



March 15, 2024 Email Blast

**Office of Federal Programs -
Division for Special Education**

Directors,

Happy St. Patrick's Day! Since green is my favorite color, I always enjoy this time of year. With the official start of spring only a few days away along with an early Easter, there will be lots to celebrate this month. Speaking of celebrating, Michael and I just celebrated our 46th anniversary on March 11. We enjoyed a few days in Hilton Head so I am sharing a couple of pictures.



Happy St. Patrick's Day



Parent Mentor Application - NOW AVAILABLE

The Parent Mentor Partnership Application is now available and can be found on Grant-Opportunities. The application is open until April 30 at 5 p.m. Our goal is to increase the number of mentors each year until each LEA has a Parent Mentor. If you have any questions about the application or about the partnership, please reach out to Anne Ladd at aladd@doe.k12.ga.us or Belinda Tiller at belinda.tiller@doe.k12.ga.us.

This week's director spotlight is shining brightly on Tiffany Livingston from Commerce City Schools. Read below all about how she realized she had the potential to be an amazing leader.

We are excited to highlight East Central GLRS and its steadfast support of the Heart of Georgia Region ASPIRE Ambassador Program. Learn how this year's ASPIRE Ambassador program has integrated the Lead4Change Curriculum to enhance individual leadership skills and teamwork.



Rainbow leading to a pot of gold.

Watch out for leprechauns, look for four-leaf clovers and always follow a rainbow in search of a pot o'gold. I wish all the very best for each of you. You are loved and appreciated.

Thank you for all you do! I feel that I have found the gold at the end of the rainbow knowing all of you.

Keeping students first,
Wina



*Professional Learning
Events*

Special Education Events & Due Dates

Please review the information below and the [Due Dates Calendar](#) for deadlines and key dates.

Coming Up

March 20 at 11 a.m. Conversations Around Collaboration: Leveling Up: Part 1 and 2

Reminders

March 28 FTE Cycle 3, Student Class, and CPI Final Transmission Date, Deadline for Superintendent's Sign Off (Data Collections)

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



Tiffany Livingston, Special Education Director, Commerce City Schools

New Director Spotlight: Tiffany Livingston, Commerce City Schools

GaDOE is excited to feature Tiffany Livingston for our New Director Spotlight this week.

Tiffany Livingston is the Special Education Director for Commerce City Schools and has been in the field of education for 13 years. After graduating from UGA, Ms. Livingston worked as a preschool special educator in Greene County for two years before moving to Starkville, Mississippi. There, she taught in an early elementary adaptive setting before transitioning to department chair and kindergarten special education teacher. Also, during that time, Ms. Livingston attended Mississippi State University and the University of Southern Mississippi to further her education in special education and educational leadership. Recently, Ms. Livingston moved back to Greene County and joined Commerce City Schools, as a special education coordinator and is now in her first year as the Special Education Director.

Along with being thankful for her Commerce family, Ms. Livingston said, “I never knew I had the potential to be a leader until I met Julie Jones [the Director of Special Education in the Starkville Oktibbeha School District in Mississippi where Ms. Livingston worked for eight years]. She saw something in us all and made a point to support us in whatever way she could. Although it was a larger district, she made a point to be present. I try to be mindful of my actions and how those can affect the perceptions of those around me. Although I never thought it would happen, I have surprisingly gained patience in this role. This journey is only the beginning, and I am so excited for the future!”

Ms. Livingston loves to spend time with her husband, Fraser, and daughter,

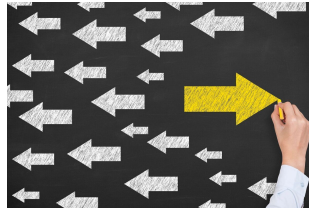
Laslie. The family enjoys playing outside, walking their dog, Fitz, and visiting their hometown of Bainbridge to see family.



District Highlight: East Central GLRS

Since 2016, East Central GLRS has steadfastly supported the Heart of Georgia Region ASPIRE Ambassador Program. Initially, the program was established as a student leadership advisory board for Georgia's ASPIRE student-led IEP initiative. Over time, the ASPIRE Ambassador program has developed into a leadership training initiative that identifies students who have actively participated in their IEP meetings, displayed outstanding character and self-determination, and set positive examples for others. This year's ASPIRE Ambassador Program comprised twenty-eight students, twelve teachers, and support staff from Bleckley County, Montgomery, and Pulaski County School Districts.

This year's ASPIRE Ambassador program has integrated the Lead4Change Curriculum to enhance individual leadership skills and teamwork. Dublin GA, GVRA counselors Kathy Riner and Shamada Carr, under the leadership of Alfred Wheeler, lead the curriculum. Through the Lead4Change curriculum, students from each school district learned the importance of communication, self-awareness, collaboration, goal-setting execution, and proposal crafting. ASPIRE Ambassadors from each district worked with their teacher to craft a proposal to get buy-in for a community/school change project. Upon completion of the Lead4Change program, ASPIRE Ambassador teams from each district are encouraged to submit their project proposals for review. If chosen by Lead4Change, the teams could win up to \$10,000.00 to implement their change initiatives. Ideas for change projects initiated by the ASPIRE Ambassador teams include building a tiny house as an independent living transition program to teach life skills to students with disabilities, improving a community playground by making it accessible for all children, developing a media campaign to bring awareness of a newly developed sensory garden, and creating accessible outdoor areas including a sensory garden in a local school district.



Arrows

Practice Pointers – Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team: General Education Teacher and Dual Roles

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the IEP Team must include not less than one general education teacher of the child and not less than one special education teacher of the child. The determination of who can serve as the general education teacher and the special education teacher in the IEP Team meeting is not based on that individual's certification alone, but their relation to the child. Hence, a teacher dually certified in both special education and general education cannot serve these dual roles in the IEP Team meeting. Although, as long as one of the child's general education teachers meets the requirements of the local educational agency (LEA) representative (someone who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities; is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum; and is knowledgeable about the availability of LEA resources), he or she can serve these dual roles allowing the general education teacher to fill the role of the LEA representative. It is important to note that for IEP Team meetings, the LEA representative must "have the authority to commit agency resources and be able to ensure that whatever services are described in the IEP will actually be provided."

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](#).

Office of Teaching and Learning: March 7, 2024 Right Now Resources

Please review the [March 7, 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.



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 Wednesday, March 27, 2024.

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

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