



Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent

QUARTERLY
SPECIAL
EDUCATION
NEWSLETTER

Special Education

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GaDOE Special Education Resources

[Special Ed Staff Contact List](#)

[Implementation Manual](#)

Provides practical ideas and best practice information on the implementation of the Georgia Special Education Rules.

[GaDOE Website](#)

The Georgia Department of Education redesigned its website last February. The site features user friendly navigation. Be sure to visit the [Sp Ed Webpage](#) on your next visit.



Our purpose is to share Tips, Information, and Updates from the Georgia Department of Education with our teachers.

In this issue

Grit 1

iDevices, the Bold Next Step 2-3

Effective IEP's: Present Levels 4-5

ASPIRE—Student Led IEP's 6

Teacher Resources 7

Grit

Do your students have “GRIT”? Grit is a personal attribute that can help predict student success. So what is grit? Grit is “the quality that enables individuals to work hard and stick to their long-term passions and goals” (Perkins-Gough 14). To be gritty is “to be resilient in the face of failure or adversity” (Angela Duckworth, qtd. in Perkins-Gough 14). Perseverance, stick with-it-ness, and moving on beyond failure are the core components of grit.

Ironically, while intelligence may often be thought of as the best predictor of success, research over the past several years has revealed that grit is actually a much better predictor of success. And, moreover, grit can be taught. Fostering grit means giving students opportunities to turn failure into success and letting them know that we learn valuable lessons through failure.

Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, and Steve Jobs provide ready examples of successful people. Einstein is considered a genius even though he did not speak fluently until the age of six; he was expelled from school because of his unruly behavior; and he failed his university entrance exam several times before finally passing it. Einstein did not allow these failures to deter him from pursuing his passion as a physicist. Likewise, Thomas Edison failed ten thousand times before he successfully invented the electric light bulb. When asked why he just didn't give up, he stated, “I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.” More recently, Steve Jobs life taught us how, even though he endured enormous failures with the Apple III computer and several other failed products, his perseverance resulted in the ultimate success of Apple products. These are just a few examples of individuals who demonstrated GRIT.

So, how do we get our students to exhibit grit? We do it one step at a time. When a subject is difficult for a student, we need to break larger concepts or processes into manageable parts that the student can master. Each small success leads to the next. If we meet our students first where they are and then set the bar repeatedly and (with encouragement) just a little higher, they can learn to believe in their own possibilities of success and achievement.

Resource:

Angela Lee Duckworth: The key to success? Grit http://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_the_key_to_success_grit.html
Perkins-Gough, D. (2013, Sept.). The significance of GRIT. *Educational Leadership* 71(1). 14-20.



iDevices, the Bold Next Step

Plan to come to the
2014
IDEAS Conference

Last year the Georgia Department of Education's Division for Special Education Services and Supports was proud to offer the **IDEAS Conference** in partnership with Georgia Tools for Life, Georgia CEC and the Georgia Sensory Assistance Project on June 3-6, 2013. The **IDEAS Conference** offered a wide range of session topics and presentations that addressed technical and functional perspectives **for all educators who teach students with disabilities**. Please check out the handouts from this conference at the [IDEAS 2014 webpage](#).

Mark your calendar for our next IDEAS Conference June 2-6, 2014.

"I'm so glad you're here, maybe you can help me. I just got an order of iPads...*pause*...Can you tell me what to do with them?" Have you ever asked or even thought about asking that question? The answer is simple, use them. It's OK that you're not Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, or any other uber-techie. iDevices have built-in accessibility functions, apps, and accessories that make them usable for a surprising number of people. In this and the next few editions of the Special Education Newsletter we will have articles addressing these components.



Figure 1

Accessibility features are categorized by disability areas such as vision, hearing, and motor impairments. These categories are simply a way to organize the features and should not pigeon hole their usage to a single group. Remember that technology isn't disability specific, so students in other eligibility categories can also benefit.

Accessibility features are accessed through the Settings icon, (Figure 1) which is usually located on the bottom row of the main icons on the home screen. Select the General option on the Settings menu and then navigate to the Accessibility menu screen (Figure 2). Now explore the accessibility options in each supported category (Figure 3). As you're looking, try to think of ways that these features could benefit one or more of your students. Focus your attention on the "Speak Selection" option, and turn it on. Then go find a document or text message on the device and select some text and hear what happens next.

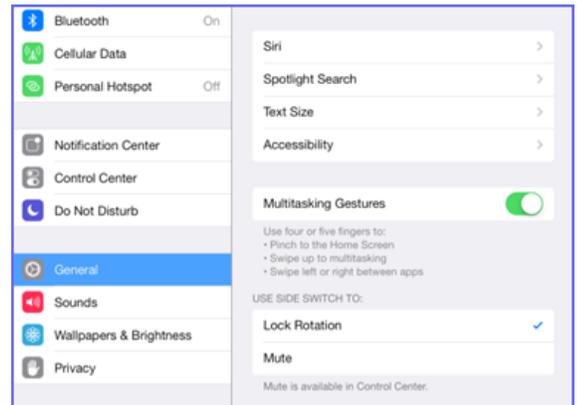


Figure 2

What are the implications of this feature for students who have trouble reading?

1. _____
2. _____

Continue to explore the Accessibility functions. Imagine ways to present materials by locking an app and deactivating part(s) of the screen using "Guided Access" (Figure 3). No more navigating out to other apps or the Internet, unless that's part of your lesson plan. Activate this feature, open an app, and try it out.

Do you have students who can't swipe to access the device? Assistive Touch (Figure 4) is another Accessibility option that opens the way for them. I even use it to save wear and tear on my regular home button. Can you think of any other uses for this option? Look at the switch control option just above. The iDevices with the new iOS 7.0 accommodate for switches. You will have to purchase an accessory that connects your students' switches to the device. Do an Internet search to find a couple of makers of the interfaces.

Get the picture? The more you use your iDevices the more you will become comfortable with them and think of more possibilities of how to implement them with your students.



iDevices, the Bold Next Step (continued)

A Good Read

The Power of SMART Goals: Using Goals to Improve Student Learning

by J. O'Neill and A. Conzemius with C. Commodore and C. Pulsfus

This book provides the teacher with a clear understanding of the necessity of goal writing so that teachers and students will focus their efforts on the written goal/s and not be side tracked with distractions. The authors provide an easy read that explains the benefits of goal planning for teachers and students then demonstrates how to write SMART Goals . A must read for teachers who want to improve student learning.



Figure 3



Figure 4

Accessibility options, apps, and accessories provide low-cost methods to provide access to students who would otherwise not have it. Continue to explore the other Accessibility options on your iDevices and get ready for the next iDevice installment that will address some apps with features that provide even more access for your students.

Technology Tip

UDL Tech Toolkit

The [UDL Tech Toolkit](#) is a wiki which provides information on Universal Design for Learning in education and resources for free technology that can be used to support your students as you work to integrate UDL into your classroom.

Information is provided on tools to support literacy, study skills, writing, math, research and many other areas. These tools are generally computer based tools, but information is also provided on strategies and other resources, including some information on apps.

This wiki used in conjunction with other UDL resources, such as CAST, [the Center for Applied Technology](#), can provide a foundation for integrating the principles of UDL and technology into your classroom.



Effective IEPs: Present Levels

The dream begins with a teacher who believes in you, who tugs and pushes and leads you to the next plateau, sometimes poking you with a sharp stick called 'truth'.

Dan Rather

What should be included in the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) when developing an effective IEP?

The first thing to include in this section is the Results of Initial or Most Recent Evaluation/s and State and District Assessments. This would include assessments such as GKIDS, CRCT, GHS GT, Writing Tests, EOCT, or GAA as well as Psycho-Educational measures such as I.Q. measures, Reading/Math measures, or Social-Emotional measures. Information should be no more than two years old. If you feel that it is appropriate to include older information, include a statement explaining why this information is relevant today. Remember to include the test name, date of administration, score and/or range of scores, and an interpretation of the score.

Information must also be included to describe the Academic, Developmental, and/or Functional Strengths. Strengths can be general or specific **as long as the strength section and the needs section do not contradict one another**. Appropriate comments would include information such as “Jay passed the CRCT in Reading and ELA. He typically scores 80-90 on grade level classroom tests and quizzes. His math skills are at grade level as measured by grade level classroom tests when material is read aloud or AT is used.” Remember that personality characteristics, traits, and/or work habits can also be included in this section when they are relevant. An appropriate example is “Susan completes all work on time, and she is liked by both students and teachers. She is a hard worker who works well independently.” There must be **data** to support the academic, developmental, and/or functional **strengths** just as there must be **data** to support the academic, developmental, and/or functional **needs**. This data may be found in State and District Assessments, Progress Monitoring data regarding IEP Goals, and/or data from monitoring progress in Unit Tests, Chapter Tests/Quizzes, Benchmarks, or Classroom Grades.

Information must be included to describe the Academic, Developmental, and/or Functional Needs of the student. Deficits are specific enough only when they describe the specific skills the student needs to learn and set the stage for developing measurable goals. Curriculum based Measurements are excellent sources of information. Examine the CCGPS Reading/Math Standard at the student’s grade level to see if skills are close to grade level or at the grade level closest to the student’s functioning level or if skills are significantly below grade level. Select the skill/s you know the student struggles with and develop CBM probes to test that skill/s. Administer CBM to get “baseline data” and then develop a Needs/Deficit Statement for that skill. Remember that all needs require goals and all goals should correlate to a need/deficit unless there is a statement that explains the missing goal. Additionally, the needs of a student should clearly support any accommodations that will be discussed in the IEP.

Parental concerns should be addressed in the PLAAFP. Information in this section is the result of ongoing communication that should be occurring with a parent for **all** SWDs

Effective IEPs: Present Levels (continued)

I have come to believe that a great teacher is a great artist and that there are as few as there are any other great artists. Teaching might even be the greatest of the arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit.

John Steinbeck

regarding the child's academics, behavior, performance toward meeting goals, and/or future plans.

The impact of the disability on the involvement and Progress in the General Education Curriculum should be discussed in the PLAAFP. This should include a description of characteristics of the disability that affect classroom performance for this student and the impact of those characteristics on classroom instruction. Identifying the eligibility category does not adequately address this requirement.

Following this guidance will help you be sure that the present levels of students are appropriately discussed. This will serve as the foundation for all further discussion in the IEP.

New IEP Webinar Series. You can access this webinar series by going to the GaDOE Special Education Webpage and click on IEP Webinar Series on the right side of the page under **Related Links**.

[Best Practices in Developing Compliant IEPs: Modules 1-5](#)

This webinar is divided into five modules with a set of twelve handouts. The handouts include extensive examples of the content discussed in the webinar and are designed to support teachers and others who write IEPs. Each section of the IEP is discussed in depth with both compliant and non-compliant examples provided. The modules can either be viewed all at one time or individual modules can be selected for information regarding specific sections or topics. An outline of each module is provided below.

[Module 1](#)

General Information; Team Member Attendance ; Notice of Meeting; Parent Participation; Documentation of Parent Participation; Present Levels of Academic And Functional Performance (PLAAFP): Most Recent Evaluations; State and District Testing; Strengths, Parental Concerns, Impact of the Disability

[Module 2](#)

Present Levels of Academic And Functional Performance (PLAAFP) Needs/Deficits; Curriculum Based Measurement

[Module 3](#)

Measurable Goals; Progress Monitoring; Alignment of Goals and Needs

[Module 4](#)

Student Supports: Accommodations and Alignment of Accommodations with Needs/Deficits; Supplemental Needs and Services; Supports for School Personnel

[Module 5](#)

Consideration of Special Factors; Placement; Extended School Year

All PowerPoints and the handout can be downloaded from the [IEP Webinar Series webpage](#).

Please note: Transition Plans are not discussed in this webinar series. Extensive information regarding Transition Plans is available on the Georgia Department of Education [Transition from High School webpage](#).



ASPIRE — Student Led IEP's

Most of us end up with no more than five or six people who remember us. Teachers have thousands of people who remember them for the rest of their lives.

Andy Rooney

The Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement (ASPIRE) program is a student-led Individualized Education Program (IEP) initiative that builds self-confidence, self-determination, and self-advocacy skills, which are essential in preparing students for the educational, career, and independent living decisions they will need to make in adulthood.

ASPIRE in Georgia began in 2010 as a collaboration between the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD). With funding from a five-year State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), GaDOE chose to implement the ASPIRE program and develop support materials based on other successful models across the country.

ASPIRE was piloted in the 2010-11 school year with 12 schools, 118 students and 56 teachers and administrators. Since then, it has expanded and has impacted approximately 1,400 parents, students, teachers, and administrators in over 90 schools. In addition, Houston County is implementing a district-wide initiative and creating a systematic plan for all students to be active participants in their IEP by 2016. ASPIRE promotes the students as the center of the meetings and provides a vehicle for their voices, interests, and desires to be heard and reflected in their IEP goals/plan. With ASPIRE, the students contribute to the process and help determine the content of their IEPs, which allows them to become more involved and responsible for their education. Research has indicated that students with disabilities who participate in student-led IEPs develop problem-solving, decision-making, self-determination, and advocacy skills, which result in improved outcomes (attending college, technical schools, or competitively employed) upon graduation.

The State has chosen to build capacity and sustainability for the project by offering mini-grants to the Georgia Learning Resources System (GLRS) to support ASPIREs in their school districts. Guidelines and materials for implementing ASPIRE will also be available online for the districts' use. This new approach will provide greater flexibility and opportunities for more schools to implement ASPIRE. Any schools or districts interested in participating in the ASPIRE program should contact their GLRS. Find your local center at <http://www.glr.org/regional-centers/>.

Excerpt from GCDD article, 2013

Resources

Another Good Read

Visible Learning For Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning

by John Hattie

A book written for teachers to help take the guess work out of what practices work to promote student achievement. Visible simply means when teaching is visible the student knows what to do and how to do it and when learning is visible the teacher knows if learning is occurring or not.

Use this link to meet John Hattie

[What Works Clearinghouse](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/) (WWC) - This site will provide educators with the information they need to make evidence-based decisions. The mission for WWC is to review the research on the different programs, practices, product, and policies in education.

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

[Promising Practices Network](http://www.promisingpractices.net/) (PPN) - This site provides research-based information on what works to improve the lives of children and families. PPN features summaries of Programs (and practices) that Work which are proven to improve outcomes for children. Other features are the Issue Briefs that provide a concise overview of research-based information on various topics and Expert Perspectives where experts share their perspectives on various topics.

<http://www.promisingpractices.net/>