World Series Champions - The Atlanta Braves! This has been an exciting week for all Georgians with the Braves winning the World Series. Other than such a great accomplishment, there are also lessons to learn from this journey. First, the battle was not easy. The team did not have a great record at mid-season, but with strong leadership from their coach and the general manager, the situation quickly changed. After 26 years without the title, once again the Braves are the champions. Steady leadership from Coach Snitker, a life-long baseball player and coach for 45 years, resulted in a triumph of perseverance. Being surrounded with great support of a general manager willing to make strong trades at mid-season propelled the team into a position to win. The Braves didn’t even have a winning record this year until August 6th. As excited as we are to be a part of the celebration, there are many stories embedded in this success that should matter to us. Among those lessons, leadership matters. Perseverance matters. Each player matters. We all have a role, a chance to serve, and an opportunity to make a difference. Just ask 23 year old, Marietta native, Dansby Swanson, who hit 2 homeruns in the World Series, if dreams come true. Your opportunity to lead is very similar. Sometimes it is a hard road needing the commitment to stay the course, but the reward will be great when a student graduates or a child learns to read. Just
remember - dreams really can come true!

Our next Director’s Webinar is Tuesday, November 9, 2021 at 1:00 PM. Please use the Director's Webinar link to access the meeting.

I am pleased to recognize Mountain Education Charter High School for their innovative use of Virtual Job Shadow. Hope you will learn more about their story and plan ways Virtual Job Shadow may support your work.

Please also note the new resources from the United States Department of Education. You will find resources for Part C but be sure to read and share the new technical assistance resource, "Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral and Mental Health".

I know you will enjoy learning more about Lynn Holland, Program Manager for Results Driven Accountability. She is very serious about pimento cheese. Lynn is also someone you want to know when it comes time to make costumes, as she is an expert!

The eblast is full of announcements, opportunities for technical assistance, resources, and professional learning opportunities. If you find this information helpful, please let us know. If you have suggestions to improve our communication, please also feel free to let me know.

Just remember, you are strong leaders. You are making a difference each day! It may take many years to see the impact, but the victory will be even sweeter.

Keeping Students First,
Wina

District Highlight: Mountain Education Charter High School

Virtual Job Shadow (VJS)

Mountain Education Charter High School (MECHS) has used the Virtual Job Shadow program for career exploration and transition planning for our students with disabilities for approximately five years now. Students are able to take assessments and then explore careers that are a good fit for them virtually through videos. Students can also see the prospective job outlook for careers that they are interested in and find job openings near
their area. During September 2021, MECHS had our highest activity usage of the VJS program to date! We are very proud that with the guidance from our special education staff, students with disabilities at MECHS are using this valuable resource to help prepare for their future!

**Trail Blazers**

The MECHS Central Region implemented our "Trail Blazers" program during September of 2021 as a Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervention System. This summer, our interventionists received training organized by Pioneer RESA in the use of DBT Skills Training for Adolescents (DBT STEPS-A). We started small with our Central Region where we identified our target group of students who would benefit from strategies and skills related to emotional regulation, coping with depression and anxiety, and development of daily living skills. Students attend the Trail Blazers group session bi-weekly during their dinner break! We are excited to see the benefits of this program as we continue to help students with their social and emotional needs at MECHS. We believe we truly are "The first choice for a second chance to build a better future through education."

**New Resources from the Office of Special Education Programs**

On October 29, 2021, The United States Department of Education (USED) released two new Q&As entitled "Return to School Roadmap: Child Find, Referral, and Eligibility Under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)" and "Return to School Roadmap: Provision of Early Intervention Services for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities and their Families under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)". Please be sure to note that both documents are addressing Part C of IDEA.

On October 19, 2021, USED issued a new technical assistance resource entitled "Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral and Mental Health". This resource for educators and practitioners is intended to supplement and build on the information in the prior released ED COVID-19 Handbooks. This resource highlights seven key challenges to providing school or program-based mental health support across early childhood, K–12 schools, and higher education settings, and presents seven corresponding recommendations. This resource includes many real-world examples, including resources from OSEP
funded technical assistance centers, of how the recommendations are being put into action by schools, communities, and states across the country.

**GaDOE Spotlight: Lynn Holland**

Lynn Holland is a Program Manager for Results Driven Accountability in the Division for Special Education Services and Supports. She has been at GaDOE for almost 20 years after working in a metro LEA as a compliance coordinator. All combined, she has been working in the field of education for 50 years!

Lynn has been involved with providing curriculum access to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities almost since arriving at GaDOE. She has appreciated the opportunity to work with so many talented and dedicated educators who willingly share resources and skills to help students and teachers.

Lynn has 5 children, 13 grandchildren and several cats. She is a dedicated foodie, being particularly partial to discovering new sources for pimento cheese, biscuits and donuts. She also enjoys fiber crafts of all sorts, which has resulted in a massive collection of handcrafted dolls.

**East Paulding Middle School Takes a Minute**

Paulding County Schools, one of GaDOE’s Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) Cohort partners, has launched the “Take a Minute” (TAM) initiative at East Paulding Middle School. Cecille Bolton, “Dr. B” met with the school to explain the purpose behind TAM and to distribute stickers and AEM/AT info guides. Each IEP meeting will have a dedicated minute to review three brief questions about present levels, AT, and AEM. Materials for the “Take a Minute” initiative are available at GaDOE by visiting the [AEM Cohort page](#).

**Cross Functional Monitoring Office Hours**
To support districts in preparation for upcoming Cross-functional Monitoring (CFM), the Budget Unit and the Results-Driven Accountability Unit will be offering open office hours to answer questions and provide clarification to LEAs. These sessions are completely optional and designed to meet needs and address any questions surrounding the IDEA component of the CFM process.

The scheduled dates and times are:
Friday, November 12, 2021
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM Meeting Link
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM Meeting Link

Tuesday, January 18, 2022
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM Meeting Link
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM Meeting Link

Friday, February 18, 2022
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM Meeting Link
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM Meeting Link

Links to the January 2022 and February 2022 sessions will be available in the Friday blast several weeks prior to each listed date.

Support documents are available on the Federal Programs Monitoring webpage.

Additionally, your District Liaison and Budget Liaison are always available to provide any necessary assistance. We look forward to supporting you in this process.

**Parent to Parent of Georgia - Peace, Love, Harmony....and the IEP/IFSP?**

Date: Thursday, November 18, 2021
Time: 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Registration Link: Peace, Love, Harmony....and the IEP/IFSP?

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.
Learn how to use effective communication skills to develop a partnership with your child's IEP/IFSP team. Get tips for preparing for school meetings and how to be an effective member of the team.

For more information, contact Jane Grillo, Parent Mentor, White County Schools at 706-865-2315 Ext 1410 or via email jane.grillo@white.k12.ga.us. See our Training Calendar for additional trainings and webinars at www.p2pga.org.

All services and resources offered by Parent to Parent of Georgia are free.

**Parent to Parent of Georgia - Sifting Through Your Parental Rights**

Date: Thursday, November 18, 2021  
Time: 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM  
Registration Link: Sifting Through Your Parental Rights

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Provides basic information about parental rights under IDEA, including confidentiality, notice, consent, surrogate parents, free and appropriate public education (FAPE), least restrictive environment (LRE), evaluations and dispute resolution methods such as mediation and due process.

For more information contact Kathryn Marous, Regional Coordinator, at kathryn@p2pga.org or by phone at 770-451-5484 Ext. 314. You can also reach Parent to Parent of Georgia at 1-800-229-2038. See our Training Calendar for additional trainings and webinars at www.p2pga.org.

All services and resources offered by Parent to Parent of Georgia are free.

**Parent to Parent of Georgia - Where Do We Go From Here?**

Date: Thursday, November 18, 2021  
Time: 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM  
Registration Link: Where Do We Go From Here?

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.
Preparing for Transition from High School
Learn the keys to successful transition, the role of the school in transition planning and things to consider when planning your child’s transition to adulthood.

For more information, please contact Michelle Santana, Social Worker at michelle.santana@clayton.k12.ga.us or by phone at 770-473-2855 or Priscilla Johnson-Musa, Social Worker at Priscilla.johnson-musa@clayton.k12.ga.us or by phone at 770-473-2940 ex 507128. See our Training Calendar for additional trainings and webinars at www.p2pga.org.

All services and resources offered by Parent to Parent of Georgia are free.

Preschool Special Education Pyramid Trainings

These trainings will focus on implementing the Pyramid Model in preschool special education classrooms. The Pyramid Model is a framework of evidence-based practices designed to promote positive social and emotional development in young children.

Please note, the trainings on each date are different. The trainings will be recorded. (Please log into ZOOM by 11:45 to reserve a seat and make sure there are no technical difficulties.)

**The Pyramid Model Tier 1**

**The Pyramid Model Tier 1: Relationships & Environment Registration Link / PDF**
Date: November 8, 2021
Time: 12:00 - 3:00 PM
Meeting ID: 838 8825 6620
Passcode: DOE8500

**The Pyramid Model Tier 2**

**The Pyramid Model Tier 2: Teaching Social Emotional Development Registration Link / PDF**
Date: November 15, 2021
Time: 12:00 - 3:00 PM
Meeting ID: 873 3903 0127
Passcode: DOE8500
Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Adjustment

The MOE Adjustment Forms should be requested with IDEA budget approval. However, we will continue to accept the forms until Friday, December 3, 2021. As a reminder, IDEA allows a local educational agency (LEA) to receive an adjustment of 50% of the increase only in IDEA funds from the previous year to reduce local Maintenance of Effort (MOE) expenditures. Since IDEA American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding is considered an increase in IDEA funds, all eligible LEAs are strongly encouraged to complete a MOE adjustment form to take this adjustment. LEAs that did not meet local IDEA Determinations or have a Significant Disproportionality Determination are not eligible to use the MOE adjustment. Additionally, if LEAs opt to use CEIS funds, then those funds must be subtracted from the available reduction. Please email the MOE Adjustment form to your budget specialist.


Please provide feedback for Georgia’s SPP/APR targets for students with disabilities including Graduation Rate, Dropout Rate, and Parent Involvement at SPP/APR Stakeholder Feedback Survey 2020-2025. Additional information about all SPP/APR Indicators is available at SPP/APR 2020-2025 Target Setting Document.

If you have questions, please contact Dawn Kemp atdkemp@doe.k12.ga.us.

New Webpage on Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

The Division for Special Education Services and Supports is pleased to announce a new webpage for Specially Designed Instruction (SDI). SDI is the instruction delivered to a student with an IEP to help the student
access the general education curriculum. SDI goes beyond differentiated instruction and addresses the unique needs that exist because of a student’s disability. It is what makes Special Education special!

The SDI webpage contains important resources and information that will be updated each month with new updates, monthly podcasts, professional learning opportunities, resources for teachers and information for parents, families, and administrators. Please visit the new **Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) webpage.** We encourage LEAs to visit the webpage regularly for new and updated resources.

Check out the recently added tool in the **Specially Designed Instruction Parent Guide.**

**FY22 SSIP Professional Learning Series**

The FY22 SSIP Professional Learning Series focuses on supporting teachers and leaders to increase graduation rates and decrease dropout rates for students with disabilities. Please join us Wednesday, November 10, 2021 at 2 PM for our eighth session entitled “Strategies for Promoting School Attendance” with Ann Cross and Trace Vaughn. Please use this **SSIP FY 22 Professional Learning Series Recordings, Presentations and Registration link** to access registration links, recordings, and PowerPoint presentations for all previous sessions.

**Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Learning and Behavior Expectations for PreK/Kindergarten Students - Webinar**

SAVE THE DATE!!! The GaDOE/DECAL Early Learning Webinar, “Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Learning and Behavior Expectations for PreK/Kindergarten Students” is scheduled on November 17, 2021 from 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM. During this webinar participants will explore developmentally appropriate learning and behavior expectations to enhance practitioners' knowledge on how to support each child’s optimal growth and development.

**Targeted Audience for Early Learning Webinar Training**
* Elementary Schools (non-PBIS and PBIS schools; administrators or support staff attend and share the webinars with teachers, staff, and parents)
* Districts (all school district personnel that support Pre-K/Kindergarten teachers, elementary schools, and early learning centers)
* Early Learning Programs (administrators attend and share the webinars with teachers, parents, and staff)
* RESA School Climate Specialists
* PBIS District Coordinators
* Anyone that may find this webinar helpful is welcome to attend!

**Understanding Developmentally Appropriate Learning and Behavior Expectations for PreK/Kindergarten Students**

**Registration Link**

**Paraprofessional Supporting Students with Disabilities in the Inclusion Setting**

Northeast GLRS is offering a virtual professional learning opportunity designed to provide paraprofessionals that support students with disabilities in the general education setting with training, resources, and technical assistance to increase fidelity with which instructional and behavior strategies are implemented. This course is FREE to any LEA in Georgia. This course is self-paced (asynchronous) but will offer weekly virtual video chats to support participants as they progress through the materials. The optional chats are scheduled from 3:30 PM - 4:00 PM on the following dates: Jan 18 (course orientation), Jan 24, Feb 7, Feb 14, and Feb 21.

**Registration Link**

**I'm a Paraprofessional. What's Your Superpower?**

**MTSS Snapshot: The Power of the Pyramid**

The power of the pyramid is revealed in many ways. The image of a pyramid represents the essential component of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) known as the Multi-Level Prevention System. Clearly, the power of a tiered system of supports rests in the fact that it is based on prevention. MTSS is not a “wait to fail”
model for students who are in need of additional supports. In fact, the potential benefits of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports were outlined in John Hattie’s (et.al) work below:
- Decreased expulsion, behavioral referrals, and suspension rates
- Sustained academic improvement
- Reduction in student retention
- Increased on-time graduation

**Improved Outcomes**

- Decreased expulsion, behavioral referrals, and suspension rates
- Sustained academic improvement
- Reduction in Student Retention
- Increased on-time graduation

Improved Outcomes from utilizing a Multi-Tiered System of Supports

These improved outcomes are what all educators want for students. They are the key components of student achievement and school improvement – the “Holy Grail” of education. Potential growth of students engaged in MTSS that is implemented with fidelity can yield an effect size of 1.29. Again, Hattie’s work suggests that an effect size of .40 would be equivalent to an academic year of growth for a student. Imagine what gains could be made with students in an academic year if MTSS is implemented to support students and prevent failure! Other elements of MTSS that provide power to learning and achieving improved outcomes are that it is a flexible, collaborative system, and most importantly, it allows educators to facilitate learning for students thoughtfully, intentionally, and supportively. MTSS is grounded in careful analysis of data collected through Progress Monitoring and Data-Based Decision Making, two additional essential components of MTSS. Implementing MTSS allows educators an opportunity to prevent failure and watch students thrive in their learning, and that is extremely powerful.


For more information, contact Karen Suddeth, Program Manager Georgia’s Tiered System of Supports for Students at ksuddeth@doe.k12.ga.us.
November 12, 2021 Email Blast

Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education

Directors,

With less than two weeks till Thanksgiving, our beautiful fall leaves are really shining now. The pictures of fall leaves this week are courtesy of my own yard. The tree with the very red leaves is a Japanese Maple tree. The leaves are always a beautiful deep plum color, but when the change of seasons occur, the leaves turn red and really sparkle. The change of seasons and other rituals prepare us for our next steps. One of those rituals of fall is the Annual Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education (G-CASE) Fall Conference. Hope to see you in Savannah next week!

As a special recognition, I want to thank our School Psychologists for the very important role they serve to support administrators, teachers, families, and most importantly, students. The week of November 8-12, 2021 is School Psychology Week. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) are using the theme, Let’s Get in Gear, to illustrate the
Let’s Get in Gear from The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)

acronym GEAR – Grow, Engage, Advocate and Rise. According to NASP, the challenge is: Grow – personally and professionally, Engage - in best practices, Advocate - for access to mental health and learning supports for students, Rise - for resilience and renewal despite the last few challenging years. Please join me in celebrating our School Psychologists. From our GaDOE staff, we are thankful for Alicia Mercer and Dr. Donna McClain and their talent and expertise as School Psychologists.

The district highlight this week is Georgia Cyber Academy’s Future Flyers Mentoring Program based on the Check and Connect model. Even within the first quarter of implementation, an 8% decrease in absenteeism has been noted.

Oconee GLRS has truly embraced the work of the new Teacher Retention High Leverage Practices (HLPs) professional learning. Not only are special education teachers included in this work, but also GaTAPP candidates. A huge thank you to GLRS Director, Dawn Howell, for her leadership.

Our staff spotlight is on Linda Castellanos, Program Manager for Data and GO-IEP. She is pictured with her precious granddaughter. Linda is an adventurer having traveled to many spectacular locations around the world. As you all know, especially GO-IEP districts, that Linda consistently goes above and beyond to ensure local educational agencies are supported.

Be sure to share the new *English Learners With Significant Learning Difficulties or Disabilities: Recommendations for Practice*, the third brief in the series of Meeting the Needs of English Learners With and Without Disabilities.

Topics covered in this brief include:
• Identification of ELs who need Tier 3 intervention
• Design and delivery of Tier 3 language and reading interventions for ELs
• Special education referral decisions
• Culturally and linguistically responsive special education services

In closing, I would be remiss not to recognize and honor our veterans. We are so grateful for their service.

Keeping Students First,
Wina

District Highlight: Georgia Cyber Academy

Georgia Cyber Academy's (GCA) Future Flyers Program is a mentoring program based on the Check and Connect model that helps to promote students’ active participation in school and learning as well as help them feel connected. Under the leadership of the Special Education Director, Veronica Crenshaw, and the Instructional Support Services Director, Gail Robertson, GCA began implementing this program in the Fall of 2021. Participation is limited during the first year of implementation and students in the inaugural group will receive services for a minimum of two years. Students within the special education department were identified based on the following risk factors: attendance, grades, enrollment history, and class engagement. Students who are participating in this program are assigned a personal Mentor. Each student will meet with his/her Mentor at least once a week. Parents/guardians of participating students will receive regular communication from their student’s Mentor. In addition, they will receive training and support from the Special Education Parent Mentor, Jennifer Anderson, on a monthly basis.

The Instructional Support Services department is using the Check and Connect model to engage students who are receiving Tier 3 supports. Both departments collaborate quarterly to establish goals and assess progress. Currently, GCA
has 38 mentors supporting 87 students. Within the first quarter, GCA has already seen an 8% decrease in absenteeism. We look forward to the continued improvement of GCA's graduation rates and student/family engagement as a result of this program.

**GaDOE Spotlight: Linda Castellanos**

Linda Castellanos is the Program Manager for the Data and GO-IEP unit in the Division for Special Education Services and Supports. She is enjoying her 10th year at GaDOE. Previously, she taught special education for 22 years and was a special education coordinator for 10 years. She is blessed to be able to say that she loved each of those positions, learned so much from peers and students, and every child she has taught has been special to her.

Linda’s team is developing learning modules to help teachers develop meaningful IEPs designed to improve student outcomes. Additionally, they are developing guidance and webinars to help system level staff understand a variety of data so they can make informed and data-driven decisions for students.

Linda lives in Rome, GA and has been married to her husband, Carlos, for 42 years. They have two sons and one precious granddaughter. She loves travelling and has visited Australia, Iceland, Europe, South America and Canada. She has relaxed on beautiful beaches and hiked scenic national parks such as Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, and Rocky Mountain National. She also enjoys participating in ministries serving children through her church.

**Oconee GLRS New Special Education Induction Academy**

Over 30 new GaTAPP and special education teachers from Baldwin, Hancock, GNETS of Oconee, Jefferson, Heart of GA
GNETS, and Putnam are currently participating in the Teacher Retention HLP series, which consists of practical sessions based on high-leverage, research-based strategies, and practices.

During the HLP session focused on teaching social behaviors, participants were randomly assigned to work in small groups to discuss their individual practices and create a summary on how they were promoting equity, high expectations, and academic achievement for all students. Each group presented their practices on teaching social behaviors to whole group.

The HLP session focused on providing positive and constructive feedback to guide students learning and behavior. Participants were given several scenarios that used feedback. The participants had to determine if the scenario was feedback or evaluation or if the scenario was feedback or advice. Instructors incorporated participant engagement by having students place a sticky note determining the type of feedback from each scenario in the appropriate column on a chart. After each participant made their choice, the group discussed why they felt each scenario was or was not feedback.

**Assistive Technology and Accessibility Evaluations**

Here are tips to share with IEP teams if AT evaluations are delayed due to backlogs resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Collect information:** Survey the student and/or parents about how previously used AT and accessible formats have helped or hindered.

**Inquire:** Ask about any tools or strategies that the student uses at home or in the community to complete tasks. This can inform teams about new tools or services that may be useful at school.

**Try:** Check if the student will try other devices or services before the evaluation. See if any benefits to communication, participation, or other areas of learning are improved.

**Recognize:** The students AT and accessibility issues may be different if they are taught remotely. Students may need specific software/apps, or different accessible formats.
GaDOE Dyslexia Team

The GaDOE Dyslexia Team has been hard at work creating and updating resources and providing professional learning to educators to aid them in preparing to screen, instruct, and provide interventions for students with characteristics of dyslexia.

The team is now ready to provide updates and next steps surrounding our work with dyslexia, as well as answer any questions you may have. We invite you to attend the virtual State Dyslexia Committee meeting on Thursday, November 18, 2021, from 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM.

State Dyslexia Committee RSVP

The link to join the meeting will be provided prior to the meeting.

If you have any questions, please contact Franeka Colley at fcolley@doe.k12.ga.us.

Research-to-Practice: English Learners With Significant Learning Difficulties or Disabilities: Recommendations for Practice (Brief 3)

English Learners With Significant Learning Difficulties or Disabilities: Recommendations for Practice (Brief 3) is the third brief in the series Meeting the Needs of English Learners With and Without Disabilities. Brief 3 features the work of Projects ELITE, ELLIPSES, and LEE (model demonstration projects funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s (ED) Office of Special Education Programs), which supports the language and literacy needs of ELs with and without reading-related disabilities in Grades 3 to 5. This brief focuses on a culturally and linguistically responsive multitiered system of supports framework, with an emphasis on effective interventions and decision-making for ELs with significant learning difficulties or disabilities.
Topics covered in this brief include:
• Identification of ELs who need Tier 3 intervention
• Design and delivery of Tier 3 language and reading interventions for ELs
• Special education referral decisions
• Culturally and linguistically responsive special education services

MTSS Snapshot: Myths & Facts

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a framework intended to support ALL students, and it is considered best practice for teaching and learning. Occasionally, practices and/or requirements can drift from the intent of the original purpose. When this happens, there can be some confusion. Read on as two myths and facts are revealed:

3 Myth: Only struggling students are placed in MTSS tiers so that they can be identified for special education.

Fact: MTSS is a framework for ALL students! At Tier I, you will note 80% as the percentage labeled on Tier I. That percentage is an estimate of the number of students who should be successful with Tier I instruction. The true percentage of students served in Tier I is 100% - ALL students. Of the 100%, it is estimated that 80% will be successful at Tier I. Approximately 15% of the 100% will require additional supports or Tier II evidence-based interventions. The percentage of students in need of Intensive Interventions at Tier III is approximately 5% of the 100%.

Answer: MTSS is a framework designed to meet the needs of ALL students. When implemented with fidelity, a tiered support system can actually reduce the number of inappropriate special education referrals and placements. The pyramid image represents the Multi-Level Prevention System. It is not a “wait to fail” model, but instead, it is considered a “prevention” model that is designed to provide supports for students in areas of specific need. It should be understood that not all students will require supports. With robust Tier I instruction, consisting of evidence-based practices (EBPs) and high leverage practices (HLPs), the number of students in need of support will be reduced which is far more manageable for educators and effective for students.

4 Myth: Student Support Team (SST) is for all Tier II and Tier III
students.

Fact: Although SST can be initiated at any time, it is most often initiated at Tier III when evidence suggests a need for intensive interventions. Furthermore, students are not “Tier II or Tier III students.” Only interventions are tiered.

Answer: Because the Multi-Level Prevention System is designed to “prevent” failure, it should not be assumed that SST is initiated automatically before interventions are incorporated. Educators must determine if the data suggests more individualized instruction is needed. However, an educator or a parent may request SST be initiated at any time. Additionally, if there is a student suspected to have some type of disability, an evaluation for eligibility cannot be denied or delayed for any reason. There is no standard practice for “tiering students” because interventions are tiered, not students.

For more information, contact Karen Suddeth, Program Manager Georgia’s Tiered System of Supports for Students at ksuddeth@doe.k12.ga.us.
November 19, 2021 Email Blast

Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education

Directors,

It was great seeing everyone in Savannah this week at the G-CASE Fall Conference. The conference provided a wonderful time to participate in professional learning, but also to reconnect with colleagues and friends after more than 18 months of being apart. Hope you enjoy a few pictures from Savannah and the conference.

A special Director’s Webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, November 30, 2021 at
1:00 PM. This session is at the request of many local educational agencies to address best practice in vision and hearing screenings, including students difficult to screen or obtain clearance. Experts, from our State Schools in vision and hearing, will provide the professional learning opportunity. Please share the link with appropriate personnel in your district. Link to register for the session: **November 30th Director’s Webinar.**

I am pleased to recognize the outstanding work of Cobb County School District this week. I know you will enjoy learning more about their comprehensive programs developed to support effective transition for students with disabilities. I am so proud of this work!

We will not have an eblast next Friday due to the Thanksgiving holidays. Our eblast will resume the week of November 29, 2021.

**Turkey with a hat on**

In 1621 when the first Thanksgiving was celebrated with the Pilgrims and Wampanoag Native Americans, the menu was likely different than the traditional turkey and dressing we have today. History reflects that the first autumn harvest, to give thanks for a successful crop, likely had some wild turkey and venison, but due to the location of Plymouth Colony, seafood was more plentiful and easier to secure. The meal probably actually included lobster, mussels and clams. There were plenty of vegetables like peas, corn, cabbage, lettuce, spinach and carrots. Cranberries, blueberries and raspberries were also on the menu, but not in the form of relish or sauce. The sugar brought over on the Mayflower was depleted by this time. An oven was not built yet, so stuffing, dressing, pumpkin pie and cakes would not have been included. Although we associate Thanksgiving with a big, lavish meal, it is really not about the food. The real meaning of Thanksgiving is to pause and give thanks. I am thankful for our Special Education leaders, teachers and support personnel! You are all on my list to give thanks. Please take this upcoming holiday week to rest, recharge and pause to give thanks. We have much to be thankful for in our lives.
I appreciate each of you! Happy Thanksgiving!

Keeping Students First,
Wina

District Highlight: Cobb County

The Cobb County School District recognizes that all students have plans, hopes, and dreams for their life after graduation or high school completion. According to Brenda Carter, Director of Special Education, “A targeted focus of the Special Education Department has been to provide expansive transition programming to support our students and families in preparing for post-secondary opportunities.”

In 2009, the Cobb County School District established the Transition Academy program to support students with significant cognitive disabilities, ages 18-22, with a focus on increasing employability and life skills before leaving school. In the years since the Transition Academy program was established, it has evolved into a comprehensive Transition Program with 17 school-based transition classes and three off campus classes in the district’s Project Life program.
Cobb County School District’s school-based transition classes are structured to support students with a variety of independence levels gain the skills they will need to successfully achieve their post-secondary goals. In addition to classroom instruction, students participate in school-based enterprises, campus-based activities, and community-based instruction. Director of Special Education Compliance, Jessica Coleman worked with the team to ensure the transition programs meet the requirements for FAPE and ensured all students had access to the continuum of services.

Cobb County School District’s Transition Program also includes the Project Life programs comprised of the SETS (Students Exploring Transition Services) Program and the Corporate Classroom. Students in SETS Program participate in internships on the Kennesaw and Marietta campuses of Kennesaw State University. Students participating in the SETS programs are assigned internship sites on the campuses and participate in community-based instruction. The Corporate Classroom is located at the Instructional Support Center at the School District’s central office location. The students complete a variety of projects for the various offices within the Instructional Support Center. Additionally, the students run school-based enterprises including a coffee shop and a screen-printing business.
The Transition Program continues to grow and evolve under the direction of Brenda Carter, Cobb County School District’s Director of Special Education. Under her direction, the program has added four additional school-based transition classes and has undergone a restructuring of the district’s Corporate Classroom programming.

More information about Cobb County School District’s Transition Programs and the Transition events held throughout the school year can be found at the Special Education Transition Services webpage.

Teacher Tools

The November edition of Teacher Tools can be accessed using this link: Teacher Tools November 2021.

The newsletter designed specifically for teachers of students with disabilities.

FY22 SSIP Fall PL Series: Promoting Positive Behavior Supports for Students in Secondary Settings

The FY22 SSIP Professional Learning Series focuses on supporting teachers and leaders to increase graduation rates and decrease dropout rates for
students with disabilities. Please join us Wednesday, December 1, 2021, from 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM for the last session of our fall series. Jeannie Morris, PBIS Program Specialist, will be presenting on Strategies for Promoting Positive Behavior Supports in Secondary Settings. Please use this link **SSIP Professional Learning Series** to register. The link may also be used to access registration links, recordings, and PowerPoint presentations for all previous sessions. An announcement for the upcoming FY 22 SSIP Spring PL Series will be shared following the Thanksgiving Holiday.

![Desktop computer](image)

### Understanding the Digital Divide

The digital divide was previously defined by the difference of students who had access to technology and those that did not. The definition has evolved to be those who use technology in different ways verses those that substitute technology for traditional input/output methods. Students spend time gaming and on social media, but still may lack the skills necessary to get by in high school, college, or the work force. Instruction should be provided in keyboarding, word processing, coding, online research, editing, and graphics skills to support your students in these areas. Students with physical or other disabilities may require alternative computer access or accessible text formats. Be sure to include computer skills instruction in IEPs, 504 plans and/or transition plans.

![A family smiling happily](image)

### MTSS Snapshot: November is Family Engagement Month
Family Engagement is embedded throughout a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework. One of the reasons Georgia added the fifth component, Infrastructure, to its MTSS framework, is to prevent barriers to implementation. When school teams take a holistic approach to engaging families and creating resources and organizational structures to meet the needs of the families in their communities, students are more likely to be successful.

It is important that families have a voice in decision-making throughout the MTSS process. Families should participate in problem-solving discussions with their child’s teacher and communicate their child’s strengths, weaknesses, and specific area(s) of need(s).

Georgia's MTSS team partnered with Parent to Parent of Georgia to help families understand their role within the MTSS framework. As educators begin implementing the framework, more families are educating themselves and asking questions about the components of MTSS.

MTSS coaches are answering parents' most frequently asked questions in a new Parent to Parent of Georgia videos series.

Topics include:
- **MTSS, RTI, and SST**: Watch this video and learn how to unravel the language of MTSS, RTI and SST and how they impact all students in Georgia.
- **MTSS and Special Education**: Watch this video and learn more about MTSS and how it connects with Special Education in Georgia.
- **MTSS FAQs**: This video features Frequently Asked Questions from Parents about MTSS in Georgia.

These videos are a great resource for educators who are looking to explain the importance of MTSS to families. For more information, visit the Parent to Parent of Georgia webpage or email gamtss@doe.k12.ga.us.