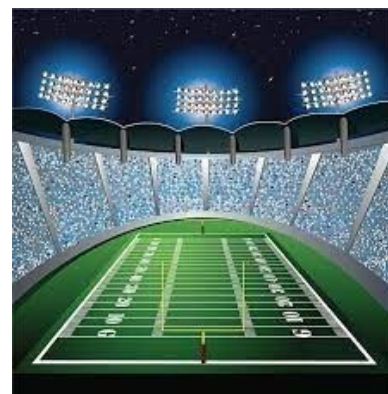


February 16, 2024 Email Blast

Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education

Directors,

I hope you had a wonderful Valentine's Day!
Loved seeing everyone at the Federal Programs
Conference this week too.



Football field

This year's Super Bowl certainly kept my attention on Sunday night. Unless you watched till the very end, you could not imagine the way it ended with only seconds left to play. I was very nervous about the outcome until my daughter called to say the game was over and the Chiefs won. I did not know there was a 15-minute network delay. Knowing the outcome made it much easier to watch for the last minutes of overtime. Both teams played a great game. By the time you reach this level, the teams must be very equally matched, but this game really kept everyone guessing.

I love the behind-the-scenes stories. Brock Purdy, San Francisco 49ers quarterback, went to college at Iowa State University on a football scholarship but knowing he was the third string quarterback. Purdy had a big opportunity with the first string quarterback being injured and the next in line having performance issues. His big chance came much sooner than expected. He was only drafted by the 49ers in the 2022 draft being the last pick in the draft that

year. He came as the third string quarterback once again but to the 49ers. Due to circumstances with injuries, Purdy had the opportunity to step-up to lead the team. At only 24 years old, he has already played in a Super Bowl and should be very proud of his performance. What a story of commitment and resilience. Patrick Mahomes is a little older at 28 years and his legacy already includes multiple Super Bowl appearances. His college experience was quarterback at Texas Tech. Mahomes was drafted in 2017 by the Kansas City Chiefs being the 10th pick in the first round. This story is a lot like the analogy of learning to pack a parachute. It only matters if you are proficient in the end. Playing sports has so many great aspects that we can apply to teaching and learning. Having experts as guides, pouring the time into students, practicing, and practicing along with great coaching, it really doesn't matter if you are the first-round draft pick or the very last. Opportunity is in your hands to take your chance to be one of the greatest of all time.

Please nominate students for the Awards of Excellence. The deadline for submission is March 24, 2024. The recognition of our outstanding seniors is one of my favorite events of the year. The awards ceremony will be virtual on May 3, 2024 beginning at 9:00 am. Use the link to make your nomination.

[Awards of Excellence 2024](#)

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA): Bud McCall Post-Secondary Vocational Rehabilitation Grant

The Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) is pleased to announce the availability of the Bud McCall Post-Secondary Vocational Rehabilitation Grant, which allows up to \$17,725 to be awarded annually to eligible students with disabilities seeking post-secondary and other Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services. Candidates for the grant must have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan. To be eligible, they also must have a permanent disability that results in a substantial impediment to employment and be eligible for GVRA services. To apply, visit the [GVRA website](#).



Just like the rest of the viewers, I loved seeing the celebrities attending the Super Bowl. If you had any doubt, Taylor made it back from Tokyo to be there. Now it is time to move on with life and get ready for baseball season.

Whether you start as the third string pick or were drafted to start, make the most of the opportunities

Trophy

given. Just think how quickly outcomes can change with talent, commitment, determination and maybe a

little luck too!

You are all Super Bowl champions to me! Thank you for all you do. You have tough jobs and face many challenges, but you are investing in students so everyone can win!

Keeping students first,
Wina

Special Education Events & Due Dates

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



*Professional Learning
Events*

Coming Up

February 21 at 10 a.m. Special Education and School Administrator Academy: Best Practices from the Field for the School-based Administrator

February 22 at 1 p.m. FY24 GaDOE Legal Updates: School Psychologists

February 22 at 1:30 p.m. FY24 Special Education Student Record Errors and Impact of Information

Reminders

February 15 Post School Outcomes Opens for Viewing (FY 22-23 Exiters) Located in the SE Applications Dashboard - APR Indicator 14

February 15 Final Date to submit Grant for Residential and Reintegration Services Application (Submitted to Budget Liaison using Portal email)

February 15 Final Date to Submit High Cost Grant Application (Submitted via www.gahcf.org)

Visit [GaDOE Community](https://community.gadoe.org) for a complete listing of GaDOE Professional Learning Events.

New Director Spotlight: Jennifer Popkin, Wayne County Schools

GaDOE is excited to feature Jennifer Popkin for our New Director Spotlight this week.



Jennifer Popkin, Special Education Director, Wayne County Schools

Jennifer Popkin is the Special Education Director for Wayne County Schools and has been in the field of education for 26 years. Ms. Popkin began her career as a teacher of students with moderate, severe, and profound disabilities at Burroughs-Molette Elementary in Glynn County. Ms. Popkin's career has also included being a member of the District Assistive Technology Team, a middle school teacher, an autism teacher, an Autism and Direct Instruction Specialist, a coach of all special education reading, Program Specialist for Coastal GLRS with First District RESA,

Wayne County Library Media Specialist, Assistant Director of Special Education, and in March 2023, Ms. Popkin assumed the role of Director of Special Education.

Sharing that she is blessed to have been a part of many different teams along the way and how thankful she is for the lessons and mentors that she had in each role, Ms. Popkin shared "There is not a day that goes by that I don't think of a dear friend and mentor, Maggie Boozer, who coached and supported me when I was the Reading and Autism Coach in Wayne. Her coaching was always child-centered, keeping the whole child in mind. While we were advocating for students, she always cared for the adults in the building, too. She formed relationships with staff and students alike. She could get the most challenging child to do whatever she wanted them to do because she began with relationships. I learned from her that my actions will let people know how much I care. I hope to do the same for those around me. It is not as easy as she made it seem. My hope is that if I continue to form relationships with staff and families, then I will be a "Maggie" for others around me."

Ms. Popkin has a love for learning and her happy place is the beach as she loves to drive to St. Simons Island every chance she gets. Married for 27 years to her husband David, the Popkin's have three children: Jacob, Mia, and Maura along with two grand dogs, Joe, and Penny. While Jacob manages the family restaurant in Jesup, Ms. Popkin shares, "If you ever come our way, stop by Damon's Famous Fingers and Wings, and tell them I sent you!"

District Highlight: Bleckley County Schools



Mrs. Riley Troili and Mrs. Scarlett Moore at Bleckley Elementary in Cochran, GA, selected a wonderful

learning activity to complete with their sweet class of students with disabilities. This project is called Hearts Across the World!

The class set a goal to spread the word and receive a Valentine's card from each of our 50 states in the US as well as locations outside the US. As the class received cards, the students put hearts on the state/country on large maps. Not only have these kids been receiving cards, but excited individuals have sent candy, pencils, stickers, and even crocheted sea turtles for every student! Students are learning writing skills as they send Valentines back to others and are practicing map skills/geography and reading standards and so much more! The class has met the goal of receiving a card from each of the 50 states and is now receiving cards from other places out of the country.

This has been a really fun project and has gained a lot of attention! Many others have been invested in their progress. The class has a social media presence and even a TikTok video (@smileyriley) showing their progress! The class was featured on Channel 13 WMAZ news out of Macon, GA, in their School of the Week segment! What a fun and exciting project!



Arrows

Practice Pointers – Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team Excusals: Timeline for Notification

QUESTION C-5: IS THERE A SPECIFIC TIMELINE IN THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA) FOR PUBLIC AGENCIES TO NOTIFY PARENTS OF A REQUEST TO

EXCUSE AN IEP TEAM MEMBER FROM ATTENDING AN IEP TEAM MEETING?

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has emphasized in a [Questions and Answers Document](#) that under the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#), neither the IDEA nor its implementing regulations specify a time period in which a public agency must notify parents of a request for an excusal. In public comments on the proposed Part B regulations, the United States Department of Education (USED) was asked to specify a timeline, through regulations, in which a public agency must notify parents of requests for excusing IEP Team members from attending IEP Team meetings. In declining the commenter's request to regulate, USED noted that Part B of the IDEA does not specify how far in advance of an IEP Team meeting a public agency must notify a parent of the public agency's request to excuse an IEP Team member from attending the IEP Team meeting. Further, Part B of the IDEA does not specify, when the parent and public agency must sign a written agreement that the IEP Team member's attendance is not necessary, consistent with the regulations, or when the parent and agency must provide written consent regarding the IEP Team member's excusal consistent with the regulations. USED also explained that requiring the request for excusal or the written agreement or written consent to occur at a particular time prior to an IEP Team meeting would not account for situations where it would be impossible to meet the timeline (e.g., when an IEP Team member has an emergency). Thus, requiring specific timelines could impede Congressional intent to provide additional flexibility to parents in scheduling IEP Team meetings, as reflected in the IDEA.

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



Trophies

Awards of Excellence 2024

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 the Georgia Department of Education, 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 on May 3, 2024 at 9 a.m. and it will feature a message from our State Superintendent.

Please complete the [Awards of Excellence 2024](#) no later than Friday March 24, 2024.

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

Technical Assistance Webinar: FY24 GaDOE Legal Updates: School Psychologists

The Division for Special Education Services and Supports is hosting a Technical Assistance online webinar for School Psychologists titled, FY24 GaDOE Legal Updates: School Psychologists.

Jamila Pollard, Legal Officer/Senior Program Manager, will deliver updates regarding current dispute resolution data in Georgia and discuss some common IDEA violations found in formal state complaints and due process hearings. The webinar will place an emphasis on IDEA violations that are related to the work of School Psychologists. This webinar will occur virtually on February 22, 2024 from 1:00-2:30 pm.

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

[FY24 GaDOE Legal Updates: School Psychologists Registration](#)

Office of Teaching and Learning: February 8, 2024 Right Now Resources

Please review the February 8, 2024 Right Now Resources newsletter for Teaching and Learning Updates, or subscribe on the [Curriculum and Instruction webpage](#) to have them delivered straight to your inbox. You are in a place to purposefully impact teaching and learning in your districts, schools and classrooms.

As always, our teaching and learning team is here to serve and support. Continue to reach out as needed and thank you for your continued commitment to Georgia students and educators.

\$5,000 Scholarship Opportunity for Deaf or Hard of Hearing High School Seniors

Quota Atlanta offers the John T. Wheeler Memorial \$5,000 Scholarship to Georgia Deaf or Hard of Hearing High School Seniors who have a diagnosis of moderate to profound hearing loss in both ears. Applicants must be an American citizen, plan to attend college in the upcoming school year, excel academically and be active in extra-curricular activities including, but not limited to, school clubs, community organizations, employment and volunteering. For more information, please reach out to Sarah Moore at SarahHouseMoore@gmail.com.

Completed applications should be mailed as one packet to: Sarah Moore, Quota Atlanta, Inc. 6465 Bridgewood Valley Road Sandy Springs, GA 30328, or emailed to SarahHouseMoore@gmail.com. Applications must be postmarked or emailed by 5 p.m. on March 1.

The winning applicant will be notified on or before April 1.

Quota John T Wheeler Memorial Scholarship Application

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA): Bud McCall Post-Secondary Vocational Rehabilitation Grant

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Candidates for the grant must have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan. To be eligible, they also must have a permanent disability that results in a substantial impediment to employment and be eligible for GVRA services. To apply, visit the [GVRA website](#).

GVRA's announcement of the grant follows policy changes that removed the financial-needs assessment as a requirement for individuals with disabilities seeking post-secondary opportunities. The changes became effective on January 1. In addition to removing that barrier, GVRA increased the maximum grant amount to match funding offered through the Pell Grant. The Bud McCall Grant provides up to \$7,395 for tuition, \$9,430 for maintenance (room, board, and meals), and \$900 for books annually.

The Bud McCall Grant is named in memory of the first-born son of former State Representative Tom McCall and Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board Member Jane McCall, whose love for others served as an inspiration to his family, friends, and the entire community.

SDI District Pilot Application

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 round out this year's activities with Cohort I, we are happy to announce the application window for participation in Cohort II is officially open!

The SDI Project partnership focus is 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, uses a comprehensive approach that includes supporting LEAs through professional learning, job-embedded training/coaching, implementation and sustainability planning.

The application deadline for submission is March 15. For additional information, please contact Yyanisha Bass Bonner at Yyanisha.Bass@doe.k12.ga.us or Katherine Johnson at Katherine.Johnson@doe.k12.ga.us.

SDI District Pilot Application

Important Budget Announcement: High-Cost Fund for Special Educations Services Grant and Grant for Residential & Reintegration Services

The High-Cost Fund for Special Education Services Grant and Grant for Residential & Reintegration Services submission period opened January 1. The updated resources for the Georgia High-Cost Fund Grant and Residential & Reintegration Services Grant can be accessed online at the [GaDOE Competitive Grants 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.

Important Budget Announcement: FY23 Maintenance of Effort Compliance Results Now Updated in the GaDOE Portal

The FY23 Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Compliance results are now updated. The MOE results can be viewed in the GaDOE Portal by going to Special Education Programs > Special Education MOE. LEAs that do not meet compliance may take allowable exceptions, if applicable, to reduce effort. Please see the [Exceptions to MOE Requirement document](#). If your LEA determines there are applicable exceptions, please complete and return the form to your Budget Specialist with supporting documentation by March 14, 2024. **This is the final deadline.** Reconciliations must take place before this deadline. Please begin the reconciliation process as soon as possible. This process can be time-consuming and may require the support of your Finance Office. If eligible exceptions are not determined, repayment may be required. Please note, that budget amendments will be delayed until MOE Compliance is met.

Sign up for Summer Grow at Roosevelt Warm Springs

In order to attend Summer Grow 2024, a student has to be enrolled in a public school and have a 504 or IEP. Want to sign up a student? Please fill out the [Summer Grow 2024 Application](#) and email it to RWS_Summer_GROW@gvs.ga.gov by April 12.

SIGN UP FOR SUMMER GROW AT **ROOSEVELT** *Warm Springs*



Criteria

- Pre-Ets Permission form
- Current IEP
- Enrollment in High School
- Independent in all activities of daily living
- Able to ambulate and navigate campus
- Able to self-monitor behavior

****In order to attend Summer Grow 2024, a student has to be enrolled in a public school and have a 504 or IEP. Students that have graduated from high school and are no longer enrolled in a GA public school, will not be eligible.

Dates

- June 3rd -6th (18 years and older)
- June 10th -13th (18 years and older)
- June 17th -20th (14-17 years)
- June 24th-27th (14-17 years)

Want to sign up a student? Send an email with application to the address below....

RWS_Summer_GROW@gvs.ga.gov

Find us on

FB →



Deadline to sign up is April 12th! 706-542-9579 OR 706-620-0073

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