively Review Math And Reading Tasks. The students were so excited to participate in this fun and educational activity that it quickly became a daily staple.

At first, students were concerned that their teachers were letting them shop without their parents, but they were quickly assured that the STAR MART is a kid friendly store! Students make choices from the teacher-created store flyer and design their own shopping lists. Then they shop to pick out their items independently. Progressing through the steps, students learn to calculate totals, count money and figure taxes. Look at these little shoppers go!



*Bleckley County
Schools logo*



*Kriszti Kilpatrick,
Program Specialist,
Georgia Department
of Education*

GaDOE Spotlight: Kriszti Kilpatrick

Kriszti Kilpatrick has worked in the field of education for 21 years. She is currently an Education Program Specialist in the Results Driven Accountability Unit.

Having transitioned from a special education director to a district liaison three months ago, Kriszti has been excited to take on the responsibilities of supporting special education directors. The basis for the work as a district liaison is to support districts in maintaining compliance with federal and state regulations. Whether supporting districts through cross functional monitoring, complaints, disproportionality findings, or corrective action planning, her goal is to support directors in using compliance as a catalyst to grow great special education programs that have a positive, lifelong impact on students with disabilities and their communities as a whole.

Kriszti has been married to her high school sweetheart for 23 years. They have a 13-year-old son, Lincoln, who they adore and take great pride in parenting. Lincoln loves to explore and experience new places. Several years ago, he began making a travel bucket list. One of their hobbies as a family is slowly marking off trips with hopes of having all the adventures under their belts before he graduates college. Kriszti loves all things related to home improvement projects, mostly decorating, redecorating, and landscaping. They recently sold their home, and are looking for the next project. Kriszti is pretty sure her husband is going to prolong the hunt because he is enjoying a reprieve from the honey-do lists.



Arrows

Practice Pointers – USED Guidance on Discipline: Question F-2 and F-3

QUESTION F-2: WHEN MUST A MANIFESTATION DETERMINATION REVIEW (MDR) BE CONDUCTED?

The MDR must be conducted when school personnel propose to change the placement of a child with a disability because of a violation of the school’s code of student conduct. The MDR also must take place when the local educational agency (LEA) is deemed to have knowledge that the child is a child with a disability, even if the child has not yet been found eligible for special education and related services at the time the discipline is proposed. The MDR must occur within 10 school days of the decision to change the placement of the child because of a violation of the school’s code of student conduct. **34 C.F.R. § 300.530(e)(1)**. Additionally, while the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires the MDR to be conducted when there is a change of placement, the IDEA does not prohibit individualized education program (IEP) Teams from conducting the MDR during other situations when a child’s behavior is inconsistent with the school’s code of student conduct.

QUESTION F-3: WHEN MUST A CHILD’S BEHAVIOR BE DETERMINED TO BE A MANIFESTATION OF THE CHILD’S DISABILITY?

The behavior must be determined to be a manifestation of the child’s disability if the LEA, the parent, and relevant members of the child’s IEP Team determine that the child’s behavior was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the child’s disability, or the behavior in question was the direct result of the LEA’s failure to implement the IEP. **34 C.F.R. § 300.530(e)(1)(i)-(ii)**. This could include situations where the child did not consistently receive all services required by their IEP.

For more information, please see the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) guidance found in [Questions and Answers: Addressing the Needs of Children with Disabilities and IDEA’s Discipline Provisions](#) as revised July 19, 2022.

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD)

Your help is needed to provide feedback to the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD). Please share with your special education staff, parents and administrators.

The Research and Evaluation Unit (REU) at the Institute on Human Development and Disability (IHDD) at the University of Georgia (UGA) and Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) are seeking input from individuals with disabilities; their families and caregivers; and key informants about the services and support needs, and gaps in services in Georgia, related to two topics - Transportation & Employment. You can participate by completing the surveys or participating in interviews/focus groups, on one or both of these topics.

Transportation and Employment Surveys

Surveys can be found by going to the [GA Transportation & Employment Needs Assessment webpage](#). Once you are on the web page, please click on the big icons to select the survey you want to complete. The surveys should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete, and your participation is completely voluntary. You may complete the full survey or only the questions you choose. None of the questions are mandatory, and you can skip any of the questions and still continue with the survey. There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will be kept confidential. Feedback gathered through this survey will be combined into a summary report along with other data collected for this project.

Interviews or Focus Groups

If you would like to participate in an interview or a focus group, the interest form can be found at the bottom of the [GA Transportation & Employment Needs Assessment webpage](#). One of our study team members will contact you to determine eligibility and schedule at a time convenient for you. Interviews will take about 20-30 minutes and focus groups will take about 45-60 minutes. Individuals with disabilities or family members will receive a \$20 Wal-Mart gift card as a thank you for their participation.

If you have questions or need more information about the needs assessment, please contact the Research and Evaluation Unit (REU) at IHDD by sending an email to researchevaluation.ihdd@gmail.com. Thank you for your time and

participation!

Georgia's Specially Designed Instruction Project

Through a partnership with American Institutes for Research, the Instruction and Systemic Improvement unit began our Specially Designed Instruction professional learning series with the goal of increasing knowledge and building awareness related to specially designed instruction. As we prepare to end the professional learning series in February, we are happy to announce the application window for participation as a pilot district is officially open!

The SDI Project Pilot District partnership focus will be on developing and implementing high-quality, specially designed instruction practices to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Through partnership with selected LEAs, the Georgia Department of Education through the Instruction and Systemic Improvement Unit, proposes a comprehensive approach that includes supporting LEAs through professional learning, job-embedded training/coaching and implementation and sustainability planning.

The application deadline for submission is March 3. For additional information, please contact Yyanisha.Bass@doe.k12.ga.us or Katherine Johnson at Katherine.Johnson@doe.k12.ga.us.

[Georgia's Specially Designed Instruction Project Application](#)

FY 24 GA Parent Mentor Partnership (GaPMP) Application for Participation

The FY 24 Application for Participation in the GA Parent Mentor Partnership is available. A signed copy should be submitted using the JotForm link by March 1, 2023. The signatures required include that of the special education director and the district's superintendent. If you have questions, contact Anne Ladd, Family Engagement Specialist, 470-423-6987, aladd@doe.k12.ga.us.

[Ga Parent Mentor Partnership FY24 Application for Participation](#)
[Ga Parent Mentor Partnership Application Submission Link](#)



BECOME A SOCCER OLYMPIAN

Could you, a friend, or a family member benefit from our program? We are always looking for more children of different ages to be a part of the Georgia Tech GOALS and Special Olympics team.

Learn the fundamentals of soccer and experience being on a competitive but fun team of supportive friends and volunteers. Also, registering with GOALS and Special Olympics gives you the opportunity to participate in the Special Olympics Summer Games.

Practice is held 12:30 - 1:30 PM at Georgia Tech. Free parking is available at the CRC Deck.

VISIT GOALSOCCEER.GEORGEIA.EDU FOR MORE INFORMATION
QUESTIONS? EMAIL US AT GOALS@GTSPHOTO.COM



GOAL Buddies Soccer Program

The GOAL Buddies Soccer program is an organization where special needs players can attend weekly practices and play at the Special Olympics in May. The program is entirely free for participants and has been running for approximately 10 years. They have not had openings on the team for three years until now!

GOALS Soccer is a student-led organization that is affiliated with Georgia Tech. They practice Sundays from 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. on the Stamps Recreational Fields next to the Campus Recreation Center. Their coaches pair one-on-one with a player to guide them through soccer drills that improve motor control and balance. The players are medically trained by the Georgia Special Olympics and the drills are adapted from the Special Olympics. GOALS Soccer takes players aged 5 - 20 with a wide variety of skills. They focus on creating a positive environment where players can get moving, so it is okay if the players do not want to or are not capable of playing soccer!

The program is entirely free to participants and participating in the Special Olympics in May is also free but not required. They also cover the parking fees!

If you are interested or know someone who may be, please reach out to goals.gt@gmail.com. Their Instagram handle is *goalsoccer.gt* if you would like to get a glimpse at what they do!



Parent to Parent of Georgia
logo

Parent to Parent Trainings

Webinar Title: GA Medicaid and Katie Beckett Deeming Waiver

Date: Tuesday, February 7, 2023

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Webinar Title: GA Medicaid and Katie Beckett Deeming Waiver

Date: Thursday, February 9, 2023

Time: 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

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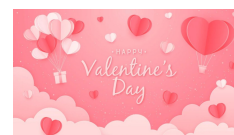
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Federal Programs

February 10, 2023 Email Blast



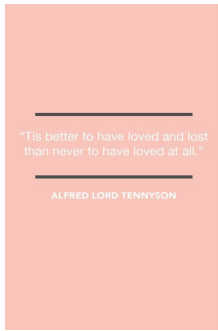
Happy Valentine's Day

Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education

Directors,

When I was in second grade, my teacher asked if we wanted to make a special Valentine's Day card for our mothers. She had two examples and said we could choose from one. There was a red card with a big heart in the middle while the second choice was a beautiful soft pink with a rose on the front. Every student in the class chose the red card except me. I wanted the beautiful pink card because my mother loved pink. My teacher tried her best to persuade me to go with the red but I knew my Mama would just love the pink card. All seemed to be fine but every step of the way, I was going against the flow. I was on my own making the pink card. Despite the obvious disapproval of having decided to make a pink Valentine card for my Mama, I was determined to have the best card of all. I am glad I stuck with my choice because my reason was genuine. In my reflection on what should have been a very ordinary activity for Valentine's Day, I still remember the pressure I felt to conform. As we all know, instead of discouraging differences and creativity, we should encourage it. Let children have choices and celebrate differences. Conformity would mean all Valentine's cards are red. For my Mama, it had to be pink! Wishing you a wonderful Valentine's Day!

Our new director featured this week is Dillia H. Smith,



Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. - Alfred Lord Tennyson

Special Education Director for Coweta Charter Academy at Senoia. Her devotion to the field of education, her friends and her family are wonderful to read about.

Our district highlight is Whitfield County. Read how their Compass Transition Academy is making a difference for the post school outcomes of their students.

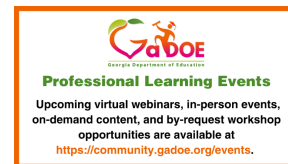
Take time to celebrate colleagues, friends and family on Valentine’s Day! Thank you for all do for students with disabilities. Please be my Valentine!

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

Professional Learning Events

February 14 at 1:00 p.m. – Special Education

Directors’ Webinar registration

February 14 at 3:00 p.m. – Designing Transition Programs

February 21 at 9:00 a.m. – Georgia’s SDI for Administrators Session 5

February 22 at 9:00 a.m. – GA Educators SDI PL Series: Elementary Session 4

February 22 at 10:00 a.m. – SESBAA: Being an LEA in an IEP Meeting

February 22 at 1:00 p.m. – Special Education Open Office Hours - CFM

February 23 at 1:30 p.m. – FY23 Sp Ed SR Errors Impact

Reminders

February 15 – Final Date to submit Grant for Residential and Reintegration Services Application (SE Applications Dashboard)

February 15 – Final Date to Submit High Cost Grant Application (Submitted to Budget Liaison using Portal email)

February 15 – Post School Outcomes Opens for Viewing (FY 21-22 Exiters) in SE Applications Dashboard (APR Indicator 14)

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



Dillia Smith, Special Education Director, Coweta Charter Academy at Senoia

New Director Spotlight: Dillia H. Smith

GaDOE's Special Education Services and Supports Division is excited to feature Dillia H. Smith for our New Director Spotlight this week.

Dillia H. Smith is the Special Education Director for Coweta Charter Academy at Senoia and has been in the field of education for what she says is “a long time.”

Ms. Smith always wanted to be a teacher and started her educational career as an elementary teacher, an Assistant Principal for several years, a Testing Coordinator / 504 Coordinator, an Educational Consultant, and now to her current position as a Student Services Coordinator at Coweta Charter Academy at Senoia. Coweta Charter Academy and Ms. Smith share a focus on student success, both academically and socially.

In addition to her mother, Ms. Smith shared that the person that influenced her career the most was the late Mrs. Juantia Byrd, her amazing high school counselor and church member. Ms. Smith shared that, “Mrs. Byrd always stayed ahead of my career.”

With her spare time and her priority being devotion to her friends and family, Ms. Smith loves to read, cook, and enjoy the good times shared with family dinners and vacations.

District Spotlight: Whitfield County

Compass Transition Academy

Whitfield County Schools' Compass Transition Academy opened in the fall of 2022. It is an employment skills-focused academy for high schoolers with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. The vision of the Compass Transition Academy is for every intern who receives training to exit the program with the skills needed to enter competitive employment. Their mission is to provide quality, engaging, person-centered programming in the areas of employment, interpersonal skills and independent living skills to prepare each intern for postsecondary success.



Whitfield County Schools logo

With the completion of the first year of the Compass Transition program, one

student has already accepted employment, and the rest are slated for job placements or to continue their education with Project Search. These students have completed 4+ years of high school and earned a special education diploma (by completing the required adapted curriculum courses and participating in the GAA).

Read more about this innovative academy featured in the Dalton Daily Citizen.

Practice Pointers – USED Guidance on Discipline: Question F-4



Arrows

QUESTION F-4: WHAT ACTIONS MUST AN IEP TEAM TAKE IF THE CONDUCT IN QUESTION IS DETERMINED TO BE A MANIFESTATION OF THE CHILD'S DISABILITY?

If the local educational agency (LEA), the parent, and relevant members of the individualized education program (IEP) Team make the determination that the conduct was a manifestation of the child's disability, the IEP Team must either: (1) conduct a functional behavioral assessment (FBA), unless the LEA had conducted an FBA before the behavior that resulted in the change of placement occurred, and implement a behavior intervention plan (BIP) for the child; or (2) if a BIP already had been developed, review the BIP and modify it as necessary to address the behavior. 34 C.F.R. § 300.530(f)(1).

The IEP Team also must return the child to the placement from which the child was removed unless the parent and the LEA agree to a change of placement. In addition, when the removal is for weapons, drugs, or serious bodily injury, the child may remain in an interim alternative educational setting (IAES), as determined by the child's IEP Team, for the duration of the removal (not more than 45 school days), regardless of whether the violation was a manifestation of their disability. 34 C.F.R. § 300.530(f)(2).

If the behavior in question was the direct result of the LEA's failure to implement the IEP, the LEA must take immediate steps to remedy those deficiencies. 34 C.F.R. § 300.530(e)(3).

For more information, please see the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) guidance found in [Questions and Answers: Addressing the Needs of Children with Disabilities and IDEA's Discipline Provisions as revised July 19, 2022](#).

OSEP Director Highlights Discipline Policies as Reflective of OSEP Priorities, Two TA Centers Share Preventative Models, Resources

DISCIPLINE AND BEHAVIOR SERIES

Our Discipline Policies Reflect Our Priorities

Valerie C. Williams, director of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), released the second blog post in a series on discipline and behavior. The newest blog post addresses OSEP's priorities of calling on "state and local leaders to double down on their efforts to reduce their reliance on exclusionary discipline practice," and "creating safe, predictable learning environments for students and educators."

In addition to sharing how OSEP's discipline policies reflect the office's priorities, Williams asked two OSEP-funded technical assistance centers about preventative models early childhood programs, schools and families can use to address the behavior of young and school-aged children with disabilities.

The National Center on Pyramid Model Interventions answered questions through an early childhood lens while the Center on Positive Interventions & Supports addressed questions about school-aged children.

Important Budget Reminder: Georgia High-Cost Fund Grant and Georgia Residential & Reintegration Services Grant

The Georgia High-Cost Fund Grant and Georgia Residential & Reintegration Services Grant submission period opened January 1. The updated resources for the Georgia High-Cost Fund Grant and Residential & Reintegration Services Grant can be accessed online on the [Budget, Grants and Consolidated Application webpage](#). The deadline for the submission of these grants is February 15. Don't hesitate to contact your budget liaison if you have any additional questions.

Georgia's Specially Designed Instruction Project

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The application deadline for submission is March 3. For additional information, please contact Yyanisha.Bass@doe.k12.ga.us or Katherine Johnson at Katherine.Johnson@doe.k12.ga.us.

Georgia's Specially Designed Instruction Project Application

FY 24 GA Parent Mentor Partnership (GaPMP) Application for Participation

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Ga Parent Mentor Partnership FY24 Application for Participation
[Ga Parent Mentor Partnership Application Submission Link](#)

Parent to Parent Trainings

Webinar Title: Workshop for Parents and Caregivers:
Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Who, What
& How

Date: Tuesday, February 22, 2023

Time: 12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.



*Parent to Parent of Georgia
logo*



February 17, 2023 Email Blast

Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education



Red shoes and wand from The Wizard of Oz

Directors,

The classic movie, Wizard of Oz, has many pearls of wisdom that have literally become a part of our culture. We all know the famous line from Dorothy, "There is no place like home." A great quote and something we can all agree on, but my favorite quote is from Glinda the Good Witch, "You always had the power, my dear, you just had to learn it for yourself." Glinda's statement is a powerful quote and applies in so many situations. I recall as a new special education director being called into all sorts of situations within the first few weeks of the school year. Although I had the degrees, certifications, and experience, it was a humbling experience to be the "expert" called to help. As Glinda's quote so eloquently expresses, the power is within, but you just have to learn it for yourself. The power is within each of us. Believe in yourself and you will find it!

Thank you for being a part of the Director's Webinar on Tuesday. This month was a marathon version, but I hope you enjoyed the content. The PowerPoint is posted on the webpage under Director's Webinars.

Our district highlight is Barrow County's Compass Transition Academy. In partnership with Chico's, Barrow County Schools has established a Project Search location. Learn more about the great opportunities for transition.

Our new director this week is Dr. Marva Clarke-Howard from Rockdale County Schools. Although she has an impressive list of experience and credentials, she also served in the United States Army for four years of active duty. So glad to have you in SELDA!

Our staff spotlight is Barbara Ross. Barbara is a Program Specialist supporting the Speech/Language Program and Preschool Special Education. She has a wealth of knowledge and experience including being the former Special Education Director of Greene County Schools. We are delighted she joined our team!



You had the power all along my dear - Glinda the Good Witch

"Click your heels together three times and say, 'There's no place like home' and you'll be there." -Wizard of Oz

As we know, Dorothy wanted to find her way home to Kansas and although the movie may have involved a little magic, the quote is often used to symbolize transporting our minds to a safe, cozy place like home. A pair of ruby slippers might just be what we all need. In all seriousness, you have the power within yourself to make a difference for students with disabilities.

You are greatly appreciated. Thank you for all you do each day to impact the lives of students.

Just click your heels and make it happen!

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

February 21 at 9:00 a.m. – Georgia's SDI for Administrators Session 5

February 22 at 9:00 a.m. – GA Educators SDI PL Series: Elementary Session 4

February 22 at 10:00 a.m. – SESBAA: Being an LEA in an IEP Meeting



Professional Learning Events

February 22 at 1:00 p.m. – Special Education Open Office Hours - CFM
February 23 at 1:30 p.m. – FY23 Sp Ed SR Errors Impact
February 23 at 3:30 p.m. – Accessible Educational Materials Session 5
February 28 at 1:00 p.m. – Preparing for Your IDEA 2024 Budgets
February 28 at 3:00 p.m. – GVRA: Pulling Data Reports and Documentation
March 1 at 3:30 p.m. – Significant Cognitive Disabilities Session 6

Reminders

February 28 – American Printing House (APH) Census Closes. Submitted via GIMC website direct link.

March 2 – FTE Cycle 3 Count Day

March 14 – MOE Reconciliation Deadline. Submit reconciliation evidence to Budget Liaison. Timely and Accurate Submission.

Visit [GaDOE Community](#) for a complete listing of GaDOE Professional Learning Events.



Dr. Marva Clarke-Howard, Special Education Director, Rockdale County Schools

New Director Spotlight: Dr. Marva Clarke-Howard

GaDOE's Special Education Services and Supports Division is excited to feature Dr. Marva Clarke-Howard for our New Director Spotlight this week.

Dr. Marva Clarke-Howard is the Special Education Director for Rockdale County Schools and has been in the field of education for 21+ years. With a vast array of knowledge and experiences, Dr. Clarke-Howard's work experience includes four years of active duty in the United States Army, a Program Coordinator and Drug and Alcohol Counselor, a Career Counselor for service members exiting the military, and a Human Resource Analyst. In the field of education, Dr. Clarke-Howard served as a Special Education Teacher for eight years, a Behavior Intervention Coach for four years, a Student Support Facilitator for three years, a Special Education Compliance Coordinator for five years, and is currently serving in the role of Special Education Director.

Dr. Clarke-Howard's desire to pursue a career in education came about when she admired her great-aunt, a phenomenal educator and trailblazer, in the British Virgin Islands school system. Dr. Clarke-Howard's great-aunt's passion for educating children was marked by everything she did for the betterment of

children, and she eventually retired as a principal. Dr. Clarke-Howard shared that, “Faith would have it that a school was named in her honor before she passed and my brief career as a project coordinator and counselor for a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center, is what sealed it for me. My clientele quickly went from adults only to adolescents. It was at that time that I decided to pursue a career as a teacher, because I wanted to position myself to work with children at an early age, so that I could positively impact their lives.”

Dr. Clarke-Howard is the mother of one beautiful and amazing daughter, and pet-grandma to a few furry babies that are near and dear to her heart. Dr. Clarke-Howard loves to travel and was blessed to live in Germany for four years, where she was afforded many opportunities to travel to 17 different countries in Europe. Some of her favorites were Spain, England, Czech Republic, Portugal, Switzerland, and Italy. Dr. Clarke-Howard also enjoys reading, dancing, and cooking.

District Spotlight: Barrow County

Exciting things are happening at Chico’s Project SEARCH, Barrow County Schools’ newest transition to work program. This is their fourth year serving the students of Winder-Barrow and Apalachee high schools. Seniors who have completed their graduation requirements but desire an additional year of employment-related instruction can apply for an internship in Project SEARCH.



*Barrow County
Schools logo*



Project SEARCH is completely site-based, and the Barrow County program is hosted by Chico’s FAS Distribution Center. Working alongside Chico’s associates and with an instructor and skills trainer, the interns rotate through three internships in different departments to achieve typically expected accuracy and productivity standards. They also complete a life and work skills curriculum in a training class each day.

The goal of Project SEARCH is that interns acquire complex, transferable skills that lead to competitive, integrated employment in a community business at the end of the program year.

Barrow County is proud that all three of last year’s interns are now employed full-time at Chico’s, and four other interns from the two previous years are employed in the community. They look forward to the success of this year’s

group!



Barbara Ross, Program Specialist

GADOE Staff Spotlight: Barbara Ross

Barbara has been in the field of education for 34 years. Most of her years as an educator were spent as a Speech-Language Pathologist in school systems in Texas, South Carolina, and Georgia. For the past seven years, she served as Director of Special Education and Student Supports for the Greene County School System. She currently serves as the Program Specialist for Speech and Language and Preschool for GaDOE in the Division for Special Education Services and Supports.

Barbara has loved each opportunity that she has been given to work with students with disabilities across her career. She has a particular passion for early intervention and working with preschool children with disabilities. Strong speech and language skills are critical for learning across all content areas and early intervention supports students to become successful learners.

Barbara lives at Lake Oconee with her husband, Lee and their Wire Haired Vizula, Jack. She enjoys reading and spending time with friends and family. She especially loves spending time with her two beautiful grandchildren, Charlotte (3) and Bennett (3 months).

Practice Pointers – USED Guidance on Discipline: Question F-7



Arrows

QUESTION F-7: IS THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) TEAM REQUIRED TO HOLD A MANIFESTATION DETERMINATION REVIEW (MDR) EACH TIME THAT A CHILD IS REMOVED FOR MORE THAN 10 CONSECUTIVE SCHOOL DAYS, AND EACH TIME THAT THE LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY (LEA) DETERMINES THAT A SERIES OF REMOVALS CONSTITUTES A CHANGE OF PLACEMENT?

The answer is yes. The regulations require that “within 10 school days of any decision to change the placement of a child with a disability because of a violation of a code of student conduct,” the LEA, the parent, and relevant members of the child’s IEP Team must conduct an MDR. 34 C.F.R. §

300.530(e). Under 34 C.F.R. § 300.536, a change of placement occurs if: (1) the removal is for more than 10 consecutive school days; or (2) if the LEA determines, on a case-by-case basis, that a pattern of removals constitutes a change of placement because (i) the series of removals total more than 10 school days in a school year, (ii) the child's behavior is substantially similar to the behavior that resulted in the previous removals, and (iii) because of such additional factors as the length of each removal, the total amount of time the child has been removed, and the proximity of the removals to one another.

For more information, please see the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) guidance found in [Questions and Answers: Addressing the Needs of Children with Disabilities and IDEA's Discipline Provisions as revised July 19, 2022](#).

Important Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Update

The FY22 Maintenance of Effort Compliance Calculations are now available in the portal. Please log in to the Consolidated Application using the following thread to see your results: [Consolidated Application > Special Education MOE > FY22](#). If you did not maintain your effort, please contact your budget specialist to reconcile MOE compliance.

Parent to Parent Trainings

Webinar Title: GA Medicaid Basics and Home Community Based Waiver Services

Date: Thursday, February 23, 2023

Time: 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

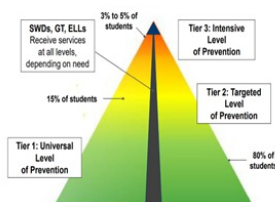


*Parent to Parent of Georgia
logo*

Webinar Title: GA Medicaid Basics and Home Community Based Waiver Services - Spanish Presentation

Date: Thursday, February 23, 2023

Time: 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.



TSS Snapshot: Why is the closing a critical component of the infrastructure of effective Tier I instruction?

As you reflect on planning standards-based lessons, what is a critical

component of the lesson? Yes, the closing. The closing should be about 20% of your instructional time, [GaDOE SBC Instructional Framework](#). The purpose of the closing is to clarify the elements of the lesson for the students; hence the goal should be to ensure the closing is student-centered. Oftentimes, the closing is the most difficult part of the lesson to implement. However, it is essential in helping to ensure that 100% of your students have access to and benefit from effective Tier I instruction.

The closing provides an opportunity for the teacher to gather formative data, to decide if re-teaching is needed and/or determine if additional practice is needed before addressing the next standard, *The Language of the Standard (LOTS)*, should be clearly evident as students take an active role during the closing.

It is critical that misconceptions are addressed during the closing. This is very important since some classes may be on a block schedule and students may not see their teacher every day. Sometimes, students may not see their teacher for four or more days in a row. If students leave their class with misconceptions, the teacher will may have to address misconceptions days later. This significantly impacts the students' ability to access and master the standards.

As teachers work to plan effective closings, some engaging ways that can be considered are [22 Powerful Closure Activities | Edutopia](#). Ensuring that closings are implemented effectively is very important as administrators observe classes and provide effective feedback.

For additional information, please feel free to reach out to the MTSS regional coaches or Karen Suddeth, to learn more.

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February 24, 2023 Email Blast

Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education

Directors,

Last Friday was one of the best days ever! I was honored to be included in the Coastal GLRS Teacher of the Year Celebration for Special Education. Organized by GLRS Director, Kim Bennett, and supported by each LEA and GNETS in the region, a day to honor special education professionals was truly the best. Each LEA and GNETS selected their representative to hold this honor for 2023. The honoree and their family had the opportunity to attend along with First District RESA Director, Superintendents, Principals, Special Education Directors, GNETS Directors and other district leaders. To start the day, there was an opportunity to walk the red carpet with a photographer ready to snap pictures of each celebrity. Following a wonderful lunch, each honoree was recognized and presented a certificate and plaque. Take time to recognize talent and show appreciation for dedicated service. Thank you Coastal GLRS for including me in this awesome event.



*A teacher takes a hand, opens a mind, touches a heart.
Thank you!*



Our district highlight this week is from Pierce County and particularly the teachers who go above and beyond for their students in and outside the classroom.

Our staff spotlight is shining brightly on Ira Williamson-Groomes, Program Specialist in our Dispute Resolution Unit. Read more about her 25-year career in education as well as some of her favorite activities.

Showing appreciation should be one of our top priorities as leaders. You have heard the phrase that, “Not all Superheroes wear capes.” Teachers touch lives, influence the future and care deeply for their students. Take time today to say thank you, provide recognition and show appreciation. Teachers are my heroes!

I sincerely appreciate the dedication of special education teachers and leaders. Such a remarkable group of talented, compassionate professionals working diligently to support students with disabilities. You are all celebrities to me. Go rock the red carpet!

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*

Professional Learning Events

February 28 at 1:00 p.m. – Preparing for Your IDEA
2024 Budgets

February 28 at 3:00 p.m. – GVRA: Pulling Data Reports and Documentation

March 1 at 3:30 p.m. – Significant Cognitive Disabilities Session 6

March 8 at 10:00 a.m. – School-based Administrators' Impact on SWD Success

March 9 at 8:30 a.m. – Intentional Teaching Practices for Preschool

March 9 at 3:30 p.m. – Assistive Technology (AT) Webinar Session 6

Reminders

February 28 – American Printing House (APH) Census Closes. Submitted via GIMC website direct link.

March 2 – FTE Cycle 3 Count Day

March 14 – MOE Reconciliation Deadline. Submit reconciliation evidence to Budget Liaison. Timely and Accurate Submission.

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

District Spotlight: Pierce County

Pierce County High School

Shout out to PCHS teacher, Jennifer Duncan. Jennifer has been working with Georgia High School High Tech to help students obtain their driver's license. Nathan's Driving School provided a five-day driving instruction course with 21 students participating. High School High Tech not only paid for these students to participate in the course, it also paid for the cost of the driving test and for the students' lunches. There were a total of 19 out of 21 students that passed their exams!



*Pierce County
Schools logo*

Jennifer said she saw these students light up like never before when they passed their exam. They were all so proud of themselves and it gave them a much needed boost in their confidence. We are so proud of these students as well. Thank you Jennifer for taking it upon yourself to go above and beyond including visiting the local courthouse to help students get their birth certificates which were needed for the test.



GADOE Staff Spotlight: Ira Williamson-Groomes

Ira Williamson-Groomes is currently a program specialist in the Dispute Resolution Unit. She previously served at the district level in the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System as the lead speech-language pathologist and as an MTSS specialist.

Prior to joining GaDOE in October 2022, Ira served as the regional lead SLP for Coastal Georgia. She worked with Coastal GLRS to establish an SLP consortium for our area and was able to develop learning events to meet the specific needs of the SLPs in her region.

Ira loves being married to her rugged cowboy who owns and trains horses.

They are busy raising their beautiful nine-year-old twin girls. The girls keep their schedules filled with all of their extracurricular activities. As a family, they enjoy traveling, riding go karts/four wheelers, spending time with friends/family, and relaxing at home.



Awards of Excellence

The Division for Special Education Services and Supports is seeking to recognize high school seniors with disabilities who have had academic and/or extracurricular accomplishments. This is a great opportunity to spotlight the outstanding achievement of a senior in your school district, as well as honor the hard work and supports of the family, teachers and staff.

A review of all applications will be completed by GaDOE's Division for Special Education Services and Support staff. There will be one winner from each GLRS region, and we will be sure to share the winner's information with district leadership.

There will be a virtual awards ceremony this year (date and time to be determined) and it will feature a message from our State Superintendent.

Please complete the Awards of Excellence 2023 no later than Friday March 24, 2023.

For questions contact Paula Gumpman at atpgumpman@doe.k12.ga.us or Lynn Holland at lholland@doe.k12.ga.us.

FY 24 Request for Applications – Formal Complaint Investigators

The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) is seeking applications from individuals to serve as Formal Complaint Investigators starting on July 1, 2023. A letter of interest, current resume or curriculum vitae, and list of references can be submitted using the [JotForm link](#) by March 24, 2023. Applications will not be accepted from individuals who are employees of GaDOE or local educational agencies.

If you have questions, contact Jamila Pollard, Senior Program Manager/Legal Officer, 404-670-2683, jpollard@doe.k12.ga.us.

FY 24 Request for Applications – Formal Complaint Investigators Posting



Person filling out an application.

Capacity Building Grants Available

The Division for Special Education Services and Supports has Capacity Building Grants available for local educational agencies and GNETS programs. Funds will be available from the award date until September 30, 2023. The grants will be awarded in the areas outlined below.

Therapeutic Services

To offer therapeutic, psychological, psychiatric consultation or counseling services for students with disabilities. Funds may be used to provide these services during the extended school year or extended day programs in addition to the school year.

Multi-Sensory Reading Initiative

To provide funding for the implementation of an evidenced-based multi-sensory reading program for Tier 2 or 3 instruction to support students with disabilities. LEAs may select the program and utilize the funds for professional learning, materials, supplemental pay for summer training and other aspects of implementation.

Dyslexia Initiative

To provide professional learning for LEA staff working with students with Dyslexia.

Evidenced -Based Reading Programs

To provide professional learning including materials and resources for the implementation of an evidenced-based reading approach for students with disabilities.

Other guidance:

-Allocation(s) will be up to \$75,000.00 and will be determined based on the number of requests, as well as the size classification of the LEA based on number of students with disabilities.

-Grant awards are expected to be allocated no later than May 2023 pending approval.

-Funds will be available through September 30, 2023. Carryover will not be available.

Please complete the [Capacity Building Grants survey](#) by March 3, 2023 to indicate the LEA's interest in receiving a grant based on the areas of priority. Submissions of interest after this date may not be funded.

Right Now Resources from the Office of Teaching and Learning

Office of Teaching and Learning

Updated State Course Codes

Grant Opportunities

* **Computer Science Teacher Equipment and Community Grant.** The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) is committed to supporting the growth of the discipline of computer science in middle and high schools in Georgia and has allocated state funds to create the Computer Science Teacher Equipment and Community Grant (CSTEC).

* **STEM/STEAM Grant.** The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has allocated funds for the FY23-24 STEM/STEAM Educator Externship Grant.

* **STEM/STEAM Grant.** The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has allocated funds for the FY23-24 STEM/STEAM Professional Learning Grant.

College Readiness and Talent Development

If you are a new gifted coordinator, please join us for our [Q/A Informal Share Fair: Office Hour](#) on Tuesday, February 28 from 10:30 -11:30 a.m.

Computer Science

Computer Science Implementation Spring Workshop. Each semester, GaDOE offers the Computer Science Implementation Workshop. The workshop is designed for Local Educational Agency (LEA) teams to take a day to develop a comprehensive implementation plan.

Middle School Artificial Intelligence Standards. The standards for “Living and Working with AI”, a middle school course on artificial intelligence, are now open for public review.

Digital Media and Literacy

Classroom Conversations Podcast. New episodes of Classroom Conversations are released every Tuesday. Catch this week's episode, Primary Sources in Social Studies: Putting History into Our Students' Hands. Listen on your commute; share with a colleague; share with your PLC to start great discussions.

Digital Tool Time. Join the DML team for Digital Tool Time. Quick and interactive sessions are available in February and March. Next up: Virtual Fieldtrips.

GaDOE Inspire. Check out GaDOE Inspire! If you haven't already, try out GaDOE Inspire via your district's SLDS or visit the public site.

English Language Arts

ELA Standards Timeline Adjusted. Full classroom implementation of the revised Georgia Standards for English Language Arts has been postponed from school year 2024-2025 to school year 2025-2026.

Mathematics

New Math Standards Updates. The Math team has compiled a very useful list of documents that will help with the implementation of the new standards. The list includes resources, rubrics, professional learning and more.

New Resources for New Standards. New resources have been released to prepare teachers for the implementation of Georgia's K-12 Mathematics Standards. All new resources for the new standards can be found on the New Standards page.

Let's Talk Math, GA! Professional Learning Sessions for District Mathematics Supervisors. Sessions are available monthly for District Mathematics Supervisors to prepare for implementation of Georgia's K-12 Mathematics Standards. We invite all district leaders to join the webinars for professional learning.

Professional Learning Opportunities

GaDOE Community Professional Learning Opportunities. This is a list of professional learning events available on Community for February 23 – March 2.

Science

Science Professional Learning. Looking for science professional learning opportunities? Review the list of the upcoming the on-demand, live, and by-request sessions that are hosted on the GaDOE Professional Learning Catalog.

Social Studies

Applications Open! National Intelligence Summer Academy. Are your students fascinated by the field of intelligence – spying and counter-spying.

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